

GambleAware Legacy Report 2026

GambleAware

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Introduction

For over two decades, GambleAware has been the leading charity and strategic commissioner of gambling harm¹ education, prevention, research, and treatment across Great Britain. What began as a small, sector-specific charity evolved into a sector leader, shaping a system of response to gambling harms that did not exist before. Throughout its journey, GambleAware championed a bold vision: **a society free from gambling harms**, and it pursued this mission with determination, innovation, and a commitment to the people and communities most affected.

During a period when gambling was widely normalised and its harms were poorly understood, GambleAware played a pioneering role in reframing gambling harm as a significant public health issue. It built the understanding that gambling harm is not an individual failing but a complex, systemic challenge requiring a coordinated, multifaceted response. GambleAware's story is one of ambition, resilience, and strong impact. Its work has improved lives, shaped national policy, and strengthened the fabric of a public health response across Great Britain. As the organisation prepares to close its doors, its legacy endures – in the systems it built, the voices it elevated, and the countless people whose lives are safer, healthier, and better supported, including those who are more aware of the risks of gambling and have been empowered to make informed choices.

As the sector prepares for a fundamental shift, with statutory commissioners² now responsible for treatment, prevention, and research, this moment offers an essential opportunity to reflect on the legacy that GambleAware leaves behind. This legacy report, produced in partnership with New Philanthropy Capital (NPC), captures GambleAware's contributions and the lessons that can guide the next phase of system development and service delivery for gambling harms across Great Britain. Drawing on interviews, focus groups, and an extensive desk review, the report highlights the organisation's achievements, the challenges it navigated, and the insights that future commissioners, policymakers, and third sector partners can carry forward.

¹ World Health Organisation fact sheet 2024 highlights that 'gambling can lead to serious harms to health. These include financial stress, relationship breakdown, family violence, mental illness, and suicide. The legacy of gambling harm can endure throughout one's life and transmit intergenerationally.' (See [World Health Organization fact sheet](#) on Gambling, 2 December 2024)

² In England NHS England are commissioning for treatment, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities are commissioning for prevention, and UK Research and Innovation are commissioning for research. Other relevant bodies are commissioning for treatment and prevention in Scotland and Wales. (See '[Announcement of funds raised through the first year of the Statutory Gambling Levy](#)' made by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on 2 December 2025).

1.1 GambleAware's formation and growth

GambleAware operated in a landscape where gambling harm was poorly understood, public awareness was limited, and gambling was not treated as a public health issue. The organisation stepped into this vacuum and began laying the foundations for what would become the country's first strategic response to gambling harms. Over time, GambleAware transitioned from a small charity to a nationally recognised, independent commissioner of gambling harm prevention, treatment, and research, widely regarded for its expertise, its role in highlighting an issue that was previously little-understood, and its pivotal contribution to transforming the sector.



GambleAware's charitable objectives

- 1) **The advancement of education aimed at preventing gambling harms** for the benefit of the public in Great Britain, in particular young people and those who are most vulnerable, by carrying out research, **by providing advice and information, and by raising awareness.**
- 2) **Working to keep people in Great Britain safe from gambling harms through the application of a public health model** based on three levels of prevention: primary— universal promotion of a safer environment; secondary — selective intervention for those who may be 'at risk'; and, tertiary — direct support for those directly or indirectly affected by gambling disorder, **by carrying out research, by providing advice and information, by raising awareness, and by commissioning the provision of effective treatment, interventions and support.**

GambleAware was originally established in 2002 as the Gambling Industry Charitable Trust, created in response to a government review³ calling for a dedicated body to fund research and treatment for gambling harms. It was supported by voluntary, ad hoc donations from the gambling industry, an approach effectively reinforced by the Gambling Act 2005,⁴ which did not set out an alternative funding mechanism.

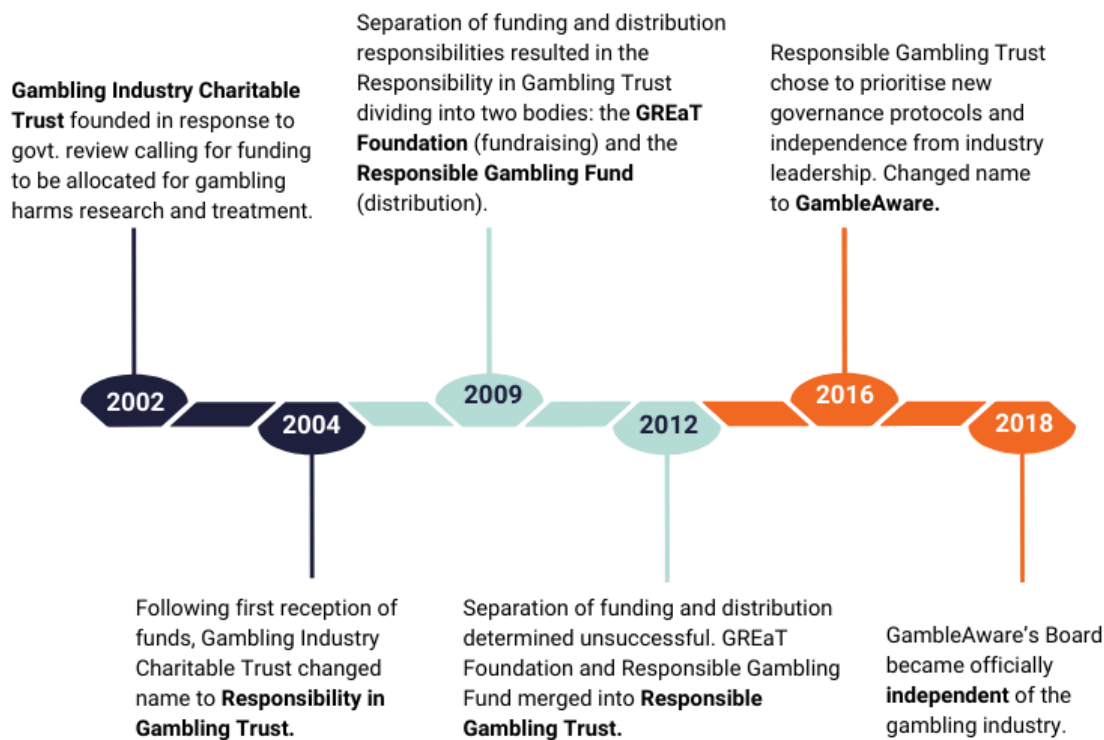
In 2004, after its first receipt of voluntary donations, the Gambling Industry Charitable Trust was renamed as the Responsibility in Gambling Trust. Following a Gambling Commission review, the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board was established in 2009 to advise the

³ [Select Committee on Culture Media and Sport – Seventh Report](#)

⁴ [Gambling Act 2005](#)

Commission on how funds should be used⁵, and - pending any statutory levy - stakeholders agreed to separate fundraising and distribution. The charity (renamed the GREaT Foundation) focused on fundraising while a newly established entity, the Responsible Gambling Fund, distributed funds. In 2011, government and stakeholders concluded this model was not working, leading to a 2012 merger of both organisations into the Responsible Gambling Trust, reuniting fundraising and distribution. Governance then moved progressively toward industry independence. By November 2012 trustees were split evenly between independent and industry-linked members. In 2016, the organisation adopted the name GambleAware and appointed an independent chair. By 2018 the board was wholly independent of the industry.

A simplified timeline of these events can be found below:



Simplified timeline of GambleAware's historical name changes and shifts in organisational focus

⁵ [Gambling Commission Annual Report 2008/09](#) confirms the establishment of the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board in 2009 to advise the Commission on the allocation and use of research, education, and treatment funding.

1.2 Funding and governance

GambleAware operated as an independent charity registered in England, Wales, and Scotland. GambleAware was funded through voluntary donations from licensed gambling operators. This voluntary levy was encouraged under the Gambling Commission's License Conditions and Codes of Practice (LCCP) and was the only large-scale source of funding available to those working in gambling harm response⁶.

Within this voluntary funding framework, a significant shift occurred in 2020 when the five largest licensed gambling operators committed to provide £100 million to GambleAware over a four-year period (2020-2024) through planned, incremental increases in their voluntary levy contributions. This marked a move away from ad hoc funding towards a more predictable income stream, enabling GambleAware to take a more strategic, long-term approach to commissioning⁷.

Against this backdrop, GambleAware played a pivotal stewardship role in the funding structure of the sector, acting as the primary recipient of voluntary levy contributions and directing their use towards high-quality prevention, treatment, and research. In addition to commissioning services, GambleAware also secured funding to deliver frontline programmes, enabling the organisation to champion innovation, expand support, and strengthen the wider system of care.

However, GambleAware attracted criticism for its role as commissioner under this funding model, with concerns raised about potential conflicts of interest in accepting money from gambling operators for gambling harm response. It is important to note that GambleAware did not respond to requests from gambling operators regarding the allocation or use of funds, nor did it have any accountability to the gambling industry in respect of reporting arrangements. GambleAware also took a series of bold and deliberate steps to cement its independence from gambling companies, including introducing stringent measures such as a clear donations acceptance policy, a donor interaction protocol, and transparent quarterly reporting of funding sources.

It also developed a coherent governance structure with the creation of an independent Board of Trustees by 2018, comprising a range of expertise spanning public health, regulation, law,

⁶ Gambling organisations were encouraged to donate a portion of their gross gambling yields to the voluntary levy (see [Gambling Act 2005](#))

⁷ [GambleAware welcomes the Betting & Gaming Council funding announcement](#), 15 June 2020

and the third sector. Additionally, GambleAware established a Lived Experience Council in 2022 that provided expert advice and strategic direction, with its Chair sitting on the Board of Trustees in an advisory capacity. GambleAware's commitment to independence was perhaps most powerfully expressed in its promotion of a public health approach – which it championed with integrity and courage, even in the face of industry resistance.

There were also concerns, including from GambleAware, regarding the long-term sustainability of a funding model based on voluntary donations, given their inherent unpredictability. In response GambleAware, alongside others in the sector, advocated for a statutory levy to replace the voluntary levy. This bold shift would establish an increased, sustainable, and trusted source of funding, enabling commissioners and providers to make long-term commitments to meet the needs of people impacted by gambling harms.

Despite the actions taken by GambleAware, and despite operating in a funding model directed by the Government and managed by the Gambling Commission, the criticisms GambleAware faced were pervasive. The concerns around GambleAware's independence from gambling organisations were highlighted by stakeholders in the gambling harm sector and public health bodies. Indeed in 2024, a complaint was submitted by the Good Law Practice to the Charity Commission regarding GambleAware's funding arrangement. GambleAware submitted a detailed response which was reviewed alongside the complaint by the Charity Commission in 2024. The Commission found no evidence of industry influence on GambleAware's operations or decision-making. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has also publicly affirmed GambleAware's independence from industry influence.⁸

1.3 Why is GambleAware closing its doors?

Following the introduction of a White Paper in April 2023, and a period of public consultation run by the UK Government⁹, a statutory levy was introduced in April 2025 to be charged on all licensed gambling activities to help fund research, treatment, and prevention efforts related to tackling gambling harm. This reflects a policy shift toward embedding gambling harm within a broader public health framework and mirrors the statutory model for drug and alcohol treatment in England. Consequentially, it also marks the end of GambleAware's long-standing stewardship of the voluntary levy, a role through which the organisation

⁸ [High Stakes: Gambling Reform for the Digital Age](#), Department for Culture, Media and Sport, April 2023

⁹ [Consultation on the statutory levy on gambling operators](#) led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport

helped lay the foundations on which statutory commissioning can now build. Of this transition, Andy Boucher, GambleAware’s Chair of Trustees said:

“The introduction of the new statutory levy and the appointment of the three new commissioners for gambling harms research, prevention and treatment means that, as expected, the work historically delivered by GambleAware will now transition to the UK government and new commissioners across England, Scotland, and Wales. We have advocated for the introduction of a statutory system for many years and are proud of our contribution to its implementation.”¹⁰

Within this new structure, directed by the Government, the Gambling Commission will be responsible for collecting and administering the statutory levy, operating within the UK Government’s framework and under ministerial direction from the Department of Culture Media and Sport¹¹. Given the transition to the statutory levy, the new role and oversight of the Gambling Commission, and the introduction of the new system commissioners – the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, NHS England, UK Research and Innovation, and relevant bodies in Scotland and Wales – GambleAware is undertaking a managed closure to be completed in March 2026¹².

Following the levy’s implementation in 2025, GambleAware ceased accepting industry funds and operated on regulatory settlement and reserve funding during its managed transition. The organisation will continue to fulfil existing commissioning commitments until the new system becomes fully operational in April 2026, with a vital focus on preserving service continuity and ensuring that beneficiaries remain supported throughout this important transition. In doing so, GambleAware’s final chapter reflects the same dedication, leadership, and purpose that defined its contribution to the sector for over a decade.

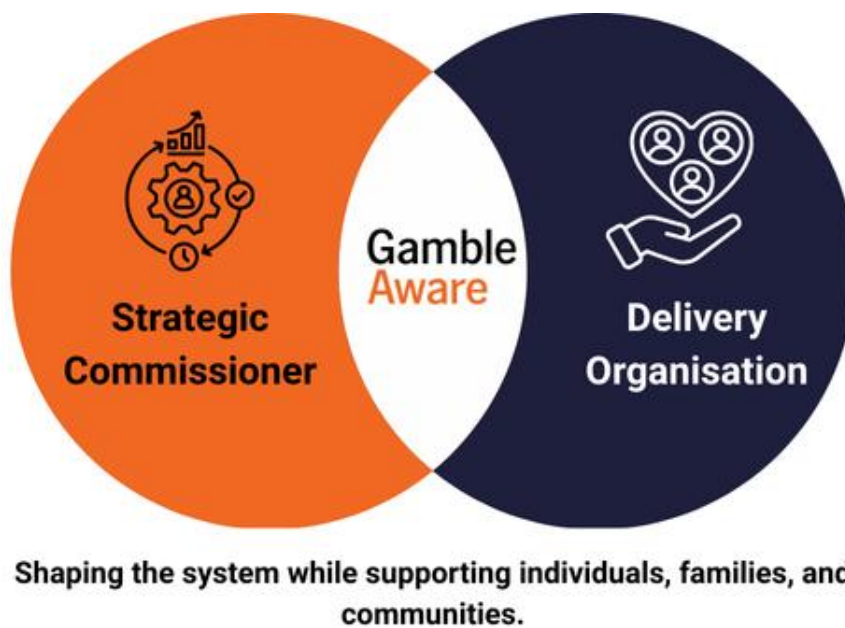
¹⁰ Extract from GambleAware’s statement on the new statutory gambling harms system, July 2025

¹¹ [Statutory Gambling Levy](#), August 2025

¹² Extract from GambleAware’s statement on the new statutory gambling harms system, July 2025

How did GambleAware operate and work?

GambleAware fulfilled a dual role as both a strategic commissioner and a delivery organisation¹³. This allowed commissioning and delivery to operate as complementary levers, marking a decisive sector-wide shift from funding isolated activities to intentionally shaping a coherent national system - one designed with purpose, ambition, and a deep commitment to the individuals, families, and communities at its heart.



2.1 Scope of work

GambleAware's commissioning spanned four key areas:

1. **National support and treatment provision:** To provide integrated support and treatment services across England, Scotland and Wales, GambleAware commissioned the National Gambling Support Network (NGSN).¹⁴ This network housed the National Gambling Helpline (operated by GamCare) alongside a range of other support options and accounts for most treatment and support delivered for people affected by gambling harms in Great Britain. Reporting indicates that between April 2024 and March 25 a total of 11,960 clients were treated by the NGSN.¹⁵ Additionally, GambleAware commissioned the Primary Care Gambling Service

¹³ Note: GambleAware's delivery activity was limited in scope and did not include the direct provision of services.

¹⁴ [Overview of the National Gambling Support Network](#)

¹⁵ [Annual Statistics from the National Gambling Support Network \(Great Britain\) 2024/25](#), pp. 7-9

(PCGS), an NHS primary care based service for people experiencing gambling harms. PCGS not only provided clinical treatment itself but also supported other NGSN organisations to manage complex patients more safely. Its clinical involvement strengthened the overall governance and stability of the support and treatment system. Between November 2019 and March 2025, PCGS treated 2,218 patients and a further 145 affected others.¹⁶

2. **Research and evidence building:** To better understand gambling harms and inequalities, inform policy, improve service design, and increase effective treatment across the sector, GambleAware funded rigorous research and evaluations. For example, in 2023–24, GambleAware’s Children and Young People Research Programme engaged schools and youth groups to uncover how gambling-like content saturates online spaces. These findings directly shaped policy recommendations for stricter advertising rules and pre-watershed bans¹⁷.
3. **Education and prevention:** To provide better resources for commissioned providers, schools, youth workers, and frontline professionals directly addressing gambling harms, GambleAware commissioned the development of education and prevention resources. For example, through the Scottish Gambling Education Hub, GambleAware trained 4,655 youth-facing professionals and young people, with every participant reporting increased knowledge and most feeling confident to identify and respond to gambling harms¹⁸.
4. **Innovation and community-based programmes:** To better support high-risk and underserved communities, GambleAware piloted new prevention and early-intervention models through local campaigns, community-led initiatives, and innovation funding. In its first year, the organisation’s Community Resilience Fund worked with 21 organisations, reached approximately 100,000 people with key messaging, and delivered intensive support for 720 people at highest risk¹⁹.

Alongside its commissioning role, GambleAware also delivered key national prevention work, often in partnership with expert agencies, to fill gaps that commissioning alone could not. By building and sustaining trusted, evidence-based tools and campaigns, it helped people recognise gambling harms earlier, reduced stigma about seeking help,

¹⁶ [The Primary Care Gambling Service: Five-Year Report](#), 2020-2025

¹⁷ [GambleAware Annual Report 2023–24](#), pp. 24–25

¹⁸ [GambleAware Annual Report 2023–24](#), pp. 28–29

¹⁹ [GambleAware’s Community Resilience Fund Year One Report](#), April 2024

and made it easier to navigate a complex support system. This reach was enabled and amplified by the strength and recognisability of the GambleAware brand, which reports suggest is the most salient brand associated with gambling addiction in Great Britain.²⁰

GambleAware's delivery functions can be grouped into five main areas:

1. **Campaigns:** To raise awareness of gambling harms and reduce stigma, GambleAware delivered national, evidence-informed campaigns targeted at groups at higher risk (including young men, women, and minority communities), signposting people to advice, tools, and support. A key example is GambleAware's national campaign – 'Let's Open Up About Gambling,' launched in 2023 and co-created with people with lived experience. This campaign normalised conversations gambling conversations and encourage earlier help-seeking. An independent evaluation shows high campaign recognition, widespread action among campaign-aware audiences, and a 9% increase in contacts to the National Gambling Helpline.²¹



Creative assets from GambleAware's stigma campaigns

2. **Digital tools and advice:** To turn awareness into action, GambleAware built and continually strengthened a suite of digital tools. This included the GambleAware website, offering self-help resources and lived-experience content, and a Service Finder linking people to support and treatment providers. It also included the GambleAware app, which provided practical features such as self-assessment and progress tracking. These assets operated at scale, supporting millions of

²⁰ [GambleAware's National Prevention Programme Assets](#), May 2025

²¹ [GambleAware's National Prevention Programme Assets](#), May 2025

interactions each year and enabling users to take meaningful steps such as monitoring their gambling, accessing tailored advice, and entering treatment pathways.²²



Renderings of GambleAware's digital assets

3. **Education and training:** To improve the sector's understanding of gambling harms, early identification, and referral pathways, GambleAware developed resources such as the Language Guide.²³
4. **Sector convening and capacity building:** To help build a stronger, more connected system, GambleAware assumed a leadership role, organising sector-wide conferences, workshops, and engagement events where GambleAware supported organisations in connecting, collaborating, and expanding their capabilities. This included strengthening the provider network and convening stakeholders to share insights in Research Showcases and Annual Conferences.
5. **Research and evidence generation:** To complement its commissioning and inform strategic priorities, GambleAware also directly produced a number of reports e.g. on gambling related harms among women²⁴, inequalities in gambling harm²⁵, and gambling related harms among children and young people²⁶.

Ultimately, GambleAware utilised both its commissioning and delivery activities to serve anyone in Great Britain affected by gambling harms, be it individuals struggling with

²² [GambleAware's National Prevention Programme Assets](#), May 2025

²³ [How to reduce the stigma of gambling harms through language](#), A language guide

²⁴ [Background to women's gambling harms prevention](#), January 2022

²⁵ [The Gambling Harms Inequalities Framework](#), November 2025

²⁶ [Gambling Harms and Young People in Great Britain: A State of the Nation Report](#), December 2025

gambling addiction or at risk of harm or affected others: family members, friends, and communities impacted by someone else's gambling.

Key achievements

GambleAware has made a profound difference to the lives of people experiencing gambling harm. Through its work, the organisation has helped the public to recognise how common gambling harm can be, to reflect more openly on their own gambling, and to question the long-held assumption that gambling is inherently harmless.²⁷ It has also equipped professionals with the knowledge of how to support someone facing gambling harm²⁸, provided clear pathways for people experiencing harm to know where to go to access support²⁹, and offered assurance to those affected that the support provided is responsive to their individual experiences and needs³⁰. This was achieved through three key approaches.



The rest of this section provides detailed insights into how these were achieved.

3.1 GambleAware reframed gambling harm as a public health issue in Great Britain

Recognition of a public health issue

For more than a decade, GambleAware championed the recognition of gambling harm as a public health issue. When the organisation was founded, gambling was socially normalised and heavily marketed, while harm was treated as an individual problem, not a systemic

²⁷ [‘Let’s Open Up About Gambling’ stigma reduction campaign evaluation](#), Key highlights report, Nov 2023 to Feb 2024

²⁸ [Scottish Gambling Education Hub Evaluation Final Report](#), March 2022

²⁹ [Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the National Gambling Support Network](#), January 2026

³⁰ [Evaluation of the Gambling Support Service, England & Wales Final Evaluation Report](#), May 2021

health concern. GambleAware set out to change that narrative. Through a powerful combination of research, advocacy, and public campaigns, the organisation brought national attention to the complex, interconnected factors that shape gambling harm - factors that touch mental health, relationships, finances, and entire communities.

GambleAware positioned gambling alongside other addictive products like alcohol, calling for similar public health approaches and ultimately played a central role in establishing gambling harm as a public health issue. This deepened public understanding of the wide ranging and complex nature of gambling harms, making it clear that the impacts of harm extend far beyond financial loss.

Taking a public health approach

For GambleAware, taking a public health approach meant integrating commissioning, delivery, and policy to align prevention, early intervention, and inequalities with established public health frameworks, and to inform approaches across health, local government, and community systems. This was operationalised through strategic partnerships spanning health, social care, community, sport, and education settings, extending prevention and early identification into everyday environments where gambling harms could be recognised earlier and more informally.

Through training programmes and trust-based collaboration, GambleAware equipped partners with the confidence and skills to recognise gambling harms, embed screening and brief intervention approaches, and strengthen referral pathways into advice, support, and treatment. Evaluations show the scale of this achievement - demonstrating improved confidence of professionals, adoption of screening practices, and thousands reached through early intervention activity.³¹ Crucially these efforts helped moved prevention and inequalities from peripheral concerns to core priorities in how the system was designed and resourced.

GambleAware worked to extend the same integrated approach across the wider gambling harms sector through intentional, evidence-based policy work. Drawing directly on commissioned research, service data, and insights from frontline delivery, GambleAware produced focused policy papers, consultation responses and parliamentary evidence for

³¹ [Evaluation of the Gambling Support Service, England & Wales Final Evaluation Report](#), May 2021

government departments, regulators, and policymakers. These contributions translated evidence into clear, actionable recommendations. Examples include detailed submissions to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Select Committees³² on gambling reform, which set out priorities such as the introduction of a statutory levy, stronger consumer protections, and tighter regulation of gambling advertising and sponsorship.

Alongside its role in influencing wider sector approaches to gambling harm, GambleAware engaged in vital awareness raising with the general public and at-risk groups to tackle the stigma associated with gambling harms. Stigma presents a significant barrier to accessing support for those experiencing gambling harm and minimises opportunities for early intervention. One way that GambleAware tackled stigma was through its use of campaigns. Internal and external stakeholders engaged as part of this legacy report credited GambleAware with not only raising awareness of gambling harms but reducing stigma and supporting earlier access to advice and support, highlighting the use of campaigns as an important mechanism to get there.

GambleAware's campaigns evolved over time as part of its public health approach. Earlier widespread campaigns, such as *Bet Regret*, played an important role in establishing public awareness and helping people recognise the dangers of gambling. However, evaluation evidence and lived-experience insight increasingly highlighted the limits of awareness-raising alone, particularly where stigma and shame prevented people from identifying with messages or seeking support.³³

In response, GambleAware shifted its campaign strategy towards more targeted, behaviour change focused interventions, with greater emphasis on language, tone, and framing. Learning from *Bet Regret* underscored the importance of framing gambling harm as the outcome of heavy marketing and socially normalised behaviours. Adopting a more attuned voice, co-created alongside those with lived experience, helped campaigns resonate earlier



³² [Further submission to Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee's Inquiry on Gambling Regulation](#), July 2023

³³ [GambleAware Stigma Polling, Key findings](#), June 2024

and more effectively with people at risk, while GambleAware's independence from the gambling industry enabled it to openly highlight where gambling practices were contributing to harm.

This evolution was reflected most clearly in the flagship stigma-reduction campaign *Let's Open Up About Gambling*. This campaign aimed to normalise conversations about gambling harm and reduce barriers to help-seeking. It was first launched in 2023 and delivered through three bursts between 2023 and 2025.³⁴ These campaigns had a high level of reach and recognition, and real impact. For example, the evaluation of the campaign showed that over 90% of the behaviour change audience reported taking action as a result of seeing the campaign.³⁵

GambleAware's campaigns ultimately helped shift national conversations about gambling harm. They leave a lasting legacy of more open dialogue, greater recognition of harm, and a stronger foundation for prevention across Great Britain.

3.2 Building a national system of response

When GambleAware assumed its role, it entered a space with no statutory architecture and no central coordination. Gambling harm services were delivered primarily by charities, but in isolated pockets, shaped by limited and ad hoc funding, with inconsistent availability and limited coordination between providers. GambleAware transformed that landscape. It built the architecture of a national response, including better connected support and treatment provision. Through intentional, strategic commissioning, it strengthened the capacity of organisations across the sector and laid the foundations for a coordinated, evidence-led approach to tackling gambling harm.

This whole systems approach was vital to respond to the growing need for gambling harm response. Indeed, this need continues to grow. The most recent data from the Annual Treatment and Support Survey 2024³⁶ demonstrates that there has been a sharp increase in people seeking help for gambling-related harm - with almost 30% of adults who gamble and who are experiencing any level of problems desiring treatment, support or advice, nearly doubling from 17% in 2020. To address this growing need for prevention,

³⁴ ['Let's Open Up About Gambling' stigma reduction campaign evaluation, Key highlights report](#), April to June 2023

³⁵ [Let's Open up about Gambling, Summary of key learnings & insights from a three-year marketing strategy to reduce stigma](#), December 2025

³⁶ [Annual Great Britain Treatment and Support Survey](#), delivered by GambleAware and YouGov

treatment, and support over the past 20 years, GambleAware built an integrated and responsive system capable of addressing the complex realities of gambling harm and ensuring that people, families, and communities could access the help they needed.

Strategic commissioning model

GambleAware's commissioning model evolved from ad hoc grant-making to strategic, evidence-led commissioning, introducing national pathways, shared outcomes, and consistent quality standards. This shift created coherence across a previously fragmented field and laid the foundations for a system that could integrate regionally with statutory health and care structures, providing potential for continuity under the new commissioning landscape.

The creation of the National Gambling Support Network (NGSN) exemplifies a flagship achievement of this architectural vision: a coordinated system of providers operating to shared specifications, quality standards, and outcomes, underpinned by strong governance, monitoring, and collaboration. It connects local and regional services within a national framework, balancing consistency with local responsiveness. By aligning referral routes and pathways across providers and Helpline services, the NGSN was designed as an integrated system, enabling entry at multiple points and directing individuals to appropriate care.

GambleAware's annual reporting shows in 2024/2025 alone the NGSN served just under 12,000 individuals, an increase from 11% in the previous year.³⁷ Since its launch in April 2023, the Network has supported over 110,000 people across Great Britain, with self-referrals directly into services increasing by more than 50%³⁸, indicating growing awareness, accessibility and trust in the system. Performance data also demonstrated



Map of NGSN providers

³⁷ [Annual Statistics from the National Gambling Support Network \(Great Britain\) 2024/25](#), page 7

³⁸ Figures taken from press release issued by GambleAware on 8 May 2025 to mark the two year anniversary of the launch of the NGSN. The total number of people accessing support was based on the number of individuals who accessed services including the National Gambling Helpline, regional providers, primary care and residential services.

strong responsiveness and outcomes, with 50% of people accessing treatment receiving a first appointment within six days and 93% of those completing treatment reporting an improvement³⁹.

National Gambling Support Network (NGSN)



It is critical to note that GambleAware commissioned almost entirely within the third sector, working with charities and voluntary organisations rather than statutory providers. This form of commissioning holds unique challenges and demands flexibility, trust-based relationships, and capacity-building. This approach not only delivered services but also enabled these organisations to grow and sustain their role in the system.



GambleAware engaged in third sector commissioning exceptionally well, as one external stakeholder noted, the organisation “led the way in commissioning best practice,” combining trust-based approaches with rigorous impact measurement and embedding collaboration across the sector.



³⁹ [Annual Statistics from the National Gambling Support Network \(Great Britain\) 2024/25](#)

Building sector capacity

GambleAware's role extended beyond commissioning to strengthening the entire ecosystem. Through multi-year funding, leadership support, system building initiatives, and innovation funds, it enabled voluntary sector organisations to diversify provision and achieve greater readiness for statutory commissioning. For example, the £4.3 million Improving Outcomes Fund provided 18-month grants and learning support to charities working with women and minority communities⁴⁰, helping them build governance, evaluation capability, and partnerships for future statutory integration. This has helped ensure that the investments GambleAware made in the third sector will extend well beyond the lifetime of the organisation.

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One interviewee reflected that through capacity building support from GambleAware “we’re now in a position to stand alone and take what we’ve learned forward into the new commissioning world.”
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GambleAware used convening as a driving force for sector-wide progress. Events such as the Annual Conference and Research Showcases brought providers, researchers, lived experience leaders, and policymakers together in collaborative forums. These gatherings aligned priorities, shared evidence, and created space to interrogate key issues while fostering relationships across stakeholder groups.

Through this exchange, GambleAware broadened understanding of who is affected by gambling harms, why and how, and encouraged innovation beyond traditional treatment models. By embedding prevention, early intervention, and lived experience into the conversation, these events helped shape a more inclusive, multidisciplinary sector.

⁴⁰ NPC acted as the learning and evaluation partner on the Improving Outcomes Fund, which included capacity building support to grantees.

Ultimately, GambleAware strengthened the sector's identity, moving from fragmented services toward a unified system with shared objectives and standards, and a focus on lived experience and evidence-based action.

3.3 Putting evidence and lived experience at the centre

GambleAware took a listening and learning approach to its commissioning and delivery work. This was supported by two key mechanisms: building a strong evidence base and research practice within the sector; and promoting lived experience leadership in designing and delivering prevention, support, and treatment services. Ultimately, it built a system that prioritised continuous learning to embed evidence and insight into strategic decision making and ensure interventions are effective, adaptive, and responsive to emerging needs.

Research to inform strategic decision making

GambleAware was a major commissioner and deliverer of research in the gambling harms sector, building insights into what works in the prevention and treatment of gambling harms, and crucially, for whom. GambleAware's highly specialist knowledge and expertise led the way. They commissioned groundbreaking studies on stigma, inequalities, and treatment access. This includes research looking at the specific implications of gambling harm for a range of groups including women, ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and neurodiverse individuals.⁴¹

This, and other research, directly informed delivery approaches and commissioning priorities at GambleAware. This includes:

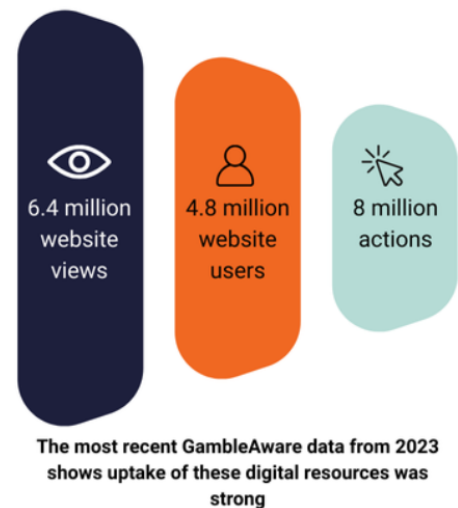
- Research⁴² that informed a shifting approach around campaigns – to focus more on tackling stigma and promoting behaviour change.
- Inequalities research⁴³ which prompted the launch of pilot funds to explore innovative approaches to community-embedded and responsive delivery for example through the Improving Outcomes and Community Resilience Funds.

⁴¹ [GambleAware Publication Library of Research](#)

⁴² [Background to Stigma Reduction Campaign](#), April 2023

⁴³ [Minority Communities and Gambling Harms, Quantitative Report: Lived Experience, Racism, Discrimination and Stigma](#), March 2023

- Research⁴⁴ that informed the production of digital self-help tools and resources. These served as core prevention infrastructure, enabling earlier recognition of harm, earlier intervention, and reducing stigma by offering private, low-barrier routes to support. Uptake of these digital resources was strong, as illustrated in the accompanying diagram.



Through its research commissioning approach, GambleAware built a high-quality evidence base where little had existed previously. For example, it commissioned key pieces of independent research with institutions like the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen), University of Bristol, University of Wolverhampton, and the Tavistock Institute to produce high-impact studies. Through their reputation as a trusted source of evidence, their research has had sector wide influence, informing key strategic pieces including the Gambling Commission National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harms (2019–2022⁴⁵) and Public Health England’s evidence review (2021⁴⁶).

Research, evaluation and national datasets directly informed decisions about where resources went, who was prioritised, and how the system evolved. For example, prevention research⁴⁷ demonstrated the necessity of upstream and early interventions in reducing later demand for specialist treatment. This promoted key discourse in the sector around the need for early intervention as well as programmes and campaigns looking at behaviour change, education, and training. A key milestone in the evolution of the system was GambleAware’s commissioning of the Gambling Harms Research Centre at the University of Bristol, representing a significant investment in long-term, independent research to inform prevention, policy, and public health practice⁴⁸. Additionally, GambleAware’s population health surveys and large-scale research, including the Annual Treatment and Support Survey⁴⁹, Gambling Harms Data Profiles⁵⁰ and the Data Reporting Framework⁵¹ helped

⁴⁴ [The GambleAware Support Tool, Summary of evidence and rationale for development](#), April 2025

⁴⁵ [National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harms](#), 2019 – 2022

⁴⁶ [Gambling-related harms: evidence review](#), January 2023

⁴⁷ [GambleAware’s National Prevention Programme Assets](#), May 2025

⁴⁸ [Bristol Hub for Gambling Harms Research](#)

⁴⁹ Conducted annually with around 18,000 participants across Great Britain, this survey collects data on gambling behaviour, harm, and demand for treatment (see [Annual Great Britain Treatment and Support Survey](#) commissioned by GambleAware and conducted by YouGov).

⁵⁰ GambleAware developed regional and local data profiles for every Local Authority and Parliamentary Constituency in Great Britain (see [Gambling Harm Local Area Data Profiles 2022–2024](#))

⁵¹ The [Data Reporting Framework](#) is GambleAware’s structured framework for managing and reporting data collected by NGSN organisations to enable consistent monitoring and evaluation.

policymakers and public health officials understand and address gambling harms in their areas. Bodies such as the Gambling Commission pointed to specific GambleAware research that informs their own practice, for example *Patterns of Play*⁵². Indeed, the continued use of its research by major institutions reflects the organisation's credibility and the quality of its work.

Supporting the research agenda was an internal culture of learning and emphasis on innovation. Stakeholders past and present noted that culturally, GambleAware allowed testing and learning from failure. Employees were encouraged to challenge, critique and put forward ideas for projects or innovations. While GambleAware remained firmly evidence-led, it also took bold risks in piloting new approaches where formal evidence was limited but lived experience voices highlighted clear need. Subsequently, over time GambleAware's approach to research has shifted, recognising that an evidence-led approach is powerful, but not enough alone. Rather than taking a purely academic approach it used increasingly participatory and equitable approaches to gather insights that engaged community perspectives and enabled them to further contextualise, interrogate, and understand research findings.

Lived experience leadership

GambleAware's work has been fundamentally driven and supported by the expertise and insights of members of the lived experience community. The organisation's Lived Experience Council, established in 2022, was comprised of individuals with direct lived experience of gambling harms, and those who had been affected by someone else's gambling. It played a critical role in providing direction and advice on GambleAware's activities, programmes, and strategic development, with a member of the Council having an advisory seat at every Board of Trustees meeting. This approach embodied GambleAware's commitment to embedding lived experience and co-production across every aspect of its work, capturing the breadth of lived experience, including people directly affected by gambling harm and affected others, and setting a benchmark for genuine and inclusive practice within the sector.

⁵² [Patterns of Play: Extended Executive Summary Report](#), June 2022



Lived Experience Council

The establishment of the Lived Experience Council (LEC) who were set up as a trusted collective and critical friend to be a part of key strategic decisions at GambleAware.

The relationship between LEC members and GambleAware staff and leadership was described as “authentic”.

LEC members felt truly valued as equal and expert contributors, not just storytellers, and highlighted their involvement in shaping stigma campaigns, language guides, media work, and funding decisions.

GambleAware was consistently praised for its meaningful, non-tokenistic approach by stakeholders engaged for this report. Lived experience leadership was also closely aligned with GambleAware’s value-based approach, with internal stakeholders noting that engaging with people with lived experience motivated an ongoing care and commitment to high quality, responsive programme delivery. This kept staff especially motivated at times of criticism and uncertainty.

Internal stakeholder opinions differed on how ‘unique’ GambleAware’s approach to lived experience leadership was. Some people cited that, for example, in bodies like the NHS there is a statutory responsibility to engage with beneficiaries and do this effectively, while others noted that GambleAware’s approach was particularly effective. Key achievements that demonstrate these effective approaches include the steps taken to structure, fund and embed influential lived experience leadership and voices within the wider gambling harms sector through:

- Specific funds that emphasise lived experience leadership, for example the Community Resilience Fund.
- Funding key initiatives including the Affected Lived Experience Research, Treatment & Support (ALERTS) group⁵³ which helped reshape treatment pathways in the NGSN and improve accessibility of services.

⁵³ ALERTS was a group composed of individuals with lived experience of gambling harms, commissioned by GambleAware to provide insights to improve the accessibility, equity and effectiveness of services, particularly those delivered by NGSN organisations.

- Supporting the establishment of the Gambling Lived Experience Network (GLEN)⁵⁴, an independent, UK-wide charity that provides a collective voice for people with lived experience of gambling harms.

As GambleAware prepares to close, there is concern about the loss of sector leadership which values and supports lived experience. Without intentional investment, there is a risk that lived experience becomes peripheral rather than central in the new system. However, GambleAware has laid strong foundations for lived experience leadership through capacity building around best practice approaches in the sector. By investing in GLEN in particular, it supported a sustainable, independent voice that will continue under the statutory levy system. These initiatives position lived experience as a permanent feature of the gambling harm ecosystem, beyond GambleAware's own remit.

⁵⁴ GLEN was established in 2021. GambleAware provided funding to community-based development partner Expert Link to support GLEN's development.

Challenges faced

GambleAware's achievements demonstrate the significant impact it had on shaping the system of gambling harms response. Next, we explore how these were achieved despite a backdrop of complexity.

4.1 Pace of growth and organisational set-up

GambleAware's evolution into a strategic commissioner was marked by rapid growth and significant organisational change. While the charity was not initially designed to function as a commissioning body, its remit expanded quickly, requiring GambleAware to deliberately adapt internal structures to meet new responsibilities.

This period of development coincided with heightened external expectations, including major funding influxes⁵⁵ and the need to deliver a coordinated national response to gambling harms. Meeting these demands required the organisation to scale its operating systems and internal capacity at pace, while continuing to deliver core activity. This presented clear organisational challenges, particularly in ensuring that infrastructure, assurance, and capability developed in a way that aligned with ambition.

At the same time, this phase created important opportunities. GambleAware used it as a moment of consolidation and system-building, helping to establish national infrastructure and strengthening its leadership role within the sector. In response, the organisation clarified its mandate, strengthened organisational structures, invested in a more sustainable culture, and improved how its role was communicated externally. Growth was also accompanied by a deliberate expansion of the evidence base, supporting research that better reflected national realities and addressed populations that had previously been under-represented.

4.2 Scrutiny and the importance of independence

The biggest challenge that GambleAware faced was building and leading a coherent system while continually defending its legitimacy to do so against a backdrop of criticism. As noted above, the organisation operated under sustained scrutiny about its independence, driven largely by the fact that its funding came from gambling industry organisations.

⁵⁵ Periods of accelerated growth followed funding influxes in the form of longer-term commitments from the four largest gambling operators (as highlighted in Section 1.2 of this report), and regulatory settlements.

To reinforce its independence and build the credibility needed to act as a system leader, GambleAware deliberately implemented a series of structural changes as noted in Section 1.2 (Funding and governance). These included establishing clear donation protocols, enhancing transparency in reporting, and, most importantly, removing industry representatives from its Board. This governance shift marked a decisive break from earlier models and was a critical step in demonstrating that the organisation operated impartially.

Alongside these structural changes, GambleAware's values played an equally important role in its ability to build trust and credibility to act as a system leader. At the heart of GambleAware's values was a passion for improving lives. This ensured that every initiative was people-centred, focused on improving access to support and treatment and delivering better outcomes for those affected, while remaining grounded in the goal of creating a safer, more inclusive system. It also inspired key decisions, such as advocating for a statutory levy despite the potential implications for the organisation's own future.

Collaboration was another cornerstone of GambleAware's ethos. The organisation actively convened charities, researchers, lived experience leaders, and statutory bodies together under a shared ambition to align priorities and share learning. In this contested space, GambleAware's professionalism, proactive cross-sector advocacy, shared messaging, and convening power helped to address misinformation regarding its independence where possible.

Externally, these values helped to position GambleAware as a credible and trusted leader for beneficiaries and charities in the gambling harms sector. Internally, these values created a culture of accountability and openness, enabling teams to challenge ideas constructively, hold one another to a high level of accountability, and create meaningful and lasting work, despite the criticisms it faced.

When faced with criticism, GambleAware made a conscious choice not to respond with publicly bold or overtly vocal positions. Instead, it focused on delivering against its charitable objectives and drew on its base of high-quality research to underpin any responses, allowing evidence to speak for itself.

Some called GambleAware's approach to criticism "cautious" or "risk-averse" however, its actions tell a different story. When it mattered most, the organisation took bold positions, for example in using its voice to advocate for a statutory levy and by promoting a public health approach, both of which countered perspectives of the gambling industry. Indeed,

advocating for funding system reform could be viewed as especially courageous, given the risks it presented to the future role of GambleAware in the sector.

Despite the efforts to improve transparency and accountability, criticism remained a persistent feature of the external landscape. Stakeholders engaged for this report shared the perspective that other actors in the sector could have taken a more vocal stance in responding to the criticism GambleAware faced, to highlight their independence and combat misinformation. Instead, criticism continued to shape perceptions of industry influence, which had real implications for how GambleAware could operate. A key example of this is the letter received from NHS England in February 2022 which notified GambleAware of the decision to end their dual commissioning and funding arrangement for the NHS specialist gambling clinics. This letter was issued without prior engagement with GambleAware, despite their historic funding and championing of the NHS clinics.

Some noted that the criticism persisted to such an extent that it was hard for GambleAware to carve out a role for itself under the new commissioning structure, either in a commissioning or a delivery function. Regardless, as set out in Section 1.3 (Why is GambleAware closing its doors?), the Government ultimately opted to appoint new system commissioners, all being statutory bodies rather than a charity.

It is also important to recognise that the emotional toll of operating under constant scrutiny was significant. It was time and resource intensive for GambleAware leadership and staff to manage and respond to the criticism it received. This at times diverted staff attention away from other priorities, and also affected wellbeing and energy levels for GambleAware's staff who demonstrated a deep care for and understanding of those facing gambling harm.

4.3 Preparing for transition to statutory commissioning

As responsibility for gambling harm commissioning transfers to statutory bodies, GambleAware has drawn on its unique role as both a strategic commissioner and system convenor to steward the system, seeking to provide essential stability at a time of significant change and uncertainty. The new statutory commissioning model has been established as three distinct arms: treatment, prevention, and research, each overseen by separate bodies⁵⁶. While this new structure embeds gambling harm reduction within statutory health frameworks, the transition poses risks.

⁵⁶ Statutory levy funding will be distributed for the purposes of research, prevention, and treatment under the strategic direction of the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments, with each strand having an identified commissioning lead(s).

Primarily there is a concern among stakeholders that the three separate arms will create fragmentation, losing the joined-up approach built over 20+ years under GambleAware's leadership, and the valuable knowledge and collaboration networks that have been established. As the system transitions, concerns about the potential loss of institutional knowledge and sectoral progress are rising. Alongside this, there is a concern that differences in local capacity could mean that the quality of services varies from place to place. Without deliberate action, these risks could erode progress made in prevention, early intervention, and equity of response.

GambleAware has prioritised system stability as a central objective of its October 2024–March 2026 Strategic Plan⁵⁷. This includes launching a third round of its System Stabilisation Fund to protect third-sector organisations whose funding has been disrupted; maintaining strategic leadership of the NGSN to ensure continuity of service quality; and continuing to embed lived experience across all areas of its work. Alongside this, GambleAware has implemented an Asset Transfer Plan and a structured legacy programme to preserve key assets, knowledge, data, and learning, and has actively shared insights, research, and good practice across the system. Through focused and sustained engagement with government and future system commissioners, GambleAware has consistently sought to align transition planning, advocate for clarity on timelines and funding, highlight areas of risk and interdependency, and reduce uncertainty for providers, ultimately preparing the sector for what comes next.

⁵⁷ GambleAware's October 2024 – March 2026 Strategic Plan, [summary document](#)

Lessons learnt

As GambleAware prepares to conclude more than two decades of leadership in the gambling harms sector, it leaves behind a rich body of experience that offers valuable guidance for the new statutory system, the wider public health landscape, and system building in complex settings.

The organisation operated in a uniquely complex environment, one defined by evolving public health understanding, intense scrutiny, and the absence of statutory infrastructure. This context required GambleAware to innovate, adapt, and build systems in real time, often without precedent. The lessons emerging from this period are therefore not simply reflections on organisational practice; they are insights into what it takes to build a coherent, evidence-led, person-centred system in a field where stigma, fragmentation, and contested narratives have historically impeded progress.



Values based approaches are transformative

Anchoring commissioning and delivery in a clear focus on public benefit, equity, and collaboration enabled GambleAware to bring greater coherence to a previously fragmented landscape. This values-led approach was not abstract; it shaped how the system was designed and stewarded in practice. It included:

- **Setting shared outcomes and quality standards across providers**, helping move the system away from isolated activity towards a more coherent national response.
- **Investing in third-sector capacity through multi-year, trust-based funding**, recognising that system stability and quality depend on the strength and sustainability of the organisations delivering services.
- **Convening stakeholders around evidence and lived experience**, creating shared understanding and integration in a field where alignment could not be assumed.

Lesson: Future commissioners should adopt these principles to ensure services remain person-centred and adaptive.



Independence is essential for credibility

Operating under sustained scrutiny taught GambleAware that independence was not simply desirable but essential to its credibility and ability to act. Perceptions of industry influence — regardless of their accuracy — had real operational consequences, including limiting partnerships with statutory bodies and the organisation's room to manoeuvre.

In this context, independence was not something that could be assumed or asserted. It had to be demonstrated continually through transparent governance, evidence-informed decision-making, and a consistent focus on public benefit. This included taking positions that were not always welcomed, such as challenging the impact of heavy marketing and normalised messaging by gambling operators, and advocating for a public health approach grounded in prevention and harm reduction.

For GambleAware, independence was inseparable from its legitimacy to lead a system in the absence of statutory authority. Establishing and maintaining that legitimacy required restraint as well as action - including careful choices about when to respond publicly to criticism and when to prioritise delivery and system development instead.

Key insights include:

- **Independence underpins credibility**, which in turn enables ambition and system leadership in contested spaces.
- **Convening stakeholders around shared evidence, learning, and values** can help build credibility where formal authority is absent.
- **Both structural safeguards** (such as governance arrangements and transparent funding models) **and cultural safeguards** (including values-led, evidence-informed decision-making) are necessary to sustain independence over time.

Lesson: Organisations working in similar contested spaces should embed independence as a core principle, especially in governance to protect credibility.



Integration is a cornerstone of system coherence

GambleAware learned that integration across prevention, treatment, and research does not happen naturally - it must be deliberately designed, resourced, and sustained. By holding prevention, treatment, and research together at a strategic level, GambleAware was able to reduce fragmentation and build a more coherent national response to gambling harms.

This integrated approach delivered tangible system benefits, including:

- **More consistent pathways and quality expectations across services**, helping to reduce variation and improve equity.
- **More seamless referral routes and earlier intervention**, enabling continuity of support across services and improving access and outcomes for people affected by gambling harms.
- **A more coherent system-wide perspective to inform policy discussions**, grounded in aligned evidence from prevention, treatment, and research.

Over time, GambleAware learned that maintaining integration required ongoing coordination, convening, and system stewardship. As the system transitions to a statutory model with separate commissioning arrangements for prevention, treatment, and research, this experience highlights the risk of fragmentation if strategic links are not actively maintained.

Lesson: System coherence depends on deliberate integration across prevention, treatment, and research; without it, fragmentation can quickly undermine quality, access, and impact.



Lived experience leadership should be a core principle of system design

GambleAware's experience demonstrated that co-production with people who have lived experience can meaningfully strengthen system relevance, trust, and accessibility - but only when lived experience leadership is embedded as part of system design rather than treated as an optional addition.

By formally integrating lived experience into governance structures such as the Lived Experience Council, shaping campaigns, and influencing commissioning decisions, GambleAware moved beyond consultation towards shared influence. This helped ensure that decisions reflected the realities of harm, reduced barriers to access, and challenged assumptions.

Over time, GambleAware learned that effective lived experience leadership requires structure, support, and investment. Without these, co-production risks becoming tokenistic or placing undue burden on individuals. Investing in independent infrastructure, including the Gambling Lived Experience Network (GLEN), was therefore critical to sustaining lived experience leadership beyond the lifetime of the organisation itself.

Key insights include:

- **Formalising lived experience roles within governance and decision-making** to ensure influence is meaningful rather than symbolic.
- **Safeguarding wellbeing and avoiding tokenism** through clear roles, appropriate support, and fair remuneration.
- **Investing in independent lived experience infrastructure**, such as GLEN, to secure a durable and credible voice that can endure beyond individual organisations.

Lesson: Lived experience leadership strengthens systems when power, influence, and resources are shared - not when voices are merely heard.



Adaptability and organisational resilience are foundations for growth

GambleAware's evolution from a small charity to a national strategic commissioner highlighted the importance - and difficulty - of building organisational structures and culture that can adapt as remit, scale, and responsibility change. Growth was not linear or incremental; it was often rapid and externally driven, placing pressure on systems, roles, and ways of working.

Over time, GambleAware learned that resilience is not simply about absorbing growth, but about continually realigning organisational design, governance, and culture with an evolving role. Periods of accelerated growth exposed tensions between ambition and capacity, requiring ongoing adjustment to maintain strategic coherence and operational clarity.

Key insights include:

- **Align organisational design, governance, and culture with an evolving remit**, ensures clarity of roles, accountability, and strategic focus as responsibilities expand.
- **Invest deliberately in staff wellbeing and capability** during periods of rapid growth, recognising the cumulative strain created by pace, scrutiny, and change.
- **Embed systems for continuous learning and improvement**, enabling adaptation in response to emerging evidence, needs, and system expectations.

Lesson: Sustainable growth depends as much on organisational resilience and adaptability as it does on ambition.

Conclusion

As the sector shifts, GambleAware's legacy is clear: it built a sector rooted in collaboration, expertise, and innovation.

GambleAware helped transform Great Britain's response to gambling harms from a fragmented, treatment-focused landscape to a coordinated system integrating prevention, early intervention, and treatment, supported by robust evidence and lived experience leadership. It built the sector with a strong basis of expertise, skill, and experience in gambling harm reduction by working closely with statutory and third-sector partners, implementing whole-system approaches, introducing strategic commissioning models, setting national standards, and positioning gambling harms as a public health issue.

GambleAware's story offers a powerful blueprint for system building in complex, contested spaces: align ambition with values, commission strategically and convene diverse actors around shared evidence and purpose. If future commissioners adopt these principles the gambling harms system can not only sustain but strengthen the progress made, delivering equitable, high-quality support for people and communities facing gambling harm across Great Britain.



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