New Digital Tool to Support Gamblers Experiencing Harm

Monday 17 February, 2020

Leading national gambling support charity GamCare has launched an online course for people concerned about their gambling behaviour. The new ***GameChange*** course, commissioned by GambleAware, is based on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and participants are supported by regular contact with a GamCare therapist.

GamCare has seen considerable interest since soft launching the software, from people who are generally not accessing other forms of support or treatment. ***GameChange*** allows people to access support from wherever is convenient, working at their own pace to change their relationship with gambling. The course has been designed by Swedish responsible gambling software company Sustainable Interaction, who previously developed the GamTest screening assessment incorporated into the GamCare website, and has been adapted for UK clients by GamCare.

GamCare operates the National Gambling Helpline (Freephone and live chat) to provide information, advice and support to those affected by gambling problems, as well as providing a range of face-to-face, online and telephone treatment services for gamblers and their loved ones. The charity is innovating in order to provide a greater choice of services for people who may not engage with existing treatment programmes.

The UK Gambling Commission estimates that around 340,000 people may already experience harm because of their gambling in Great Britain, while up to 2 million more could be at risk of developing problems with gambling[1]. At present, around 10,000 people a year access the help and support offered by GamCare and other organisations commissioned by GambleAware to provide support and treatment services across England, Scotland and Wales, plus around 30,000 people access the National Gambling Helpline.

Anna Hemmings, CEO at GamCare, says: *"There may be a variety of reasons why more traditional treatment services may not suit everyone – time pressures and other responsibilities, mobility or communication issues, or perhaps feeling more comfortable accessing online services.*

GamCare aims to provide a range of accessible, expert support so that we can provide the right help at the right time to prevent issues from escalating, and our new ***GameChange*** *course is an integral part of our continually developing digital offer."*

The course is designed to be completed over eight weeks. Modules have been designed to be completed in the client's own time, with a check-in with a GamCare therapist over the phone when each module is completed.

Helen Garratt, Director of Clinical Services at GamCare, says: *"Gambling is sometimes described as a 'hidden addiction', as it can be hard to spot a problem developing and many people find themselves becoming isolated from the people around them. The chances of recovery are good with help and support in place, and our new course is designed to easily fit into our client's lives so that they can successfully change their relationship with gambling and make positive choices for their future."*

Christofer Hagstedt from Sustainable Interaction says: *"GamCare has implemented an end-to-end digital approach to provide interventions and treatment to at-risk players and those experiencing harm, using the products that we at Sustainable Interaction supply. Seeing our self-assessment test, GamTest, our micro interventions and our CCBT treatment program all implemented as a digital pathway to provide the best possible help is really a fantastic step."*

John McCracken, Director of Commissioning at GambleAware, says: "*As part of our ongoing work to expand the range of treatment options offered by the National Gambling Treatment Service, we are pleased to have commissioned this vital new service, which is designed to meet the needs of people who prefer to access help online. It is a cost effective, accessible and sustainable way of helping those who experience gambling harms, which fits with the direction of travel in mental health treatment more widely and has a good evidence base internationally. Through robust evaluation of* ***GameChange*** *we will begin to establish an evidence-base here in Britain around digital interventions to address gambling harms.*"

GameChange is available online now for residents in Great Britain via https://www.gamcare.org.uk/self-help/gamechange/

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GamCare – Working to minimise gambling-related harm

- GamCare operates the National Gambling Helpline on Freephone 0808 8020 133 or via web chat at www.gamcare.org.uk, providing information, advice and support for anyone affected by problem gambling, funded by GambleAware. Advisers are available 24/7, every day of the year.
- GamCare also provides a range of free treatment (face to face, online or over the phone) for anyone affected by problem gambling across England, Scotland and Wales, funded by GambleAware, as well as Forum and daily chatrooms so that people can speak to others experiencing similar issues and seek support. Find out more at www.gamcare.org.uk
- GamCare's organisational strategy is available to download at www.gamcare.org.uk/publications, along with their latest Annual Review and Statistics.
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Sustainable Interaction

Sustainable Interaction has been producing and developing online training, treatment programmes and diagnostic tools for both national and international customers since 2003. Their main fields are responsible gambling and online treatment, where their strength is connecting research, psychology and technology.

For more information please see https://www.sustainableinteraction.se/

***GambleAware*:**

- GambleAware is an independent charity (Charity No. England & Wales 1093910, Scotland SC049433) that champions a public health approach to preventing gambling harms – see http://about.gambleaware.org/

- GambleAware is a commissioner of integrated prevention, education and treatment services on a national scale, with over £40 million of grant funding under active management. In partnership with gambling treatment providers, GambleAware has spent several years methodically building structures for commissioning a coherent system of brief intervention and treatment services, with clearly defined care pathways and established referral routes to and from the NHS – a National Gambling Treatment Service.

- The National Gambling Treatment Service brings together a National Gambling Helpline and a network of locally-based providers across Great Britain that works with partner agencies and people with lived experience to design and deliver a system, which meets the needs of individuals. This system delivers a range of treatment services, including brief intervention, counselling (delivered either face-to-face or online), residential programmes and psychiatrist-led care.

- In the 12 months to 31 March 2019, provisional figures show that the National Gambling Treatment Service treated 10,000 people and this is projected to rise to 24,000 people a year by 2021. Helpline activity is currently running at about 30,000 calls and on-line chats per annum. GambleAware also runs the website BeGambleAware.org which helps 4.2 million visitors a year, and signposts to a wide range of support services.

- GambleAware produces public health campaigns including **Bet Regret**. A Safer Gambling Board, including representatives from Public Health England, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and GambleAware, is responsible for the design and delivery of a campaign based on best practice in public health education. The Bet Regret campaign is being funded through specific, additional donations to the charity, in line with a commitment given to the government by the broadcasting, advertising and gambling industries.

See https://about.gambleaware.org/prevention/safer-gambling-campaign/.

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