



Impacts of GamCare's Women's Programme Year Two

Impacts of GamCare's Women's Programme

GamCare is the leading UK provider of free information, advice and support for anyone harmed by gambling.

This report shares the Women's Programme evaluation findings for year two, carried out by inFocus. This report describes how the programme is reducing the gambling-related harm experienced by women.

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Acknowledgements

We are grateful to inFocus Consulting for their evaluation report work. We also thank our partners and women with lived experience for sharing information as part of the evaluation. Any unattributed quotes in this report are taken from the Evaluation Report of the GamCare Women's Programme, Year 2, produced by inFocus Consulting.



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Foreword

GamCare is the leading UK charity working to minimise gambling-related harm. We operate the National Gambling Helpline and provide a range of support and treatment for anyone affected by gambling across Great Britain, as well as targeted education and outreach programmes, like the Women's Programme, to reduce risks for those who may be vulnerable to harm.

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As the Women's Programme entered its second year, we have continued to work towards reducing the gambling-related harm experienced by women, who represent almost half of the total number of people who gamble in the UK. During the last year, we have worked against the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic, to provide services for our beneficiaries. Throughout this period, our online support services were particularly popular, offering a lifeline for those unable to provide a confidential space to speak during lockdown. Our outreach and training moved swiftly online, making it more accessible than ever.

This year, we have delivered training to 918 organisations across the UK. After the training, 97% of professionals trained in year 2 had an understanding of how problem gambling impacts women they work with, with 96% of professionals reporting improved confidence in their ability to signpost and refer women to gambling support services following the training.

Each year at least 30% of callers to the National Gambling Helpline are women, half of whom call about their own gambling and half about someone else's. One fifth of all clients in GamCare's treatment services are women. Women can be disproportionately affected by gambling-related harms, experiencing financial, relationship and mental health issues. Evidence also suggests that for women, emotional distress, trauma, domestic abuse or other pressures can make them vulnerable to developing gambling problems.

Our team of training and engagement leads bring a range of skills and experience from multiple sectors, including health and social care, mental health, domestic abuse and education. This report details what we've achieved in the second year of the programme and sets out how we plan to build on these successes in the coming year.

Marina Smith

Programme Manager, Women's Programme



Results at a Glance



More confidence talking about gambling harms.

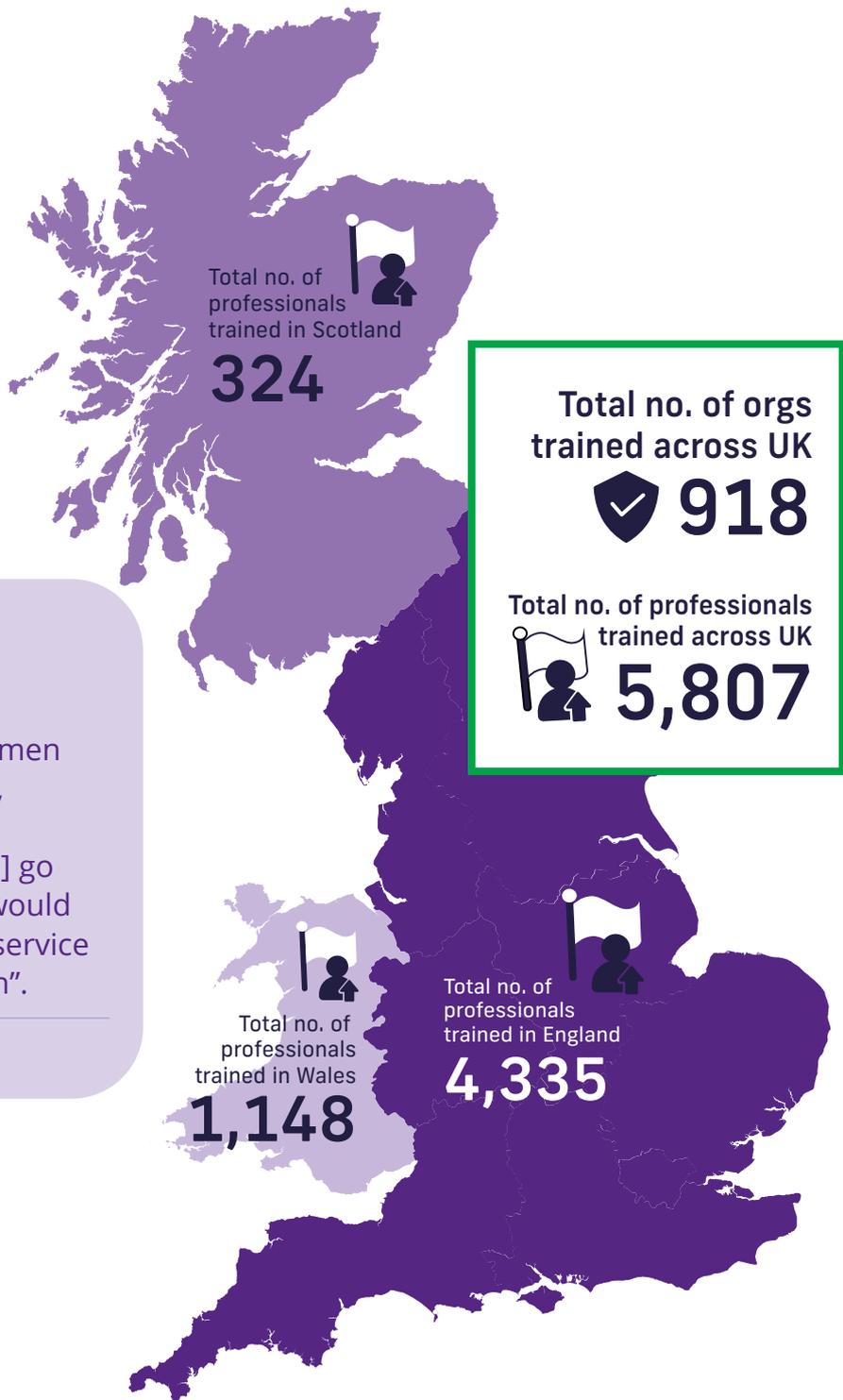
All 36 professionals consulted for the evaluation reported **more confidence to talk about gambling and gambling-related harms** since the training.

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“I have referred more women as a result of the training, basically, because I [am] aware now that they [can] go somewhere where they would really be supported... , a service [that] I have confidence in”.

TRAINING PARTICIPANT





increased ability to signpost and refer women.

96% of professionals trained in Y2 (443 out of 463) reported improved confidence in their ability to signpost and refer women to gambling support services.



Identified women in need of gambling-related support.

Over a third of professionals consulted for the evaluation (13 out of 33) had identified women in need of gambling-related support since the training.



Voices of 99 women

Impacted by gambling-related harm heard.

99 women impacted by gambling-related harms shared their experience through the lived experience survey 2020-2021.



Understand how problem gambling impacts women we work with

After the training, 97% of professionals trained in Y2 (448 out of 463) had an understanding of how problem gambling impacts the women they work with.



“

We now use the starter question at initial assessment when people come into service, and it is now mandatory for staff to do the training.”

TRAINING PARTICIPANT

Introduction

GamCare and the women's Programme.

GamCare is the leading UK charity working to minimise gambling-related harm.

Our Women's Programme exists to reduce the gambling-related harm experienced by women.

Key Facts on Women and Gambling-Related Harms

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- Last year, 40% of women had participated in a gambling activity, compared with 45% of men¹.
- Public Health England estimates that 0.5% of the UK population experience problem gambling. Additionally, it is estimated that a further 3.8% of the population are 'at-risk' gamblers.
- In the UK, in excess of 2.5 million family members, friends and other loved ones may be harmed by problematic gambling behaviour. (Banks et al, 2018, p.13)
- We estimate that only around 1% of women who are experiencing gambling-related harm receive help and support.

Women can be disproportionately affected by gambling-related harms because they typically have less disposable income and can feel the financial impacts of gambling losses more quickly. In addition, women are an underrepresented group in gambling support services.

Scope of this Report

This report will cover:

- How we are creating a network of organisations
- How we are raising awareness about gambling-related harms for women
- How we are identifying women in need of support
- How we are referring women to appropriate services
- How we are improving treatment and support
- How we are improving the evidence base on what works to support women affected by gambling-related harm.

¹ <https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/publication/year-to-december-2020>

Creating a Network of Organisations

GamCare has trained a total of 5,807 professionals from 918 organisations through the second year of the Women’s Programme. On average, GamCare trains 6 staff from each organisation that has participated in the training.

Country	Professionals Trained in Year 2	Organisations Trained in Year 2
England	4,335	677
Scotland	324	45
Wales	1,148	196
Total	5,807	918

The Women’s Programme training quickly moved online at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which served to further increase the programme’s reach.

Many women have benefitted from the improved access to GamCare treatment and support services, as a consequence of the broad reach of the Women’s Programme training. This includes staff of organisations serving mental health and wellbeing needs, such as Mind, professionals working in Local Authorities and those working in housing support services (please see the infographic on the following page).

What’s Next?

In future, we aim to train professionals from organisations that work in some currently underrepresented sectors, such as social care and youth services, because these organisations may have closer proximity to women who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing gambling-related harms. To achieve this, we are developing regional engagement and recruitment strategies to foster relationships with organisations where there are gaps in the programme’s reach.

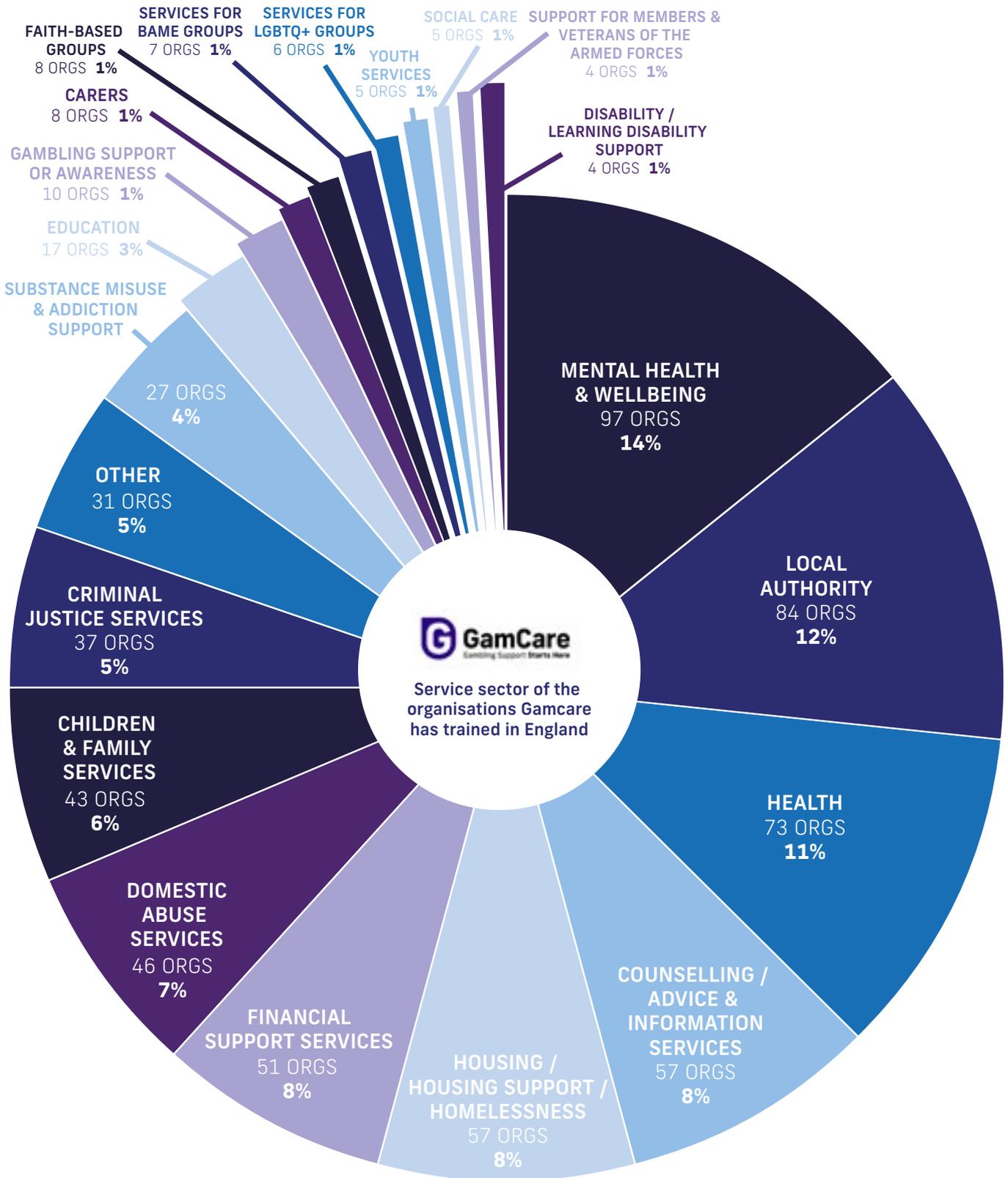
We also plan to narrow the breadth of different organisations engaged in the programme but, for those targeted, we will deepen the level of interaction we have, thus increasing the likelihood of sustained impact. To do this, we will first target organisations that have already participated in the training and are known to interact more frequently with women experiencing gambling-related harm.

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“I felt more confident in explaining what services there are out there. Because I have been in touch with GamCare, I felt more confident in signposting my mothers to make sure... that they will be taken care of.”

TRAINING PARTICIPANT

UK SERVICE SECTORS OF THE ORGANISATIONS TRAINED BY GAMCARE WOMEN'S PROGRAMME IN YEAR 2



Raising Awareness and Educating

Following the programme's training, **100%** of respondents reported an **increase in confidence** speaking to women about gambling (36 out of 36 respondents).

In addition, the year two training was even more effective than year one at improving the professionals' understanding of the impact that problem gambling has on women:

85% of professionals improved their understanding of how problem gambling impacts the women they work with after participating in the year two training, compared with **60%** of professionals that participated in the year one training.

After the training, almost **ALL** respondents (**97%**) stated that they now have an understanding of how problem gambling impacts the women they work with (449 out of 563 respondents).

Many of those interviewed felt that whilst the general public may be a little more aware of the general gambling support services, most are unlikely to be any more aware of services specifically for women.

What's Next?

To increase awareness of gambling support services for women and help strengthen information and knowledge exchange in this area, we intend to build an **online learning community**.

This will play an important role in bringing together key people and organisations to improve the quality of the Women's Programme, treatment services and wider service provisions for women affected by gambling-related harms. It will also serve to increase awareness and the general evidence base to help engage policy makers and the gambling industry around issues going forwards.

Learning community benefits:

Build knowledge and understanding across the community of different organisations' work. To avoid 'reinventing the wheel'

Increase the credibility of this field of common interest and scale-up efforts to support women affected by gambling and attract new partners

Improve women's service quality across the community, through the identification and integration of good practice into service design

Coordinate and improve access to the evidence base for both GamCare staff and the community and promote more joined-up work

Identifying Women in Need of Support

Before the training, 81% of professionals trained in year two (623 out of 770) successfully identified all of the risk factors for problem gambling. This increased to 87% (403 out of 463) following the training.

The evaluation also found evidence of increased identification by professionals of women in need of support (please see graph below) by asking the following 'starter / trigger question': "Has your gambling or the gambling of someone close to you had a negative effect on your life? A negative effect might include financial problems, relationship problems or poor health including mental health issues like stress, anxiety or depression".

39% of professionals consulted (13 out of 33) stated that they had asked the starter question to at least one of their service users.

What's Next?

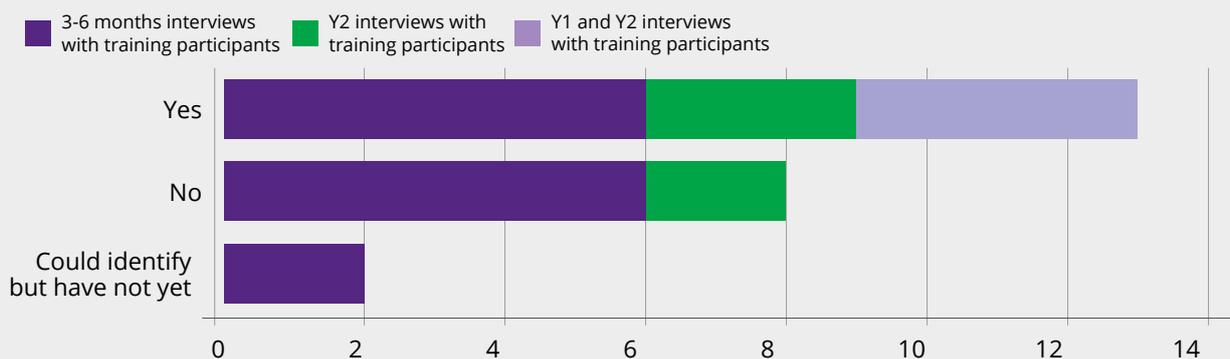
Whilst a good start has been made, we will further target our training offer to focus on enabling professionals to **more effectively identify** women at risk of gambling-related harms. We also intend to incorporate strategies that professionals can use to identify and deal with 'at risk' women who may be in denial about the problem.

To raise awareness amongst healthcare professionals, we intend to **build stronger relationships with departments of the NHS and other healthcare service providers**. We hope this will encourage more routine use of the starter / trigger question with patients at greater risk of being impacted by gambling-related harm, and the subsequent signposting of those individuals to relevant gambling support services in their area.

Additionally, we want those who participate in the training to pass their acquired learning on, so we also intend to consider developing a **trainer of trainer model** going forwards, to support trained professionals to pass information on to others within their organisations.

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The extent to which the professionals trained have identified more women in need of support / impacted by gambling-related harm



Referring Women to Appropriate Services

GamCare Women's Programme training is improving professionals' confidence to signpost and refer women to gambling support services. A strong majority of professionals trained in both year one and year two (97% and 96% respectively) stated that they felt confident in their ability to signpost and refer women to gambling support services following the training.

There is evidence that some women impacted by gambling-related harm are now experiencing greater access to gambling support and treatment services. Of the 13 professionals consulted as part of the year two evaluation who reported that they had identified women in need of support following the training, 10 went on to refer these individuals for expert support and / or treatment services.

A 6% increase in the number of women accessing support for gambling has been reported in the UK over the last year² and GamCare Women's Programme is likely to have positively contributed to this change (in concert with other actors' efforts and factors).

What's Next?

We intend to implement more structured, long-term follow-up with training participants to ask about the impact of the training, such as whether they now use the starter question and, if not, why not.

To increase access to support, we have supported the development of a **women's only chat room** and a **women's only group**. The evaluation

recommended that we analyse the value of these support services, with a view to further scaling-up these initiatives to make them more accessible and reach more women, if it appears cost effective to do so.



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TRAINING PARTICIPANT

² <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/oct/29/only-3-of-uk-problem-gamblers-get-proper-help-says-study>, accessed on 09/01/2021

Improving Treatment and Support

Only 3% of problem gamblers received treatment in the UK over the last year, 25% of whom were women (National Gambling Treatment Service).

Some groups of women are more likely to seek support for their harmful gambling than others. Younger women (18 – 24) are more likely to seek treatment compared with those in an older age group. In addition, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups of women are more likely to access support compared to white women, but are also susceptible to experience increased levels of harm from problem gambling.

There are many reasons why women may not access support for gambling-related harm. These include feelings of stigma or shame, denial, being in an abusive relationship, lack of access to support, the perception that gambling is a male problem and lack of awareness by healthcare professionals.

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“I think it’s just getting out there in the public. When we look at mental health, it’s screamed about everywhere, but nobody sort of says, sometimes, the causation of these mental health problems that might be gambling.”

TRAINING PARTICIPANT

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“Gambling is not considered a mental health issue. I have only ever received two referrals from GPs.”

GAMCARE STAFF MEMBER

COVID-19 moved the majority of the Women’s Programme training sessions online. This resulted in increasing the programme’s reach, as the online training sessions were subsequently open to all professionals from organisations within a particular region. However, one challenge with online delivery is noted below:

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“Over lockdown, the lack of privacy online has become an issue. People need a physical space in the house to call the helpline, where the kids or husband won’t barge in.”

GAMCARE STAFF MEMBER

Half of the evaluation survey respondents (8 out of 16) stated that they had employed some solutions to overcome barriers to access support. Many of these strategies concerned communications and awareness-raising regarding gambling-related harms for women.

The year two evaluation found that as a consequence of the Women's Programme, some service sectors had now begun to proactively review and develop their engagement processes to respond better to the needs of women experiencing gambling-related harm. Examples included amending the questions asked to service users, improving individual communication around gambling-related harms and sharing GamCare leaflets with clients and members of their team.

20% of professionals consulted (7 out of 35) stated that they had successfully adapted and shaped their services internally to better meet the needs of women following the training and 43% (15 out of 35) stated that they had 'partially' adapted and shape their services to better meet the needs of women.

What's Next?

GamCare Women's Programme year two evaluation recommended that we enhance our understanding of what barriers trained professionals still face in successfully identifying

women in need of support or impacted by gambling-related harm. The training content could then be refreshed to address these barriers.

To address the specific barrier of the lack of awareness of healthcare professionals, the evaluation recommended focusing upon building stronger relationships with departments within the NHS and other healthcare service providers.

The year two evaluation also recommended that GamCare conducts further research to better understand if the training has been negatively impacted in any ways through online delivery mechanism. If it has, we will develop strategies to further improve the online training approach, given the likely ongoing disruptions caused by COVID-19.

A number of other suggestions emerged from the evaluation to improve treatment and support of women affected by gambling-related harms:

- Produce more awareness raising pieces, such as through TV news, radio, adverts and talks
- Elicit the support of politicians and public figures to help raise awareness of key messages
- Increase engagement with the gambling industry to direct those who may be experiencing gambling-related harms to our services, and
- Increase the reach of treatment and support services to more underserved groups.

Improving the Evidence Base

Our GamCare Women's programme is directly responding to the limited research in the area of how women experience gambling-related harm. The Year 2 evaluation considers that through the programme, we have successfully established an evidence base around women and their experience of gambling-related harm, for example, by collecting information from women as part of the lived experience surveys.

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As a result, the programme has also made some good progress towards increasing the potential for:

- Evidence-led policy making
- Understanding where to direct future research projects
- Producing information to guide the development of safer play strategies and customer interaction within the gambling industry.

This was achieved by gaining feedback from hundreds of professionals who have completed the training, soliciting insights from women with lived experience and commissioning an evaluation of the programme.

What's Next?

The next step is to consider how the insights that have already been generated and will continue to be generated in future could be better fed into research-policy uptake processes in order to increase our impact in the UK.

For further details on the findings, conclusions and recommendations from the Year 2 evaluation, the full evaluation report can be downloaded from our website here: www.gamcare.org.uk/womensprogrammeevalreport

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TRAINING PARTICIPANT

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National Gambling Helpline

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