# The Gambling Commission and the National Strategy

The National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harms was launched in April 2019 and ran until April 2022. This document is archived content which appeared in the Reducing Gambling Harms hub, and refers to activity to reduce gambling harms during that time.

**All links on these pages open in a new tab.**

The National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harms was launched in April 2019, the result of collaboration between the Gambling Commission and a wide range of partners to develop the Strategy.

The aim of the National Strategy is to go further and faster to reduce gambling harms. It is an important tool for collaboration and a wide range of organisations have an important role to play.

In Scotland and Wales, there are Strategy Implementation Groups which bring regulators, public health and other public sector bodies together to collaborate on reducing harms. You can view more information on the [Strategy Implementation Group for Wales](https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/about-us/transparency/strategy-implementation-group-sig) and the [Strategy Implementation Group for Scotland](https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/about-us/transparency/strategy-implementation-group-sig).

The Commission maintains an actions map to which partner organisations share their activity – this is an important tool for the Strategy Implementation Groups and all stakeholders to identify gaps and opportunities, and to disseminate research, evaluation findings and lessons learned.

In addition, the Commission’s advisors on safer gambling, the [Advisory Board for Safer Gambling (ABSG)](https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/absg) report on progress being made across the Strategy on an annual basis. View the [most up to date progress report](https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/absg).

This guide will provide more information on the Gambling Commission’s role and priority actions to reduce gambling harms.

## **How the Gambling Commission works to reduce gambling harm**

As a collaboration partner, the Gambling Commission delivers its role in a number of ways:

* the first and most significant role is to uphold the licensing objective to protect children and vulnerable people from being harmed by gambling, through effective regulation of the gambling industry
* we provide advice to Government on participation and prevalence of gambling and problem gambling, and the regulation of the gambling industry
* we advise local authorities on their dual regulation of premises-based gambling
* we approve destinations of regulatory settlements, which may result from our enforcement activity – these are payments in lieu of financial penalties for socially responsible purposes. These projects accelerate work to support the National Strategy
* we collaborate to drive strategic coordination and oversight to reduce gambling harms, and to share widely and communicate progress and actions delivered by partners involved.

## **Key facts**

More than 400 individual actions have been or are being delivered by stakeholders by more than 40 lead stakeholders.

Since March 2019, more than £32m of regulatory settlements has been matched to 43 pilots and projects to accelerate the National Strategy and increase our collective understanding about what works to reduce gambling harms. Regulatory settlements may arise as a result of enforcement activity and are payments in lieu of a financial penalty. They are paid to socially responsible purposes.

Since January 2020, gambling operators have been required to make their annual financial contribution to fund research, prevention and treatment (RET) to organisations approved by the Commission, and there are currently 21 organisations eligible to receive this funding. RET data will be published on our website.

## **The Commission’s actions to reduce gambling harms**

In delivering its regulatory role in the two years since Strategy’s launch, the Commission has made gambling safer through a range of preventive and reactive measures. These contribute to both the prevention and education strategic priority as well as the ‘support’ part of the treatment and support strategic priority. These include:

* strengthened online age verification to prevent children gambling online
* banned credit cards for online gambling
* made online games safer through updated and enhance technical standards
* banned reverse withdrawals
* strengthened rules on so-called VIP schemes
* made the GAMSTOP national self-exclusion scheme mandatory for all online gambling
* ensured that voluntary funding to support research, prevention and treatment of gambling harms is targeted only to eligible bodies.

In collaboration with the gambling industry and the ASA we have also issued new rules on the use of ad-tech and protecting vulnerable consumers. The Commission has strengthened its engagement with people with lived experience, both directly through our Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP), and with a range of bodies providing a voice to those with lived experience and indeed those who place lived experience at the heart of delivery of projects to reduce harms.

This work sits alongside the actions delivered by stakeholders, and we have continued to work closely with the many organisations working to reduce gambling harms to update the [map of implementation actions](https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/about-us/guide/action-map) every six months.

There are some areas where work is ongoing or progress may have been slow. The Covid-19 pandemic has placed and continues to place significant pressures on all partners involved, from local governments via public health teams through to front line services and delivery, although restrictions on how we interact have also led to more innovation in service delivery, stakeholder engagement and widened collaboration.

Treatment sits outside the Commission’s remit, although we have been able to support the treatment and support aims of the National Strategy through collaboration on the role of the industry in signposting to treatment and in offering support tools such as self-exclusion. We also work with treatment partners on research, application of data in building our understanding of gambling harms.

## **How the Commission will work to reduce gambling harms in 2021 to 2022**

The National Strategy was intended to run to 2022, and while much progress has been made so far, we consider that the two strategic priorities of prevention and education and treatment and support, and the four enablers remain valid and relevant. We will therefore contribute to and support collaboration beyond this original timeframe.

We will continue to deliver our regulatory remit to prevent harm to children and vulnerable people. Reflecting our corporate strategy and business plan, this year we will:

* formally advise Government on the Review of the Gambling Act 2005, which is a significant and welcome opportunity to support Government in determining the longer-term strategic landscape for the regulation of gambling and supporting the licensing objectives
* continue our programme of work to strengthen customer interaction and operator identification of customers who may be in a vulnerable position. This will tackle the serious failings we continue to see in our casework in relation to three key risks – binge gambling, significant unaffordable losses over time and customers who are in a financial or otherwise vulnerable situation
* this year we will also pilot a new approach to collecting data on gambling harms, following our consultation on methodologies for assessing participation and prevalence methodologies
* this year and beyond we will continue to support the Strategy’s aims by sharing progress and collaborating with partners to keep moving forward on cross cutting issues such as measuring success and evaluating impact, greater understanding of gambling harms and piloting activity to identify what works.