

How CQC inspects gambling treatment services

For our assessments, we will use a bespoke [assessment framework](#) for gambling treatment and support services.

We can provide this information in different languages and formats if needed – please contact CQCgamblingwork@cqc.org.uk to request this service.

[The Gambling Commission](#) and [GambleAware](#) have commissioned the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to assess gambling treatment services delivered by your organisation and other members of the [National Gambling Support Network](#) (NGSN).

We have developed a bespoke assessment process for gambling treatment services, which is based on [CQC's regulatory methodology](#). This has been created with input from organisations that commission services, service providers including those across the NGSN, and people with lived experience of gambling harms.

Our inspectors for this programme are trained in the knowledge of gambling harms. They will use their professional judgement, supported by objective measures and evidence, to assess your service against the 5 key questions that we ask of all services that we inspect:

- Are they safe?
- Are they effective?
- Are they caring?
- Are they responsive to people's needs?
- Are they well-led?

Note: When assessing gambling treatment services, the safe key question will also directly relate to the requirements in NICE clinical guidelines and any contractual requirements for service providers.

Providing gambling treatment services is not a regulated activity under the Health and Social Care Act 2008. This means that, unlike most types of service that we regulate, we only have the legal powers to monitor and assess services in this programme of work. It also means we have no enforcement powers and we cannot register these service providers. This work is therefore delivered under paragraph 9 of Schedule 4 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008, where CQC is permitted to provide advice or assistance to another public authority.

However, we will report on the findings of our assessments, which includes highlighting good practice and making recommendations for improvement where necessary. If we find a significant concern, we will escalate this to GambleAware and the Gambling Commission.

Reports for the services we have assessed are available on the [GambleAware website](#).

Our service level agreement with GambleAware currently runs until 31 March 2026. We will assess these services during this time.

Our assessments

The Gambling Commission, GambleAware and CQC have agreed that all gambling treatment services will be assessed during a baseline period between April 2025 and March 2026.

To assess gambling treatment services, we will carry out comprehensive assessments. This involves looking at all aspects of support being delivered, and reporting under each of our 5 key questions – is the service safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led.

We carry out assessments through on-site visits or remotely, depending on the issues we need to review and the size and type of service you deliver. We will confirm this when we announce our assessment.

Before the assessment

Making contact with you

We require all service providers to identify a lead person and provide contact details for them. This is so we can talk to them about the assessment programme. We will contact this person before an assessment and for any other reason related to the programme or if we need information about your services. They will also need to tell us about any changes to the services you provide. You need to tell us if there are any changes to this role, for example the person's name or contact details, so we can contact you quickly when we need to.

We will allocate a CQC inspector to your organisation so that you know who to contact if you have any general queries about the assessment programme. You can contact CQC at any time to discuss the assessment programme by emailing

CQCgamblingwork@cqc.org.uk

Before we carry out our assessment, the inspector will:

- announce the assessment
- make any necessary logistical arrangements
- make sure that you are prepared for the assessment process.

The inspector will telephone you 10 working days before the planned date of our assessment to make sure you know the date, and to discuss how we will carry out the assessment.

During the initial call, the inspector will confirm:

- that your organisation is providing the service we have told you we plan to assess
- that the gambling treatment service is open/operating on the planned day of the assessment, and that staff and service users will be available to speak with or meet inspectors
- email addresses of any key contacts at the service (including the service manager)
- practical arrangements for the visit such as an allocated space for the assessment team to work in, facilities available, and access to systems and documents.

The inspector will also:

- explain how we send the formal announcement letter to confirm our assessment
- explain what information we need you to send before the assessment and how to send it to us
- explain the assessment process
- agree a provisional assessment timetable
- discuss and agree arrangements to speak with managers and your staff

- explain about giving service users the opportunity to provide feedback to inspectors through the survey or interviews
- explain how we will engage with service users and ask you about any support they will need during the assessment, such as a quiet area to talk and how to arrange interpretation needs.

If the inspector needs to confirm the assessment plan or answer your questions about the process, they will arrange a follow-up call with you.

Provider Information Return

Before an assessment, we will ask you to complete a Provider Information Return (PIR). This helps us to understand more about the service you provide. The PIR form will ask you for information about:

- the services you provide
- external services that you liaise with
- staffing arrangements and staffing levels
- how many people use your service
- how you monitor the quality of the services you provide
- any adverse incidents and complaints
- feedback you have collected from service users
- policies and procedures.

This is not a full list, and we may ask for other information if we need it. You will have 5 working days to complete and respond to our request. We will tell you how and when to submit the information, and who to contact if you have any questions.

At any stage during the assessment process, inspectors may need to ask you for some additional specific information to clarify queries or strengthen the evidence they have collected. We will keep track of these extra requests to avoid duplication and to make sure that we only request information that we need, which is not available elsewhere.

Data sharing and processing agreement

As part of this baseline inspection activity, it is necessary for service providers, as Data Controllers, to share data with CQC. For the purposes of this agreement, both parties will be considered to be Data Controllers. A copy of the data sharing agreement is on the webpage and this will need to be completed before inspection activity commences.

Engaging with service users

We will use different ways to engage with service users to gather their views about your service. It's important that they can give feedback on their experiences.

Service user survey

We will develop a survey for service users to complete. We will give you guidance on how to share this with them.

When we receive responses, our inspectors will manage the information confidentially and we will use this feedback to help us to understand your service.

Speaking with service users

During on-site assessments, our inspectors will speak with service users who are willing to share information about their support. This will usually be an individual conversation in a private space, or with your staff present if requested.

We can also speak with service users on the telephone, or through online digital apps such as Microsoft Teams, during the assessment. This may be particularly useful for people who access support remotely.

During the assessment

Assessment framework

To direct the focus of our assessment, our teams will use a set of quality statements. These directly relate to the 5 key questions that we ask of all services we assess (are services safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led?)

For this programme of assessments, we will use a bespoke [assessment framework](#) for gambling treatment services. This has been produced in collaboration with commissioners and service providers.

The framework contains quality statements that are tailored and relevant to the services you provide, and questions (called prompts) that inspectors will consider as part of their assessment of services.

When preparing for the assessment, our teams will consider the information and data they gather, such as from the PIR and responses from the service user survey. This helps them to decide which of the prompts they will use to help them make judgements on the quality statements (see how we do this under [Making judgements](#)).

The assessment team

Each assessment will be led by a CQC gambling treatment services inspector. The inspector will be your direct point of contact throughout the assessment process. The size of your service will determine how long we spend visiting you, the number of inspectors on the team and who they are. For example, for larger services we may assess over 2 or more days. We'll confirm this information when we call you to announce the assessment.

Site visits

As part of the assessment, our team may visit your premises. If you offer remote services, we are able to provide access to one of our CQC offices or GambleAware offices for the purpose of the assessment. If the location is not suitable, we will make an alternative suitable arrangement. Our team will meet with the service manager, talk with staff and review systems, documents and records. We will try to make sure that our assessment visit does not affect the delivery of services to service users.

Introductory meeting

At the start of the visit, the assessment team will hold an introductory meeting with the service manager. This will introduce the assessment team and enable them to explain:

- the purpose and scope of the assessment
- how we will give feedback and/or escalate any concerns that we may identify
- how we will communicate our findings.

During this meeting you will have an opportunity to:

- include any staff you feel will contribute to the meeting
- tell us about the service, including the context in which it operates
- share any examples of notable or innovative practice

- tell us about any concerns or challenges for the service, and how you are addressing them.

We encourage you to be open and honest and it's helpful if the service manager can tell the inspector about any concerns or other relevant information that may affect the assessment as soon as possible.

Gathering information

During the on-site visit, the assessment team will:

- interview staff at all levels (including managers, support workers, therapists and any other relevant staff)
- speak with service users
- review a sample of cases
- review documentary evidence
- check accommodation (for residential services).

We expect you to support inspectors to complete these activities. This will include:

- arranging times for interviews
- facilitating interpreting services where needed
- ensuring that the staff and service users who wish to speak with inspectors during the assessment are available
- arranging for the assessment team to have access to necessary records and gambling treatment service accommodation or premises.

Feedback on the visit

At the end of the assessment, our assessment team will meet with the service manager, and any other members of staff who the manager has invited, to provide summary feedback. This usually includes:

- explaining our findings to date, including any issues that we need to escalate
- any plans for follow-up or additional site visits if necessary
- explaining how we make our assessments, including how we analyse any evidence after the assessment
- explaining the next steps, including the timeline for reporting
- answering your questions about the process.

We will confirm this feedback in writing shortly after our assessment, but if we find any significant concerns we will let you know immediately during our assessment.

We also have an agreed process to share any significant concerns with GambleAware.

Mental Capacity Act

If your service provides support for adults who have (or appear to have) difficulty making informed decisions about their care, treatment or support, you may need to refer to the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

The Mental Capacity Act helps to safeguard the rights of people aged 16 and over who lack (or may lack) mental capacity to make decisions. This may be because of a lifelong learning disability or a more recent short-term or long-term impairment resulting from injury or illness. This includes decisions about whether to consent to care or treatment.

If a person's capacity is (or is likely to be) impaired, staff must know how to ensure that decisions made on the person's behalf are in their best interests.

After the assessment

Your assessment report

After each assessment we produce a report about the service. This presents a summary of our findings and judgements. The report focuses on what our findings mean for people using your services. It gives details of our judgements on whether services are providing people with support that is safe, effective, caring, and responsive, and whether the service is well-led.

When we find examples of good practice during the assessment, we describe them in the report to support learning and improvements. Our reports will also identify any areas for improvement and may include associated recommendations.

Making judgements

Unlike the registered services that CQC regulates, we do not have the legal powers to **require** providers of gambling treatment services to make improvements.

However, the assessment team will make a judgement on whether your service is meeting expectations. This is based on our assessment of the evidence we gather against our quality statements during the site visit, from the PIR, and from what service users and other stakeholders tell us. Our judgements will also be influenced by any contractual requirements and clinical guidelines, which are cross-referenced to the quality statements within the assessment framework.

When making our judgements, we consider the weight of each piece of relevant evidence. In most cases, we aim to verify our evidence with other sources to support our findings. When we have conflicting evidence, we will consider its source, how robust it is, and which piece of evidence is the strongest. We may conclude that we need to gather additional evidence or get specialist advice to make a judgement.

When we identify areas for improvement, we will usually make improvement recommendations in our report.

If we identify serious concerns during the assessment, for example serious safeguarding or other safety concerns, we will let you know straight away and also share these concerns with GambleAware.

Quality checks

Before finalising our reports, we check the quality and consistency through agreed internal assurance processes to ensure that our judgements are consistent. This will include a peer and management review, and consideration at a quality panel of CQC managers.

Factual accuracy check

When we have completed and checked the quality of the draft assessment report, we will send you a copy to review. We will ask you to check the factual accuracy and completeness of the information that we have used to reach our judgements. The factual accuracy checking process allows you to tell us:

- where information is factually incorrect
- where our evidence in the report may be incomplete.

The factual accuracy process gives inspectors and providers the opportunity to ensure that they see and consider all relevant information that will form the basis of our judgements. The factual accuracy process does not deal with complaints about CQC or challenges to proposed recommendations.

We will send the draft report to you by email. Our email will include:

- a copy of the draft report
- a factual accuracy form for you to submit a response to us

- instructions about the deadline to send any comments.

Once you have received the email with the draft report, you have 10 working days from the date of the email to return the form with any comments. You are responsible for making sure that the factual accuracy of the draft report has been checked by the appropriate person and that any comments regarding the factual accuracy of the draft report have been approved and submitted.

The draft report includes the draft judgements. If the inspector corrects any factual details in the report or accepts any additional evidence, they will amend the draft report. They will determine whether this has an impact on a judgement and will explain any changes in writing.

If you do **not** wish to submit a response, please tell us immediately. We will then be able to finalise your report.

How we share assessment information

Once the factual accuracy of the assessment report has been agreed, we will email a copy of the final report to you. We will also email a copy to GambleAware who will determine how reports are published. We will not publish assessment reports for gambling treatment services on CQC's website or make them available to the public, as your services do not fall under the scope of regulation by CQC.

Our website will provide a link to GambleAware's website, where the reports will be hosted and published.

Independent report on the services provided to service users

In addition to service-level assessments, our agreement with GambleAware and the Gambling Commission requires us to publish a report on our initial findings from the assessment programme and through engaging with providers and other stakeholders.

When we have assessed all providers we will publish a thematic report on the themes we identified during our assessments. This will focus on the experiences of service users and include examples of good practice and details of any areas where improvements are needed.

Governance of the assessment programme

We will have regular meetings with GambleAware and the Gambling Commission to monitor how the assessment programme is being carried out.

Complaints about CQC

We aim to provide the best possible service, and we welcome your feedback to help us improve our services and ensure we are responding to your concerns as best we can.

If you would like to make complaint, you can read the information on our website:

[Complain about CQC.](#)

Assessment schedule for gambling treatment services

This schedule provides a guide to the timings of our activity during the assessment process.

Activity: We will telephone providers to announce our assessment.

Timescale: 10 working days before the assessment.

Activity: We will also send a letter to providers by email to confirm the assessment along with a provider information return (PIR) form.

Timescale: 10 working days before the assessment.

Your staff should use this period to return any requested information and offer service users an opportunity to give feedback through the service user survey.

Activity: We carry out the on-site or remote assessment of gambling treatment services.

Timescale: The duration of the assessment will depend on the size and geographical spread of your service(s). We will confirm this when we telephone you to announce the assessment.

Activity: The provider submits any additional information (if we ask for it).

Timescale: Up to 7 working days after the assessment.

During this time, we write a draft assessment report and complete internal quality assurance processes, including review by an independent panel.

Activity: We send the draft assessment report to the provider by email to check the factual accuracy.

Timescale: On or around 20 working days after the end of the on-site assessment.

Activity: Deadline for the provider to return any comments on the factual accuracy of the draft report.

Timescale: 10 working days from the date you receive the draft assessment report.

We consider your comments and amend the report if we accept them. If significant amendments or changes to our judgements are necessary they are reviewed by an independent quality panel.

Activity: We email the final report to the provider and commissioners.

Timescale: On or before 50 working days after the end of the assessment.

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