

Evaluation Report

Use of ChangeTracker Card in a counselling setting

A partnership trial between
Anglicare SA's Gambling Help Services
and the
Responsible Gambling Working Party

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An Initiative of
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- Mo Stauner – Gambling Services Counsellor
- Staff of Anglicare SA's Gambling Help Services
- Clients of Anglicare SA's Gambling Help Services

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Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
GLOSSARY	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
1. INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 BACKGROUND	5
1.2 TRIAL OVERVIEW	7
1.3 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK	7
2 TRIAL FINDINGS	9
2.1 OFFERS OF USE AND CARD ACCEPTANCE	9
2.2 CARD USE	9
2.3 REASONS FOR CARD NON-ACCEPTANCE	10
2.4 DEMOGRAPHICS – CARD ACCEPTERS.....	11
2.5 DEMOGRAPHICS – CARD NON-ACCEPTERS	12
2.6 INDIRECT TRIAL BENEFITS.....	12
3 ANSWERING THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS	13
3.1 VALUE FOR THE CUSTOMER.....	13
3.2 BEHAVIOURAL IMPACT CONSISTENT WITH GAMBLING RESPONSIBLY	13
3.3 COST EFFECTIVE TO THE PROVIDER.....	14
4 CONCLUSION	15
5 REFERENCES	17

Glossary

EGM	Electronic Gaming Machine
GHS	Gambling Help Service

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ChangeTracker Card is a personal tool that players of electronic gaming machines can use to keep track of their gambling spend against a weekly budget. Players manually record their weekly budget and daily cash to coin exchanges on a wallet sized card. Up to five cash to coin exchanges can be recorded in a day.

The card was trialled during 2009 on the general gambling population. This trial aimed to identify if there was value in using the card in a counselling setting.

Anglicare SA's Gambling Help Service conducted the trial over six months, concluding at the end of February 2012.

Clients who were identified as being the most appropriate to benefit from using the card, through reinforcing gambling spend patterns in relation to their gambling, were offered the ChangeTracker Card. The card was offered as a part of their approach to addressing their gambling on electronic gaming machines.

Of the 48 clients who were offered the card, 14 (29%) accepted it for use. Of these, 5 used the card either as intended (for recording cash to coin exchanges), or as a visual reminder or in conjunction with a visual reminder. Those who did not use it had identified, on acceptance, that it was likely that they would not use it, citing reasons such as: they would forget to use it, abstinence was their goal, or they were aware of their spending and did not want to record it.

The primary reason given by 16 (47%) of the 34 who did not accept the card was that they had a goal of abstinence or they had already stopped gambling. The next most common reason given by 9 clients (26%) was that did not see the card as providing value, with three citing that they were using other strategies and could solve their gambling problem without the card. The remainder did not see themselves as having a gambling problem or a severe enough problem to warrant use of the card, or they were concerned about drawing attention to their gambling.

No client made ongoing and consistent use of the card.

Overall, there appeared to be limited or no ongoing value in the use of the card in a counselling setting though there could be potential value in offering the card online as a self help tool.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Responsible Gambling Working Party (RGWP) was established in 2006 to report to the Minister for Gambling (now Minister for Business Services and Consumers) on strategies that can be implemented to support customers to make commitments about their level of gambling on electronic gaming machines (EGMs).

The RGWP has worked within three key focus areas:

- Informed decision-making;
- Money management; and
- Player tracking and pre-commitment systems.

The RGWP has completed evaluations of three trials of voluntary player tracking and/or pre-commitment tools. The purpose for the RGWP of conducting trials is to learn about the effectiveness of player tracking and pre-commitment as a feature for venue customers to better manage their money in relation to gambling, and as a tool for harm minimisation (RGWP: 2008:27).

Two trials involved technological card based systems. One trial, which was completed in 2009 – the ChangeTracker Card trial – involved a manual approach.

The ChangeTracker Card (Figure 1) is a personal tool that players of electronic gaming machines can use to keep track of their gambling spend against a weekly budget. Players manually record their weekly budget and daily cash to coin exchanges on a wallet sized card. Up to five cash to coin exchanges can be recorded in a day.

Figure 1: ChangeTracker Card

How to use your ChangeTracker card
Keep track of your gaming spend every time you change notes for coin. ChangeTracker helps you set your own private spend limit...and stick to it!
Simply hand your ChangeTracker card to the cashier whenever you change notes to coin – it's that easy!

Member number _____

Gambling Helpline - 1800 060 757
Gamble Responsibly

CHANGE Tracker
Keep track of your gaming spend and stay in charge!

Week commencing / /2009							
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
Total							
Weekly budget \$				Total spent \$			

Week commencing / /2009							
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
Total							
Weekly budget \$				Total spent \$			

The 2009 ChangeTracker Card trial targeted the general gaming population in small hotel and club venues. A copy of the evaluation report for that trial is available at: http://www.treasury.sa.gov.au/dfp/policy_analysis/gambling_policy.jsp. A summary of the trial is also provided in the RGWP's *Fourth Progress Report*.

During the development phase of the 2009 trial, consultation occurred with a manager and counselling staff from two Gambling Help Services. The staff identified an interest in the application of the card in a counselling setting (RGWP 2010:12).

The 2009 trial was focussed on regular recreational gamblers. However, the Trial Coordination Group determined that future consideration should be given to an evaluation of the use of the card in a counselling setting (RGWP 2010:13).

There is potential to evolve the concept of the ChangeTracker card into a tool that could be used by customers of Gambling Help Services when they visit gaming venues. This tool could assist in tracking the clients gaming spend and as a basis for discussions with their gambling counsellor. Further investigation of this option would necessarily involve considerable consultation with gambling counsellors and their clients. (2010:36)

Initial discussions with the Office for Problem Gambling about the trial concept, provided a view that the card would best suit clients in recovery rather than those initially presenting to a service, and that it could be applied in four areas:

- Peer support groups;
- Relapse prevention groups;
- Financial counselling; and
- Self help.

In June 2011 the Secretariat of the Responsible Gambling Working Party attended a meeting of the regional Gambling Help Services to gauge the interest of help services in trialling the use of ChangeTracker Card in a counselling setting. Help services were informed that the broad aims of a trial were to identify if the ChangeTracker Card provides:

- value when used in a counselling setting; and
- value to the client (ease of use and usefulness as a money management tool).

In July 2011 Anglicare SA's Gambling Help Services advised that it was interested in undertaking a trial.

Anglicare SA's Gambling Help Services (GHS) are funded by the Office for Problem Gambling to offer effective and timely services to problem gamblers across the western and northern regions of Adelaide. The GHS offers professional therapeutic and financial counselling services to people experiencing problems with their own gambling or those of a family member or significant other.

Anglicare SA's GHS works in close collaboration with other agencies, including but not limited to, the Statewide Gambling Help Service, the Vietnamese Community Association, Glenside Hospital and Pokies Anonymous.

The development of the trial required minimal work:

- ChangeTracker Cards remaining from the 2009 trial were used in this trial;

- an informal trial management group was established involving Anglicare SA's GHS staff and the RGWP secretariat; and
- an Anglicare SA's GHS staff person collated monthly data and anecdotal information conveyed by clients and staff.

1.2 Trial Overview

The trial began on 22 August 2011 and concluded on 29 February 2012 – a period of over six months.

During this period, clients accessing Anglicare SA's Gambling Help Services were offered the ChangeTracker Card to use as part of their approach to addressing their gambling on electronic gaming machines.

The clients offered the ChangeTracker Card were clients who were identified as being the most appropriate to benefit from using the card, through reinforcing gambling spend patterns in relation to their gambling.

1.3 Evaluation Framework

The RGWPs evaluations of voluntary player tracking and/or pre-commitment tools have addressed three research questions posed by the RGWP. The questions, provided below, were directed at trials conducted by an industry provider and so, the following are modified to reflect that the trial of the ChangeTracker Card in a counselling setting was conducted by a non-industry agency:

- Is there value for the customer (EGM players) in the trial?
 - Did a significant proportion of customers use the features of the trial?
 - Did the features of the trial provide on-going value to the customer?
 - What value was derived by the customers from the features of the trial?
- Is the behavioural impact of the trial consistent with the Working Party's goal of customers gambling responsibly?
 - Did the trial support the goals of better money management and informed decision making by customers?
 - What behaviours did the features of the trial target?
 - What were the impacts of the trial on customers gambling behaviour? Are they consistent with the goals?
 - Do the impacts vary by risk for gambling problems?
 - Is there opportunity to use features of the trial to support gambling rehabilitation services?
- If the trial is extended to full operation, is on-going operation pre-commitment and player tracking system cost effective to the provider?
 - What are the likely cost and revenue impacts from operating the system?
 - What are the likely transition and implementation costs of the system?

- What are the impacts on staff responsibilities, training and skill requirements?

Anglicare SA's Gambling Help Services provided monthly data reports which included anecdotal information conveyed by clients and staff. Additional information was conveyed during management meetings. This quantitative and qualitative data formed the basis for the following discussion about trial findings.

2 TRIAL FINDINGS

The following data relates to the trial period from 22 August 2011 to 29 February 2012 inclusive.

2.1 Offers of use and card acceptance

Over the approximate 6 months of the trial, 48 clients were offered the card with 14 (29%) accepting it for use. This is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 also shows that the greatest period of clients being offered the card occurred in the initial months of the trial from August-October 2011:

- 71% (n=34) of the offers occurred in the first 2 months of the trial (includes the first 10 days of the trial at the end of August 2011).
- At the end of December 2011, 88% (n=42) of the trial cohort had been invited to use the card.

The card offer data reflects that:

- in the initial months, Anglicare SA's GHS Counsellors extended an invitation to use the card to current clients with whom they had developed a rapport; and
- during these months, few new clients were offered the card because few were accessing the service (Anglicare SA's GHS reported that gambling help services state wide were experiencing a reduction in referrals, which may have been linked with the spring racing season).

Table 1: Clients offered use of the card (n=48) and number accepting use each month

Month	Number offered card	Number accepting card
August* 2011	10	2
September 2011	13	4
October 2011	11	0
November 2011	3	1
December 2011	5	5
January 2012	4	1
February 2012	2	1
Total	48	14

* Note: trial started 22 August, and so the month of August = 10 days only

2.2 Card use

Table 2 shows that while 14 accepted to use the card, of these 14:

- 14% (n=2) used the card as intended, for recording cash to coin exchanges;
- 21% (n=3) used it as a visual reminder or in conjunction with a visual reminder; and
- 57% (n=8) did not use it.

Overall, the card was used by 5 (10.4%) of the 48 clients who were offered the card.

Table 2: Clients use of the card (n=14)

Type of use	Number
Cash to coin exchanges	2
As a visual cue/reminder or in conjunction with a visual cue	3
Not used	8
Unknown	1

Of the two who used the card as intended (to record cash to coin exchanges), they did not use it for an extended period:

- One used the card when they first obtained it in September 2011 but was filling out the cash to coin exchange amounts at home due to not wanting to fill out the card in public. By January 2012 they had ceased using it saying that they saw it as a short term therapy only.
- One used the card when they were first offered it in January 2012 and, on feeling it was successful, ceased to use it and has continued to gamble (interestingly, this person advised that they had downloaded the card from a website rather than being provided it by Anglicare SA GHS).

Three clients who accepted the card, used it not as intended but as a visual cue or reminder token, or in association with a visual cue:

- On acceptance, two clients said that they would keep the card as a reminder token rather than fill it out.
- In November 2011, Anglicare SA GHS reported that three were using a visual cue in association with the card to remind them of their goal (e.g. storing ATM receipts in the card to discuss with their counsellor, placing stickers in the card that said something like “Do you want to spend this money?”).

Eight clients reported that they had not used the card. However, they had indicated on acceptance that it was likely that they would not use it, citing the following reasons:

- they would forget to take a pen;
- they would forget to use it;
- they were not gambling at the moment;
- they wanted to stop rather than manage their gambling;
- it would not be useful right now; and
- they knew what they were spending and did not want to write it down.

2.3 Reasons for card non-acceptance

Reasons given by the 34 who did not accept the card are shown in Table 3. Of these:

- 47% (n=16) identified that they had a goal of abstinence or they had already stopped gambling;

- 26% (n=9) did not see the card as providing value, with three citing that they were using other strategies and could solve their gambling problem without the card;
- 15% (n=5) identified that they did not have a gambling problem or a problem that was severe enough to warrant use of such a tool; and
- 12% (n=4) identified that they would be embarrassed to fill out the card or thought the card would draw attention to their gambling when they did not want others to know (an Anglicare SA counsellor provided anecdotal feedback that some clients were concerned that the orange/yellow colour of the card would draw attention, being a brighter colour in comparison to other cards normally held in a wallet, such as credit and bank cards).

Table 3: Clients reasons for not accepting the card (n=34)

Reason for non-acceptance	Number
Goal is abstinence	10
Have stopped gambling	6
Gambling is not severe/do not have a problem	5
Would be embarrassed/don't want others to know	4
Not interested	4
Have other strategies/can solve problem without the card	3
Won't help/not of any value	2

2.4 Demographics – card accepters

Table 4 shows that clients who accepted the card (n=14) were:

- equally male or female;
- primarily Australian (79%); and
- aged 25-54 years with the primary ages being equally 25-34 years (36%) or 45-54 years (36%).

Table 4: Demographics – card accepters (n=14)

Gender		Age				Ethnicity-country of birth			
M	F	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	Aboriginal	Australian	New Zealand	Polish
7	7	5	3	5	1	1	11	1	1

In relation to the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) score for clients who accepted the card, 12 of the 14 had a recorded CPGI score, and all 12 (100%) had a score of 8+ (problem gambling with negative consequences and a possible loss of control).

These CPGI scores are not unexpected, as people accessing Anglicare SA's Gambling Help Services have presented as a result of their problematic gambling behaviour.

Overall, due to the low numbers using the card (as intended, as a visual cue, or in association with a visual cue) no common traits were able to be discerned.

Likert scores (level of gambling) were also recorded for three users of the card. However, as these clients were also undertaking counselling and using other strategies, it cannot be concluded that the Likert score reflected the impact of using the card. Regardless, only one client showed a slight reduction in their level of gambling, while the others recorded either no change or minimal change.

2.5 Demographics – card non-accepters

Table 5 shows that clients who did not accept the card (n=34) were:

- near equally male (47%) or female (53%);
- primarily Australian (79%); and
- aged 25-74 years with the primary ages being 35-44 years (26%) or 45-54 years (29%).

This profile aligns with that of card accepters (refer to section 2.4)

Table 5: Demographics – card non-accepters (N=34)

Gender		Age					Ethnicity-country of birth			
M	F	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	Aboriginal	Australian	Fijian	Other*
16	18	5	9	10	7	3	2	27	2	3

* 1 each Italian, Turkish and Polish

In relation to the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) score for clients who did not accept the card and who had a recorded CPGI score (n=30):

- 71% (n=24) had a score of 8+ (problem gambling with negative consequences and a possible loss of control); and
- 18% (N=6) had a CPGI score of 3-7 (moderate level of problems leading to some negative consequences).

Again, these CPGI scores are not unexpected, given that the clients are accessing Anglicare SA's Gambling Help Services.

2.6 Indirect trial benefits

In addition to the direct trial outcomes, Anglicare SA noted that the trial has had some indirect benefits for Anglicare SA's gambling and financial counselling service, and its clients, through the development of other financial management strategies. On suggestion from a counsellor, some non-abstinence clients have approached their bank and:

- requested the bank to limit their ATM access to bank ATMs only (as this will require the client to leave the gambling venue to access an ATM); and
- set withdrawal limits on their bank account.

3 ANSWERING THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

3.1 Value for the customer

Due to overall sample size (n=48), it is difficult to gauge if the 10.4% (n=5) who ultimately used the card, indicates anything about value to the client. Research shows¹ that gamblers seek and use a range of strategies to address or manage their level of gambling, with self help strategies preferred. The ChangeTracker Card is a self help tool, albeit its use during the trial within a counselling framework.

For the two clients who used the card as intended, their use was not ongoing. Both clients reported that they saw it as a short term tool. The level of gambling for these two clients remained relatively unchanged. The ongoing use of the card in the context of a reminder cue by three clients is not known. However, the cards adaptability by these clients indicates value in that the client could personalise its use.

Overall, the ongoing value of the card is limited if not absent, but there may be short term value.

Notably, one client downloaded the card from a website, which might suggest that providing access to the card as a self help tool might add value.

3.2 Behavioural impact consistent with gambling responsibly

Overall, due to an insufficient sample and data, no conclusion can be reached about the behavioural impacts.

For the two clients who used the card as intended, their level of gambling remained relatively unchanged (while noting that they were also undertaking other strategies such as gambling or financial counselling). Gambling levels for the three clients who used the card in the context of a reminder cue is not known.

It can be argued that the behavioural impacts of the card in terms of gambling can not be untangled from other strategies being used by the clients. However, most clients were current clients of Anglicare SA GHS and so the impact of counselling was to some extent already underway.

Further, 21% of the clients who were offered the card were of an Aboriginal or CALD² background, with two clients of this background accepting the card. Neither used it, identifying that this was due to their not gambling or because they forgot to use it. Research shows that the role of gambling in these population cohorts differs to that for Australians, as does their help seeking behaviour³. This may be reflected in the use of the card.

¹ Refer to Hing, N. Nuske, E, Gainsbury, S. (2011). *Gamblers at risk and their help seeking behaviour*. Centre for Gambling Education and Research, Southern Cross University. Gambling Research Australia.

² Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

³ Refer to Hing, N. Nuske, E, Gainsbury, S. (2011) cited above.

3.3 Cost effective to the provider

The ChangeTracker Card requires no level of training other than a brief explanation of how to use the card.

The cards used in the trial were remaining stock from the 2009 trial; these cards were professionally printed.

One client advised that she accessed a copy of the card on-line. Providing the card on-line for downloading would create negligible cost and efficiency, as it could be printed as needed.

4 CONCLUSION

Over the six month trial the number of clients offered the card was low and as a consequence card accepters were also low in number. However, it was not unexpected that the levels of card acceptance would be low.

Preliminary discussions were undertaken with a number of agencies and groups at various stages while developing the trial – the two Gambling Help agencies that indicated an interest in 2009 (which included Anglicare SA Gambling Help Services), the Office for Problem Gambling, and regional Gambling Help Services. During these discussions it was suggested that:

- it would be hard to find clients who wanted a moderated approach to gaming machine play as most wanted abstinence; and
- a trial would need to be over a long term (at least a year) to gain sufficient client involvement.

The trial experience seems to support these suppositions, particularly regarding abstinence as a goal or that being the client's current gambling status.

During the initial discussions it was also expressed that the card could be used as “part of the journey” and again, the trials seems to support this position. Two clients used the card for a brief timeframe to record their gambling spend, with one saying that they viewed the card as a short term therapy. Three modified use of the card to operate in the context of a visual reminder (though the client who used it to store ATM receipts could also be said to be using it as a tool to record spend).

Of those who were offered the card, 10.4% used it either as intended or in a modified approach. This aligns with the statistics for people accessing other strategies, whether they are professional help seeking, non-professional or self help strategies. With research showing that self help is a primary strategy for gamblers who have early signs of gambling problems and during relapse, there may be value in providing the card on-line.

Notably, this is consistent with the Office for Problem Gambling's early perspective that the card might best suit clients in recovery rather than those initially presenting to a service (and this view is consistent with the trial experience where client selection was based on a developed rapport), particularly in relation to: peer support groups, relapse prevention groups, financial counselling; and self help.

In relation to the small take-up rate, Anglicare SA Gambling Help Services noted that many clients supported the ChangeTracker Card concept, but spoke of the shame and embarrassment that may be experienced through the identification of the card and its use in a venue. This is consistent with other player tracking and pre-commitment trials where gaming machine players reported a concern about such tools drawing attention to their gambling behaviour.

Of the clients who took the card, continual usage was not achieved. While some clients reported that they only ever saw it as a short term strategy, Anglicare SA Gambling Help Services staff suggest that this could also be due to the client not wanting to “let down” their counsellor and use of the card simply being too confronting for them to continue its use. Others reported they simply did not want to gamble and so did not support ongoing involvement with the trial.

From Anglicare SA Gambling Help Services experience of the trial, it was agreed that the ChangeTracker Card was one of many tools available for clients to assist them to reduce and or monitor their gambling spend.

However, Anglicare SA Gambling Help Services noted that there appeared to be no long term commitment from clients or counsellors towards the card and, due to the experiences shared by both clients and counsellors, questions its usefulness in a counselling setting.

5 REFERENCES

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