

# 7 Minute Briefing 'Harmful Gambling'

## 1 What is the difference between gambling and harmful gambling?

Gambling is simply defined as "to stake or risk money, or anything of value, on the outcome of something involving chance". Usually, gambling is a fun and safe leisure activity involving games of chance for money or material goods. However, when a person has the urge to continuously gamble despite negative and harmful consequences or the desire to stop, this is identified as 'harmful gambling' and will often require specialist intervention and support to address the issue.

## 2 Why it matters

According to the Gambling Commission's annual survey on young people in 2019, **11% of young people aged 11-16** had spent their own money on a gambling activity in the previous seven days. This equates to approximately **350,000 11-16 year olds across Great Britain**, **55,000** of whom are classified as having a gambling problem.

This survey also showed that for the young people who have heard of in-game items, **44% have paid money to open loot boxes/crates/packs** to get other items within a game they were playing, and **6% have bet with in-game items on external websites or privately** (e.g. with friends).

## 3 The impact of harmful gambling

The level of impact of harmful gambling on both the individual and affected others include: mental health and well-being issues, higher risk of suicidal ideation/intent, drug and alcohol misuse, financial crisis, problems with education/work, criminality, relationship difficulties and the associated social and psychological impact on affected others. Findings published by the institute for Public Policy Research in 2016 discovered that harmful gamblers, in contrast to the general population, are:

- 9 times more likely to be accessing mental health services.
- 9 times more likely to access homelessness services
- 4 times more likely to be in prison

## 4 What are the indicators / signs of harmful gambling?

The indicators that an individual's gambling behaviour is problematic and harmful include:

- **Preoccupation** - often thinking about or planning to gamble.
- **Tolerance** - needing to gamble with more money to get excitement.
- **Withdraw** - negative emotions when trying to cut down on gambling.
- **Loss of control** - spending more than you plan to (time and money).
- **Escape** - the motivation for gambling being to escape negative elements of life.
- **Chasing losses** - gambling to try to win back money that has been lost.
- **Lying** - gambling leading to lying to friends/family.
- **Illegal acts** - taking money without permission, misusing money to fund gambling.
- **Risky relationships** - putting personal relationships at risk.

## 7 Want to know more?

GamCare and our partners provide free training and interactive workshops across the UK.

These sessions can help you recognise the signs and symptoms of harmful gambling, how it can affect young people, and how to engage with the young people you work with about the issue.

Visit [www.bigdeal.org.uk](http://www.bigdeal.org.uk) or email [hello@bigdeal.org.uk](mailto:hello@bigdeal.org.uk)

# BIG DEAL?

[www.bigdeal.org.uk](http://www.bigdeal.org.uk)

## 6 Referral to a specialist

GamCare Advisers can refer anyone concerned about their own gambling, or impacted by someone else's gambling, to specialist support.

You can also find more information on the partners providing specialist treatment as part of the National Gambling Treatment Service at [www.gamcare.org.uk](http://www.gamcare.org.uk)

## 5 What to do next?

Young people, parents/carers and professionals supporting young people can find information, advice and support through the **National Gambling Helpline on Freephone 0808 80 20 133 (24 hours a day)**.

This service is provided by GamCare, who also provide a dedicated website at [www.BigDeal.org.uk](http://www.BigDeal.org.uk).

Live chat is available with GamCare Advisers around the clock too - access this via the BigDeal site or at [www.gamcare.org.uk](http://www.gamcare.org.uk)