

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?

Gambling related harm (GRH) research findings show that **47%** of the population, aged 16 years and over, have taken part in some form of gambling in the past four weeks. Estimates from various reports published by the **Gambling Commission** and **Gamble Aware** respectively, indicate there are between **500,000 to 1.4 million** problem gamblers in the UK. The **Young People and Gambling Survey** in 2019 revealed that **11% (350,000)** of 11-16-year olds self-reported to have spent their own money gambling in the last week. These results were found to be higher than smoking tobacco (**6%**) and illegal drug use (**5%**). The report also found that as many as **55,000** young people nationally are classified as problem gamblers.

3 Want to know more?

BCT provides **FREE** interactive harmful gambling workshops to both young people and professionals as part of their '**Big Deal**' and '**Bet You Can Help**' programmes. These sessions help participants recognise risk factors, signs, and symptoms and address how to access support.

Contact **0151 226 0696** or visit www.beaconcounsellingtrust.co.uk for more details.



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3 The impact of harmful gambling.

The level of impact of harmful gambling on both the individual and affected others include: mental health and wellbeing 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:

- **3 times more likely to have visited their GP in the last year due to mental health issues.**
- **9 times more likely to be accessing mental health services.**
- **6 times more likely to have been a hospital inpatient within the last 3 months.**
- **3 times more likely to be claiming Job Seekers Allowance.**
- **9 times more likely to access homelessness services.**
- **4 times more likely to be in prison.**

The report also highlighted that the fiscal cost, by harmful gamblers on the public purse, could be as much as **£1.2 billion per year** throughout the UK.

6 Referral to specialist service provision:

Beacon Counselling Trust (BCT) is a specialist service providing treatment, advice, and support to anyone aged **16+** throughout **North West England**. Contact the main office on **0151 226 0696** and for gambling related counselling call: **0151 321 1099** or visit www.beaconcounsellingtrust.co.uk

5 How to respond:

If you are worried or concerned help is available through **The National Gambling Helpline**. This service is available **24 hours a day**, seven days a week through **GamCare**. **The Big Deal Project** is a separate service specifically for young people aged **11-19 years**. You can call both services free on **0808 8020 133**, or by visiting www.gamcare.org.uk / www.bigdeal.org.uk

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.
- **Withdrawal** – 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 and 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.
- **Risked relationships** – putting personal relationships at risk.