



National association for gambling care,
educational resources and training

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BRIEFING PAPER 5

YOUNG PEOPLE AND PROBLEM GAMBLING

Problem gambling doesn't just affect adults. There are an estimated 127,500 people aged under 24 with a gambling problem in the UK.

Factors linked with problem gambling in young people include:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Delinquent behaviour
- Crime
- Low self esteem
- Alcohol and substance abuse
- Suicide
- Personality disorders
- Poor school performance and truancy

The most recent survey of young people and gambling was carried out in 2009 Ipsos MORI for the National Lottery Commission¹. Nearly 9,000 adolescents aged between 12 and 15 were asked questions about their experiences of and attitudes towards gambling. The survey found that:

- 21% had gambled in the past week.
- 2% were estimated to have a gambling problem, which equates to around 60,000 people aged between 12 and 15. (The British Gambling Prevalence Survey² also found that 0.9% of 16-24 year olds had a gambling problem, which equates to 67,500 people).
- Boys were more likely to gamble and be problem gamblers than girls.
- Asian children were no more likely to gamble than other ethnicities; however they were more likely to be problem gamblers.

The number of young problem gamblers is likely to be even higher than that captured in prevalence research, as problem gambling has been labelled the 'hidden addiction', with sufferers highly motivated to conceal their problem behaviour. And while this number may seem relatively small, it is important to remember that for every problem gambler, it has been estimated that a further 8 people may be affected.

The rate of problem gambling is over three times as high in young people as it is in adults. However it has consistently been shown that young people do not seek help for gambling problems. This may be due to a lack of awareness about problem gambling and avenues via which to seek help, but may also be due to the fact that many of those in positions of responsibility aren't alert to the problems excessive gambling can cause. Research has shown that only 5% of parents would take steps to encourage their child not to gamble³.

There is a clear need for efforts to be made to educate young people, their families and those in positions of responsibility such as teachers and youth workers about problem gambling and how it can affect young people.

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¹Ipsos MORI (2009): "British Survey of Children, the National Lottery and. Gambling 2008-09: Report of a quantitative survey", London, NLC

²Wardle, H., Sproston, K., Orford, J., Erens, B., Griffiths, M., Constantine, R., & Piggot, S. (2007). British Gambling Prevalence Survey 2007. London: National Centre for Social Research, 2007

³Ladouceur, R., Boudreault, N., Jacques, C., & Vitaro, F. (1999). Pathological gambling and related problems among adolescents. *Journal of Child Adolescent Substance Abuse*, 8, 55-68