

# **Problem Gambling and Young People**

**A Strategy for  
GamCare and Partners  
2017-2019**



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## The Introduction

GamCare is the leading national provider of information, advice, support and free counselling for the prevention and treatment of problem gambling.

We operate the National Gambling HelpLine for anyone affected by problem gambling, as well as providing free online or face-to-face counselling for problem gamblers and ‘affected others’ across England, Scotland and Wales.

GamCare recognises that while for many people, gambling does not cause harm, for some it can become a serious issue. Our services are confidential and non-judgemental, focussed on minimising harm caused by gambling.

GamCare educates and trains a diverse set of stakeholders to raise the profile of problem gambling in society, and to improve awareness of the potentially harmful impacts of gambling.

Most forms of gambling are illegal for those under the age of 16. GamCare strongly supports this as well as the need for industry initiatives safeguarding young people from the effects of gambling related harm.

GamCare has a long-standing commitment to educating young people and other at-risk or vulnerable groups about the risks of gambling and its impacts, so that we can minimise harm and prevent gambling problems before they begin.

This document gives an overview of the strategy that GamCare and our Partners have created to specifically address youth-related gambling issues for the period 2017-2019.

In this document ‘young people’ and ‘youth’ are used interchangeably to refer to anyone under the age of 18.

# The Context

Recent figures<sup>1</sup> suggest that around 16% of 11-16 year olds participate in gambling behaviour on a weekly basis, a prevalence far higher than that of drinking, smoking or using drugs.

International evidence consistently indicates that young people are disproportionately at risk of developing problems with gambling, as well as experiencing harm resulting from the problematic gambling of family or friends<sup>2</sup>. Despite this, only around 1% of under 18's use GamCare's helpline or treatment services<sup>3</sup>. This is a gap that GamCare is keen to close.

In 2010 GamCare published an initial strategy for our work with young people called Beating the Odds<sup>4</sup>. This highlighted that an effective strategy for education and prevention related to problem gambling for young people needs to have two aims:

- To deliver information about responsible gambling;
- To educate about when, how, and where to ask for help if needed.

In 2012, utilising this strategy, GamCare launched a pilot education and treatment programme in Bristol and the South West through its partner ARA (Addiction Recovery Agency). This provided training to the workforce directly supporting young people, and ran gambling awareness workshops in schools and FE colleges, inviting young people to think critically about gambling, understand its signs and symptoms of problem gambling, and to know where to go for help. This ran for three years, up to November 2015.

GamCare commissioned an independent evaluation of this programme in 2016. The evaluation showed that the programme was highly effective in developing young people's understanding of, and capacity to recognise, problem gambling, as well as professionals' confidence in interacting with a young person around problem gambling.



It also revealed that the programme provided the most extensive reach via its delivery of training to the front-line workforce, of whom each trainee interacted with an average of 11 young people on the subject of problem gambling a year after training.

As part of this initial strategy we also launched a youth-specific website, ([www.bigdeal.org.uk](http://www.bigdeal.org.uk)), where young people can learn more about the risks associated with gambling and the player protection tools available, so that they can make informed choices about gambling.

This website is also a repository of information for parents and teachers on how to explore the subject of problem gambling with a young person, and a portal to the National Gambling HelpLine if they require help and support. The site consistently receives over 2,000 unique visitors each month.

Our pilot programmes formed the first initiatives of their kind in the UK, putting gambling awareness and education on the youth agenda, and providing clear and targeted information directly to young people in new and innovative ways.

While these programmes have been successful, GamCare is clear in its view that still more needs to be done to bridge the gap between young people and our support services, and current research supports this need.

## The Research

In June 2016 Professor Gill Valentine published an updated literature review concerning problem gambling and young people, commissioned by GambleAware® (formerly the Responsible Gambling Trust), recognising problem gambling as a public health issue with young people the group most at risk. Key findings of the research included the following:

- The younger a person is when a problem develops, the more harm will result in later life.
- Having family members who gamble may be a key risk factor for a young person developing a problem themselves.
- The impact of problem gambling is transferred onto family members.
- Young people may struggle to differentiate between gambling language such as risk, chance, probability and fate.

The research also highlighted that:

- There is little public awareness about youth problem gambling, and more emphasis needs to be placed on teacher's knowledge of the problem as compared to other risky behaviour.

- Parents are less likely to talk to their children about problem gambling than other risky behaviours such as smoking, drinking and unprotected sex.

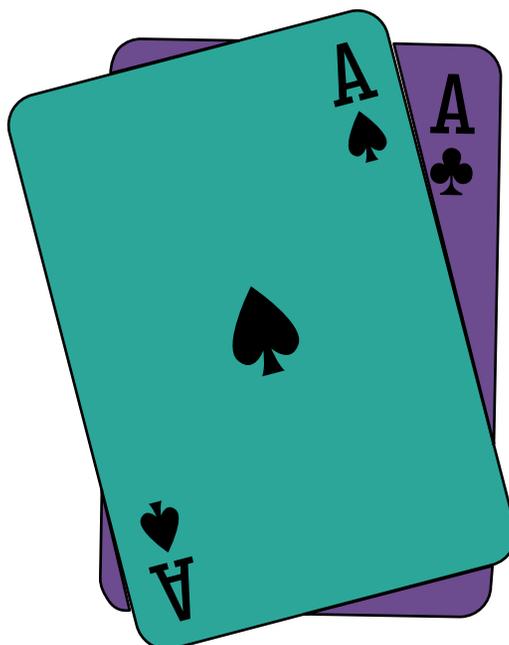
In June 2016, GamCare commissioned research in partnership with youth support organisation The Mix<sup>5</sup>. This research involved a nationwide survey, combined with a number of smaller facilitated focus groups with 11-18 year olds designed to help us understand:

- Young people's awareness and understanding of, and attitudes towards, gambling;
- How aware young people are of the risks associated with gambling and/or harmful impacts of problem gambling;
- What sources of information and support young people were aware of, and which they were likely to use.

The research found that most respondents became aware of gambling activities for the first time around age 10, and by age 13, 67% responded that they had participated in gambling activities already.

Young people are most likely to become aware of gambling through other family members (17%), visiting amusement arcades (15%) and through TV adverts (15%). Talking about gambling at school is also an important avenue for becoming aware of gambling (9%).

Examining why young people aged 12-15 were attracted to gambling, reasons stated included 'for fun' (85%), 'to make money' (18%) and 'friends were doing it' (16%). For those aged 16-18, motivations were the same, however a greater percentage stated they participated 'to make money' (40%).



Understanding of the potential harm caused by gambling or the impacts of problematic gambling varied between the age groups. 'Borrowing money and losing it' is seen as a major sign of gambling becoming a problem across both age groups, followed by trying to win back what you have lost, and spending more time and money on gambling than first intended.

When asked where they would be most likely to seek information or support for themselves or another regarding a gambling problem, over half of respondents said they would turn to specialist website (51%) and another (44%) said they would call a free helpline. Family members were also an important source of information and advice (45%).

## The Strategy

Taking into account the combination of outcomes from our evaluation, international research, anecdotal examples and feedback from our work with The Mix, we have formulated our strategy for the next two years to work towards the following long-term goal:

### **A reduction in gambling related harm in young people.**

This goal will be reached through the following long-term outcomes:

- Young people, their parents and the youth professional workforce understand the risks of gambling, and where to go for help.
- Young people can get tailored, expert advice and support about problem gambling in engaging, accessible formats.
- Young people can receive expert treatment for problem gambling and the impacts of the harm caused by someone else's gambling in accessible formats.
- There is cross sector understanding of and commitment to the minimisation of gambling related harm in young people.

GamCare has worked with our Partner agencies across multiple areas of the UK to create a 'Theory of Change' model to frame our work towards these outcomes and long term goal. This model identifies four work-streams through which GamCare will achieve its aims.

These work streams are defined broadly as follows:

- **Education** - Raising awareness of problem gambling amongst those working across the youth sector and providing education in responsible gambling direct to young people.
- **Advice** – Providing targeted, accessible advice and information to young people who may be at risk of or affected by problem gambling, to parents and other affected parties.
- **Treatment** – Providing targeted and accessible treatment for young people affected by problem gambling, or impacted by someone else's gambling.
- **Communication** – Evaluating our work and communicating our knowledge of problem gambling and young people to all relevant stakeholders.

Our Theory of Change is underpinned by the following assumptions:

- Prevention is better than cure. With awareness, knowledge and skills to make safer choices around gambling, young people will be less likely to be impacted by problems later in life.
- Front-line staff working with young people are best positioned to identify a problem with gambling, challenge behaviour, and signpost into appropriate services for further support.
- Some young people, such as those in or leaving care, in Pupil Referral Units, young offender's institutions or with special educational needs may be more likely to engage in risk taking behaviour. These individuals may have multiple complex life issues of which (problem) gambling may be only one part.
- Young people are susceptible to harm as a result of (problem) gambling in their immediate family. This harm may be hidden, and such individuals may be more likely to develop gambling problems in later life.
- Young people themselves are in the best position to tell us about the services that they need, how best to engage with them and ensure that they are tailored to their lifestyles.
- We are expert in problem gambling, but not in young people. In order for our strategy to have maximum impact, we need to establish partnerships with youth organisations.

Acknowledging these assumptions, GamCare will undertake the following activities within each of the four work-streams outlined above.

**1) We will expand and extend our education initiatives with young people and youth professionals. Specifically, we will:**

- Extend our piloted work in Bristol and expand into three new regions of the UK – London, Birmingham and the North West (Manchester/Liverpool). These regional ‘youth hubs’ will provide expert education, advice and treatment in local settings.
- Train staff in front-line roles working with young people to identify, screen for and signpost young people affected by problem gambling into appropriate services; giving them the knowledge and confidence to talk to a young person about problem gambling where they identify it.
- Deliver gambling awareness workshops directly to young people in educational settings, giving them the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to make informed choices about gambling.
- Educate parents attending our services about the impacts of problem gambling on their children in the form of ‘hidden harm’, ensuring that they and their children are aware of the impacts, and what support is available to them.

**2) We will enhance our advice and information provision to young people, their parents and teachers by building programmes in accessible, relevant formats informed by young people. Specifically, we will:**

- Rebuild the BigDeal website in accordance with the feedback from young people, diversifying the channels we use to communicate information.
- Redevelop our ‘YourSay’ youth message-board to provide young people with a space designated for peer support where they can share experiences and support one another in a safe environment, moderated by expert staff.
- Refresh the training of our frontline staff to provide specialist advice and information with input from youth experts.

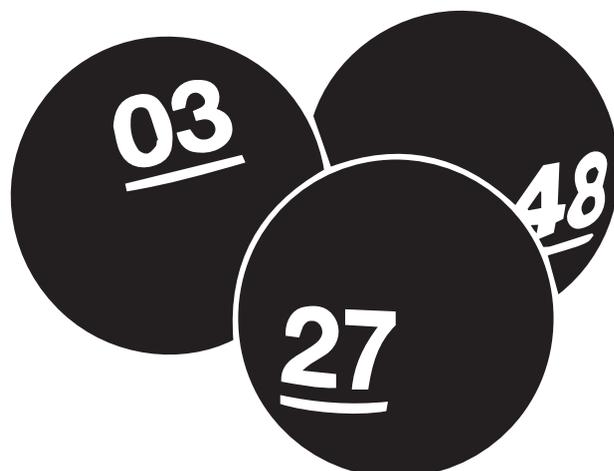
**3) We will enhance our specialist treatment provision to young people harmed by problem gambling (their own or that of someone close to them). Specifically, we will:**

- Ensure that any young person in need of support is able to access a range of treatment options as required by them; face-to-face or online.

- Continuously improve our treatment for young people affected by problem gambling by sharing knowledge across our partner network, and establishing new partnerships with youth expert organisations.
- Provide treatment targeted at young people affected by a parent's gambling problem (hidden harm), developing our understanding of the needs of this key at-risk group.

**4) We will evaluate our work, raising the quality of our interventions and enriching our knowledge and understanding of youth problem gambling. We will communicate the findings of our work to policy makers, industry and society as a whole. Specifically, we will:**

- Evaluate our activities, feeding our findings back in to continuously improve our own services, and publishing our findings to contribute to the wider debate on youth gambling.
- Involve young people in service design wherever possible, gathering feedback and cultivating innovation through youth steering groups.
- Collaborate with other organisations working to support young people and establish a Working Group designed to share best practice across the sector.



# Why GamCare?

Founded in 1995 as the UK Forum on Young People and Gambling, and with experience in delivering support to all those affected by problem gambling since 1997, GamCare has its roots in working with young people and remains uniquely placed to reduce gambling related harm amongst young people today.

GamCare provides a holistic package of education, advice and treatment delivered through a network of experienced and locally embedded Partner agencies, able to provide support to the individual at any stage of readiness to address the impacts of a gambling problem. With us, education, advice and treatment are all joined up.

## Fundraising

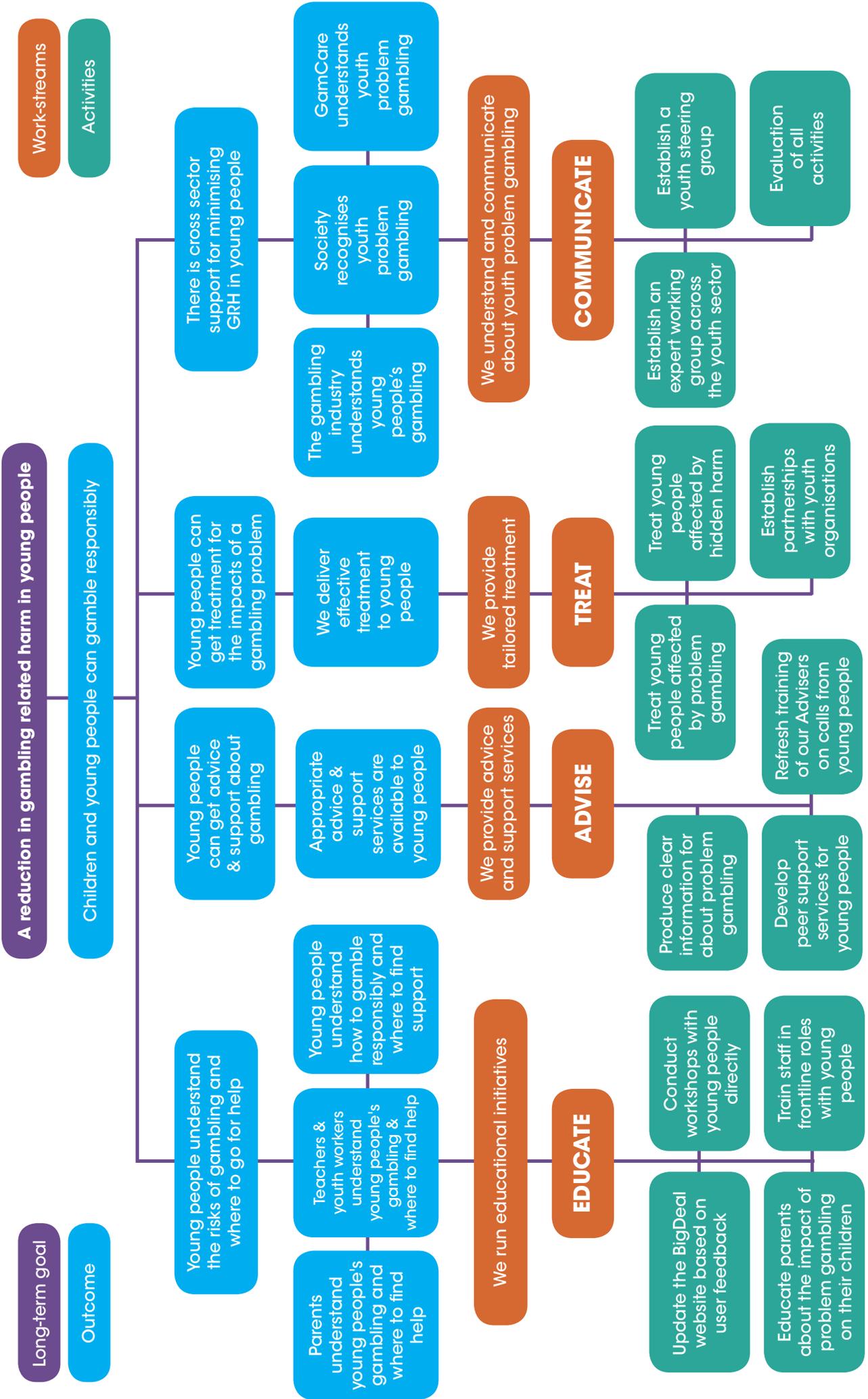
Our charity relies on donations to deliver special projects specifically targeting at-risk groups.

GamCare has secured funding to enact our Strategy for Young People for the next two years, however we are seeking to extend this and expand our ambitious agenda into new regions of the UK.

GamCare is engaging with trusts, individuals and corporates to push problem gambling up the agenda, and ensure it stays there.

## Footnotes

- 1) The Gambling Commission, (2016) Young People and Gambling Report: [www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/pdf/Young-people-and-gambling-2016.pdf](http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/pdf/Young-people-and-gambling-2016.pdf)
- 2) Valentine, G. (2016) Children and Young People's Gambling, Literature Review, available at: [www.rgtinfohub.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/1-june-update-children-young-people-literature-review.pdf](http://www.rgtinfohub.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/1-june-update-children-young-people-literature-review.pdf)
- 3) GamCare (2016) GamCare Annual Statistics: [www.gamcare.org.uk/publications/annual-reviews-and-statistics](http://www.gamcare.org.uk/publications/annual-reviews-and-statistics)
- 4) GamCare (2010) Beating the Odds; Preventing teenage problem gambling. Available at: <http://bit.ly/Beating-Odds>
- 5) [www.gamcare.org.uk/news/gamcare-launches-survey-young-people](http://www.gamcare.org.uk/news/gamcare-launches-survey-young-people)



Evaluation of all activities to demonstrate effectiveness

Fundraising to grow effective services

# BIG DEAL?

GET THE FACTS ABOUT GAMBLING



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