

In a recent survey some parent feedback around gambling included comments such as:

“No young person should be gambling until they are 18 as it is illegal.”

“Gambling is not relevant at this age.”

Yet most young people will have participated in a gambling activity, which is legal. In the document Gambling and the law, activities such as coin pushers, toy grabbers, tombolas, Category D machines, raffles, do not have an age limit and most young people will have participated when visiting school fairs, fetes, local celebrations, amusement arcades on holidays or activity centres.

So young people are gambling and participate in different ways.

Gambling with family

Many families will involve their children in gambling style activities, such as big sporting events;

“We like to all choose a horse to place a bet on, usually I go for a funny name or my favourite colour.” *Tagged 10*

The Grand National is a popular choice where all the family can get involved, choosing their favourite horse and watching the race to see who wins and which family member has won. Parents often ask their child to choose a number for the National Lottery or allow them to scratch off the sections on a scratch card. This is seen as harmless and often without thinking of it as their child involved in gambling. In a survey, one of the most common forms of gambling included playing card games at home.

Social gambling

As your child becomes more independent they will often meet in large shopping centres, at multi-entertainment complexes or amusement arcades where they can spend their free time and money on having fun with their friends, often working together to win as many tickets as possible to get a bigger prize. After bowling they may move onto the machines to pass some time. On holidays they spend time in the arcades as a family or with their friends. These are all gambling activities.

In addition, gambling takes place as it is seen as another social activity with many sites and apps have chat functions so people can send messages, play with friends and share stories whilst participating. If people are chatting with friends, they are more likely to spend longer on the site.

Non-association gambling

“Gamblers are low lifes, scammers, solvent abusers, tattooed fat bald men with tracksuits or suits and gold jewellery, crack heads, council estate people, manipulative people.”

In our research, many young people had stereotypical views of gambling with 69% of young people displaying ‘out of date, stereotypical views’ as shown above and only 17% identifying it could be anyone for any reason. This highlights how many young people do not associate their own actions as gambling. Despite the attitudes of gamblers, most young people identified the wide variety of gambling activities, yet again did not always associate themselves as gamblers.

Young people do not associate their actions as gambling, seeing it as a form of play. As we discuss in the document blurred lines of gaming and gambling, many young people also participate in many gambling style activities, without realising the link. Many video games and apps have gambling themes and content and many games allow children to gamble without money on their mobile devices.

When asked, young people had many reasons for engaging in gambling activities. Despite striving for independence they are still children and limited on where they can do and what they can do. Arcades, gaming and local events are enticing for many reasons;

“It’s a form of entertainment.”

“It releases endorphins.”

“It’s fun.”

“It’s something to do.”

“I can do it with my friends.”

Accessible

Most young people have their own phone or tablet and can download games and apps. Many games have gambling style features; loot boxes, skin gambling, roulette or spin the wheel features in the game to win extra prizes or make the activity more exciting. Although not classed as gambling it is gambling actions which young people can get used to and as they get older become drawn to casino style activities or games as they have experience of it at a lower level. Many games and apps on mobile devices have adverts that pop up, making gambling seem glamorous, an easy way to win money which entices young people in.

These are some of the reasons and ways young people get involved in gambling. Not are all bad, arcades can provide fun with friends and family, be sociable and, when participated in safely and sensibly, be safe. However, in a survey the top gambling activities young people participated in were;

- **Private bet with friends 6%**
- **Lottery 4%**
- **Fruit machines 3%**
- **Playing cards 3%**

This shows many young people do participate in many forms of gambling, some of which may be illegal as they are still underage. Unfortunately, with the amount of advertising and accessibility around, young people see gambling as a normal part of everyday life.

Safe Gambling

To help your child approach gambling in the right way we have put together some tips to help;

Educate your child, do they know what is classed as gambling? Let them know arcades and fetes have gambling activities so they realise they do gamble at a young age. Explain to them how gambling works. Often gambling activities can be made to look like a game of skill so young people think they can crack it and win, however games are based on chance and it is important young people understand this.

Acknowledge they participate in gambling. Have conversations as you would drinking, taking drugs, safe sex. It is better your child is aware and educated rather than shielded and not understanding their actions.

Discuss the risks such as getting carried away and spending more money than they planned to on these activities. Look at how we can act on impulse for the chance to win or place higher stakes to win bigger. Look at the odds of winning so they can understand how likely they are to win.

Teach your child to gamble responsibly, set a limit and keep to it so that they don't spend all their money and regret it later on.

Hold conversations with your child around advertising, do they think it is that easy to win? What do they think the term gamble responsible or when the fun stops, stop means? This helps them view from different perspectives, to take a 360 approach, and make educated decision.

