

Gambling and the Law

There are lots of different types of gambling but in our sessions with young people, many of them express stereotypical views of what a gambler looks like. The truth, of course, is far different.

In the UK there are several different age limits, depending on what exactly it is that people are gambling on, as the table below demonstrates:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tombola • Raffle • Category D machines - such as pushers, claw machines and some fruit machines • Private betting 	No Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National lottery • Scratch cards • Football pools 	16+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casinos • Arcades • Slot Machines • Poker • Bingo • Sports Betting • Horse Racing 	18+
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The current laws are complex, with the age limit in place depending entirely on what it is that someone is hoping to gamble upon. A 16-year-old could spend £100 on scratch cards, football pools or the National Lottery, for example, but wouldn't be allowed to bet even £1 inside a casino. Furthermore, a five-year-old could spend all of his or her money on a coin pusher-type game or a teddy grabber without worrying the law.

Further enticements are offered at amusement arcades such as tickets than can be cashed in for additional prizes, whilst games of luck like raffles, tombolas and hook-a-prize competitions are common-place at local events such as village fetes.



Children are exposed to gambling and often participate in the activity from a young age. Many families gather together and choose horses ahead of the Grand National or pick their favourite numbers before the lottery draw whilst also happily engaging in activities at fêtes and amusement arcades. These activities can be fun and whilst participating in them does not necessarily mean they will go on to experience gambling-related harms, it is still important to ensure that they understand the risks and establish a healthy attitude and balance.

Lead by example – Monitor your own behaviour. Ensure you avoid creating the impression that gambling is fun and easy. We don't want children believing it's an easy way to make money.

