

At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one issue of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about SPORTS BETTING

Sports betting involves staking money on the predicted outcome of sports results. Online sports gambling is much faster and easier than using a traditional bookmaker and provides more markets to wager on – including in-play betting, enabling bets to be placed on an event after it has started. Online betting operators also provide the incentive of odds which look like a better deal than high-street bookmakers, along with bonuses and promotions for customers. Alongside the convenience of being able to place a bet (in seconds) from a mobile phone or tablet at any time, this has helped online sports betting in the UK to grow year on year.

Betting for 'fun'

A study into why young people use gambling platforms reported that the most common responses were "because it's fun" (55%), "to give me something to do" and "to win money" (both 31%). Other reasons on the list included "because it's cool", "because it's something my parents or guardians do" and "because it helps me when I feel depressed".

Cross-selling of products

Cross-selling is a critical marketing strategy for sports betting operators. It is a concern because it can lead users of one gambling platform onto another, and then to another. These other gambling apps and sites include high-speed casino games (such as blackjack and roulette), which are extremely addictive and financially thrive on engaging the user to gamble.

Underage gambling

The UK Gambling Commission suggests around 140,000 11- to 18-year-olds have, or risk having, a gambling problem. Gambling under 18 is illegal, but some platforms' weak age verification processes make it possible for young people to bet using their own card details or an adult's. Usually, if the name used to sign up matches the cardholder's name, then the user will have no issues depositing funds to bet with.

Financial risks

There have been numerous reports of instances where a young person has gambled away a significant amount of money in a short space of time on a parent's card. The parent has then had to retrospectively file a complaint with the operator of the gambling platform and attempt to prove that it was not the cardholder who had signed up and placed bets.

Possibility of addiction

Researchers have proved that when we take any risk and it pays off, our brain releases the chemical called dopamine which causes us to feel good. So in a gambling context, when a person places a bet and is successful, these reward pathways are triggered in the brain. This physiological response can very rapidly become addictive for some people.

Negative impact on mental health

Several scientific studies have concluded that gambling can lead to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, anger management problems and even suicidal thoughts. In fact, gambling disorder (the overall term for compulsive gambling or gambling addiction) is highly correlated with suicide and disproportionately affects people under the age of 30.

Safety tips for Parents & Carers

Talk about the risks

Even if your child has not asked about betting on sports online, talk to them about its potential dangers. Young people are exposed to gambling through their devices, via social media and by friends. Make sure they are aware of the risks of gambling apps and platforms.

Support critical thinking

Encourage your child to think critically about online gambling. Explain how limited the chances of winning are, and make sure they understand that the whole business of gambling companies is taking money from users.

Install protective software

Install blocking software such as Gamban, BetFilter or BetBlocker on your child's devices. These user-friendly, non-intrusive pieces of software stop users from accessing thousands of online gambling websites and apps worldwide.

Limit access to funds

Ensure your card details aren't saved on your child's device (from a previous purchase, for example). This restricts their spending and stops them gambling if they don't have their own debit card. If your child does have a bank card, make sure they realise that gambling can leave them with no money to spend on other things that they like.

Be a role model

It's wise not to expose your child to gambling, because seeing you bet can normalise it and suggest to them that it is risk-free and harmless. They would also be far less likely to take you seriously when you talk to them about the dangers of gambling.

Seek support

If you're concerned about your child and online gambling, it's important to step in early. What might first appear to be the odd bet here and there can quickly become a serious issue. If your child is affected, don't be afraid to ask for guidance and advice – there are several charities who you can turn to for support.

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Meet Our Expert

TalkGEN is a non-profit organisation that was formed by individuals who have lived experiences of gambling harm. As well as their own direct efforts to reduce the dangers through research, education and treatment, TalkGEN actively campaign for reform of the sector to eliminate the potentially devastating effects of problem gambling on current and future generations.



Spot the signs

Problem gambling can be very isolating. Awareness of the issue is increasing, but it can still be difficult for people to seek help or even admit that they are struggling. These signs are common indicators of gambling issues: if your child displays any of them, it might be time for an honest talk.

- Regularly borrowing money
- Expenditures they don't want to explain
- Being secretive about their devices
- Controlling or manipulative behaviour
- Becoming depressed, agitated or anxious
- Changes in performance at school
- Mood swings

SOURCES: <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-56245526> | <http://gambling.com/gambling-topical/gambling/> | <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/gambling-commission-reports>



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