

## Young People and Gambling Harms

### Background

Following an approach from a local resident (who is the regional lead for [Young People's Gambling Harm Prevention Programme](#) at [GamCare](#)) offering free training to councillors on gambling related harm, Cllr Gabbert requested an information briefing for PDS on the issue.

### An introduction to young people's gambling and associated harms

The Gambling Act 2005 sets out how gambling is regulated in Great Britain and it covers arcades, betting, bingo, casinos, gaming machines, society lotteries and online gambling.

For most gambling activities, the legal age is 18. However, there are some which do not have age restrictions, such as playing a toy grabber or coin pusher game in an amusement arcade (a 'category D' machine) in the hope of catching a prize. Children also participate in non-regulated gambling such as non-commercial gambling between friends and family.

New forms of gambling are closely connected to online gaming. These include esports betting (such as on Fortnite or FIFA), skins betting and microtransactions within games (such as loot boxes). For further information see the [Big Deal factsheet](#)<sup>1</sup>. These are very popular with a young demographic who are too young to legally gamble.

Children and young people are exposed to gambling activities and gambling-style features from a young age. On the television, on the radio, at the football stadium or popping up during video games, gambling advertisements, sponsorship and influences are everywhere. Given that 1 in 5 adults with gambling problems started to gamble before they were 18, it is important to educate and address the topic early.

Since September 2020, Health Education has been compulsory in all state funded schools, with separate guidance outlining the content to be covered in independent schools. Secondary schools are required to address 'the risks related to online gambling including the accumulation of debt' within the Internet Safety and Harms section<sup>2</sup> of Health Education. There is no requirement to teach about gambling harms in primary schools.

### Local data on young people gambling

Young people's problem gambling is not a significant concern in Bromley. A search on the key words 'gamble' and 'gambling' for all Bromley MASH contacts over the last two years did not bring up any results for children/young people's gambling. Similarly, it was not cited as a reason for concern in any Children's Social Care assessments in the same period. Parental problem gambling is cited in some cases, among other concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://bigdeal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Online-Gaming-Factsheet.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Bromley CAMHS stated that gambling issues are not prevalent in the CAMHS population within the young people and they do not recall seeing any referrals which named this as an issue in the last year. They get some referrals where gaming is named, but fairly rarely.

Secondary headteachers are not seeing issues relating to gambling amongst their students.

London Borough of Bromley's Public Protection Division are not aware of any reported issues with fixed odds terminals and children in Bromley and gambling is not an identified priority in the current Safer Bromley Partnership Strategy.

### **National data on young people gambling**

The Gambling Commission has commissioned an annual survey of young people since 2011 (although it did not run in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic), which samples 2500-3000 young people aged 11-16 years in c.125 schools in England, Scotland and Wales. It is considered the most robust data we have nationally on this issue. Key findings from the past two surveys are below:

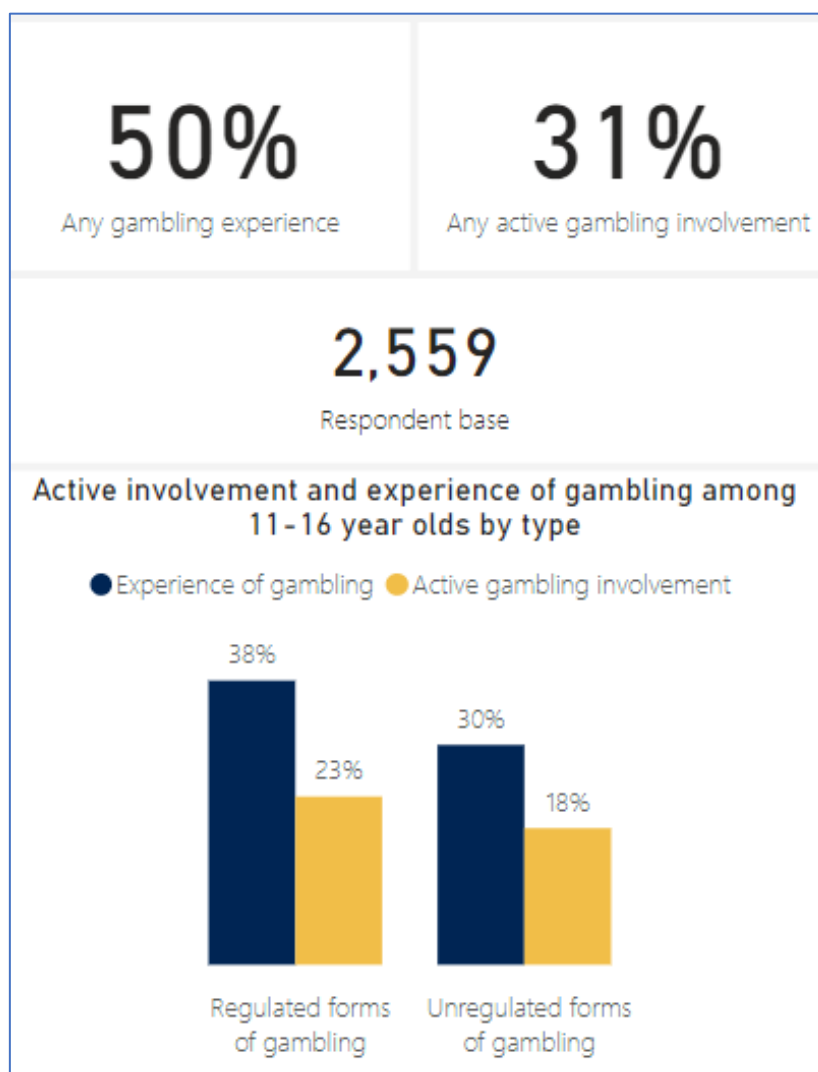
#### **2019 Survey**

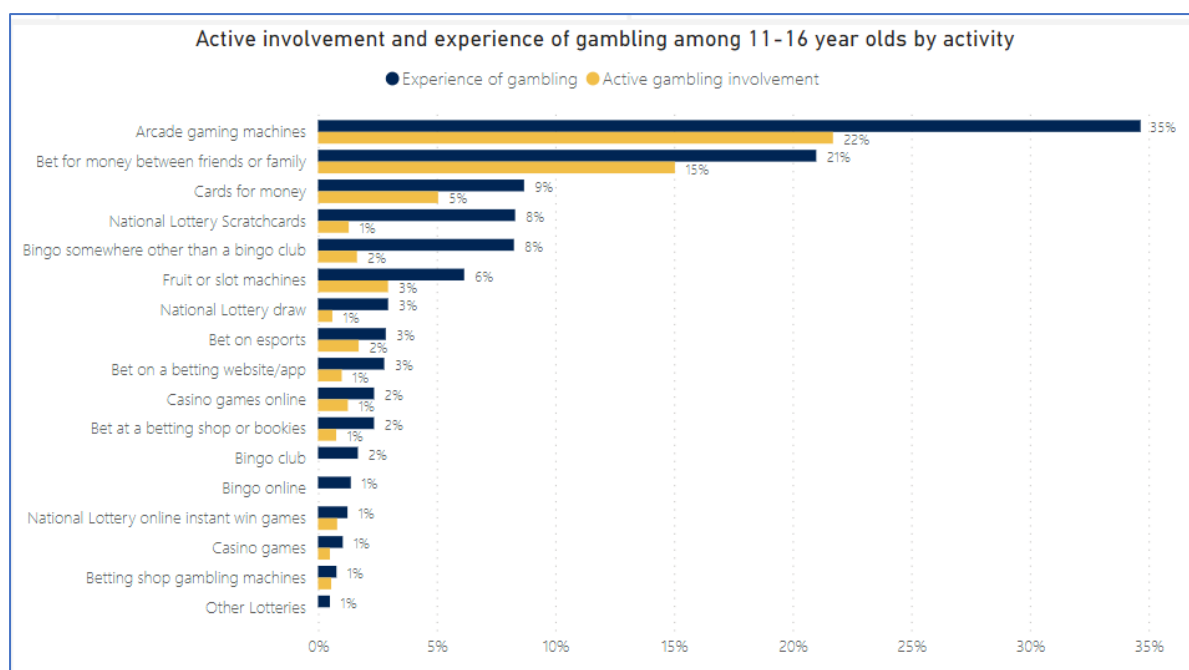
- 11% of the young people surveyed had spent their own money on a gambling activity in the 7 days prior to taking part in the study. This equates to approximately 350,000 11-16 year olds in England, Scotland and Wales.
- Participation in gambling remains higher among boys (13%), compared with girls (7%) and older children (12% of 14-16 year olds, compared with 9% of 11-13 year olds).
- The same group of young people surveyed by the Gambling Commission in 2019 were asked to consider why they had gambled in the past 12 months. The most common response was *'because it's fun'* (55%) with *'to win money'* and *'it gives me something to do'* (31%) equally second on the list. Other reasons on a long list included *'because it's cool'* (11%), *'because it's something my parents/guardians do'* (10%) and *'because it helps me when I feel depressed'* (6%) along with the influence of siblings and peers (both 6%).
- Boys are more likely to gamble *'to win money'* than girls (36%/24%), and young people who gamble *'because it's fun'* are more likely to be gambling on fruit/slot machines (53%).
- Among the young people who have not spent money on gambling, the most common reasons cited included *'because it is illegal'* (56%) and concern about future problems that gambling could lead to (35%).

#### **2022 Survey**

- 31 percent of 11 to 16-year-olds spent their own money on any gambling activity in the twelve months prior to taking part in the survey.
- During that period, the most common types of gambling activity that young people spent their own money on were legal or did not feature age restricted products, namely:

- playing arcade gaming machines such as penny pusher or claw grab machines (22 percent)
  - placing a bet for money between friends or family (15 percent)
  - playing cards with friends or family for money (5 percent).
- The youth-adapted problem gambling screen ([DSM-IV-MR-J](#)) identified 0.9 percent of 11 to 16 year olds as problem gamblers, 2.4 percent as at risk gamblers and 27.3 percent as non-problem gamblers.
  - Most (78 percent) young people who spent their own money gambling in the last 12 months, did so because they regard it as a fun thing to do. Whilst one in five (21 percent) agree that gambling makes them feel happy, more (29 percent) disagreed that it made them happy and the same proportion (29 percent) were unsure either way.
  - Three in ten (28 percent) young people had seen family members they live with gamble, of which 7 percent indicated it had resulted in arguments or tension at home. However, one in ten (11 percent) said that gambling by a family member had helped to pay for things at home for example holidays, trips or clubs.





### Gaming and links to gambling

Gambling-style behaviours that are present when playing online games will be far more common with under 18s than the data shows for more traditional forms of gambling listed in the table above. This is the area where BSCP (Bromley Safeguarding Children Partnership) has focused more of its work with the children’s workforce.

The 2019 report ‘[Gaming The System](#)’ from the Children’s Commissioner found that 93% of children in the UK play video games. Younger children play on average 2-3 hours per day and older children play on average 3-4 hours per day. These findings echo what BSCP found locally in Bromley in our own Digital Footprint Survey in 2017 (completed by over 3000 children, young people and parents/carers). Bromley children have access to their own device earlier than children nationally and children as young as 4 years old have their own smartphone.

The Children’s Commissioner warns:

“Monetisation is where online gaming starts to look less like ‘play’ and more like gambling. The amount of money children spend on games varies. In some cases, the amount of money children report spending on games has increased annually, with some spending over £300 in one year. Peer pressure from friends and online strangers, as well as influence from famous gaming YouTubers, are all factors that children say lead to them feeling pressured to spend money on in-game purchases. Children are scorned in games such as Fortnite if they are seen to wear the ‘default skin’ (the free avatar they receive at the start of the game). Children say they feel embarrassed if they cannot afford new ‘skins’, because then their friends see them as poor.

Game design also encourages spending. In games such as FIFA, children can either improve by investing significant time to build up their squad or spend money in the hope of quickly advancing their position. The latter option – to spend money in the hope of progressing – is the most popular option across the sample. With new

editions of FIFA being released every year, children feel as though there is an expectation and pressure to buy new players, spend money and build up their team as quickly as possible.

In some cases, this spending was done in order to receive a collection of unknown rewards, so-called loot boxes. The most obvious example of this is FIFA player packs, which some children acknowledged as being similar to gambling. The lack of guaranteed reward from these purchases can leave some children feeling as though they have wasted their money. The potential to receive a good reward means that children also feel that they are not in control of their spending, and sometimes try to 'chase losses'. In general, children do not have effective strategies to manage their online spend."

The Royal Society for Public Health's research, funded by GambleAware, '[Skins in the Game](#)' demonstrates the growing prevalence of the risks to children, with 11-14 year olds particularly susceptible. It cites 2018 research estimating the combined value of the loot box and skin gambling market is anticipated to reach \$50 billion by 2022.

### **Supporting prevention in Bromley**

100% of the 96 Bromley schools who completed the BSCP Safeguarding Self-Assessment in 2021 stated they met the requirement to teach online safety. However, the various aspects of online safety were not separated out so we cannot be certain how many schools are specifically covering gambling and gaming harms. The 2023 survey will include this as an additional question. The PSHE Association's own national teacher survey found just 22% of primary and less than half of secondary respondents stated their school had addressed gambling in any way.

In Bromley, every school, parent/carer/grandparent has access to the [Safer Schools App](#), at no cost to them. This offer was put in place in part to mitigate against increased harm online during the pandemic. The app and [Safer Schools website](#) links to tens of articles, soundbites/podcasts, clear advice on gaming and gambling harms, top tips and signposting to specialist support.

### **Training opportunities**

Members of the children's workforce in Bromley have been offered free training on gambling and gaming harms. Staff from the Early Intervention and Family Support Service (EIFS) completed training with GamCare in 2022. The rest of the workforce was offered a choice of two dates of bespoke training from YGAM<sup>3</sup> in early 2023. These sessions were paid for by London Safeguarding Children Partnership. Unfortunately, take-up was low.

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<sup>3</sup> YGAM is a national charity with a social purpose to inform, educate, safeguard, and build digital resilience amongst young and vulnerable people, helping them to make informed decisions and understand consequences around gambling and gaming.

## **Support for Problem Gambling**

Should a child be identified with problem gambling there are specialist support services available. GamCare offers a 24/7 service via a number of communication channels for both the young person themselves and the parent/carer. GamCare also offer online and face to face treatment, both 1:1 and in groups.

The National Centre for Behavioural Addictions is based in London and now treats people aged 13 years and above. This is the umbrella centre that houses both the [National Problem Gambling Clinic](#) and the [National Centre for Gaming Disorders](#). Local CAMHS will work with these clinics and young people.

## **Conclusion and Next Steps**

Problem gambling and gaming among children and young people very rarely comes to the attention of statutory safeguarding services in Bromley. There have been no referrals for this in the last two years.

The future harms most likely to affect children and young people arise from gaming online where gambling-like behaviours can start early. Focusing on preventative work is key and universal services are best placed to support this.

BSCP will continue to make training opportunities available to the entire children's workforce and encourage take-up. Where resources can be shared (copyright allowing) these will be added to the BSCP website.

BSCP will continue to encourage downloads of the Safer Schools App which contains the most up-to-date information on all safeguarding harms.

BSCP will specifically ask schools to state whether they are covering gambling within internet safety lessons with pupils/students when we repeat our Safeguarding Self-Assessment in Summer 2023.

The next SHEU survey (Schools and students Health Education Unit) of year 10s in Bromley, to be conducted in Spring 2024, will include a new question on gambling.