

# The Risks and Harms of Gaming and Gambling



## In this slide set, we will explore:





- Why young people are more vulnerable to gambling harms
- How gaming and gambling can harm young people
- The impact of gambling and gaming on society

\*This knowledge bank helps you understand the big questions:

*1. What are the potential harms of gaming and gambling on young people?*

*2. What are the wider impacts of gaming and gambling for communities and the wider society?*

# Why young people are more vulnerable to gambling harms

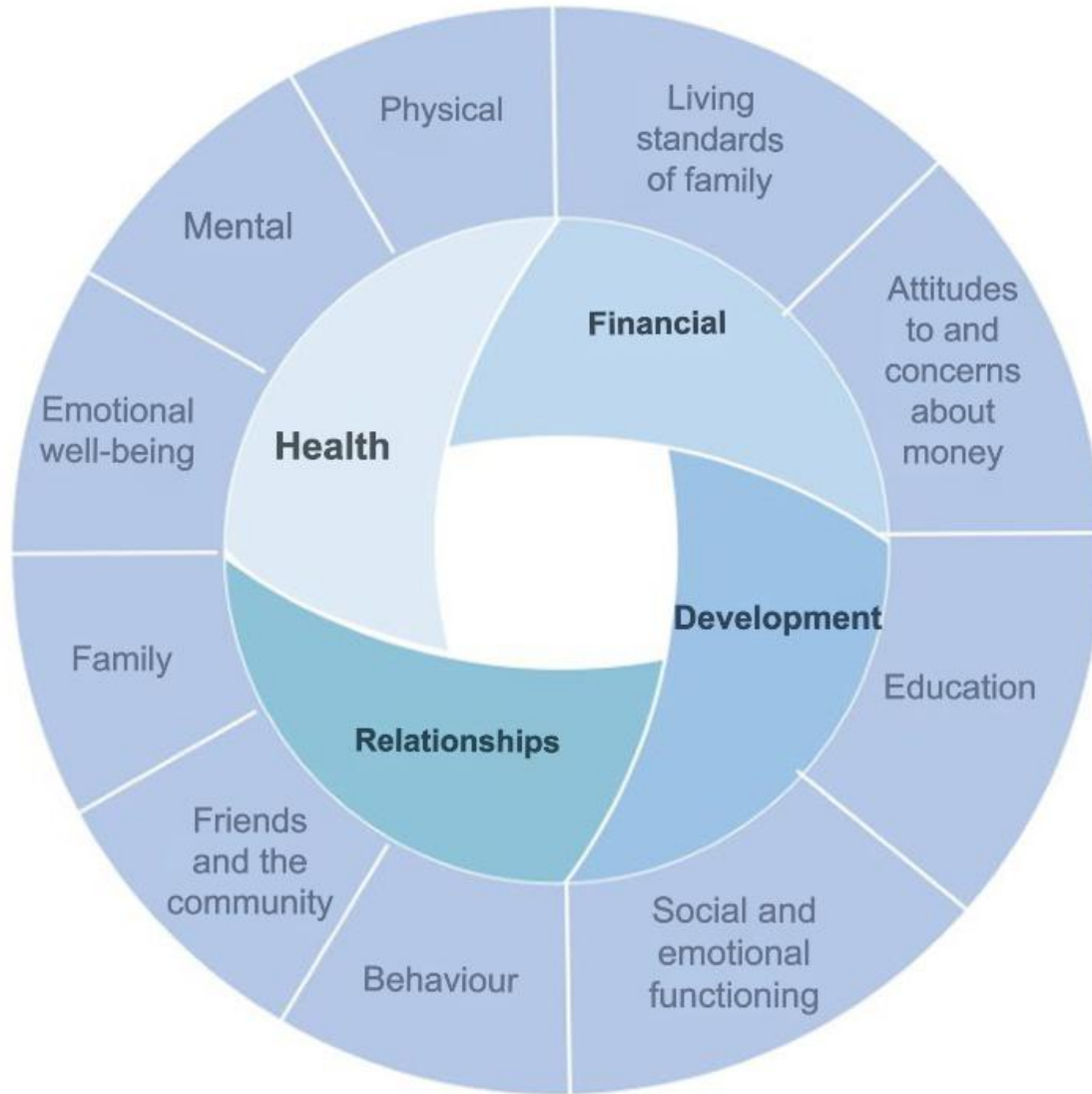
Category	Key factors	What this means in practice
Cognitive & Emotional Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underdeveloped impulse control</li> <li>• Limited understanding of odds</li> <li>• Emotional regulation challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ More likely to take risks, chase losses, and use gambling as a coping mechanism</li> </ul>
Susceptibility to Marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media &amp; advertising influence</li> <li>• Gamified features (loot boxes &amp; rewards)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Gambling appears fun and harmless, blurring lines between gaming and gambling &amp; betting</li> </ul>
Peer & Social pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence from friends &amp; online communities</li> <li>• Normalisation of behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Increased likelihood of engaging in gambling due to social acceptance</li> </ul>
Accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy access via apps &amp; online platforms</li> <li>• Free to play games with microtransactions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Early exposure &amp; progression into real-money gambling behaviours</li> </ul>

# Age Groups Most vulnerable to Gambling and Gaming-Related Harm



Preteens (10–12 years)	Early Teens (13–15 years)	Late Teens (16–19 years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limited understanding of probability and real-world consequences.</li><li>• Likely to mimic gambling behaviours seen in online games or among peers.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Highly susceptible to peer influence and social media trends.</li><li>• Vulnerable to influencer-promoted gambling and gamified content.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Greater autonomy and access to money.</li><li>• Increased exposure to online gambling platforms, which can escalate the risk of addiction.</li></ul>

# The Impact of Gambling Harms



From a public-health perspective, gambling harms for children and young people are linked across multiple areas of life and can build over time. Harms may affect them now as well as their future potential

# Psychological and Emotional Harms

Gambling is associated with increased psychological and emotional harms. For example:

- **Addiction risk:** Repeated rewards can train the brain to want quick wins repeatedly
- **Loss of control:** Difficulty stopping despite negative consequences.
- **Emotional distress:** Losing can lead to frustration, anger, guilt, shame or feeling low
- **Desensitisation:** Risk, loss and spending feel normal.
- **Mental health impact:** Increased risk of anxiety, low mood and low self-esteem

These types of harm often develop gradually and may not be immediately visible



# Physical Health Harms

There are several physical health harms that are associated with prolonged gaming, some of these being:

- **High screen time and inactivity:** Long periods sitting and reduced physical movement
- **Poor posture and strain:** Extended sitting can lead to back, neck and muscle pain
- **Sleep disruption:** Late-night screen use and blue light can reduce sleep quality and duration
- **Fatigue and low energy:** Poor sleep leads to tiredness and reduced activity
- **Weight gain:** Inactivity and irregular eating can increase the risk of weight gain
- **Eye and hand strain:** Eye strain, headaches, and repetitive strain injuries from prolonged screen use

# Financial and Material Harms

People experiencing severe gambling-related harms are likely to face financial impacts that affect their day-to-day lives. These can include:

- Spending real money on virtual items or random rewards
- Losing sense of the real value of money
- Small in-game purchases quickly adding up
- Borrowing, stealing money or selling items to keep playing
- Owing money to friends or peers

Financial harm can occur even when individual transactions seem small.



## Study & Work

- ❖ Reduced focus/productivity
- ❖ Lateness or absence
- ❖ Lower grades
- ❖ Fewer job opportunities
- ❖ Job losses

## Relationships

- ❖ Loss of trust
- ❖ Withdrawal & poor social skills
- ❖ Relationship breakdowns & domestic conflict

Wider harms caused by gambling

## Community

- ❖ Financial pressure can lead to crime
- ❖ Pressure on health/ charity services
- ❖ Mental health impact on services and workforce
- ❖ Housing instability or loss

## Wider impact

- ❖ **5-17 people** may be affected by one person's gambling
- ❖ Social cost of gambling in Wales = **£40-70 million annually**
- ❖ Can lead to ongoing cycles of debt and harm across generations

# References

The information provided in this slide set took references from the following:

**Public Health Wales — Gambling Health Needs Assessment (2022)**

<https://phw.nhs.wales/news/harmful-gambling-early-education-key-to-addressing-urgent-public-health-issue/gambling-health-needs-assessment-for-wales/>

**Public Health Wales — Early Education to Reduce Gambling Harms (2023)**

<https://phw.nhs.wales/news/harmful-gambling-early-education-key-to-addressing-urgent-public-health-issue/>

**Public Health Wales & Bangor University — Gambling as a Public Health Issue (2019)**

<https://www.greo.ca/Modules/EvidenceCentre/Details/gambling-as-a-public-health-issue-in-wales>

**Public Health Wales — The True Cost of Gambling (2023)**

<https://phw.nhs.wales/news/true-cost-of-gambling-underestimated-say-new-publications1/>

**UK Gambling Commission — Reducing Gambling Harms Resources (2019–2022)**

<https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/authorities/guide/reducing-gambling-harms-resources>

**Blakemore, S-J. and Robbins, T.W. (2012)** Decision-making in the adolescent brain. *Nature Neuroscience*, 15(9), pp.1184–1191.

**GambleAware (2022)** Youth gambling and harm report. London: GambleAware.

**NHS (2023)** Gambling addiction. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/gambling-addiction/>

**Public Health Wales (2021)** Gambling-related harm: evidence review. Cardiff: Public Health Wales.

**Royal Society for Public Health (2019)** Skins in the game: gambling and the role of video games. London: RSPH.

**World Health Organization (2021)** Adolescent development and risk behaviour. Geneva: WHO.