

Young People and Problem Gambling

What do young people gamble on? Young people take part in all forms of gambling. The most common types for young people between 11 and 16 are the lottery, scratchcards and slot machines, and making bets or playing cards with friends, with either cash or other items at stake.

Legal Ages

As a general rule, the minimum legal age for gambling in the UK is 18 years old. This applies to adult gaming centres, betting shops, bingo halls, casinos, racetracks and online gambling. The exceptions to this are the National Lottery and scratchcards – you're allowed to take part in these from the age of 16.

However, some gaming machines, such as coin pushers, teddy grabbers and some lower stakes fruit machines in family entertainment centres and amusement arcades don't have a minimum legal age at all. These might not seem risky because usually you'll only lose between 2p and £1 in a single game, but very few of us ever stop at one. It's incredibly easy to keep popping pound coins into change machines, then dropping the change into these games. Before you know it you've spend twenty pounds on a keyring or cheap toy car. Is it really worth it?

Any venue that provides gambling activities with a minimum legal age must stick to rules designed to prevent underage gambling.

Can young people have gambling problems?

Anyone of any age can experience problems with controlling their gambling behaviour. For young people, the impact of the problem may seem trivial – often there is no job, mortgage or family to lose. However gambling problems are experienced by around 2% of people aged 11 to 15, around 60,000 young people in Britain. Problem gambling is associated with educational problems such as low attainment and truancy, can lead to emotional, social and behavioural problems, and worryingly, those who begin their gambling careers earlier in life are more likely to be problem gamblers in adulthood.

Where can I get help?

There is information and advice tailored specifically for young people at **www.bigdeal.org.uk**. This site is part of GamCare, the national organisation for advice and help for anyone suffering with a gambling problem.

You can contact the **National Gambling Helpline on 0808 8020 133**.