

Tackling Gambling Harms in Great Britain

Gambling harm remains a critical public health issue. Whilst significant progress has been made in addressing this challenge, including the introduction of a statutory industry levy to fund research, prevention and treatment (RPT), and implementation of new regulations to protect the public from harmful gambling products, the job is not done.

GambleAware has played a central role in leading the sector in the prevention and treatment of gambling harms, and has spearheaded advocacy on policy reform to create a safer environment for the public. Since 2017, GambleAware has championed the development of a statutory, public health-led system to address gambling harms and we welcome this new era where such harms are recognised and funded through a statutory levy.

The charity has long been concerned that exposure to gambling is part of everyday life, which is particularly concerning for children and young people. Urgent action is needed to introduce effective regulation of gambling advertising, marketing and sponsorship in Great Britain.

This summary provides an overview of the key policy positions GambleAware has called for to prevent gambling harms across Great Britain and to protect children and young people.

GambleAware has been at the forefront of tackling gambling harms

GambleAware has been the leading independent charity and strategic commissioner of gambling harm prevention and treatment across Great Britain since 2017. We have worked closely with the UK government, regulators, the statutory and third sectors, and those with lived experience to deliver a coordinated whole system approach. We also worked to hold the gambling industry to account by pushing for best practice to keep people safe from harm.

GambleAware, alongside others in the third sector and the lived experience community, has worked to deliver effective, evidence-based support and treatment for those affected by gambling harms in Great Britain. The National Gambling Support Network has played a vital role in reaching thousands of people each year, with 9 in 10 patients seeing an improvement after completing treatmentⁱ.

Our national prevention programmes have offered crucial early intervention and public health messaging to reduce harm. Our final public health behaviour change campaign, on gambling harms stigma, was found by independent academics to be the only harm reduction advert studied to yield significant decreases in gambling urgesⁱⁱ.

We are pleased that a number of GambleAware's evidence-based and effective prevention interventions will be maintained in the new system – ensuring no drop in support for people at-risk of, or experiencing, gambling harms.

Under the new statutory system for gambling harms, responsibility for prevention, treatment and research commissioning will be split between the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID), NHS England (NHSE), and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), alongside the relevant bodies in Scotland and Wales. Funding for this activity will be obtained through the statutory levy on gambling operators, who will be required to pay between 1% to 0.1% of Gross Gambling Yields to the UK Gambling Commission. More information about this can be found [here](#).

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Reducing exposure to gambling is vital for a public health approach

In line with a public health approach, reducing exposure to, and normalisation of, gambling is vital, particularly for children and young people. GambleAware has long been concerned that exposure to gambling is part of everyday life, which is particularly problematic for children and young people:

- GambleAware research has found stark evidence of exposure to gambling marketing for 11-24 year olds¹:
 - **Almost all (96%) had awareness of any types of gambling marketing** in the previous month.
 - Children and young people with the greatest advertising exposure are 2.3x more likely to experience 'problem gambling' in their lifetime
 - **Only 38% were aware of any health information or warnings** on gambling adverts.
- Further research commissioned by GambleAware also revealed the impact of gambling on children and young people's everyday lives. With children describing their online spaces as 'saturated' with gambling, gambling-like content and advertising²:
 - **Three in four children agree that gambling advertising makes gambling seem more fun** (76%) and/or harmless/risk-free (73%).
- For those who are already experiencing harm from gambling, the impact of exposure to gambling advertising and marketing was also highlighted concerning³:
 - People experiencing gambling harms are **40 times more likely to spend more money and time gambling due to seeing gambling advertising**, compared to those without any problems.
 - More than half (55%) feel they cannot escape adverts about gambling.

Support for change and introduction of further regulations

A [report](#) published in November 2024 by the University of Bristol and Ipsos, commissioned by GambleAware, revealed that the **Great Britain had the most lenient regulations on gambling advertising** in comparison to other European countries such as Italy, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium⁴. This is **despite having more research on the negative effects of gambling on the population** than many of these countries.

However, there is strong public support for change and for the introduction of greater restrictions on gambling advertising and marketing:

- A YouGov survey found that **77% of football fans** believe that gambling companies are **inappropriate sponsors** for football teams, with **three in five agreeing that there should be a ban** on this sponsorship in football competitions (57%) and pitch-side (56%)⁵
- **Over three in five people agree there are too many gambling adverts** (63%), with a similar amount **worried about the impact on young people** (62%)⁶.

¹ The effect of marketing and advertising on children, young people and vulnerable people Quantitative Research Report https://www.begambleaware.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/the-effect-of-gambling-marketing-and-advertising_quants-report.pdf

² Qualitative Research on the Lived Experience and Views of Gambling among Children and Young People <https://www.gambleaware.org/our-research/publication-library/articles/qualitative-research-on-the-lived-experience-and-views-of-gamblingamong-children-and-young-people/>

³ Ipsos research explores barriers to opening up about experiencing problems with gambling <https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/ipsos-research-exploresbarriers-opening-about-experiencing-problems-gambling>

⁴ Drivers of Gambling Marketing Restrictions – An International Comparison. Available [here](#).

⁵ <https://www.gamblinginsider.com/news/2023/yougov-poll-finds-77-of-football-fans-support-gambling-sponsorship-shirt-ban>

⁶ Annual GB Treatment and Support Survey 2024. Available [here](#).

Urgent policy reform is needed to continue the fight against gambling harms

Gambling harms are a serious public health issue which can affect anyone, and the prevention of harm cannot succeed without changes to the wider environment. Creating a regulatory and policy environment that reduces exposure to and effectively communicates the risks from participating in gambling is critical to efforts to protect people from harms.

Based on GambleAware's extensive research, and engagement with other experts such as those with lived experience of gambling harms and academics, GambleAware has identified three areas for reform:

1. Better regulation of advertising, marketing and sponsorship

A key driver in the normalisation of gambling is the proliferation of gambling advertising and sponsorship. **Significant sums are spent by the industry**: the last available estimate from 2018 was **£1.5bn/year**.

GambleAware is particularly concerned about the impact of this on gambling behaviours of CYP, **with those with the greatest advertising exposure being 2.3x more likely to experience 'problem gambling' in their lifetime⁷**.

To address this, GambleAware has been calling for **more regulation of gambling marketing to reduce exposure among CYP, and effectively communicate the risks related to it**:

1. A pre-watershed ban on all broadcast advertising, including sports sponsorships.
2. All gambling marketing to include independent evidence-led health warnings with effective signposting to support.
3. A ban on gambling advertising at sports events – including the total removal of sponsorships from sports clothing, merchandise and in-stadia.

More information about the importance and potential impact of this change, can be found in our policy paper "[Gambling marketing in Great Britain: What needs to change and why?](#)".

2. Updating online gambling content regulations for the digital age

Without Government attention and intervention, we are highly concerned that Great Britain will face an **increase in gambling-related harms as day-to-day life continues to be increasingly carried out online**. We are particularly concerned about the impact on CYP and those already experiencing harm.

- Almost **three in four 11-17-year-olds (74%) report having seen or heard gambling advertising online**.
- The blurring of paid advertising with wider marketing content, such as content marketing and influencer marketing, **makes it difficult for children to recognise** what is advertising and what is independent content.
- This **normalises gambling, presenting it as harmless or risk-free**. This can cause CYP to be drawn toward gambling products before they are legally permitted to participate.

We have identified the following areas for improvement:

⁷ The effect of marketing and advertising on children, young people and vulnerable people Quantitative Research Report
https://www.begambleaware.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/the-effect-of-gambling-marketing-and-advertising_quants-report.pdf

- 1. A clear line of accountability:** Self-regulation of online marketing is heavily relied on, which raises concerns about commercial interests and makes GB an outlier compared to other countries. There is a lack of single oversight from one Government entity over the respective work of multiple departments and regulatory bodies, driving duplicative efforts, confusion of responsibilities and a lack of accountability.
- 2. Improve enforcement powers:** The critical powers to penalise gambling operators who do not follow the rules are limited, and the rules themselves have not been updated to reflect the ever-evolving digital age. The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) does not have a Government sponsor – this makes addressing the above limitations more challenging.
- 3. Ensure safer gambling messaging online:** The quality and effectiveness of safer gambling messaging in operator advertising and marketing has been shown to lack effectiveness, can stigmatise those experiencing harms, and can contribute to an increase in gambling behaviours.

More information about the critical role of improved regulations of online content, can be found in our policy paper [“Online gambling marketing: Are current regulations fit for the digital age?”](#).

3. Safer gambling messaging on National Lottery products

Whilst the National Lottery is a lower-risk form of gambling, it is not risk-free. With **such a high reach and public trust in the brand, the National Lottery operator could have a substantial positive impact on preventing and reducing harms.**

- Participation in the National Lottery draw is so common that the comparatively **low rate of harm still equates to a very large number of people who are experiencing it.**
- The draw alone is **estimated to reach 600,000 people experiencing 'problem gambling' (PGSI 8+).**
- This reach is increased even further by other National Lottery products with higher rates of use by individuals experiencing 'problem gambling' (PGSI 8+), such as **scratch cards (7.7%) and instant-win games (8.2%).**
- The National Lottery operator, Allwyn UK, was the **largest advertising spender of any gambling brand in 2024.**

The National Lottery's platform offers a unique opportunity to inform the public about the risk of gambling harms, normalise support seeking, and signpost effectively to support. As such, The National Lottery should **signpost to gambling support services on its advertising as well as its products.** This was recommended by House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee in 2022, which stated: “with immediate effect, all National Lottery products should carry GambleAware branding”.

More information about this issue the need for the National Lottery to take the same efforts towards improving safer gambling behaviours as other operators, can be found in our policy paper [“The National Lottery: Why change is needed to reduce gambling harm”](#).

Research related to gambling harms

GambleAware commissioned a significant amount of research to bolster understanding of gambling harms and support our policy development work – links can be found in the endnotes.

- Public support for policy recommendations (September 2025):** A survey among the public found was strong support for increased regulation on gambling advertising, including a ban on advertising pre-watershed (78%) and at sporting events (58%).ⁱⁱⁱ

- **Exposure to advertising for CYP (March 2020):** A survey among CYP found that 96% are exposed to gambling adverts each month, but just 38% recalled any health information or warnings on gambling adverts.^{iv}
- **Impact of marketing on minority communities (December 2023):** Interviews with minority communities found they felt marketing may disproportionately impact individuals experiencing financial hardship due to the marketing of gambling as an easy and quick way to make money, which was seen as particularly appealing.^v
- **The lived experience of CYP (April 2024):** Interviews with children found some feel their online spaces are “saturated” with gambling content.^{vi}
- **Effectiveness of gambling messaging on advertising (May 2024):** A large-scale survey found that health warnings on adverts (e.g., “gambling comes at a cost”, “gambling can be addictive”) were more impactful, memorable, and effective at communicating the risks compared to the industry-led strapline “Take Time To Think”.^{vii}
- **Public attitudes towards marketing restrictions (June 2024):** A survey among the public found that two in three say there is too much advertising about gambling (67%) and are concerned about the impact it has on children (66%). Marketing was 40 times more likely to cause those already experiencing gambling harm to spend more money and time on gambling, suggesting advertising may exacerbate harms among the worst affected.^{viii}
- **International marketing policy comparisons (November 2024):** This review found that Britain is falling behind in implementing legislation on gambling marketing – particularly in comparison to other European countries such as Italy, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium. This is despite there being more evidence on the impact of marketing in the UK compared to any of these countries.^{ix}
- **Effectiveness of industry safer gambling campaigns (August 2025):** An online experiment found that some industry adverts intending to promote “safer gambling” position gambling as “harmless” and encourage people to gamble more. The GambleAware stigma campaign was the only ad found to have a protective effect.^x
- **The impact of ‘influencer marketing (September 2025):** A survey among school children found that more than half feel they have no control over the amount of gambling content they see online.^{xi}
- **The impact of celebrity ambassadors (September 2025):** This research on the perceptions and appeal of celebrity ambassadors found that 76% of children felt it makes it look fun, while 73% feel it presents gambling as harmless and risk-free. 1 in 4 children have been tempted to spend money gambling after seeing a celebrity gambling or advertising gambling.^{xii}
- **CYP's reflections on gambling marketing (December 2025):** A survey among CYP found that seven in ten feel that it's difficult to avoid gambling advertising and content (68%) and feel more should be done to reduce the amount of it (73%). Most CYP support marketing restrictions on social media popular with children (84%).^{xiii}

ⁱ Annual Statistics from the National Support Network (Great Britain) 2023/2024. Available [here](#).

ⁱⁱ Not always as advertised: Different effects from viewing safer gambling (harm prevention) adverts on gambling urges. Available [here](#).

ⁱⁱⁱ Annual GB Treatment and Support Survey 2024. Available [here](#).

^{iv} The effect of marketing and advertising on children, young people and vulnerable people Quantitative Research Report. Available [here](#).

^v Minority Communities & Gambling Harms: Qualitative and Synthesis Report. Available [here](#).

^{vi} Qualitative Research on the Lived Experience and Views of Gambling among Children and Young People. Available [here](#).

^{vii} Executive summary: Improving safer gambling messaging on operator advertising. Available [here](#).

^{viii} Ipsos research explores barriers to opening up about experiencing problems with gambling. Available [here](#).

^{ix} Drivers of Gambling Marketing Restrictions – An International Comparison. Available [here](#).

^x Testing Safer Gambling Video Advertising: A Randomised Controlled Trial. Available [here](#).

^{x1} Young people and gambling-related influencer content: Understanding exposure to and impact of gambling-related influencer content on young people and identifying potential strategies for change. Available [here](#).

^{xii} The Appeal of Celebrity Ambassadors to Children & Young People Aged 11-17. Available [here](#).

^{xiii} Young People's Reflections on Gambling Marketing: A Survey of 11-24-Year-Olds in Great Britain. To be published later in 2025.