

GAMBLEAWARE URGE GREATER AWARENESS OF THE RISKS RELATED TO GAMBLING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Everyone must be aware of the risks related to gambling at this challenging time.

Many people will be feeling more anxious and stressed at the moment, and some will find themselves facing financial uncertainty or difficulties. Those experiencing financial stress may use gambling as a way to cope or fill time. Many people could find themselves less occupied during isolation, possibly leading to an increase in gambling activity. Isolation may also mean that people experience less social support. There are likely to be fewer opportunities for friends, family or professionals to identify and signpost those experiencing gambling harms to sources of help and advice.

We encourage everyone to be aware of the potential impact of gambling on their own health and wellbeing, and on that of family, friends, or those they may meet in a professional capacity at this time. Here is a list of resources and guidance available to help ensure everyone is kept safe from gambling harms.

Advice for individuals:

General advice for maintaining wellbeing whilst at home

Looking after your mind and your body are increasingly important during this uncertain and challenging time. It is common to be feeling bored, lonely and anxious about your health and that of your family and friends. You can find advice and tips to look after your mental health and wellbeing on the [Every Mind Matters](#)¹ and [Clear Your Head](#)² websites.

Help and support in relation to gambling

- For free confidential advice and help, the National Gambling Helpline is available 24/7, on 0808 8020 133 or [live chat](#)³. If someone needs treatment, reassure them that the [National Gambling Treatment Service](#)⁴ continues to operate during this time, providing treatment that is tailored to an individual's needs, delivered over the telephone or on-line. Self-referrals to the National Gambling Treatment Service are welcome via the National Gambling Helpline. The National Gambling Treatment Service is a network of organisations working together to provide confidential treatment and support for anyone experiencing gambling harms, free to access across England, Scotland and Wales.
- [BeGambleAware.org](#)⁵ provides information and advice to help keep people safe from gambling harms, and signposts those that need immediate help and support to the National Gambling Helpline, operated by GamCare.

¹ <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

² <https://clearyourhead.scot/>

³ <https://aurapp01.mplaurora.net/chatapp/JoinChat.aspx>

⁴ <https://www.begambleaware.org/NGT>

⁵ [BeGambleAware.org](https://www.begambleaware.org)

- More information on the right services and charities to help yourself or someone else with their gambling problem can also be found on Citizens Advice website [here](#)⁶, including information and support for those experiencing financial difficulties as a result of their own gambling or someone else's.

Staying in control

In these challenging times people are turning to various forms of distraction to help the day pass. Gambling to cope with boredom, stress or anxiety may actually make some people feel worse. For those who do choose to gamble, there are tips and advice to help keep them safe from harms, including:

1. Don't think of gambling as a way to make money
2. Only gamble with money you can afford to lose (if you are concerned you might be gambling more than normal during this period, start to work out your spending with the [Safer Gambling calculator](#)⁷)
3. Set a money limit and try to keep track of what you are spending
4. Decide on a time limit in advance, you could even set an alarm to remind you when to stop
5. Never chase your losses as this usually just leads to bigger and bigger losses
6. Only gamble when you are not feeling stressed, upset or bored. Balance gambling with other activities, such as going for some fresh air, reading a book or getting in touch with your friends and family
7. Take frequent breaks
8. Alcohol or drugs can cloud your judgement, so it's always best to avoid gambling when drinking or using drugs

More information on these tips can be found [here](#)⁸.

If you feel someone might need support to stay in control of gambling during this time, here are options in the form of tools and software to suggest:

- Self-exclusion: Self-exclusion means asking a gambling provider to exclude you from gambling with them for a length of time, usually between six and twelve months but this can be for up to five years for online gambling. Individuals can self-exclude from each separate company they might gamble with, or from multiple companies at the same time. More information on how to self-exclude can be found [here](#)⁹.
- Blocking software: Gamblers can download a 'site blocker', which can block access from computers, tablets and phones to many online gambling sites, including some sites which are not part of GAMSTOP's online self-exclusion service e.g. illegal and overseas website. Site blockers may also prevent some gambling advertising. You can find out more about blocking software [here](#)¹⁰.

⁶ <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/get-help-with-gambling-problems/>

⁷ <https://www.begambleaware.org/safer-gambling/how-much-do-you-spend/>

⁸ <https://www.begambleaware.org/safer-gambling/tips-for-gambling-safely/>

⁹ <https://www.begambleaware.org/safer-gambling/how-to-self-exclude/>

¹⁰ <https://www.begambleaware.org/safer-gambling/gambling-blocking-software/>

- Bank account gambling block: Many banks now offer the option to block all spending on gambling websites and companies. People can contact their bank to see if this is something they can put in place, or it might be available to turn on via online banking or mobile banking apps.

Information for parents and schools:

There are a wide range of resources available from GambleAware's strategic partners to provide support and to help parents, carers and professionals understand, recognise and address gambling and risk.

- PSHE Association have developed resources to help children and young people understand and avoid risks associated with gambling which can be accessed for free [here](#)¹¹.
- Parent Zone have developed resource packs for parents, carers and professionals, so they can support young people understand the risks of gambling. Resources on gaming and gambling can be downloaded for free [here](#)¹², and resources to help young people stay in control of their finances when gambling can be found [here](#)¹³.
- Fast Forward run the [Scottish Gambling Education Hub](#)¹⁴ which provides free training and resources to help parents, carers and professionals working with young people address gambling issues across Scotland. You can access their [Gambling Education toolkit](#)¹⁵ online for free.

Guidance for organisations on what you can do to help:

Organisations are encouraged to share this information on the advice and support available with their employees to help protect their health and wellbeing. Organisations which work with the public may also wish to share the advice with people who use their services.

For further training for employees, and resources aimed at supporting professionals to identify and reduce gambling harms, please see the following:

- [E-Learning on identifying and responding to gambling harms](#)¹⁶ has been developed by the Royal Society for Public Health in partnership with GambleAware.
- [The Citizens Advice Gambling Support Service](#)¹⁷, funded by GambleAware, offers training to organisations to help them understand how gambling harms may impact their service users and how to keep people safe. This service will be delivering online webinar training in the coming weeks and can be contacted online or via your local Citizens Advice office.

¹¹ <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/content/gambling>

¹² <https://parentzone.org.uk/gaming-or-gambling>

¹³ <https://parentzone.org.uk/knowthestakes>

¹⁴ <https://www.fastforward.org.uk/projects/gedhub/>

¹⁵ <https://fastforward.org.uk/gamblingtoolkit/>

¹⁶ <https://www.rsph.org.uk/our-services/e-learning/courses/understanding-and-responding-to-gambling-related-harm.html>

¹⁷ <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>