

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **YOUNG PEOPLE KEY FOCUS OF GAMBLEAWARE CONFERENCE AS FINDINGS OF IN-DEPTH STUDY REVEAL WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE YOUNG PEOPLE'S GAMBLING HABITS**

- In-depth longitudinal study, commissioned by GambleAware and part of the 'Bristol Children of the 90s' study, has been published to coincide with the charity's annual conference in London.
- Findings show that regular weekly gamblers were more likely to be male and had developed habits and patterns of play by age 20.
- Factors such as the gambling habits of parents and social media use were also found to influence a young person's gambling activity.

**London, 5 December 2019:** GambleAware is today holding its annual conference, with the theme of 'Keeping children and young people safe from gambling harms'. The event, which is attended by gambling industry experts, policy makers and treatment providers, will also be a forum of discussion for the gambling specific findings of the 'Bristol Children of the 90s' study.

The study measured young people's gambling at 17, 20 and 24 years old and revealed that those who gambled weekly were more likely to be male and had developed regular patterns of play and gambling habits by the age of 20. Participation in gambling in the past year was reported by more than half (54%) of 17 year olds, which increased to almost seven in ten (68%) for 20 year olds, and fell slightly by the time those taking part reached the age of 24, to nearly two thirds (66%) saying they had gambled in the past year. The sample used included over 3,500 people for each age group, as well as data from surveys and interviews with parents, which were carried out before engaging with their children on the topic of gambling.

When looking at gambling activity, researchers found that playing the lottery, buying scratchcards and placing private bets with friends were the most common forms of gambling. As the young people got older, there was a significant increase in online betting activity amongst men, going from 9% at age 17, to 35% at age 20, and 47% at age 24. There was also an increase amongst women, however not as significant, rising from 0.8% at age 17 to 4% at age 20 and 11% at age 24.

The study suggests that for young people who gambled regularly, several environmental and family factors had a significant impact on their activity. For example, participants whose parents gambled regularly were more likely to gamble themselves and regular gamblers were also found to have high social media usage and to have been regular players of video games when younger. Regular gamblers had lower well-being scores and were at least twice as likely to smoke cigarettes daily and to drink alcohol weekly. A small minority (6-7%) of regular gamblers had problems with gambling and at the age of 24 they were more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, and to engage in criminal activity.

**Marc Etches, CEO of GambleAware has said:**

*"GambleAware is focused on keeping people safe from gambling harms. In particular, we are concerned to protect children and young people who are growing up in a world where technology makes gambling, and gambling-like activity, much more accessible. One in eight 11-16 year olds are reported as following gambling businesses on social media, for example. Our annual conference will showcase the 'Bristol Children of the 90s' study alongside other important contributions to discussions that will examine the theme of gambling and young people from a public health perspective."*

**Alan Emond, Emeritus Professor of Child Health at the Centre for Academic Child Health at Bristol Medical School said:**

*"The unique features of the 'Children of the 90s' gambling study are that the parent's gambling was measured before the young people's gambling, and the young people were asked about their gambling activity three times in the transition period from adolescence into young adulthood. Although many young people gambled without any harm, a small minority (6-7%) of males showed problem gambling behaviours associated with poor mental health and wellbeing, involvement in crime, and potentially harmful*

*use of drugs and alcohol. To protect these vulnerable young people from gambling harm requires a combination of education, legislation and appropriate treatment services.”*

The study, based at the University of Bristol, demonstrates GambleAware’s ongoing work to collaborate with key parties to help prevent gambling harms. Having been subject to a robust evaluation and process, the research reaffirms the charity’s track record of funding independent research which can be used to better understand the nature of gambling harms.

The conference will also be hosting discussions about the upcoming GambleAware commissioned research by the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH), which explores the attitudes of young people to gaming and gambling, including their concerns about its addictive nature. Researchers will talk about their findings and how young people and children view loot boxes and skin betting as addictive. Conversations will also cover issues around 11-14 year olds participating in activity they deem the most addictive, as well as the negative impact the relationship between gambling and gaming, as well as gambling and sport, has on young people’s lives.

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**Contact:**

Sarah Evans

+447523 609413

[gambleaware@atlas-partners.co.uk](mailto:gambleaware@atlas-partners.co.uk)

**NOTES**

**About Bristol’s Children of the 90s Study:**

- Based at the University of Bristol, Children of the 90s, also known as the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC), is a long-term health research project that enrolled more than 14,000 pregnant women in 1991 and 1992. It has been following the health and development of the parents, their children and now their grandchildren in detail ever since. It receives core funding from the Medical Research Council, the Wellcome Trust, and the University of Bristol.

**About GambleAware:**

- GambleAware is an independent charity (Charity No. England & Wales 1093910, Scotland SC049433) that champions a public health approach to preventing gambling harms – see <http://about.gambleaware.org/>

- GambleAware is a commissioner of integrated prevention, education and treatment services on a national scale, with over £40 million of grant funding under active management. In partnership with gambling treatment providers, GambleAware has spent several years methodically building structures for commissioning a coherent system of brief intervention and treatment services, with clearly defined care pathways and established referral routes to and from the NHS – a National Gambling Treatment Service.
- The National Gambling Treatment Service brings together a National Gambling Helpline and a network of locally based providers across Great Britain that works with partner agencies and people with lived experience to design and deliver a system, which meets the needs of individuals. This system delivers a range of treatment services, including brief intervention, counselling (delivered either face-to-face or online), residential programmes and psychiatrist-led care.
- In the 12 months to 31 March 2019, provisional figures show that the National Gambling Treatment Service treated 10,000 people and this is projected to rise to 24,000 people a year by 2021. Helpline activity is currently running at about 30,000 calls and on-line chats per annum. GambleAware also runs the website BeGambleAware.org which helps 2.7 million visitors a year, and signposts to a wide range of support services.
- GambleAware produces public health campaigns including **Bet Regret**. A Safer Gambling Board, including representatives from Public Health England, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and GambleAware, is responsible for the design and delivery of a campaign based on best practice in public health education. The Bet Regret campaign is being funded through specific, additional donations to the charity, in line with a commitment given to the government by the broadcasting, advertising and gambling industries.  
See <https://about.gambleaware.org/prevention/safer-gambling-campaign/>.