



Gambling with Lives

Education programme

A word from our founders and co-chairs, Charles and Liz Ritchie MBE



“What makes this programme unique is that it focuses on the role of the gambling industry and the harm caused by its addictive products and harmful practices.

“By raising awareness of the harm that gambling can cause from an early age, as opposed to just waiting for the harm to occur, we’re confident we can help protect many young people.

“But education must also be accompanied by real changes to our outdated gambling regulations to have the biggest impact.”

Charity background

Gambling with Lives (GwL) is a charity and community of bereaved families that provides support, raises awareness of the devastating effects of gambling disorder, and campaigns for change.

Charles and Liz Ritchie started GwL in 2018 after losing their son Jack to gambling-related suicide in 2017. They were both awarded MBEs in the 2023 New Year Honours list for their services to charity and bereaved families.

GwL aims to:

- Support families who have been bereaved by gambling-related suicides
- Raise awareness amongst gamblers, their families and friends, and health professionals of the dangerous effects of gambling on mental health, and the high suicide risk associated with gambling disorder
- **In support of these aims, we seek to:**
 - Reduce gambling-related harm by supporting better regulation of gambling products which lead to an increased risk of gambling addiction and adverse effects on health
 - Promote the treatment of gambling as a health issue which requires improved access to health services integrated with the NHS, and access to support for families and friends
 - Give a voice to families and friends (affected others) bereaved by gambling suicide and bring the health issues surrounding gambling to the attention of policy makers and bodies responsible for regulating the gambling industry



Introduction and context

The Gambling Commission estimate that 450,000 11–16-year-olds gamble in the UK, with at least 30,000 children already addicted, whilst YouGov research suggests that there are 5 million people currently negatively impacted by gambling. Direct gambling harms including damage to mental health, finances, life opportunities, and relationships.

One in four gamblers are at substantially higher risk of suffering harm. These harms affect both the gambler and affected others, such as family members and close friends. Gambling is a unique product, as the harms can occur in a matter of seconds – the damage is felt in a much shorter period of time than with comparative activities like smoking.

Gambling with Lives was set up by the families and friends of young people who had taken their own lives as a direct result of gambling. These were all very normal, bright, popular and happy young folk who had great futures ahead of them gambling was their only problem.

Their deaths were very sudden – “out of the blue” with no warning. They were not the result of massive gambling debts, rather what gambling had done to their hearts and minds. It’s estimated by Public Health England that there are over 400 deaths related to gambling every year in England alone, and young people are most at risk.

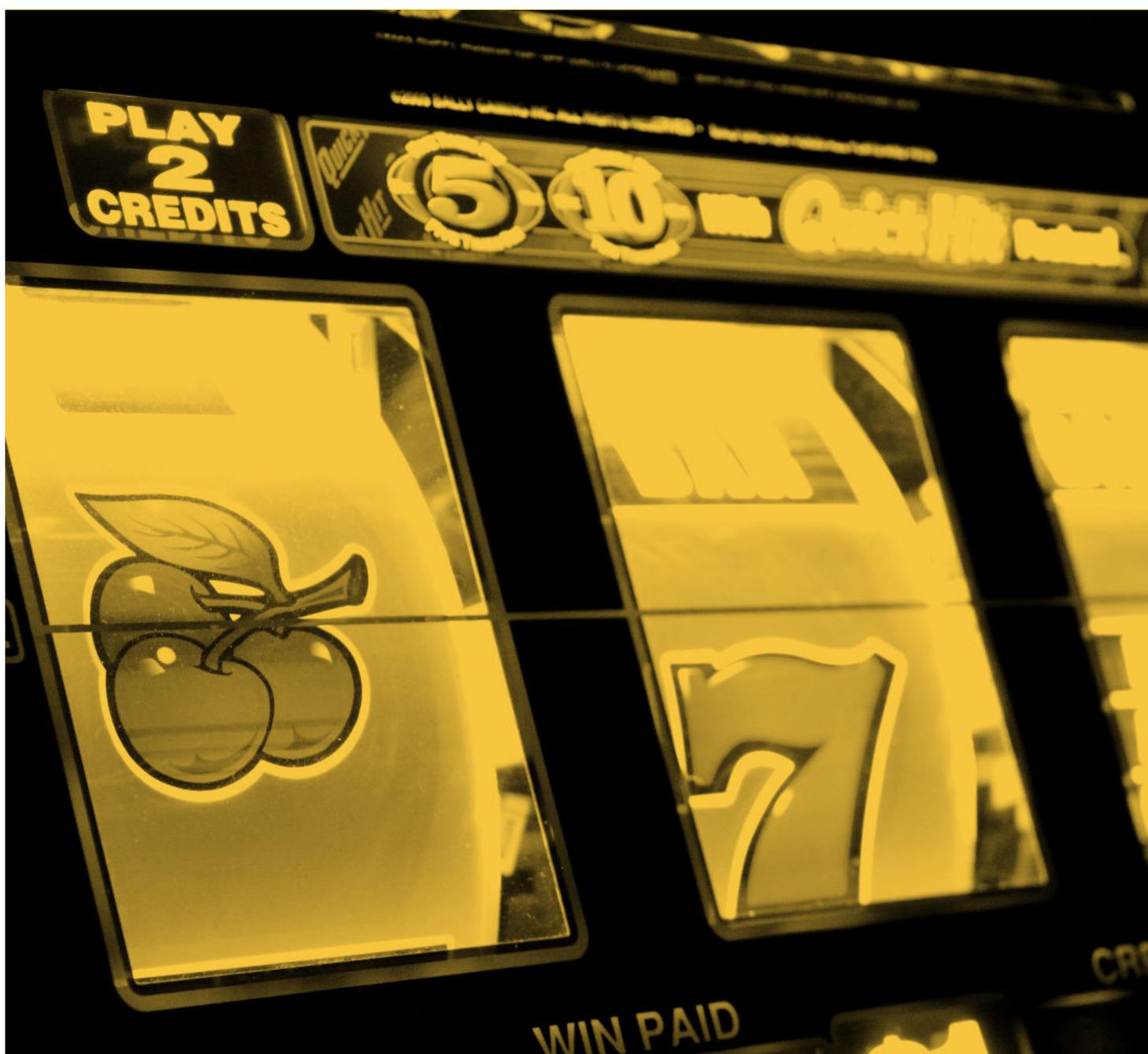
In this Act, a reference to the licensing objectives is to protect children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

Gambling Act 2005 stated objective.

Over the last three decades, the mode and frequency of gambling have changed dramatically. It is now more pervasive in our society, more readily available, and its use by the younger generations is much more difficult to monitor. Online gambling has transformed traditional betting, with the availability of slot machines, casinos and in-play sports betting never being more than a click away. Some of these products carry high addiction rates and unlike land-based machines such as fixed-odds betting terminals (£2 a spin), these online products are relatively unrestricted in terms of stake size.

Gambling marketing has saturated TV and social media, with its presence perhaps felt strongest in sport, with up to 700 gambling adverts visible during a single televised Premier League game, meaning a gambling brand is visible up to 89% of the time on Match of the Day. The pervasiveness of gambling marketing is not isolated to sport and the industry's annual spend of £1.5 billion has increased participation in gambling activity and contributed towards the normalisation of gambling in the UK.

Until now, gambling has not received the same attention in education as other activities that carry an inherent risk of harm, such as tobacco and alcohol. That's why in 2021, Gambling with Lives has launched this programme, which has been created by academics, educational specialists, clinicians, an award-winning filmmaker and people with lived experience of gambling harm, for young people aged 14 and over.



Objectives of the programme



This resource is intended to provide young people with the knowledge necessary to understand the inherent risk of different gambling products and to critically respond to gambling marketing and industry practices.

This pack contains the overview of the materials that are best suited to be delivered as a four module programme as part of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), for young people aged 14 and older.

The materials have been designed for these age groups based on research around gambling-based education interventions, but all of the resources can easily be adapted for any young person older than 16 and can be used in adult education and in wider awareness-raising activities.

The programme touches on other areas of learning including topics such as online protections, mental health, economic wellbeing, debt, crime, legislation, the nature of risk and critical marketing. Previous knowledge of these areas is not essential and can be built on throughout the programme.

The key objectives of our education programme are:

- Reduce young people's intentions to gamble on the most addictive gambling products.
- Raise understanding among young people and teachers about which products are more harmful than others.
- Reduce the stigma associated with gambling harms by changing the perception of addictions and re-framing the language used when talking about addiction.
- Shift allocation of responsibility for being entirely on the individual suffering harm.
- Raise awareness of where to go for help, support, and treatment.
- Stop under-18s gambling illegally.

Specific learning objectives for each module are listed below under 'Learning outcomes' in the 'Our materials' section.

Our materials

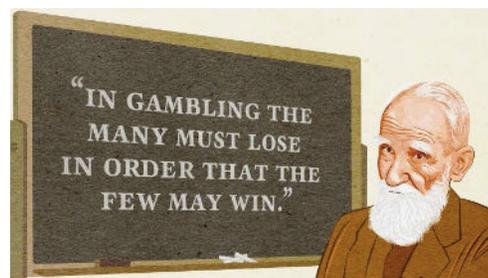
Our programme is split into four main learning areas, which are brought to life with interactive elements and award-winning film content. The topics covered are matched to the PSHE curriculum on gambling and consist of:

1. The changing gambling environment

Looking at the varied history of gambling and its impact on societies through the ages. It includes two video resources that provide a basis for class discussion and transport us from Neolithic man to the Digital Age.

Learning outcomes

- Define gambling
- Describe what effect gambling legislation has had on its evolution
- Explain how the nature of gambling has changed in recent decades



2. Gambling product design

Understanding the maths that show how the gambling industry makes profits through having a 'house edge', and includes a film to highlight this. The class can then deconstruct the strategies used to keep customers playing for extended periods of time with an interactive app.

Learning outcomes

- Describe how some products are more harmful than others
- Describe how gambling products are designed to provide a long-term profit for the gambling industry
- Describe how many gambling products are designed to maximise the amount of time that people spend on them



3. Gambling marketing

Highlighting the variety of marketing practices and appeal strategies that the gambling industry uses to gain more customers.

Learning outcomes

- Describe the most common appeal strategies used in advertising and marketing by the gambling industry
- Identify the similar advertising and marketing strategies used in both the tobacco and gambling industries
- Describe how gambling has become 'normalised' through advertising and marketing



4. Gambling harms

An award-winning 30-minute film showing the impact of gambling harms on real people with lived experience. The dramatization – based on real events – shows how gambling disorder can affect both the individual and those around them. It will also help students to recognise the early warning signs associated with a gambling disorder and to signpost them to the appropriate support.

Learning outcomes

- Explain what a gambling disorder is and describe its consequences
- Explain why some people start to gamble and describe the links with mental well-being
- Explain why it can be difficult to stop gambling
- Identify the warning signs and consequences of gambling harms and describe ways in which people can get help



Delivery

Our programme can be delivered in a variety of ways to suit the needs of the school or organisation we are working with.

The learning outcomes listed in this pack are consistent whether the programme is delivered as a one-off session, a half/full day workshop or an online seminar.



Creating a safe environment

Gambling with Lives has a 'Working with Young People' policy that can be shared with your establishment ahead of delivery. The materials must only be delivered where clear child protection and safeguarding policies have been established by the school, sports club or community organisation prior to teaching.

Although our programme has been designed to fit with in this framework, we recommend that the school policy is understood and referenced throughout the delivery of the programme.

We also recommend signposting towards the NHS children and young people's mental health services where appropriate/ needed:

<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/cypmhs-information-for-parents-and-carers/>

<https://www.cnwl.nhs.uk/services/mental-health-services/addictions-and-substance-misuse/national-problem-gambling-clinic>

<https://www.leedsandyorkpft.nhs.uk/our-services/northern-gambling-service>

What we've done so far

In September 2021, we launched our education programme with a one year pilot to test the demand, feasibility and content of our offer. We piloted this in both Northern Ireland and England, with a target of reaching **20** schools/clubs and getting feedback from at least **1000** young people.

In total, during the pilot we delivered the to **3473** young people aged 14+ at **34** schools, colleges, universities, sports clubs and youth groups.

We split the pilot into two phases, phase 1a and phase 1b. Phase 1A ran from September – January and was designed to test the demand of gambling-education and to measure the practical feasibility of the materials. This part used an online questionnaire which asked the young people if they found the session interesting, what was one thing they took away from the session and what was most surprising – all of which helped us shape and fine-tune our materials for phase 1B.

Overall, the vast majority of young people found the sessions 'very interesting' or 'interesting'. In terms of what the respondents took away from the programme, the most common responses were that **gambling addiction can happen easily** and that **it can happen to anyone**.

You can read some feedback / thoughts from students below.



"That it can happen to anyone"



**"I now understand that gambling is not just one thing.
Some forms are more dangerous than others, and they are the games that the companies get you to use most, because they make them the most money."**



"I already believed that online gambling was set up to have an unfair advantage but I now totally get that winning sometimes can fuel the addiction – like being in a toxic relationship where one partner is stringing along the other"



"I see now that people with a gambling addiction are good people with an addiction, and that it's not all their fault and that they need help"



Phase 1B used a theory of change document which allowed us to measure the short-term impact of the materials on young people including their change in perception, attitude, understanding and intended behaviour. Using pre and post session online surveys and interactive apps, the pilot showed us that we were successful in achieving:

- An overall positive change in the perception of gambling risks and harms
- An overall positive change in attitudes towards the allocation of responsibility to prevent gambling harms
- An overall increase in understanding of which are the most addictive gambling products
- An overall decrease in young people's intention to gamble on those products

We are delighted that our programme has been endorsed by the CCEA and Department of Education in Northern Ireland and we secured partnerships with Lancashire County Cricket Foundation and multiple English football clubs during our pilot.



What next?

The second phase of our education pilot will run for two years, in order to:

- Expand and test different delivery methods including a 'train the trainer' model
- Refine existing and create new material including resources on the link between gaming and gambling products
- Increase the involvement of lived experience in delivery in both England and Northern Ireland
- Form new partners across health, education and in local authorities, including expanding our work with community and youth groups to deliver the programme.

Acknowledgements

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