

How to start a conversation about gambling with your child

The issue of problem gambling among young people hasn't traditionally received all that much attention, but it's been in the news recently, and for good reason. Recent research suggests that about a third of problem gamblers are under 30, and that many of those young people don't have any idea where to turn if they do decide to seek help. For the vast majority of people who gamble it never becomes a problem or an addiction, but when it does it can have serious consequences.

Many parents have never considered talking to their children about gambling, and it can be very difficult to know where to begin. For most young people gambling won't be a problem, but it's worth having a conversation to make sure. If you're struggling to think of ways to start the conversation with your child, here are a few good questions to ask.

- 1) Do they gamble?** It may seem obvious, but first it's important to figure out if your child has been gambling at all. Under-18s aren't meant to go into betting shops, but with the rise of online gambling via websites and apps it's become easier for young people to gamble, even on sites that require some form of age verification. Your child may worry they'll be in trouble if they admit to gambling – make it clear that you're asking, not accusing.
- 2) What do they like about it?** Many people can gamble responsibly without developing a problem and there are plenty of perfectly good reasons to enjoy it. Learning the strategy of a game or figuring out the best team to place a bet on can be lots of fun. But if your child mentions using gambling to escape something stressful going on in their life, or seeking the 'rush' that comes with placing a bet, it could be a warning sign that they are at risk for future problems.
- 3) Whose money are they using?** When young people gamble, often it's with someone else's money, like a parent or other family member. If they have been gambling with your money, you will need to decide if you want to allow it or not. If you do give them access to any money for gambling, it's a good idea to talk about setting a budget or a monthly limit. If your child is having trouble sticking to a pre-set limit, it might be time to have a more serious conversation about their behaviour.