

MONTHLY QE STAFF ADVICE BULLETIN

ISSUE 8: MONEY MATTERS - GAMBLING

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As the cost of living continues to rise and people are struggling to make ends meet, Citizens Advice is warning about the potential risks of gambling as a desperate measure to increase household income.

Risks of gambling to balance your budget

The prevalence of gambling has heightened through the pandemic, for many providing a source of combatting the boredom of lockdowns. We're also keen to warn parents and carers about gambling habits amongst young people – often hidden in games and apps – despite the restrictions there are now reportedly 50,000 children now facing a problem with gambling.

The £multi-million profits of gambling companies reported in the press are a clear indicator that it's difficult to profit as a customer, and although the government has committed to review laws to help people to avoid gambling addiction these changes haven't happened yet. So our message is to recognise that gambling doesn't pay, and to avoid it altogether as a possible quick fix - instead get in touch with your Citizens Advice Gateshead Social Welfare Advice team if you need help to find ways to balance your household budget.

What does gambling look like?

Traditional forms of gambling, going to the betting office or putting money on the pools, were more apparent than most types of gambling today. Through online services – including through your mobile phone – gambling is now more instant and accessible than ever before. But it's not always obvious, even to the person taking part, with over half of the adult population reportedly gambling in one way or another. Even when the 'stake' is quite low, it might look like just a bit of fun, such as buying a weekly entry into the National Lottery. But it all adds up. We're encouraged to dream about what we could do with our £2 million prize money, but it's also important to think about what we could do with the £104 we've spent over a year on the weekly £2 stake.

Betting through bingo, casino and poker game sites are more obvious forms of online gambling, sometimes luring people in with offers of free stakes and enticing offers, framing it as harm-free exciting entertainment. These can be actively avoided if you keep your wits about you, but other forms of gambling are much more subtle, particularly those embedded into video games that require an investment to increase the chances of winning or make the game more engaging. If you start actively looking out for it, gambling is everywhere and, with very small odds of winning there's a high chance that it's just money down the drain.

Spotting the signs

Hopefully if someone in your family or friendship group is struggling with the effects of gambling, they'll be able to talk about it and reach out for help. But what if it's a colleague in the workplace - what are the signs you might be able to spot so you can encourage them to seek support?

Signs of gambling can be difficult to spot and fairly easy to hide. Everyone's different, but some of the things you can look out for are:

- A recent change in mood or signs of irritation and worry
- They're spending a lot of time on their mobile phone during break times and seem anxious or excited whilst doing so
- Concentration or work quality starts to reduce with no obvious cause
- Asking to borrow money – remember it's kinder to say no

Sources of support

Online at:

[NHS Northern Gambling Service](#) for specialist addiction support for people affected by a gambling addiction;

[GamCare](#) for telephone, online and mobile support for people who want to address their gambling and those supporting them;

[Begambleaware.org](#) for details of gambling blocking software;

[Gambling Commission](#) for schemes relating to self-exclusion and bank account spending caps.

Or call the National Gambling Helpline on 0808 8020 133

Whether you need to talk about how to increase your income, manage debts, or you need access to gambling-related support please get in touch with your Citizens Advice Gateshead team for impartial advice, information and guidance.

Email qestaffswa@citizensadvicegateshead.org.uk or call 0191 490 4231 and we'll be back in touch with you within 1 working day Monday to Friday.