

JSNA Blackpool

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment



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Gambling



Last Modified 09/10/2026 09:57:36

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Gambling and its related harm

Introduction

This is Blackpool's first needs assessment around gambling and gambling-related harm (GRH). It has been produced from a public health perspective, and the strategy it supports has been undertaken and completed with input from a wide range of partners and stakeholders.

In the UK gambling has been increasingly normalised and is seen as socially acceptable. This widespread acceptance means that harm may not be limited to those identified as 'problem gamblers', but may include those who would not be considered as addicted and also overlooks the potential for GRH to be passed on to the next generation. Gambling has the potential to deepen pre-existing inequalities - more money is lost by those who can least afford to spend it, and gambling venues and machines are clustered in more deprived areas. This point is particularly pertinent in Blackpool, with a large majority of gambling venues (including amusement arcades, betting shops, casinos and others) sited in the town centre and along the seafront. Smart phones, advertising, and 24-hour sports coverage have also contributed to the normalisation and increase in gambling.

Public health interventions aim to reduce harm with prevention work, including education and reducing the supply of and demand for products associated with the most harm. For gambling specifically, only focusing on treatment of those who have a dependence, will miss opportunities for wider harm reduction.

The effects of gambling go beyond the individual who gambles - it can also have a negative impact on families, friends and communities, which adds up to a significant burden of harm across populations. These costs can impact on the health and care system, local services and interact with other wider determinants of health. Public Health England in 2021 identified several forms of harm linked to gambling:¹

- financial
- relationship disruption, conflict or breakdown
- mental and physical health harms
- employment and education harms
- criminal and anti-social behaviour
- cultural harms

Gambling in Blackpool

There is little direct evidence as to the scale of gambling-related harms in Blackpool. Services including GP practices, other NHS services, and adult and children's social services do not routinely screen for issues with gambling or record gambling behaviour.

Blackpool's Citizens Advice Bureau provided an estimate that one quarter of their clients approaching with debt problems report some element of gambling expenditure. This does not suggest that the debt is wholly or primarily related to gambling, but it may be inferred that those with serious debt problems cannot afford further spending on gambling activities. The CAB also report a 28% increase in gambling related harm for under-25s in 2022; and that they saw twice the number of adults with gambling-related debts in 2022 as they did in 2019.

GambleAware have produced some estimates for Blackpool, based on national data, taking into account demographic features of Blackpool, including levels of deprivation and other factors associated with problem gambling. This data uses the [Problem Gambling Severity Index](#) (PGSI) classification, whereby scores of 1-2 are defined as low-risk gamblers, 3-7 as moderate risk and 8+ as 'problem

gamblers'. It should be noted that this is a clinical tool and not an estimate of the full scale of gambling-related harm.

GambleAware estimates that levels of low-risk (7.9%) and moderate-risk (3.4%) gambling in Blackpool are both higher than the national average (7.5% and 3.0% respectively), while levels of problem gambling (2.8%) are broadly in line with the national average (2.9%). A notably higher proportion of problem gamblers are accessing treatment, but lower levels of low and moderate risk gamblers are doing so, compared to the national average, and that demand for support, treatment or advice in Blackpool is generally lower.²

Local insights

For further information please see the [Gambling-related harms needs assessment \(2024\)](#) (1.8MB PDF)

References

[1] Beynon, C., Clark, R., Clarke, Z., Gatineau, M., Greaves, F., Henn, C., Jones, A., Mason, J., Pearce-Smith, N., Marsden, J. and Regan, M. (2021a) *Risk factors for gambling and harmful gambling: an umbrella review*: Public Health England (PHE).

[2] GambleAware (2023) *Gambling harm data profile: Blackpool*.

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