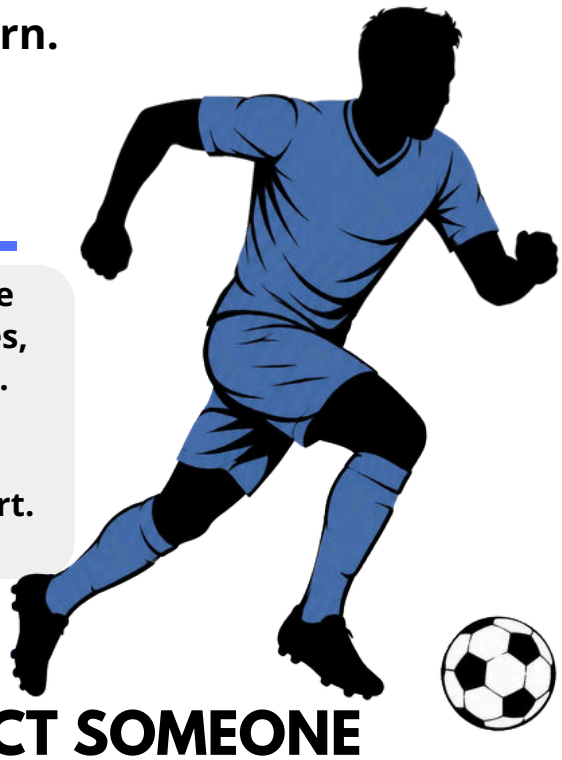
Gambling & Mental Health

Understand the impact. Notice the pattern. Know what to do.



WHAT IS IT?

Gambling means risking money or something of value on an uncertain outcome. It includes betting, lotteries, casino games, gaming machines and online gambling.

Concern grows when it is hard to control or harms mental health, money, relationships, daily life or sport. A coach should support—not diagnose.

5 WAYS GAMBLING CAN AFFECT SOMEONE

01 Mood & wellbeing

Stress, guilt, anxiety, low mood or hopelessness may grow. Losses can intensify distress.

02 Control & chasing

Someone may gamble more than intended, increase stakes, chase losses or struggle to stop.

03 Money & debt

Borrowing, selling possessions, unpaid bills or using essential money can create serious pressure.

04 Relationships & trust

Secrecy, lying, arguments and broken commitments can damage trust and isolate the person.

05 Time & participation

Gambling thoughts, app-checking and late nights can disrupt sleep, focus, attendance and sport.

A coach notices and supports—a coach does not diagnose.

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Notice. Respond. Connect.

SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR IN SPORT

What a volunteer coach may notice—and what to do next.

- Constant betting talk or checking odds and gambling apps.
- Borrowing money, selling items or showing unusual financial stress.
- Chasing losses, raising stakes or saying they cannot stop.
- Secrecy, defensiveness, irritability, anxiety or low mood.
- Feeling trapped by debt, hopeless, or talking about self-harm or suicide.
- Missing sessions, poor sleep, distraction or reduced reliability.

Look for change, patterns and context. These signs can have many explanations.

01 NOTICE

Spot Changes in behaviour, mood , attendance or performance.

No obvious sign?
Check in anyway.

02 TALK

Say what you have noticed, or simply remind them you care. "Ive noticed.." "I'm checking in.."

Follow safeguarding procedures.

03 LISTEN

Give them time. Ask open questions. Do not interrupt, judge or rush to try and fix everything.

Take notice and care to listen.

04 CARE

Stay calm, kind and non-judgmental. Repeat back what they tell you. Respect privacy within the safeguarding limits e.g. Coach, Parent and Safeguarding Officer.

Ask what would help.

05 CONNECT

If anything worries you follow the safeguarding procedures and connect them with the right lead, trusted person, GP or support service.

Immediate danger call 999.

Northern Ireland gambling support: Dunlewey Addiction Services — 08000 886 725, free and confidential, 24/7.

National Gambling Helpline: 0808 8020 133

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5 WAYS TO SUPPORT SOMEONE

01 Talk Without Judgement

Choose a suitable moment and ask directly: “Are you worried about your gambling?” Listen without blame, anger or lectures.

Shame can prevent people from admitting the problem and seeking help.

02 Identify Triggers and Make a Plan

Help them recognise when and why they gamble—such as stress, boredom, loneliness, alcohol, sporting events or trying to win back losses.

Plan different activities and support for these high-risk times.

03 Put Barriers Between Them and Gambling

With their agreement, use GAMSTOP, blocking software, gambling-payment blocks and self-exclusion from betting shops. Unsubscribe from gambling promotions and arrange for essential bills to be paid first.

Avoid: lending money for gambling, paying off losses without safeguards, hiding the problem or encouraging them to win the money back.

04 Connect Them with Specialist Help

Encourage professional treatment rather than relying only on willpower. Gambling-specific CBT, peer support and financial advice can help.

Offer to make the call with them and continue checking in—recovery may include setbacks.

05 Ask About Safety

Gambling-related harm can increase the risk of suicide, particularly after a major loss or relapse.

Ask directly: “Are you thinking about harming yourself or suicide?” Take any answer seriously and act immediately.

TAKE 5 FOR WELLBEING

Five evidence based everyday actions to help maintain and improve wellbeing.

CONNECT
Spend time with people who help you feel supported.

BE ACTIVE
Walk, run, cycle, play sports and games.

TAKE NOTICE
Pause & take notice of the world around you. Chill & relax.

KEEP LEARNING
Try something new or build a skill your value.

GIVE
Offer time, kindness or encouragement to help others.

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