RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

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A scoping review of the grey literature on gambling interventions for children and young people

What this research is about

Gambling is becoming more popular among children and young people (CYP). CYP include children (aged 8–13), adolescents (aged 13–18), and emerging adults (aged 18–25). In the UK, it was estimated that 1.7% of 11–16-years-old experienced gambling-related problems, while 31% had gambled in the past year. The growing availability of both regulated and unregulated gambling has expanded the opportunities for CYP to gamble. Furthermore, advertisements featuring celebrities and influencers may encourage gambling among CYP.

Many interventions have been designed to safeguard people from gambling-related harms. They include psychological treatments, family support interventions, public education, advertising restrictions, and safer gambling features. However, few interventions are designed for CYP, aside from some educational initiatives.

This article presents a scoping review of the grey literature. The aim was to capture a broader range of interventions than are documented in academic articles. The focus of the review was on interventions offered in the UK or countries similar to the UK in terms of gambling.

What the researchers did

The researchers followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) extension for scoping reviews. They developed search terms with a Project Advisory Group comprising healthcare and educational professionals. They then searched for grey literature published by organizations in the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. These countries were selected as they are English speaking, have similar approaches to addressing gambling harm, and are the main sources of grey literature on this topic. Google searches were carried out in June and July 2023. The searches were limited to English-language sources only.

The researchers identified organizations that offered interventions to prevent or reduce gambling-related harms among CYP. They collected data on type of organization, nature and type of intervention, target audience, and mode of delivery. Interventions that were specifically designed for adults were excluded. Interventions from before 2008 were also excluded.

What the researchers found

The researchers identified 14 organizations offering interventions for CYP. Most of the organizations were registered charities. Ten organizations offered services covering Great Britain (England, Wales, and Scotland). Two organizations were in Canada, and two in Australia.

What you need to know

This scoping review explored interventions designed to prevent or reduce gambling-related harms among children and young people (CYP). It explored the grey literature, looking at practical strategies and interventions not documented in academic articles. The focus was on the UK or countries similar to the UK in terms of gambling. The researchers identified 14 organizations offering interventions for CYP in Great Britain, Canada, and Australia. Educational interventions were most prevalent. They were delivered through workshops, online courses, and digital resources. Innovative approaches such as interactive web-based games were more likely to attract and be able to engage CYP. However, most interventions lacked rigorous evaluation data.

Thirteen organizations provided preventative interventions targeting CYP at risk of harm. Twelve of the organizations provided educational interventions. Seven organizations provided psychological treatment interventions for CYP already experiencing harms. One organization (GamCare) provided a harm minimization intervention, offering free software to block gambling websites. Twelve organizations provided interventions for CYP. Nine organizations provided interventions for practitioners, and four for parents/carers.

Most preventative interventions were educational, including school workshops, online courses, learning resources, and training programs. Innovative approaches had been used by organizations in Canada and Australia. For example, "edutainment" offered by Responsible Gambling Canada to high school students. This involved live stage shows and digital games. Such approaches were more likely to attract and engage CYP. In Great Britain, three organizations provided training courses for practitioners.

Seven organizations provided data on the effectiveness of their preventative interventions through annual reports. Three organizations provided the information directly on their website. Four organizations commissioned independent evaluations. As such, they had highly detailed reports giving stronger evidence for their interventions. Overall, the researchers found that most preventative interventions lacked rigorous evaluation data. In particular, there was a lack of data on the long-term effects of these interventions.

In Great Britain, treatment interventions for CYP were offered under existing frameworks tailored for adults. Adapting adult treatments to CYP might fail to cater to CYP's specific needs. The researchers could not find evaluation data on the effectiveness of these treatment interventions. This was because none of the seven organizations that offered treatment interventions provided evaluation data separately for CYP.

How you can use this research

This review is intended for practitioners, policy makers, and other stakeholders. It highlights the need for whole-system approaches tailored to CYP's needs and vulnerabilities.

About the researchers

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About Greo Evidence Insights

Greo Evidence Insights is an independent, non-profit organization specializing in research, knowledge mobilization, and evaluation in the health and well-being sectors. Greo transforms research and insights into actionable strategies to prevent and reduce harm related to gambling, gaming, technology use, and substance use. To learn more about funding for Research Snapshots visit our website.

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