

"The industry, as far as we can see as families, are grooming the next generation with a whole set of online games and these are aimed at 7, 8, 9 year olds – that's the next generation who are going to be their income generators" - Liz Ritchie, Gambling With Lives

The digital world that we live in can be a minefield for families and parents/carers. The way in which children 'game' now is completely different to how modern day parents and carers would have experienced. The 'monetization' of gaming is at the forefront of research and there are increasing concerns surrounding online gaming and the subsequent links this has with underage gambling.

From ONLINE GAMING to ONLINE GAMBLING

Recognising the Signs

10 Signs for Parents to Look For:

Disordered gambling is sometimes referred to as the 'silent killer'. Unlike drug or alcohol addictions the signs are sometimes harder to spot and if not dealt with at an early age can have a devastating effect on both the gambler and their families later on in life.

1 EXCESSIVE USE OF DEVICES

This can lead to increased isolated behaviour and lying about the amount of time spent online.

2 SPENDING MONEY ONLINE WITHOUT PERMISSION

If a child is willing to spend money online (invariably on a parent's card) without permission then this should act as an early warning sign to parents to ensure that there are some barriers and parental controls in place.

3 CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR

Children may become moody, aggressive or argumentative particularly during or shortly after periods of online gaming.

4 A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE TO SCHOOL

Children may display an obvious change in attitude to learning and a more negative view of school.

5 DISENGAGED WITH FAMILY LIFE

Children start to prefer spending time alone online rather than engage in normal family activities.

6 COMPULSIVE EATING

This includes both eating the wrong types of food excessively and not eating healthily.

7 IMPATIENT

Children might not be prepared to wait for anything (mirrored in excessive online game play and in app purchases) and nothing is ever good enough.

8 'THE LOOK'

Compulsive gamblers are often said to look zoned out, have a greyness, look ill, experience a loss of weight and stop taking pride in their appearance. The same can be said of those who are starting to develop a gaming addiction.

9 OBSESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

Children who demonstrate obsessive behaviour in everyday life are often reported to be 'at risk' of developing an online gaming disorder.

10 DISHONESTY

This could include starting to tell lies and in the more extreme cases even stealing things.

10 Top Tips for Parents:

If you think that your child may be at risk of developing a gaming addiction then there are a series of measures that you can put in place. This is by no means an exhaustive list but just some strategies that could ensure a potential situation does not escalate.

1 BE AWARE

Do not fall into the trap that it's just what children do – as parents/carers/families be 'on the same page' and do not be allowed to be played off against one another.

2 DO YOUR RESEARCH

Although both gaming/gambling addictions are now recognised as a mental disorder, some doctors may not be experts in these areas – families can self-refer to NHS Gaming and Gambling Clinics.

3 VISIT THE GP

See what help and support is available. Visit www.gamfam.co.uk and become an expert.

4 SPEAK TO THE SCHOOL

Have an open and honest conversation. Schools are investing heavily in mental health and can arrange or direct you to the most appropriate support services.

5 TAKE AN ACTIVE INTEREST

This applies to school work and in creating a learning environment at home. Find activities and hobbies that create a life away from the screen and be part of it.

6 BECOME THE EXPERT

Research the game your child is playing – does the game have loot boxes?

7 PUT BARRIERS IN PLACE

Set up parental controls for all devices (including phones) and set up screen time. Visit the 'Partnership with Parents' section at www.gamfam.co.uk for further details.

8 FINANCIAL CONTROLS

Turn off in-app purchases on games and make sure your credit/debit card isn't attached to the console your child is playing on. Do not link your debit/credit cards to your child's device and use a prepaid debit card instead. For example Monzo, Go Henry, Nimbi or speak to your bank for advice.

9 DISCUSS LOOT BOXES AND SKIN BETTING

Have a conversation about loot boxes and skin betting. Many games can still be played and completed without using loot boxes on the console version but be mindful of the mobile versions.

10 DO NOT LEND MONEY FOR GAMBLING

Or if you think it will be used for online gaming, without your permission.

