

# Introductory Statements

## From Catherine Calderwood, Chief Medical Officer for Scotland

Scotland is not alone in seeing the continued growth in gambling behaviour as a subject for public health concern. It is clear that some people who engage in gambling can be harmed by their experiences, and that these harmful effects of gambling can disrupt family and social life and can even affect how people can undertake the sorts of day to day everyday activities that we take for granted. We can also see how gambling harms are worse for those who are already experiencing the consequences of inequality.

But, perhaps most worrying of all is the way in which Scotland's children and young people are becoming more exposed to a culture of gambling. The UK Gambling Commission recently published the results of a small scale study which suggested that 3 in 4 children aged 11 to 15 years had seen television adverts for gambling and that just over 1 in 6 had gambled in previous week: with National Lottery purchases and using fruit machines alongside playing games or making wagers for money all featuring in their gambling behaviour.

Against this background it is probably not surprising that as Scotland's Chief Medical Officer who is committed to seeing prevention as part of our approach to achieving *Realistic Medicine*, and as a mother, I recognise that addressing such gambling harms must be at the heart of our response to reducing adverse childhood experiences, as well as to addressing the sorts of wider inequalities that affect health and wellbeing.

Gambling is now an international industry and Scotland will need work with public health colleagues across the UK to further develop our approach preventing gambling related harm. However, that is not to say that local, more direct action, is also needed.

So I warmly welcome the publication of Fast Forward's new 'toolkit' to help those who work with young people to help prevent problem youth gambling. This has been jointly developed by them alongside colleagues from NHS Lothian's Public Health Directorate, and supported by funding from the Scottish Government, the NHS Lothian Foundation, and the UK charity GambleAware. This combined effort emphasises the need for the active, multi-agency public health partnerships to support those who work with and for young people in order to prevent and reduce the harm that gambling can do.

In publishing this 'toolkit' Fast Forward are seeking to encourage local agencies and communities to develop their own approaches across Scotland. I echo that encouragement and look forward to hearing more about the successes and challenges of your local work in the months and years to come.

Catherine Calderwood  
CMO



## **From Gerda Reith, Professor of Social Science, University of Glasgow**

Educating our young people to understand risk and to make well-informed decisions in relation to potentially harmful activities are key aims of practitioners working with youth. However, the problems that can be associated with gambling have not received the same attention as many other risky behaviours, and practitioners often describe feeling ill-equipped to understand and address issues relating to gambling. This is why this 'toolkit', developed by Fast Forward, and supported by GambleAware, is therefore a vital resource for anyone working with young people growing up in Scotland today.

Unlike previous generations, today's youth are being exposed to an unprecedented increase in commercial gambling. The Gambling Act of 2005 has created a landscape where gambling promotion is now widespread, and gambling is presented as a popular leisure activity. Ofcom reported that, in the past decade, television advertising has increased by 600%, with under-16s now exposed to an average of 211 gambling adverts each per year. At the same time, new forms of technology are making gambling, and gambling-type games increasingly accessible on social networking sites and on mobile phones, while sports sponsorship is dramatically increasing images of gambling around football games and sporting events. We know that children and young people have rates of problem gambling that are between two and four times higher than those of adults. These problems are associated with doing less well at school, truancy, theft, difficulties with social relationships and poorer general wellbeing. We also know that children who begin gambling at an early age are more likely to have problems with gambling when they reach adulthood. These problems include higher than average rates of poverty, low educational attainment, divorce, debt, mental health problems and, in extreme cases, even suicide. Such problems fan out beyond the individual to affect families and wider communities.

Problem gambling undermines the potential of our young people, and erodes the wellbeing of our communities. Creating an environment in which children are protected from the harms it can cause requires a joined-up response. While policy and regulation are key, local education and prevention efforts are also crucial. Families, educators and members of the community all have a role to play in creating sustainable, healthy environments for our young people to grow up in.

This is why I welcome and endorse the 'toolkit' developed by Fast Forward. I would encourage anyone working with young people in Scotland to use it to develop their thinking around this issue, and to employ these engaging resources to support vital discussions with our youth about the risks associated with gambling, to prevent the next generation of harm.

Gerda Reith  
Professor of Social Science; University of Glasgow

