



Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media & Sport

Councillor Alistair Dewhirst
Chair, Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory
Services Scrutiny Committee
Devon County Council
County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter
EX2 4QD

Nigel Huddleston MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of
State for Sport, Tourism and Heritage
4th Floor
100 Parliament Street
London SW1A 2BQ

E: enquiries@culture.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/dcms

10th March 2020

Our Ref:
MC2020/02903/GM

Dear Cllr Dewhirst

Thank you for your February letter in which you shared your authority's report and provided several suggestions on how to reduce gambling harms.

The government is aware of the concerns around gambling and the need to reduce gambling harms, which is why there is lots of work going on around this issue. Please be assured that protecting people from harm is of the utmost importance to government.

Regarding your suggestion to ban online gambling, Fixed Odds Betting Terminals and targeted advertising, I understand the concerns around these but there are currently no plans to ban them. However, we are currently scoping a review of the Gambling Act 2005 to make sure it is fit for the digital age, and more details will be announced about that in due course. In addition, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, the Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, has announced a cross-government addiction strategy that will be published this year, which will include gambling.

There is other work being done to reduce problem gambling. All online gambling companies must allow players to self-exclude from their own gambling products. From 31 March it will be mandatory for online operators to sign up to GAMSTOP (<https://www.gamstop.co.uk/>), which allows individuals to self-exclude from all online gambling operators in one go. This is an important protection for people who recognise that they have a problem with gambling. When a customer self-excludes through GAMSTOP operators must take all reasonable steps to prevent that individual from gambling, and they should receive no marketing material. Failure to comply can result in regulatory action being taken by the Gambling Commission (the commission), which regulates the UK gambling industry. Information on how customers can self-exclude from online gambling platforms can be found at:

<http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/for-the-public/Safer-gambling/Self-exclusion.aspx>.

Alongside this the commission have challenged operators to make progress on the issue of affordability and on customer interaction where they see indications of gambling harms. As all online gambling is account-based, operators know who their customers are, and their patterns of gambling. This provides opportunities for operators to develop solutions that use customer



play data to identify and minimise gambling-related harm. The government considers that targeted interventions based on real-time analysis of customers' patterns of play is a key area of opportunity for online operators to develop, with the aim of implementing more effective approaches to customer interaction and harm minimisation. The commission has published guidance for operators outlining its expectations for customer interaction and harm minimisation. In July 2019, following a consultation, the commission announced stronger requirements for identifying and interacting with consumers, as well as evaluating what works.

On targeted gambling advertising, we have placed strict controls over the content of non-broadcast advertisements. Gambling operators who advertise in the UK must comply with the advertising code of practice issued by the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP) and the Committees of Advertising Practice (CAP), which are enforced by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). They apply across all advertising platforms, including broadcast, online and social media. A wide range of provisions in the codes are designed to protect children and vulnerable adults from harm. More information on the gambling advertising CAP code can be found here: <https://www.asa.org.uk/type/non-broadcast/code-section/16.html>.

The gambling industry has its own advertising code – The Gambling Industry Code for Socially Responsible Advertising, which prohibits gambling advertising on television before 9pm, except for bingo and lotteries. In August the ban was extended to include 'whistle-to-whistle' broadcasts of pre-watershed live sport, starting five minutes before the event begins, and ending five minutes after it finishes. This also applies to live streaming of events online. Additional measures include an end to betting adverts in highlight shows and re-runs, and no bookmaker sponsorship of sports programmes screened pre-watershed. The code also bans free sign up offers before 9pm and requires adverts to feature a responsible gambling message for the duration of the advert. The code can be accessed here: <http://igrg.org.uk/wp/index.php/industry-advertising-code/>.

Turning to public health, if the gambling industry fails to provide sufficient funds for treatment services then all options, including a mandatory levy, would be considered. However, it is important to recognise the significant increase in funding for treatment announced by five large gambling operators in July last year. The tenfold increase, from 0.1% to 1% of their profits, will result in £100 million being spent on treatment over the next four years. They have also committed to engage with government, treatment providers and regulators on how these funds are spent.

The NHS's Long-Term Plan announced that the government will expand the number of specialist clinics to help more people with serious gambling problems access support services. This includes up to 14 new NHS clinics being opened nationwide, two of which have already opened in Leeds and Sunderland.

Yours,



Nigel Huddleston MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Sport, Tourism and Heritage