

**Phil Norrey
Chief Executive**

Helen Whately MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
(Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism)
Department for Digital, Culture, Media &
Sports
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County Hall
Topsham Road
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26 November 2019

Dear Miss Whately

(Copied to APPG Gambling Related Harm)

PROBLEM GAMBLING

I am writing to you on behalf of the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee at Devon County Council regarding the issue of problem gambling.

The Scrutiny Committee feel compelled to place on record their continued and extreme concern regarding the victims of problem gambling. The Scrutiny Committee has considered the issue of problem gambling at some length, holding a spotlight review in 2018, looking at what the County Council and partners have within their powers to act upon and exploring and discussing the issue in public committee. (Spotlight review report attached to this letter.)

The Scrutiny Committee acknowledges that there have been a series of national developments to support responsible gambling, stemming from the recent Gambling Act 2019 including:

- age verification of gamblers
- identity verification of gamblers
- reduction of maximum stake on Fixed Odds Betting Terminals from £100 to £2
- in-match advertising for games starting before the 9pm watershed (does not apply to horse racing)

The Scrutiny Committee has also been made aware of the Gambling Commission publication of its three-year National Strategy to reduce gambling harms in April of this year. In addition, the January 2019 NHS Long Term Plan includes commitments to strengthening

public health and prevention, including an element directed at gambling. NHS specialist clinics will be expanded to help more people with serious gambling problems.

However, the Scrutiny Committee asserts that these developments are not addressing the fundamental hazards caused by gambling. The Committee condemns the disproportionate impact that gambling harm has on the most vulnerable in society and their families. Despite efforts at a local level to understand the scale of the problem and work cross-agency to put services in place, gambling related harm is increasing. This is at a time when profits from gambling are increasing. (Between October 2016 and September 2017, the UK gambling industry produced a yield of £13.9 billion, an 0.7% increase from the previous year.)

Problem gambling cannot be solved locally, and the Scrutiny Committee's ask to Government is to take action nationally to tackle the escalating problem specifically:

- Banning online gambling
- Phasing out entirely the use of fixed-odds betting terminals (FOBTs)
- Taking steps to prevent targeted online advertising of gambling to the most vulnerable

The Scrutiny Committee very much look forward to your response to these issues and hope that you find the attached report of interest.

Yours sincerely

Camilla de Bernhardt Lane
Head of Scrutiny
Devon County Council
On behalf of the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Committee