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Nigel Huddleston MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
(Minister for Sports, Tourism and
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Department for Digital, Culture, Media &
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Dear Nigel Huddleston MP

PROBLEM GAMBLING

Your Ref:MC2020/02903/GM

Thank you for your thoughtful response received on the 10th March.

We, as the Corporate Infrastructure & Regulatory Committee, feel dutybound to reply to your letter outlining our disappointment in the apparent lack concrete support when looking for solutions around problem gambling.

We ask you, again, to show your commitment to eradicating problem gambling by taking the following actions:

1. A review of the Gambling Act 2005, as planned, to include significant limitations on the influence of the predatory approach of online gambling platforms.
2. Stronger powers for the Gambling Commission following the Public Accounts Committee description of this body as 'toothless'. ¹
3. Taking detailed steps to prevent targeted advertising of gambling to the most vulnerable, especially under eighteens, and those at higher risk of becoming problem gamblers.
4. Acknowledgement and direction to Public Health to address the mental health and suicide correlation with problem gambling, particularly with

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gambling-related-harms-evidence-review/gambling-related-harms-evidence-review-scope> 30/04/20

children. To include the blurring of gamification of gambling for example with loot boxes, which particularly appeal to younger people.

5. Phasing out entirely the use of fixed-odds betting terminals (FOBTs).

Problem Gambling is an addiction and needs to be treated as one. We certainly would not accept a drug cartel using this approach on national TV streams and online advertising. 1% of the gaming industry's profits for treatment clinics really will not get to the 'root causes' of gambling and we know that families are being ruined and lives are being lost through gambling and we cannot endorse the industry's approach. The digital world is ruthlessly encouraging accessibility to 24/7 gambling where people can lose a fortune in a work 'tea break'.

Please can you look again and demonstrate your leadership on an issue that increasing numbers of MP's are adding their collective concerns. Below are some of the comments that were aired at the last public meeting of our [scrutiny Committee](#):

- Your response did not address, issues relating to the proliferation of advertising by the gambling industry and indirect advertising before the watershed by TV coverage of horse racing;
- The need for further information relating to gambling related tax receipts and expenditure on rehabilitation programmes for problem gambling;
- The impact of the pandemic in terms of problem gambling;
- Noting that some forms of gambling were acceptable in terms of their minimum impact and pleasure it provided for non-problem gamblers.

Devon County Council Scrutiny intends to work with the Gambling Commission and the Centre for Public Scrutiny to continue to raise the profile of this important issue. We intend to be part of a proactive solution around problem gambling.

We look forward to your further thoughts on these matters,