

Press release: All Party Parliamentary Group for Gambling Related Harm

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Influential Group of MPs Calls for a £2 Stake Limit Online, a Ban on All Gambling Advertising, a Ban on VIP Schemes and a Complete Overhaul of Gambling Regulation in the UK

The All Party Parliamentary Gambling Related Harm Group (the APPG) today publishes its final report into online gambling harms.

Following a year-long inquiry the 50-strong group of prominent parliamentarians calls for protections for online gamblers and a complete overhaul of gambling regulation in the UK. The group sets out over 30 recommendations including:

- Stake limits for online slot content of no higher than £2 given the potential to cause harm.
- A ban on all VIP schemes and inducements. These schemes are highly profitable for gambling companies offering very high stakes gambling and they continue to lead to significant harm.
- A ban on all gambling advertising.
- A complete overhaul of gambling regulation in the UK. The Gambling Commission is not fit for purpose.
- An urgent review of stakes, deposit and prize limits online as well as a complete review and classification of online products.
- Affordability limits set and imposed by the Gambling Commission.
- A Gambling Ombudsman for consumer redress.
- A mandatory 'smart' levy paid by gambling operators to fund independent research, education, prevention and treatment.
- A new Gambling Act. While some immediate changes can be made through secondary legislation and the Government should consider what changes can be made in the short-term, an overhaul of the 2005 Gambling Act is required - fit for our digital age.

The APPG's inquiry, which began in March 2019, has taken a detailed look at the regulation of the online gambling industry in the UK. The Group's report is based over 10 public evidence sessions, closed sessions, submissions from a wide range of stakeholders and meetings with the Gambling Commission and Gambling Ministers.

The Group is not anti – gambling or 'prohibitionist' as some have said, this is to debase what is an important discussion to protect vulnerable people and children and prevent online gambling harm.

The Gambling Commission estimates that there are an estimated 395,000 problem gamblers in Great Britain, with 1.8 million more gamblers at risk who may also be experiencing harm, although a recent survey by GambleAware suggests that this figure could be far higher¹. Given the extent of gambling harm, many have said it should now be treated as a public health issue: a proposition that we agree with.

At the same time, the regulation of online gambling in this country is led by a regulator which is struggling to keep pace with the fast growing industry and is behind that of many other countries. Unlike elsewhere, we have few restrictions on online products, no restrictions on stakes or deposit limits and limited restrictions on advertising.

Covid -19 has underlined the need for greater protections for people who can gamble with ease from home, at any time of day and at any level, via a mobile phone.

In this report, we set out a number of recommendations for the Government, the regulator and the industry to regulate the online gambling industry and to limit the harm it can cause. In doing this we outline changes to the regulation of online gambling and also to the wider gambling environment to better protect gamblers, vulnerable people, their families and communities.

¹ <https://about.gambleaware.org/media/2191/treatment-needs-and-gap-analysis-in-great-britain-a-synthesis-of-findings1.pdf>

Carolyn Harris MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Gambling Related Harm said:

“This multi-million pound industry has destroyed people’s lives. They resist change at every turn and claim to be reforming themselves but put forward limited changes. Their primary motive is profit. During the Covid pandemic they said they would end TV and radio advertising but just ended up replacing ads with ads - that none of us want to see. They have shown time and again that they will not effectively self-regulate. We cannot ignore this any longer. Urgent change is needed to stop this industry riding roughshod over people’s lives.”

The Rt. Hon. Sir Iain Duncan Smith, Vice Chair of the Gambling Related Harm All Party Parliamentary Group, said:

“We cannot continue with the current lack of regulation for the online industry. We have an industry that is profiteering from vulnerable people gambling more than they can afford. The industry’s ill named ‘VIP Rooms’ and their inducements have become a cynical tool to incentivise problem gamblers to gamble until they are spiralling into addiction and despair. Week after week we hear of tragic cases of harm such as that of Chris Bruney who at just 25 took his own life after being offered inducements to bet more than he could afford. We urgently need the industry to adopt safer standards and for our failing regulatory structure to be overhauled”

Ronnie Cowan MP, Vice Chair of the Gambling Related Harm All Party Parliamentary Group said:

“Every day I speak to people whose lives have been destroyed by gambling addiction while the online gambling industry grows exponentially. This Government must not sit back and watch the unfettered growth of an industry that extracts money from people across the UK to line their own pockets. We are bombarded by gambling across all mediums and our sports are in hoc to an industry which seeks to profit from them. Young men, women and families are being destroyed by online gambling. Our Gambling Commission is not fit for purpose, we urgently need an ombudsman and the Government must do its job,

it must not pander to the multi-million pound might of the online industry, it must put people and our communities first.”

Notes to editors:

1. The final report from the APPG’s inquiry can be accessed [here](#).
2. The All Party Parliamentary Group for Gambling Related Harm was set up in 2019 formed out of the Fixed Odds Betting Terminals All Party Parliamentary Group. The Group is comprised of over 50 MPs and Peers.
3. To date, the APPG has successfully campaigned for measures including: the reduction of the FOBT stake to £2, a ban on gambling with credit cards, a ban on using credit cards through Money Service Businesses like PayPal, a new Gambling Act to be part of this government’s programme, gambling advertising restrictions during the Covid-19 lockdown and greater regulation of VIP accounts.
4. More information on the online gambling inquiry can be accessed [here](#).
5. For more information and media inquiries please contact Katherine.morgan@interelgroup.com 07973 884797

The Gambling Related Harm All Party Parliamentary Group, June 2020

This is not an official publication of the House of Commons or the House of Lords. It has not been approved by either the House or its committees. All Party Parliamentary Groups are informal groups of Members of both Houses with a common interest in particular issues. The views expressed in this report are those of the Group. The research for the report was undertaken by the members of the Group. The report was drafted by Interel the Group Secretariat, the Secretariat is funded by Derek Webb