

Minutes of Meeting

The fifth inquiry session of the Gambling Related Harm All Party Parliamentary Group's Inquiry into: "online gambling – assessing the impact"

Date: Wednesday 10th July

Time: 1pm – 3.30pm

Location:

Chair: Carolyn Harris MP

Minutes taken by: Sonia Kharaud, Interel UK

Evidence Heard From:

Session one:

- Dr Henerietta Bowden-Jones, Founder and Director of the National Problem Gambling Clinic and Spokesperson on Behavioural Addictions for the Royal College of Psychiatrists
- Matthew Gaskell, Consultant Psychologist & Clinical Lead, NHS Northern Gambling Service

Session two:

- Ben Clay, Senior Associate Solicitor, Lupton Fawcett LLP
- Katie Fry, Gambling Support Service Project Manager, Citizens Advice Bureau

Session Three:

- Marc Etches, Chief Executive, GambleAware
- Kate Lampard CBE, Chair, GambleAware

Members Present

Lord Chadlington

Carolyn Harris MP

Ronnie Cowan MP

Lord Foster

Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP

First Session 13.00 – 14.00

- **Carolyn Harris MP (Chair)** began the evidence of the APPG by welcoming and introducing the witnesses. She asked the witnesses why online gambling was seen as particularly harmful compared to land based gambling.
- **Dr Henerietta Bowden-Jones** said the availability of online gambling was a major issue, nearly everyone has an electronic device which means that gambling is “*with people at all times.*” She said nearly all her patients gambled online and the majority of them were men.
- **Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP** said he found gambling to be similar alcohol where the price and availability of alcohol is critical to the rise in consumption. This he compared with the accessibility of online gambling. He asked whether online gambling had opened the pathway to much younger people getting involved in the activity.
- **Dr Henerietta Bowden-Jones** agreed that affordability and availability remained vital to influencing gambling addiction. For example, if gambling was made more expensive and inaccessible far less people would partake in it.
- She also blamed advertising for influencing young people to gamble, particularly gambling adverts during sporting events. She mentioned a new category of problem gamblers which she said is often overlooked - young financial traders who are encouraged to gamble online.
- **Lord Foster** said 40% of people gamble but only 18% gamble online. He asked the witnesses to provide more clarity on the attraction to online gambling.
- **Dr Henerietta Bowden-Jones** said there are a number of people who gamble safely however those with a neurobiological profile tend to be the most at risk. This is because they are impulsive and are higher risk takers based on research. The ease of access to a mobile phone further fuels their gambling addiction.
- **Lord Chadlington** wanted to understand the processes in the brain that lead people to gamble for hours and in some cases take drastic decisions such as taking their own lives.
- **Matthew Gaskell** said addiction evolves over time, the brain circuits are reinforced constantly if an individual is finding an activity rewarding. As the process evolves and circuits continue to be rewarded in the brain, over time the mind narrows on its focuses and an individual can become more preoccupied with this activity and all the other important responsibilities and concerns in an individual’s life can become secondary.
- **Carolyn Harris MP** asked whether this is linked with acquired brain injury.

- **Matthew Gaskell** said it was not and it was different because this was a process of conditioning to a highly attractive goal and habit pattern.
- **Carolyn Harris MP** asked whether the industry could use this as a way of exploiting people.
- **Matthew Gaskell** said the industry do use this in terms of advertising and through the structural characteristics of gambling activities. They use re-enforcement techniques and cues to stimulate the addiction.
- **Dr Henerietta Bowden-Jones** said from a medical perspective it often depends on the individual's vulnerability. For example, if a family has a problem with alcohol addiction and the child has a sip of alcohol, they are more likely to become addicted. This is the same for gambling where the genetical risks linked to problem gambling are "big" she said.
- **Matthew Gaskell** said dopamine is a motivational chemical which drives the desire to gamble and the pre-frontal region which individuals rely on to regulate impulsivity is particularly active during gambling.
- **Ronnie Cowan MP** asked whether there was any more information on women problem gamblers. This is because he said the focus has typically been placed on men and gambling.
- **Dr Henerietta Bowden-Jones** mentioned that she had edited a whole textbook on female gamblers, however despite this, there was limited research in this area. She said more needed to be done to understand women who gamble. She noted that cultural constraints often stop women from coming forward about their addiction.
- **Matthew Gaskell** mentioned a Scandinavian study on the prevalence rates of problem gamblers which indicated that women and men in Scandinavia are on par in relation to problem gambling.
- **Dr Henerietta Bowden-Jones** said women are just as vulnerable as men to gambling addiction however cultural determinants either stop women from gambling or confessing that they do gamble and do have a problem.
- **Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP** discussed gambling advertising and how it is aimed mainly at smart young men not women. He asked the witnesses whether this was the case
- **Dr Henerietta Bowden-Jones** said she was aware of a growing body of advertising specifically targeted to women; however, she had not personally seen the adverts.

- **Matthew Gaskell** agreed that there was daytime advertising targeting women which used specific colours to encourage women to gamble.
- **Dr Henerietta Bowden-Jones** reiterated her point made earlier about the need for a much larger independently funded study into problem gamblers.
- **Carolyn Harris MP** asked whether this research was needed to tackle problem gambling.
- **Dr Henerietta Bowden-Jones** said yes.
- **Lord Chadlington** said he had been criticised for saying that we were on the brink of a gambling epidemic. He asked the witnesses whether younger children are more likely to become addicted to gambling than the older generation.
- **Dr Henerietta Bowden-Jones** stipulated that the question was difficult to answer because there was no evidence to prove that the UK was on the edge of a gambling epidemic.
- She went onto say that online gambling companies are ‘priming’ children. Children are doing certain things online which gives them positive and negative feedback and these areas in the brain are lightening up in children that are predisposed. If children have a vulnerability then this will continue when they move to gambling with real money.
- **Carolyn Harris MP** asked whether the industry was doing enough to tackle gambling related harm and what more the regulator could do to reduce the levels of harms caused by online gambling.
- **Dr Henerietta Bowden-Jones** said the problem was not to do with the lack of funds being poured into the industry, it was to do with the way the money has been managed.
- **Matthew Gaskell** said there were serious questions around whether to allow people to gamble especially as the industry earns 15 million pounds a year and often those people cannot afford what they are gambling.
- **Carolyn Harris MP** asked whether this included emphasising the need for certain regulation such as affordability checks and credit cards.
- **Matthew Gaskell** agreed.
- **Dr Henerietta Bowden-Jones** said people should not be gambling on credit cards, either they have the money, or they do not. She went onto say that she is in support of a mandatory levy of 1%, money which could be invested in public health and prevention.

- **Carolyn Harris MP** agreed that a mandatory levy was vital however not all sections of the gambling industry would be able to afford to pay the 1% without damaging small business.
- **Ronnie Cowan MP** said a mandatory levy would give researchers the confidence to plan ahead. He asked how this Levy should work.
- **Matthew Gaskell** said the proportion of the money should be given to the NHS to help individuals deal with complex gambling problems.
- **Dr Henerietta Bowden-Jones** stated that more emphasis needed to be placed on relapse prevention, so people are given continuous support.
- **Ronnie Cowan MP** asked who should manage the money a mandatory levy would bring in?
- **Matthew Gaskell** said he was apprehensive about the structure of a mandatory levy because there is currently no information about the way the money will be divided up and who will be in charge of making those decisions.
- **Dr Henerietta Bowden-Jones** suggested that a new independent structure which could apportion the funds in a meritocratic way would be the best system. She agreed that a mandatory levy could reduce concerns around the motivations and intentions of industry donations to fund research, education and treatment and prevention services.

Second Session 14.00 – 14.55

- **Carolyn Harris MP (Chair)** welcomed Ben Clay and Katie Fry and asked them to introduce themselves.
- **Katie Fry** introduced herself as the Gambling Support Service Project Manager at the Citizens Advice Bureau. There she is currently delivering a gambling support service which is a GambleAware funded service which is around harm prevention. They are working with front line organisations to train them to spot gambling harm, giving them advice and helping bridge the gap to getting people into specialist treatment. She also gave background to Citizens Advice Bureau as a charity.
- **Carolyn Harris MP** asked why Katie felt it was necessary to set up the gambling project.
- **Katie Fry** said she had previously worked on delivering gambling services in South Wales.

- **Ben Clay** mentioned that he was a Solicitor specialising in gambling advertising compliance. He has experience advising on issues regarding advertising, more specifically what the law is on remote gambling in Northern Ireland.
- He proceeded to explain the work he has been undertaking. He explained that the law in Northern Ireland predates remote gambling. The issue is devolved so the law in 1985 does not consider remote gambling. He said there were gaps in regulation and the disagreements he has had with the ASA and illegal advertising over whose responsibility it is to enforce advertising rules. He added that the ASA do not comply with their own complaints' procedure.
- **Lord Chadlington** asked about the support that is available to problem gamblers and how well-trained staff in gambling services are.
- **Katie Fry** said that staff are trained to identify gambling harm and there is also information available online so that anyone in England, Wales and Scotland can go into a Citizens Advice branch and be confident they are receiving appropriate advice.
- **Lord Chadlington** asked what would happen after the individual seeks advice and how they would be directed and supported by Citizens Advice.
- **Katie Fry** explained that individuals will be given information on debt, money and housing alongside links to different organisations such as GambleAware. There will also be a pathway for referrals for more specialist support.
- **Ronnie Cowan MP** asked if Katie Fry was ever approached by high street bookmakers to provide educational services for staff.
- **Katie Fry** explained that there were other organisations that do that line of work, such as GamCare, however their line of work focuses primarily on professionals working with the public.
- **Ronnie Cowan MP** asked if their staff were volunteers.
- **Katie Fry** said that about 70% of staff in the Citizens Advice network are volunteers.
- **Caroline Harris MP** asked whether Citizens Advice had the capacity nationwide to support people with gambling problems.
- **Katie Fry** explained that Citizens Advice was not able to measure demand unless their resources are used.
- **Caroline Harris MP** asked what more the industry could do.

- **Katie Fry** said that problem gamblers should not have access to funds that they cannot afford. She referred to a report Citizens Advice released called Out of Luck which highlighted the number of gamblers in debt. Individuals should also be made aware of the amount of time they spend gambling, she said she believes that the industry has the money and technology to do this.
- **Caroline Harris MP** asked what the situation was in Northern Ireland in terms of the help and resources available to individuals.
- **Ben Clay** said that Northern Ireland has a higher rate of problem gambling and less money is being spent in the region to address the problem.
- **Caroline Harris MP** asked about the state of FOBTs in Northern Ireland.
- **Ben Clay** said that the stakes had been lowered to £2. He added that while legislation needs to be updated, it is not the main issue. It is the enforcement of the regulation.
- **Lord Chadlington** asked what the differences were in licensing regulation in Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.
- **Ben Clay** explained that the licensing regime in Northern Ireland meant that companies and individuals advertising gambling would be illegal in the UK. He referred back to the gaps in regulation that he mentioned before.
- **Lord Chadlington** asked who were committing these offences.
- **Ben Clay** replied that the issue was widespread. He listed examples from non-broadcasters such as a Bet365 advertisement in the RacingPost and advertisements for broadcasting. He also mentioned that consumers would be breaching regulation if they interacted with gambling adverts. He added that some laws have not been outlawed such as 'no purchase necessary' promotion advertisements on confectionary bars.
- **Caroline Harris MP** asked if the UK could take part in this activity.
- **Ben Clay** said that because of the remote access of gambling, individuals could gain access to advertisements in Northern Ireland. He explained that in this case, it is unlikely that the enforcement of regulation would take place.
- **Lord Chadlington** asked if there had been change in the demographic of problem gamblers.
- **Katie Fry** said that the gambling services offered by Citizens Advice is relatively new and they are yet to capture any information on demographic.

She said that hopefully once people start using the service, Citizens Advice would gain more insight into the changes in demographic.

- **Lord Chadlington** asked if Citizens Advice had the financial resources to produce the information on demographic.
- **Katie Fry** said that while priorities may differ from branch-to-branch, local centres are being funded to produce the information. To get a national picture, she said it would be possible to pull the regional information together.
- **Caroline Harris MP** asked what the geographical spread of the offices were.
- **Katie Fry** explained that there were branches in the North West, North East, East Midlands, London and Wales.
- **Caroline Harris MP** asked the witnesses for any final remarks.
- **Ben Clay** summarised that increased compliance in advertising would lead to less harm. He would like to see greater regulation in advertising.
- **Katie Fry** added that according to a Citizens Advice report, only 5% of problem gamblers identified advertising as an issue. However, problem gamblers did acknowledge advertising to be a hinderance when they were in recovery. In particular, she identified television adverts, marketing emails and text alerts.
- **Caroline Harris MP** shared some anecdotes of problem gamblers who had been bombarded with advertisements.
- **Ben Clay** added that this kind of bombardment was seen by many as normal.

Session Three 14.55 – 15.30

- **Caroline Harris MP** welcomed Marc Etches and Kate Lampard and asked them to give an insight into GambleAware.
- **Kate Lampard CBE** said they were keen to discuss the work of GambleAware and answer any specific questions on gambling.
- She mentioned the research commissioned by GambleAware which delivered an interim report on the effect of Gambling Marketing and Advertising on children and vulnerable adults. She said it was too early to judge the effects of the exposure but highlighted that there were important recommendations that were made in the report.

- **Caroline Harris MP** asked for more details on the research.
- **Marc Etches** said that one of the recommendations made called on the gambling industry, advertisement industry and technology industry to make better use of technology to safeguard children and young people.
- **Caroline Harris MP** questioned if the gambling industry were using the research for negative purposes.
- **Marc Etches** said he could not comment on what those in the industry were doing and suggested that a better use of technology would be helpful.
- **Caroline Harris MP** asked about the £3.9 million GambleAware provided to GamCare.
- **Marc Etches** explained that GambleAware is a commissioning body and this includes monitoring and working with those they have commissioned. He went onto list the three ways they engaged with GamCare.
- Firstly, they engaged with GamCare to deliver a national gambling helpline of which £705,000 of the £3.9 million was allocated too.
- Secondly, they contracted them to deliver gambling services and thirdly they commission services across a national network. He said that £2.5 million of the funding was allocated to support the national network.
- He also mentioned that GamCare was aiming to operate under CQC guidelines and are looking to be associated with them to ensure high quality of care.
- **Kate Lampard CBE** added that the Board holds GamCare to account to encourage them to keep improving their services. She mentioned that GambleAware is on the look-out on how the procurement process will continue in the future.
- **Caroline Harris MP** asked if GambleAware would be the right organisation to commission independent research.
- **Kate Lampard CBE** replied that GambleAware had set-up measures to ensure research remains independent and separate. GambleAware has a specialist research committee and processes in place for those who carry out research.
- She acknowledged that there were ethical problems around the money provided for this research
- **Caroline Harris MP** asked if this was a bad reflection on the wider industry in general.

- **Kate Lampard CBE** said she could not comment on the wider industry, but she was confident that the wider industry has had no impact on the research GambleAware does. GambleAware will be looking at other mechanisms and have approached research institutions.
- **Marc Etches** added that their research strategy is determined by the Gambling Commission. He talked about other alternatives and agreed that there needed to be an increase in independent research. He reiterated that GambleAware was committed to finding other ways of producing independent research.
- **Lord Chadlington** asked about the Bet Regret Campaign and the progress made.
- **Marc Etches** replied that the origin of the campaign was Karen Bradley as she raised concerns on gambling advertising. GambleAware was asked to produce a counter-campaign which had to be embedded in a public health approach.
- GambleAware commissioned M&C Saatchi to help deliver the campaign and to identify the target audience. They identified young men and football fans as the target audience. The aim was to incite behavioural change in 1) not chasing losses, 2) not betting when drunk and 3) not betting when bored.
- The campaign was aimed for recreational gamblers and made for broadcasting which would run for 2 years. Ipsos Mori carried out independent research and will continue to track research. Marc Etches said that there is 61% campaign recognition.
- **Lord Chadlington** asked if the money being spent on the Bet Regret was adequate compared to the money spent on gambling advertising. He quoted that the Bet Regret campaign spending was around £7 million whereas gambling advertising figures are in the billions.
- **Caroline Harris MP** agreed that the industry is aware of the messaging in the Bet Regret campaign but are not willing to address the issues.
- **Marc Etches** agreed with Lord Chadlington's point.
- **Lord Chadlington** asked about GambleAware's funds, whether they were adequate and if it could be increased.
- **Marc Etches** replied that the funding was in addition to the voluntary funding from the industry and suggested that more funding would be needed, especially online.

- **Caroline Harris MP** asked about the timing of why the big five gambling agencies being so generous about rehabilitation currently.
- **Kate Lampard CBE** said Caroline Harris MP needed to ask the gambling agencies directly.
- **Marc Etches** said that the situation needs further monitoring.
- **Lord Chadlington** asked for clarification on computerized cognitive behavioral therapy.
- **Marc Etches** explained it is CBT online and that there is a desire from users to access the services online. He reiterates the principle of this was to deliver services online, in relation to other addiction services.
- **Man** asked if it was a good idea to keep problem gamblers attached to a computer instead of seeking help in person.
- **Marc Etches** said that GambleAware would be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the service in the next few years, after data has been gathered.
- **Caroline Harris MP** asked for a written reply in regard to the issue.
- **Marc Etches** agreed.
- **Lord Chadlington** asked about the funding to expand face-to-face services.
- **Marc Etches** reiterated that they commission services to organisations such as GamCare and others such as RCA who operate in Scotland. He adds that the aim is to increase their resources so they can receive more clients.
- **Man** asked whether spending on advertising was wise because GambleAware would not be able to outspend gambling companies.
- **Marc Etches** said that it is appropriate that something is being done and would like to see more done, particularly online.
- **Man** asked if it was possible to stop gambling companies from advertising.
- **Marc Etches** said that this was a matter for regulators and policymakers.
- **Lord Chadlington** agreed. He went onto ask for further clarification on how GambleAware is structured.
- **Kate Lampard CBE** said that GambleAware is a small organization.

- **Lord Chadlington** asked how many staff GambleAware had.
- **Marc Etches** said there were 16 staff currently and they are looking to expand to 21 by the end of next year. Marc adds that they have 13 full-time members of staff.
- **Lord Chadlington** asked what GambleAware needed in order to improve.
- **Marc Etches** replied that he would benefit from a better understanding of the gaps in their services and better independent understanding of where their funding is going. He said he was comfortable with the amount of funding GambleAware currently receives and over the next six months he will be developing GambleAware's future business plan.
- **Kate Lampard CBE** pointed out that GambleAware are a commissioning body which justifies the small number of staff they have. She added that improving the quality of service is important for them.
- **Caroline Harris MP** said addiction was a public health issue and asked if GambleAware had any NHS advisers in their commissioning process.
- **Marc Etches** agreed that gambling is a public health issue. He said that the Board does have representation from the NHS and other public health bodies.
- **Lord Chadlington** said that it was important to pay tribute to Kate Lampard CBE and her team in regards to the steps they have taken to make GambleAware more independent.
- **Kate Lampard CBE** agreed that there had been some issues but assured that GambleAware was working on continually improving.

Meeting concluded at 15.30pm

External Guests

- Tosin Adedayo, Interel UK (Secretariat)
- Katherine Morgan, Interel UK (Secretariat)
- Ella Thomas, Interel UK (Secretariat)
- Sonia Kharaud, Interel UK (Secretariat)
- Miles Baron - Bingo Association
- Lisa Morgan - Bingo Association
- Tom Tuxworth -
- Lisa Speed – Novomatic
- Professor Ali - Bournemouth University
- Ryan Hidge - Bournemouth University

- Anna Hemmings - GamCare
- Sam Winter - Hanover
- Zoe Osmond- GambleAware
- Jane Rigbye- GambleAware
- Clara Martin - GambleAware
- Brian Chappell
- Craig Ashcroft
- Rebecca De Mesquita
- Katie Reynolds-Jones -GamStop
- John White - Bacta
- Liz Karter - Level Ground Therapy
- David Altanter - Gambling Compliance
- Simon Thomas - Hippodrome Casino
- Eleanor Curry - DCMS
- Rachel Redwood - DCMS
- Leslie Macloed Miller
- Karen Collins - Camelot
- Wes Himes - RGA
- Niamh McDade - RSPH
- Rob Kirby - Gambling Commission
- John Stergides - Electrocoin
- Gabi Stergides - Electrocoin
- Charles Ritchie - Gambling with Lives
- Liz Ritchie- Gambling with Lives
- Derek Webb - Fairer Gambling
- Matt Zarb-Cousin - GamBan