

Key Note Speech to GambleAware Conference, 2019

Good morning, and welcome to GambleAware's seventh annual conference.

The General Election may well have caused the unavailability of politicians and regulators to speak here today but it has crystallised political support for the notion that gambling harms are best understood as matters of health and wellbeing, and keeping people safe from gambling harms requires the application of a public health model.

Indeed, the various manifesto commitments by the three main political parties represent something of a cross-party consensus about the need for any new Government to address some key issues.

A new Conservative government have promised to review the Gambling Act 2005 to update it for the digital age including putting the voluntary levy on a statutory footing. Also, the Conservatives have said they will publish a new UK-wide cross-government addiction strategy in 2020, including gambling, under the remit of a new, dedicated monitoring unit at the heart of Government.

A Labour government would be committed to address the adverse impacts of gambling ***“as a matter of public health, treated accordingly in expanded addiction support services”*** Specifically, Labour would seek to:

- Curb gambling advertising in sports;
- Introduce a new Gambling Act fit for the digital age, establishing gambling limits; and
- Introduce a levy for problem gambling funding and mechanisms for consumer compensation.

The Liberal Democrats are also committed to introduce measures to ***“protect individuals, their families and communities from problem gambling”***. And like Labour they would also:

- Introduce a compulsory levy on gambling companies to fund research, education and treatment;
- Impose a ban on the use of credit cards for gambling;
- Restrict gambling advertising; and
- Establish a Gambling Ombudsman.

The political response reflects public concern about the extent and the impact of gambling-related marketing, the impact of technology making gambling more easily accessible and the convergence of gambling and gaming. And gambling is increasingly recognised as a public health issue, with young people one of the groups most at risk¹.

Gambling Commission figures show that 350,000 (11%) of 11 to 16 year olds spent their own money on gambling in the last week. This rate is lower than for young people drinking alcohol (16%), but higher than for those using e-cigarettes (7%), smoking tobacco cigarettes (6%) or taking illegal drugs (5%). The findings suggest a relationship between these potentially harmful activities and gambling, with those who have spent their own money on gambling in the past 7 days more likely to have drunk

¹ <https://about.gambleaware.org/media/1274/1-june-update-children-young-people-literature-review.pdf>

alcohol (41%), taken drugs (21%) or smoked either a tobacco cigarette (25%) or an e-cigarette (27%), compared with 11-16 year olds who have not gambled².

Estimates are that 4.4% of 11 to 16 year olds are experiencing harms from gambling, including 1.7% who are identified as ‘problem gamblers’. This 1.7% is equivalent to approximately 55,000 11-16 year olds across England, Scotland and Wales³. Research suggests that the younger the age at which disordered gambling develops the greater will be the consequences and severity of gambling in later life⁴.

Gambling disorder is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as an addictive behaviour with implications for mental health⁵, and for some gambling addiction can result in suicide. In Great Britain there are around 2 million adults experiencing some level of harm arising from gambling, including 340,000 so called ‘problem gamblers’ who might be diagnosed as experiencing gambling disorder⁶.

However, knowledge and understanding of gambling disorder and wider gambling harms among health professionals, advice charities, teachers and parents remains relatively poor.

Keeping people safe from gambling harms requires the application of a public health model that accounts for three aspects of prevention: universal promotion of a safer environment (primary); selective intervention for those who may be ‘at risk’ (secondary); and, direct support for those directly affected by gambling disorder (tertiary).

Guided by this public health model, GambleAware commissions prevention and treatment services on a national scale across three areas of activity:

- We work to prevent gambling harms by producing national health campaigns to build awareness and encourage behaviour change, and by providing support to frontline services and organisations to inform, to educate, and where appropriate, to deliver brief interventions;
- We commission the National Gambling Treatment Service that brings together the National Gambling Helpline and a network of providers across Britain, including the NHS, to deliver a range of treatment services;
- We seek to optimise knowledge and to provide thought leadership on prevention, addiction and treatment in gambling via an extensive research & evaluation programme.

At the heart of our charitable purpose is an objective to help build sufficient resilience for children and young people to avoid gambling harms. Primarily, we do this by working in strategic partnership with expert organisations. Current projects include:

- Commissioning two research consortia - one led by Ipsos MORI (in partnership with University of Bristol, University of Edinburgh, Ebiquity and the Centre for Analysis of Social Media at Demos), and the other by the University of Stirling (in partnership with ScotCen Social Research, University of Glasgow, and University of Warwick) to examine the effects of gambling marketing and

² <https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/PDF/Young-People-Gambling-Report-2019.pdf>

³ <https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/PDF/Young-People-Gambling-Report-2019.pdf>

⁴ <https://about.gambleaware.org/media/1274/1-june-update-children-young-people-literature-review.pdf>

⁵ <https://icd.who.int/browse11/l-m/en#/http%3a%2f%2fid.who.int%2f1041487064>

⁶ <https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/PDF/survey-data/Gambling-behaviour-in-Great-Britain-2016.pdf>

advertising on children, young people and other vulnerable people. An initial report was published in July 2019 and the second stage of this important research project will be published in February.

- Commissioning research led by the University of Wolverhampton to enhance knowledge and understanding of gambling harms by exploring how both gamers and gamblers interact with monetized gaming features with chance based elements (aka 'loot boxes').
- Commissioning **Clearview Research**, a research consultancy, to explore the experiences, views and attitudes towards gambling of young people aged 9 to 24 from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. Access to this hard to reach, vulnerable population has helped GambleAware adapt support materials to get key messages across to the BAME community. The report was published in September.
- Commissioning the **Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH)** to work with young people aged 11 to 24 across England, Scotland and Wales to explore perceptions of gambling, views on different forms of gambling and gambling harms, and the impact that this can have on young people's emotional health and well-being.
- We are working with **Parent Zone** to deliver awareness raising campaigns with accompanying films, tips and downloadable resources around gambling harms for families, professionals and young people. The first campaign **Gaming or Gambling** aims to help families learn about the emerging issue of gambling-like risks that 8 to 11 year olds may face when playing online games. These resources have reached 215,000 families, professionals and young people to date, since it's launch in September. The second campaign **Know the Stakes**, launched last week, is focussed on providing parents, carers, professionals and young people themselves who are in the process of becoming financially independent, information and advice to be able to understand and identify potential gambling harms.
- **Fast Forward**, a Scottish charity that enables young people to make informed choices about their well-being and to live healthier lifestyles, has been commissioned to run a major youth gambling initiative across Scotland for three years. This will include establishing a Scottish Gambling Education Hub with the aim of helping organisations address gambling issues with young people in Scotland. The hub will be based on the Gambling Education Toolkit developed by Fast Forward commissioned by GambleAware in 2017 and will provide the relevant training and resources needed by youth workers, teachers and professionals working with young people in formal and informal education settings. It will also offer services for vulnerable young people who are not in education, employment or training, as well as parents and carers.

So far training has been delivered to more than 200 organisations, and reached 8,000 pupils and 60 schools through peer-based theatre performances in secondary schools. The plan is to evaluate this programme in 2020 and, if warranted, commission similar national programmes in Wales and in England.

- Back in 2016 we commissioned **Demos** to work with the **PSHE Association** and others to pilot an intervention in secondary schools across England and Wales with pupils aged 14 to 15 years old

which aimed to teach and minimise the risks associated with gambling and signpost where to go for help and support. These lessons were created to build up the resilience of teenagers to the risks related to gambling. Today, I am delighted to share the first output from our ongoing partnership with the PSHE Association, a Teacher Handbook entitled '*How to address gambling through PSHE Education*'. There will be a suite of other resources ready for publication early in 2020.

Most of these organisations are participating in today's conference and you will have a chance to hear more about their respective and important programmes.

Commissioning a coherent, co-ordinated and efficient system of prevention and treatment requires the strategic distribution of sufficient funding, guided by appropriate expertise underpinned by effective partnership working. GambleAware is currently the primary commissioner using best-practice aspects of commissioning to ensure that evidence-informed services are developed according to need, within a robust and accountable system, and that funding is allocated efficiently and independently as one would expect of other health and social care commissioning and grant-making bodies.

In partnership with gambling treatment providers and advice and support organisations, GambleAware has spent several years methodically building structures for commissioning a coherent system of brief intervention and treatment services, with clearly defined care pathways and established referral routes to and from the NHS – leading to the development of the **National Gambling Treatment Service**, triaged via the National Gambling Helpline.

The work to date has demonstrated what can be achieved in a partnership between government, the statutory sector and the charitable sector with industry funding.

The commitment by NHS England to open 15 specialist gambling clinics, including provision for children and young people, over the next five years is the clearest indication that the harms arising from gambling are beginning to achieve an equivalence in terms of public policy response to the harms arising from other risky behaviours. The apparent political consensus that more needs to be done to address gambling addiction and to keep our children and young people safe from gambling harms offers further reason for optimism, whatever the outcome of next week's election.

GambleAware's work is foremost as an expert commissioner working to deliver a coherent, co-ordinated and efficient system of prevention and treatment but alongside this, we are uniquely positioned as a convener at the heart of a complex and rapidly changing landscape. It is with this role in mind that I am pleased to welcome so many different organisations, including ones we have not worked with before, to convene today to learn, to discuss and to collaborate to ensure that collectively as a society we are effective at keeping children and young people safe from gambling harms.

Thank you.