



Gambling Related Harm APPG



The Rt Hon John Whittingdale MP
Minister for Media and Data
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

Date 23 July 2021

Dear Minister,

Gambling Advertising

Thank you for your letter of 12th July regarding gambling advertising. We are pleased to hear that the answer to your question tabled on 25th May should not be taken to indicate a foregone conclusion on the impact of gambling advertising.

You note in your letter that the *'evidence you have seen does not show a causal link between exposure to gambling advertising and the development of problem gambling'*. Given this, we thought it would be helpful to send you the links to the research papers which we have seen which do indeed show a 'causal link' and wider links between adverts and harm to different groups.

We hope you will now be able to conclude that you **have** seen evidence that **does** show a causal link between exposure to gambling advertising and problem gambling and that you will consider this in developing regulatory and legislative proposals ahead of the White Paper.

The researcher Dr. Heather Wardle and colleagues have also found in some research among young people aged 16-24, pending publication, that problem gamblers are far more likely to say that the adverts induce them to gamble when they were not otherwise going to. Given that the third licensing objective of the gambling act is protecting the vulnerable from harm, this evidence demonstrates how the industry is failing in its basic duty.

Yours sincerely,

Carolyn Harris MP
Chair, APPG for Gambling Related Harm

Lord Don Foster
Chair, Peers for Gambling Reform



Gambling Related Harm APPG



Links and evidence

Advertising Standard Authority, in its response to Labour's Gambling Review, did find evidence of a causal link, 28 March 2018

<https://www.asa.org.uk/uploads/assets/uploaded/e0291e74-d97e-421f-a550f4516de2114c.pdf>

(Submission provided by ASA, CAP and BCAP – the 'ASA system')

Evidence: "AP and BCAP identified over 50 academic studies and other pieces of evidence relating to gambling, advertising/marketing and problem gambling published after the Binde (2014) evidence review. The emerging body of dedicated research explored the impact of advertising on behaviour. In general, it suggests some level of impact on particular groups. Several studies found associations between advertising exposure and the behaviour of problem and at-risk gamblers. Other studies looking at risk factors for different gambling activities identified particular at-risk groups or characteristics such as young men." (Page 2, para 2.6.)

Binde P. & Romild, U. (2019) Self-Reported Negative Influence of Gambling Advertising in a Swedish Population-Based Sample in *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 35, pp.709-724.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10899-018-9791-x>

Evidence: "In Sweden in 2015 (with a population close to 10 million), there were about 134,000 moderate risk and problem gamblers. This means that tens of thousands of these were repeatedly influenced by gambling advertising to gamble more often and for more money than they intended. This adverse consequence should not be neglected. Among these people, gambling advertising worsens problems and adds to the harm caused by excessive gambling."

Wardle H, Critchlow N, Donnachie C, Brown A, Hunt K (2021) Betting and gambling Covid-19 Impact study. Briefing paper 2: Key insights to inform the UK government's review of the Gambling Act 2005. <https://www.stir.ac.uk/media/stirling/services/research/documents/policy-briefings/Betting-and-Gambling-Covid-19-Impact-study-Briefing-paper-2-v12.pdf>

Source is research/surveys by researchers at the Universities of Stirling and Glasgow on patterns and experiences of gambling among regular sports bettors and young people (aged 18-24) and on gambling marketing. Wave 2 (data collected November 2020)

- Among regular sports bettors, **those experiencing gambling problems were more likely to recall seeing and receiving gambling marketing communications.** More than three quarters of those experiencing moderate risk and problem gambling recalled receiving direct marketing in the past month, compared with just under half of non-problem gamblers.
- **Those experiencing gambling problems were three times more likely** as those experiencing no problems to report that the **amount of gambling advertising they saw, and the amount of direct marketing they received** from gambling operators, **increased during the initial Covid-19 lockdown.**
- **Marketing was also successful in instigating behavioural response among those gambling at higher risk.** Around half (54%) of those experiencing **gambling problems** stated a gambling advert, promotion or sponsorship **often or**

very often prompted them to spend money on gambling when they were not otherwise planning to during the initial Covid-19 lockdown. **Equivalent estimate for those not experiencing gambling problems was just 2%.**

- In the in-depth interviews, some participants described a sense of a relentless onslaught of adverts – *‘it’s almost like it’s a frenzy of adverts’*; *‘my email box is constantly filled with gambling adverts, constantly’*. Some voiced a need for greater regulation.
- **Gambling marketing is successful in reaching, and engaging, sports bettors** through a variety of advertising and direct marketing. When received, **the data suggests that marketing communications may have a disproportionate behavioural impact on those who are already moderate or problem gamblers.**

Norway and Australia studies – ASA submission to Labour Party Review: NHS Treatment of gambling addiction (page 2, para 2.7.)

- 1) **Norwegian study** – Hanss. D et al. (2015) **Prevalence and Correlates of Problem Gambling in a Representative Sample of Norwegian 17-Year-Olds** in *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 31(3) pp.659-78. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24619792/>
- 2) **Australian study** – Hing et al. **Risk Factors for Gambling Problems on Online Electronic Gaming Machines, Race Betting and Sports Betting**, *Front. Psychol.* 8:779. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00779/full>

Ipsos MORI and University of Stirling, ‘The effect of gambling marketing and advertising on children, young people and vulnerable adults’ <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/effect-gambling-advertising-children-young-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

Evidence: “Researchers identified a risk that some advertising may play on the susceptibilities of children, young people and vulnerable adults, particularly when their understanding of the risk of gambling may be poor. The appeal of a gambling promotions, for example ones that imply limited risk, or inflated suggestions of winning, may not always result in an immediate bet. Instead, these adverts were successful in eliciting a range of emotional and cognitive responses from children, young people and vulnerable adults. This therefore was likely to shape their attitudes and the likelihood as to whether or not they would consider gambling in the future.”

Ruth Davidson ‘Football’s Gambling Addiction’ <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/footballs-gambling-addiction>

Gambling Commission (2020) ‘Young people and Gambling’ Report <https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/publication/young-people-and-gambling-2020>

Evidence: “58% of 11–16-year-olds have ever seen or heard gambling adverts or sponsorship, of which 7% said this had prompted them to gamble when they weren’t already planning to.”