

1 July 2020

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Dear Secretary of State,

**House of Lords inquiry into the
Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry**

The House of Lords Select Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry will tomorrow publish its report *Gambling Harm – Time for Action* (Report, Session 2019-21, HL Paper 79). I am sorry not to be able to send you a hard copy of this letter or of the report, but the email with this letter includes a link to the report. The report is under embargo until 0001 hrs tomorrow, but will then be put on the Committee's website.

I enclose a copy of a letter I have written to Oliver Dowden, since DCMS is (and in the view of the Committee should remain) the lead department for this issue. However I am also writing to you separately because of your personal interest in problem gambling, and because of your current responsibilities.

You have shown, since your days as Secretary of State at DCMS, a great concern over the issue of problem gambling. You supported the reduction in the maximum stake of FOBTs and have advocated a mandatory levy on the industry to support research, education and treatment. You re-affirmed your support at a reception given by Gambling with Lives on 26 February – we quote what you said then in paragraph 288 of our report.

You accepted then that gambling addiction was a mental health issue. Our witnesses overwhelmingly agreed, and we make recommendations for improvements in the way your department, and the NHS, should discharge their responsibilities.

The Government will be responding to our recommendations. I have made clear to Oliver Dowden that the Committee's inquiry was not a review of the Gambling Act, and is not in any way connected with the Government's promised review of the Act. There can be no further delay.

We will be putting copies of this letter on our website, along with other letters to Ministers.



HOUSE OF LORDS

**Select Committee on the Social and
Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry**

House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW
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Yours sincerely,

Lord Grade of Yarmouth

Chair of the Select Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry



1 July 2020

Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

Dear Secretary of State,

**House of Lords inquiry into the
Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry**

The House of Lords Select Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry will tomorrow publish its report *Gambling Harm – Time for Action* (Report, Session 2019-21, HL Paper 79). I am sorry not to be able to send you a hard copy of this letter or of the report, but the email with this letter includes a link to the report. The report is under embargo until 0001 hrs tomorrow, but will then be put on the Committee's website.

The Prorogation and Dissolution of Parliament have delayed our work, but have not prevented us from taking evidence from a wide range of persons and bodies. These include written evidence from the Government, oral evidence from your officials, and further written evidence from Ministers in place of the oral evidence we were due to hear in March. The Committee is most grateful for this.

All the written and oral evidence we have received is on the Committee's website. The overwhelming burden of it is that, although gambling gives pleasure to many people, the present state of the legislation and the regulatory framework does little to prevent a large number of people from becoming addicted to gambling, and suffering harm which affects not only themselves but their families, friends, and wider circle.

As you will know, Cabinet Office Guidance requires the Government to respond to reports like ours within two months. This is a long report, these are not ordinary times, and those two months will include August; we are therefore prepared to wait for your response until the end of September.

In their supplementary written evidence, Ministers referred to the Government's planned review of the Gambling Act, they said they wanted everyone to have a chance to contribute their views, and they told us that they "particularly look forward to the findings from this committee". To avoid any misunderstanding, we have not been conducting a review of the Gambling Act, or contributing to the Government's forthcoming review. Of over 50 recommendations, only 8 need primary legislation, and only 5 of those need amendments of the Gambling Act. Some, like a review of the funding of the Gambling Commission or an increase in the powers of local authority licensing committees, are less urgent. Urgent amendment of the Act is needed only for raising the minimum age for buying national lottery products, and on that the Government has already completed its consultation. The creation

of a Gambling Ombudsman would need its own Bill, or could be included in the next major piece of consumer legislation. Replacing lottery duty by a gross profits tax would be for the next Finance Bill, while an action for breach of statutory duty would be for the next law reform Bill.

We have heard some shocking evidence in the course of our inquiry. We have spoken to families whose sons were problem gamblers and committed suicide – something which happens on average once a day. So much could be done by implementing quickly the great majority of our recommendations which do not need primary legislation. We can save lives without waiting for the Government's review of the Act.

We will be putting copies of this letter on our website. In addition, I am sending copies to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to the Secretaries of State for Health and Education, and to the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, to whom I am also writing separately.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lord Grade', followed by a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line that extends to the left.

Lord Grade of Yarmouth
Chair of the Select Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry