

Guide to the Gambling White Paper

Overview and stakeholder
reaction

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INTRODUCTION

On April 27, the UK government published “High stakes: gambling reform for the digital age”, its long-awaited plan for the most comprehensive update of the regulatory framework for the industry since the Gambling Act in 2005. The white paper aims to address concerns about the dangers of online and virtual gambling, which enable punters to place a bet anywhere at any time of the day or night, while allowing millions of people to continue to play safely.

The government’s proposals, which follow a wide-ranging industry review launched in 2020, include a new levy on betting firms to fund treatment for addiction and research, stake limits for online slot games, and tougher powers for the Gambling Commission to regulate companies. However, while the industry and stakeholders welcomed the policy paper as a major step towards bringing British gambling regulations up to date for the digital age, some voiced frustration that key proposals will be subject to further consultation, while others voiced disappointment at the lack of action to restrict advertising.

This Dods Political Intelligence report provides a one-stop guide to the gambling white paper, including an overview of its key proposals and next steps, and a compilation of reactions from politicians, industry figures, and stakeholders with links to original sources. It concludes with a list of parliamentarians that have shown an interest in gambling, from government policymakers to MPs concerned about gambling harms, and lawmakers who have declared gifts from the industry during the current parliament.

OVERVIEW

On April 27, Lucy Frazer, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, announced the publication of the government's long-awaited plan for updating the regulatory framework for the gambling industry. The policy paper, ["High stakes: gambling reform for the digital age"](#), aims to respond to concerns about the rapid development of the digital betting market in recent years. The gambling landscape has changed significantly since the Gambling Act 2005, with online gambling and smart phones making it easier and quicker for people to place a bet from anywhere at any time of the day or night. The government's proposals aim to provide stronger protections for problem gamblers and young people while respecting the rights of millions of adults to continue to play safely.

The white paper followed a government [review](#) of the gambling industry launched in late 2020 that gathered some 16,000 submissions from industry, academia, the health sector, MPs, and those with experience of gambling-related harm. However, reports indicate its release was delayed at least four times over the period which included the Covid crisis, and spanned three prime ministers, four culture secretaries, and six gambling ministers. Despite the lengthy gestation period, many of the proposals in the white paper will be subject to further consultation in 2023 by the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) or the Gambling Commission, which regulates the industry. Resulting regulatory changes are set to be delivered either through secondary legislation or by giving the Gambling Commission more powers.

The white paper is structured around proposals and impact assessments for the six main themes in the original review's call for evidence: online protections for players and products; marketing and advertising; the Gambling Commission's powers and resources; dispute resolution and consumer redress; children and young adults; and land-based gambling. The key proposals include:

- A new statutory "gambling operator levy" to be collected by the Gambling Commission to ensure gambling firms help fund gambling-related treatment services and research, including through the NHS. The rate of the levy will be subject to further consultation, with factors including business size, operating costs, and problem gambling rates.
- New stake limits for online slots games of between £2 and £15 per spin, subject to a consultation, to prevent "runaway and life-changing losses". There will also be a consultation on further measures to protect under 25s, including a lower stake limit or other controls.
- Frictionless player protection checks for certain gamblers to ensure they are not incurring harmful losses. The Commission will consult on two levels of background checks: for moderate spend, seen at £125 net loss within a month or £500 within a year, and financial vulnerability indicators such as County Court Judgments; and higher levels of spend which may indicate harmful binge gambling or sustained unaffordable losses of £1,000 net loss within 24 hours or £2,000 within 90 days.
- Extra powers for the Gambling Commission to tackle black market operators. It will also reform the fee structure for the Gambling Commission to give it greater flexibility to respond to any emerging risks and challenges.
- Review bonus structures to ensure they are not harming vulnerable people, such as how free bets or spins are constructed and targeted. Information gathered will inform new rules to stop any dangerous practices.

- Closing loopholes to ensure under-18s cannot gamble online or on cash fruit machines and bringing football pools betting in line with National Lottery play for over-18s only.
- New industry ombudsman to deal with disputes and rule on redress where a customer suffers losses due to an operator failing in their player protection duties.
- Review horserace betting levy to ensure racing continues to be appropriately funded.
- Review fees which local authorities charge for premise licences and create new powers for local leaders to conduct impact assessments when considering new applications.
- Review of online game design rules to look at limiting speed of play and other factor which can exacerbate risks.

The drive for a new industry ombudsman follows criticisms levelled at the Financial Conduct Authority and Gambling Commission after customers lost thousands of pounds following the collapse of betting operator Football Index, run by BetIndex. It was also informed by a government [review](#) which looked at how the FCA worked with the Gambling Commission during the period. The Government has said it expects the appointment of the body to start in mid-2023 and be operational within a year.

REACTION

The following is a compilation of excerpts of initial reactions to the white paper from gambling companies, campaigners and other stakeholders, presented in no particular order and including links to original sources:

"Today's announcement could be a watershed moment and presents us with a real opportunity to protect people – and save lives. The government has acknowledged that gambling products are harmful but the proposals, which could well be watered down further as a result of consultation, are currently too vague and simply don't go far enough," Greg Fell, Vice President of the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH), said in a [statement](#).

"We welcome the publication of the White Paper, which we see as a significant positive moment for the UK gambling sector, raising standards and bringing the regulatory framework into the digital age...We will constructively engage with the Government and Gambling Commission as part of the subsequent industry consultation process, with a focus on providing support to the minority at-risk of gambling harm without interfering disproportionately with the enjoyment of the vast majority," Peter Jackson, Chief Executive of Flutter, owner of Paddy Power, said in a [statement](#).

"While the NHS is treating record numbers, with almost 50% more referrals last year compared to the previous year, it should not be left to the health service to pick up the pieces left behind by a billion-pound industry profiting on vulnerable people, so I fully endorse the statutory levy set out in today's White Paper and look forward to reading the proposals in detail." NHS Mental Health Director, Claire Murdoch said in a [statement](#).

"I welcome the Govt's gambling white paper, but reforms do not go far enough to protect children from advertising. We need to make it permanent that gambling firms should be banned from the front of players' shirts to reduce exposure and protect children from gambling advertising," Conservative MP Iain Duncan Smith said in a [tweet](#).

"We welcome the decision to reject proposals from anti-gambling prohibitionists for blanket, low level and intrusive affordability checks, as well as their calls for bans on advertising, sports sponsorship and consumer promotions, which would harm our best-loved sports like horseracing and football, threaten jobs and drive customers to the growing unsafe, unregulated gambling black market online. These proposed measures will mean significant change but hopefully much needed regulatory stability to ensure our members can focus entirely on delivering for customers," Michael Dugher, CEO of the Betting and Gaming Council (BGC), said in a [statement](#).

"The UK Gambling Act Review is an important step towards having a robust regulatory framework that is fit for the digital age and creates a level playing field for all operators. We welcome the clarity that it will bring to the industry and its customers. We look forward to working with the Government and the Gambling Commission on evidenced-based consultations and implementation of the proposals outlined today," Jette Nygaard-Andersen, CEO of Entain, owner of Ladbrokes, said in a [statement](#).

"While there are a range of measures included within the White Paper, there will be a series of further important consultation processes – including on the critical area of affordability checks – in the months ahead. In these, we will continue to make our case that sweeping blanket checks on affordability are not appropriate, with any measures needing to be proportionate and targeted at individuals and their specific circumstances," Joe Saumarez Smith, Chair of the British Horseracing Authority and member of the Gambling Strategy Group, said in a [statement](#).

"We have had to wait too long for this White Paper, so I am pleased that it is finally published. It is important that effective action follows in quick time, as problem gambling is a widespread scourge. In particular I want the Select Committee to probe the protections being introduced for children who are problem gamblers. Of all groups they need and deserve protection, and we need assurance that the White Paper will lead to this." Damien Green, Acting Chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee said in a [statement](#).

"We welcome additional financial risk checks for people who are gambling more than they can afford. Last year 75% of those using our services told us they struggled with long-term financial difficulties. We welcome the introduction of an Ombudsman, which will ensure a fair, transparent and quick resolution of complaints; and will advocate for our service users to be at the heart of the design of the new system," Anna Hemmings, Chief Executive of GamCare, said in a [statement](#).

"As chair of the @GRHAPPG [Gambling Related Harms All-Party Political Group] I welcome this long overdue White Paper. We need immediate implementation of the proposals and urgent legislative change. After 18 years of the industry dominating the agenda, now is the time [to] protect those affected by gambling related harm," Labour MP Carolyn Harris said in a [tweet](#).

"We welcome the government finally acting, but nothing has changed yet. We desperately need the Gambling Commission to enact these reforms and not drag their feet. Government must now go much further, remove the influence of the gambling industry, and give a greater role to the Department of Health in regulation," Will Prochaska, Strategy Director at Gambling with Lives, said in a [statement](#).

"We estimate that the fiscal costs of harms from problem gambling are at least £1.4 billion per year. Any reforms aimed at minimising harm have to be based on the real number of people experiencing problem gambling and the true cost to the public purse," Adrian Pabst, politics professor at University of Kent and Deputy Director of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR), said in a [tweet](#).

"Extern welcomes the publication of the long-awaited Gambling White Paper. We look forward to seeing how the measures outlined today will impact positively upon the GB industry and crucially those whose lives are affected by problem gambling," Extern Charity said in a [tweet](#).

"We welcome the statement from the Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport and the release of the gambling white paper, which is the first step in a long process to update the Gambling Act 2005. As an organisation, we will be digesting the six key areas in the white paper and how they relate to Gordon Moody, our services, and our service users before making any comments," gambling addiction charity Gordon Moody said on [Twitter](#).

"I...welcome the fact that you have published today a white paper on gambling reforms. But quite frankly, the measures outlined in it go nowhere near far enough to tackle this huge societal problem. This is largely because there appears to be nothing here to limit the endless amount of gambling adverts that are shown on TV and radio," Liberal Democrats MP Tim Farron said in a letter to the Culture Secretary posted on [Twitter](#).

"So while the gambling white paper represents a big step forward in many areas, it's disappointing that after such a drawn-out process much of the measures will be subject to further consultation...But the big win for campaigners is the statutory levy, which on implementation will provide £150m a year for research, education and treatment," Matt Zarb-Cousin, director of Clean Up Gambling, wrote in the [Guardian](#).

"The government's gambling reforms are a mixture of the good, the bad and the indifferent... Affordability checks and online stake limits risk pushing gamblers from reputable UK websites to unregulated parts of the internet. Although affordability checks are sometimes necessary, routine checks could become arbitrary and set a worrying precedent for personal privacy. Lower limits for adults under 25 are patronising and could create a two-tier society." Christopher Snowdon, Head of Lifestyle Economics at the Institute of Economic Affairs said in a [statement](#).

"It is true that the final decisions and details for many of the proposals in the White Paper risk being delayed further by being put out to consultation. We also note the lack of meaningful reform of advertising and clarity about an ombudsman. Until these consultations are conducted and conclude in a manner that is free of industry influence, campaigners for reform have reason to remain cautious. However, we recognise that this White Paper is an important step on the path to reducing harm, tightening regulation and creating greater fairness in the market," Dr James Noyes, Senior Fellow at the Social Market Foundation said in a [statement](#).

Parliamentarians

This section provides a list of parliamentarians that have links to gambling, from senior government figures involved in delivering the latest policy, to lawmakers concerned about gambling harms and MPs who have declared gifts from gambling bodies.

Government:

Lucy Frazer, Secretary of State for Department of Culture, Media, and Sport
lucy.frazer.mp@parliament.uk

Stuart Andrew, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Sport, Gambling and Civil Society, and Minister for Equalities stuart.andrew.mp@parliament.uk

Members of APPG for Gambling Related Harm:

Paul Blomfield (Lab, Sheffield Central) paul.blomfield.mp@parliament.uk

Ronnie Cowan (SNP, Inverclyde) ronnie.cowan.mp@parliament.uk

Judith Cummins (Lab, Bradford South) judith.cummins.mp@parliament.uk

Iain Duncan Smith (Con, Chingford and Woodford Green) iain.duncansmith.mp@parliament.uk

Margaret Ferrier (Ind, Rutherglen and Hamilton West) margaret.ferrier.mp@parliament.uk

Carolyn Harris (Lab, Swansea East) carolyn.harris.mp@parliament.uk

Mark Hendrick (Lab/Co-op, Preston) mark.hendrick.mp@parliament.uk

Gerald Jones (Lab, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) gerald.jones.mp@parliament.uk

Mark Menzies (Con, Fylde) mark.menzies.mp@parliament.uk

Stephen Timms (Lab, East Ham) stephen.timms.mp@parliament.uk

Sammy Wilson (DUP, East Antrim) lindsays@parliament.uk

Lord Foster of Bath (LD) fosterdon@parliament.uk



Members of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee

Kevin Brennan (Lab, Cardiff West) brennank@parliament.uk

Steve Brine (Con, Winchester) steve.brine.mp@parliament.uk

Clive Efford (Lab, Eltham) effordc@parliament.uk

Julie Elliott (Lab, Sunderland Central) julie.elliott.mp@parliament.uk

Damian Green (Con, Ashford) damian.green.mp@parliament.uk

Rupa Huq (Lab, Ealing Central and Acton) rupa.huq.mp@parliament.uk

Simon Jupp (Con, East Devon) simon.jupp.mp@parliament.uk

John Nicolson (SNP, Ochil and South Perthshire) john.nicolson.mp@parliament.uk

Jane Stevenson (Con, Wolverhampton North East) jane.stevenson.mp@parliament.uk

Giles Watling (Con, Clacton) giles.watling.mp@parliament.uk

MPs that have declared gifts from Betting and Gaming Council since the start of this Parliament

Rachel Reeves (Lab, Leeds West) rachel.reeves.mp@parliament.uk

Graham Brady (Con, Altrincham and Sale West) altsale@parliament.uk

Mark Jenkinson (Con, Workington) mark.jenkinson.mp@parliament.uk

Philip Davies (Con, Shipley) daviesp@parliament.uk

Ben Bradley (Con, Mansfield) ben.bradley.mp@parliament.uk

Laurence Robertson (Con, Tewkesbury) robertsonl@parliament.uk

Mark Spencer (Con, Sherwood) mark.spencer.mp@parliament.uk

Bill Esterson (Lab, Sefton Central) bill.esterson.mp@parliament.uk

Neil Coyle (Ind, Bermondsey and Old Southwark) neil.coyle.mp@parliament.uk

Dame Caroline Dinenage (Con, Gosport) caroline.dinenage.mp@parliament.uk

Nigel Adams (Con, Selby and Ainsty) nigel.adams.mp@parliament.uk

Tom Hunt (Con, Ipswich) tom.hunt.mp@parliament.uk

Dehenna Davison (Con, Bishop Auckland) dehenna.davison.mp@parliament.uk

Aaron Bell (Con, Newcastle-under-Lyme) aaron.bell.mp@parliament.uk

Heather Wheeler (Con, South Derbyshire) heather.wheeler.mp@parliament.uk

Ben Everitt (Con, Milton Keynes North) ben.everitt.mp@parliament.uk

Scott Benton (Con, Blackpool South) scott.benton.mp@parliament.uk

John Whittingdale (Con, Maldon) john.whittingdale.mp@parliament.uk

Craig Whittaker (Con, Calder Valley) craig.whittaker.mp@parliament.uk

Maria Caulfield (Con, Lewes) maria.caulfield.mp@parliament.uk

Nigel Evans (Con, Ribble Valley) nigel.evans.mp@parliament.uk

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David Warburton (Ind, Somerton and Frome) david.warburton.mp@parliament.uk

Graham Stuart (Con, Beverley and Holderness) grahamstuartmp@parliament.uk

Conor McGinn (Ind, St Helens North) conor.mcginns.mp@parliament.uk

Alex Davies-Jones (Lab, Pontypridd) alex.daviesjones.mp@parliament.uk

Chris Heaton-Harris (Con, Daventry) chris.heatonharris.mp@parliament.uk

Mark Eastwood (Con, Dewsbury) mark.eastwood.mp@parliament.uk

Alec Shelbrooke (Con, Elmet and Rothwell) alec.shelbrooke.mp@parliament.uk

Mike Wood (Con, Dudley South) mike.wood.mp@parliament.uk

Paul Scully (Con, Sutton and Cheam) paul.scully.mp@parliament.uk

Sharon Hodgson (Lab, Washington and Sunderland West) sharon.hodgson.mp@parliament.uk

Chris Green (Con, Bolton West) chris.green.mp@parliament.uk

Alex Norris (Lab, Co-op, Nottingham North) alex.norris.mp@parliament.uk

Therese Coffey (Con, Suffolk Coastal) therese.coffey.mp@parliament.uk

Wayne David (Lab, Caerphilly) wayne.david.mp@parliament.uk

John Spellar (Lab, Warley) john.spellar.mp@parliament.uk

John Cryer (Lab, Leyton and Wanstead) john.cryer.mp@parliament.uk

Sir Mark Hendrick (Lab/Co-op, Preston) mark.hendrick.mp@parliament.uk

Derek Twigg (Lab, Halton) derek.twigg.mp@parliament.uk

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