



February 2024

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about online gambling.

For many, gambling can be entertaining, but I recognise that it can also become a serious problem, as was so tragically highlighted in the case of Luke Ashton.

In the new digital landscape, work is needed to get the balance right between protecting consumer freedoms and protecting people from harm.

The Gambling White Paper strikes this balance, proposing the most comprehensive reforms to the gambling sector since the Gambling Act 2005. Responding to the risks of online gambling, measures include: new stake limits for online slots games, associated with large losses and long sessions; background checks to protect those most at risk; plus rules to prevent bonus offers including free bets from harming vulnerable people.

There are proposals to increase protections for young people, who can be particularly vulnerable to gambling harms. This includes closing loopholes so that under-18s cannot gamble online, or via fruit machines which pay out cash.

Gambling industry regulatory systems will be strengthened so that they work in consumers' interests. The Gambling Commission will get increased powers to tackle black market operators. A new non-statutory ombudsman will be created to deal with disputes where a customer suffers losses due to an operator breaching their social responsibility requirements.

I understand that the Government is working closely with the Gambling Commission and others to bring the measures from the White Paper into force as quickly as possible.

These proposals build on existing protections. The Gambling Commission has introduced rules to ensure operators robustly verify customers' age and identity. Furthermore, in 2020, the Government and Commission bolstered protections, including banning credit card gambling and making participation in the self-exclusion scheme GAMSTOP mandatory for online operators.

For further information on GAMSTOP, please search: <https://www.gamstop.co.uk/>.

The Gambling White Paper, published in April 2023, outlines a balanced and proportionate package of measures, including a new regime of frictionless financial risk checks.



Chris Heaton-Harris

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I know the Government is clear that the checks should not overregulate the gambling sector, should not unduly disrupt the millions of people who gamble without suffering harm, and should not cause unnecessary damage to sectors which rely on betting, in particular horse racing. I understand these will be implemented to protect those at the greatest risk of gambling harm and to stop potentially devastating and life-changing financial losses. These checks will be based on data sharing, and I have been reassured that the Government will not roll them out until it is certain they are frictionless.

Several roundtables have been held between the Government and representatives of industry, horse racing, and the Gambling Commission to discuss how to work together to ensure that these checks will be frictionless. Ministers have also stressed that the status quo, a host of industry-run checks, are often inconsistent, ad hoc and can be unnecessarily onerous, with customers having to manually provide reams of personal data to navigate a maze of different tick-boxes. As such, the Government has urged the Gambling Commission and industry to work together to mitigate the impact of these checks while a new, frictionless system is developed.

The Government and the Gambling Commission have also been working closely with the Information Commissioner's Office, credit reference agencies, and UK Finance to ensure new frictionless checks can be implemented in an effective but proportionate way. I am aware that the Government's is examining the role of pilots or phased implementation to ensure the checks are effective and work as intended.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY