

## Act now on problem gambling, churches and charities tell parliament.

### Child gambling a particular concern

A substantial increase in problem gambling in the last four years is unacceptable and needs urgent action, a group of national churches will tell parliament tomorrow.

On Tuesday, 22 November, the Salvation Army, Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs, the Methodist Church, the Evangelical Alliance and CARE (Christian Action, Research and Education) will give evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee inquiry into gambling.

In their contribution to a parliamentary inquiry on gambling, church groups will tell the select committee that the government must take action on child gambling, the clustering of betting shops and funding independent research, education and treatment.

The 2010 prevalence study showed that the number of problem gamblers in the UK has jumped by 50 per cent to around 450,000 since 2007. Problem gambling is defined as gambling to a degree that compromises, disrupts or damages family, personal or recreational pursuits.

One problem gambler who shared his story with the Salvation Army said: "Three people know of my addiction. My bookie, my bank and myself. Only one of us is prepared to take responsibility despite the others being legal and regulated."

James North, public issues policy adviser for the Methodist Church in Britain, commented: "The figures speak for themselves: problem gambling is on the rise. But the government seems determined to liberalise gambling laws. It is vital that the government understands the challenge posed by this worrying increase in harmful gambling and takes action to reverse it. We are also deeply concerned about their plans to cut the funding for the

Gambling Prevalence Survey. This is the only comprehensive study of gambling in the UK and is essential if we are to prevent and treat problem gambling.”

Britain is the only country in Western Europe to allow children to gamble. The Gambling Act gives the secretary of state the power to put an age limit on some or all of the machines that children are allowed to play and the churches will suggest that now is the time for this power to be used.

Gareth Wallace, who will be giving evidence from the Salvation Army, said: “This enquiry into the effects of the 2005 Gambling Act is long overdue. It is shocking the UK is the only major nation that allows under-18s to gamble on fruit machines. The government must commit to coming into line with the rest of the world and stop children from gambling. No further regulation would be needed for this move.”

The churches are increasingly concerned over the location of betting shops and the concentration of gaming machines in poorer areas. Reports by the Responsible Gambling Fund and Harriet Harman MP, shadow secretary of state for culture, media and sport, show that betting shops and their highly addictive B2 machines (aka Fixed Odds betting Terminals) are increasingly common in our poorest areas. Local authorities currently only have limited grounds to reject an application for a new betting premise.

Daniel Webster from the Evangelical Alliance insisted that: “The government must give local authorities the power to decide what gambling activities can take place in their communities. Betting shops can pop up anywhere and there is very little councils can do about it. If localism is to mean anything, it has to mean that councils can say no to more betting shops.”

The church groups will call on the government to introduce a compulsory levy on the betting industry to fund research education and treatment for problem gambling. The 2005 Act gives the government all the necessary powers, and such a levy would provide a simple and efficient solution. This is particularly necessary following the recent breakdown of the funding arrangement between the fundraiser, the GREaT Foundation, and the distributor, the Responsible Gambling Fund.

Helena Chambers from Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs, said: “The time has come for a levy on the gambling industry, as the Gambling Act allows. The level of funding for research, education and the treatment of problem gambling needs to increase. We are deeply concerned, because it seems these funds will no longer be distributed by an independent body, but by the industry itself. This involves some inevitable conflicts of interest. We need a levy and robust structures of accountability to ensure that the money is spent in the public interest. The good work that has been done on tackling issues like density must not be lost.”

Lauri Moyle, representing the Christian social policy charity CARE, will also be giving evidence highlighting issues relating to online gambling. He said: “It is high time that the government came out with some firm commitments and a timetable in response to the consultation on regulating internet gambling in the UK. The consultation closed over a year ago and we have only had a holding reply by the relevant department. People who suffer because of irresponsible and unregulated gambling websites need help now. The government needs to act.”

### **Further quotes from problem gamblers:**

“D” said “Let’s show the select committee that we exist and we’re normal members of society.

“M” said he blew £3,500 one night at a casino, after he had been banned from another. He thought he had beaten his habit but fell into playing Fixed Odds Betting Terminals at a bookies. He spent £2,000 a day every day without being challenged.

### **Ends**

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### **Notes to editors**

The Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee are hearing evidence on the effectiveness and the implementation of the 2005 Gambling Act.

On 22 November from 10.30am the fifth evidence session will take place in the Thatcher Room, Portcullis House.

Giving evidence will be:

Daniel Webster, Parliamentary Officer, Evangelical Alliance  
Gareth Wallace, Public Affairs Adviser, The Salvation Army  
James North, Policy Adviser, Methodist Church in Britain  
Helena Chambers, Director, Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs  
Lauri Moyle, Policy Consultant, CARE

Gambling prevalence figures and definition from the 2010 British Gambling Prevalence Survey  
[http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/research\\_consultations/gambling\\_research/bgps/bgps\\_2010.aspx](http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/research_consultations/gambling_research/bgps/bgps_2010.aspx)

Responsible Gambling Fund report: <http://www.rgfund.org.uk/Current-Research-Projects/machines-research-study-1-mapping-the-social-and-economic-characteristics-of-high-density-gambling-machine-locations.html>

Harriet Harman report: <http://www.harrietharman.org/uploads/95ee2a63-5cf5-4fd4-418f-a053c4043b9f.pdf>

The GREaT Foundation – <http://www.thegreatfoundation.org.uk/>

The Responsible Gambling Fund - <http://www.rgfund.org.uk/>

Section 59 of the 2005 Gambling Act gives the Minister the power to set a minimum age for the Category D machines

#### **59 Age limit for Category D gaming machines**

(1) The Secretary of State may by order create an offence of inviting, causing or permitting a child or young person below a specified age to use a Category D gaming machine.

(2) An order under subsection (1) may, in particular—  
*Gambling Act 2005 (c. 19)*

*Part 4 — Protection of children and young persons*

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(a) apply (with modifications) or include provision similar to section 46(3) to (6);

(b) make consequential amendments of this Act.

(3) Before making an order under subsection (1) the Secretary of State shall consult—

(a) the Commission,

(b) one or more persons who appear to the Secretary of State to represent the interests of persons carrying on gambling businesses, and

(c) one or more persons who appear to the Secretary of State to have knowledge about social problems relating to gambling.

(4) An order under subsection (1) may apply to a class of Category D gaming machine determined by reference to—

(a) the nature of the facilities for gambling which are made available on the machine,

(b) the nature or value of a prize offered by the machine,

(c) the manner in which the machine operates, or

(d) any other matter.

Section 123 of the Gambling Act allows the minister to introduce a compulsory levy:

#### **123 Levy**

(1) The Secretary of State may make regulations requiring holders of operating licences to pay an annual levy to the Commission.

(2) The regulations shall, in particular, make provision for—

(a) the amount of the levy;

(b) timing of payment of the levy.

(3) The regulations may, in particular, make provision—

- (a) determining the amount of the levy by reference to a percentage of specified receipts of an operating licence holder,
  - (b) determining the amount of the levy by reference to a percentage of specified profits of an operating licence holder,
  - (c) determining the amount of the levy by reference to a percentage of the annual fee under section 100,
  - (d) providing for the determination of the amount of the levy according to a specified formula, or
  - (e) providing for the determination of the amount of the levy in some other way.
- (4) Any sum due by way of levy by virtue of this section shall be treated for the purposes of this Act as if it were due by way of annual fee under section 100.
- (5) The Commission shall, with the consent of the Treasury and of the Secretary of State, expend money received by way of levy for purposes related to, or by providing financial assistance for projects related to—
- (a) addiction to gambling,
  - (b) other forms of harm or exploitation associated with gambling, or
  - (c) any of the licensing objectives.
- (6) In subsection (5) the reference to financial assistance is a reference to grants, loans and any other form of financial assistance, which may be made or given on terms or conditions (which may include terms and conditions as to repayment with or without interest).
- (7) The Secretary of State shall consult the Commission before making regulations under this section.

**The Evangelical Alliance**, formed in 1846, is the largest body serving evangelical Christians in the UK, and has a membership including denominations, churches, organisations and individuals. The mission of the Evangelical Alliance is to unite evangelicals to present Christ credibly as good news for spiritual and social transformation. According to a Tearfund survey (Churchgoing in the UK, 2007), there are approximately 2 million evangelical Christians in the UK. For more information please visit [www.eauk.org](http://www.eauk.org)

**The Salvation Army** is an international Christian church working in 123 countries worldwide. As a registered charity, The Salvation Army demonstrates its Christian principles through social welfare provision and is one of the largest, most diverse providers of social welfare in the world.

**The Methodist Church** is the third-largest Christian church in Great Britain, with over 300,000 members and regular contact with 1 million more people. It has over 6,000 churches in Great Britain, and also maintains links with other Methodist churches totaling a worldwide membership of 70 million.

**QAAD** Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs (QAAD) is a listed group of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). QAAD is an independent national charity that has a concern with the use and misuse of alcohol and other drugs, and with gambling. QAAD was one of the interfaith groups that gave oral evidence to the Joint Parliamentary Select Committee that considered the Gambling Act of 2005, and we have continued to be actively involved as a stakeholder since that time

**CARE** is a well-established mainstream Christian charity providing resources and helping to bring Christian insight and experience to matters of public policy and practical caring initiatives. CARE is represented in the UK Parliaments and Assemblies, at the EU in Brussels and the UN in Geneva and New York.