



## **Committee for Communities**

### **Informal Stakeholder Event on Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) Bill: Youth Stakeholder Event**

**Wednesday 19 January 2022 18.30 – 20.30**

#### **Remote Access via Zoom**

Present: Paula Bradley MLA (Chairperson)

Andy Allen MBE MLA

Stakeholders: Antrim Grammar

De La Salle

In Attendance: Dr Janice Thompson (Assembly Clerk)

Rachel Ashe (Clerical Supervisor)

Louise Close (Engagement)

Karin McKinty (Engagement)

Michelle Carson (Engagement)

The NI Assembly Engagement Team organised a virtual stakeholder event to gauge young people's opinions on several Clauses in the Bill that have a direct impact on young people under 18 years of age. The following summarises key points made during the discussions and although many were directly relevant to the Bill, there were comments made on wider issues also.

#### **Proposal 1: Code of Practice**

**Do you think codes of practice for the gambling industry are a good idea?**

- Vital that the industry is regulated for children and vulnerable people who might not otherwise be able to stop themselves from gambling;
- Limiting access to gambling is important for society;
- Gambling addiction is a big problem for Northern Ireland so we need to do something about it by limiting access to gambling;



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

- Most clauses of the Bill are loosening restrictions so part of the Bill does need to regulate it;
- Rules help those with gambling addictions and prevent others who could become addicted from doing so.

What requirements could the codes contain on how gambling facilities are advertised and described to protect under 18s?

- Under 18s should be restricted from gambling so they can make a decision about it at a more mature age;
- Gambling should have the same regulations as alcohol, no entry after 8pm to any facilities which might have gambling machines;
- Gambling adverts are not regulated strictly enough, saying 'Gamble Responsibly' is not enough;
- Cash-back schemes and cash-out your bet early schemes make gambling seem like a game and that needs addressed;
- Gambling is advertised like it's a game, with flashing lights and funny or loud noises not like it's a serious thing that is addictive - we need to regulate adverts on TV for gambling like we do for cigarettes;
- TV characters should not be used in gambling games or ads, it targets younger people and makes gambling appear attractive;
- Signs for casinos look fun, they all have bright, colourful lights which look attractive and exciting, like a fun fair. They should be dull and boring;

What other requirements (apart from advertising) could the codes contain to protect under 18s from gambling related harm?

- Stricter rules regarding ID, no ID no entry or have a bouncer on the door like in clubs;
- Include a mandated 'cool down' period to stop young people getting immersed in the game, so they can only play for e.g. 30 minutes at time and then are locked out for a set time period;
- Limits on how many games you can play or how much you can spend (or both) before you are locked out;



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

- Have pop-up messages that remind you about gambling addiction that you need to read and manually over-ride to continue.;
- Refuse entry to young people who have already spent a certain amount of time or money;
- Refuse people's bank card after a certain number of games or spend.

Education wise, what should be done to inform young people about gambling related harm?

- Talks are very helpful, I thought gambling was betting on horses, I didn't realise slot machines were considered gambling;
- It should be a compulsory part of LLW (Learning for Life and Work) classes, we weren't taught anything about gambling at school;
- We were taught about alcohol and drug addiction, but not gambling. It should be compulsory too.

**Proposal 2: Lower age limits for granting permits**

Do you think lowering the age limit to be granted a licence/ permit from 21 and over to 18 is a good idea? Why?

There were a range of comments made for and against this change in age limit:

- 18 is the legal age for everything, it should be in keeping with that;
- We should encourage young people, if they have a business plan and know the regulations, then let them have a licence;
- It's no different to running any other business which you can do from 18;
- The person running the establishment will see punters losing money and will be less likely to gamble, so 18 is fine.
- 18 is not mature enough, you mature a lot between 18 and 21 so keep it at 21;
- You are more developed at 21 and less likely to make rash decisions;
- You are more mature at 21 and have a greater awareness of spending and finances.



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

### **Proposal 3: Gaming machines**

Do you agree with the creation of a new offence of inviting, causing or permitting an under 18 to play anything other than a lower limit gaming machine? Why?

- Yes, there are gambling machines in shopping centres and no signs saying young people can't play them, this needs to stop;
- There are gambling machines in my local pub and I'm never told to stop playing them, need an offence or this practice will continue;
- Yes, it will be a major deterrent to anyone considering breaking the rules but what's the point of extending the Bill if nothing is done to enforce it
- Gambling machines are in my local cinema and I never knew these were illegal, so yes introduce an offence;
- Many gaming machines are geared exclusively to younger players with bouncy balls or cartoon branding, we need an offence to protect the young;
- There should be an offence but it needs to be enforced and advertised, they could have campaigns on social media so everyone knows it's illegal.

Do you agree with the proposed punishment for this new offence – a fine of £5,000, or 6 months in prison, or both? Why?

- Yes, the higher the penalty, the less likely people will be to break the law;
- Yes, we should have all the incentives we need to regulate gambling;
- I would like a points system, like driving licences, where you get points following an offence and that dictates the punishment;
- Prison is too extreme, but a points system and fines are appropriate.
- There should be a register for rule breakers so they can't just open another arcade or casino, etc. after the punishment;
- The fines should be on a scale and relative to the size of the business, £5,000 isn't much for some bigger businesses, like casinos.

Do you feel it is acceptable to allow a person to use the defence that they had a good reason to believe the young person was over the age of 18? Why?

- No, everyone over 18 has ID, ask for it;
- Use the 'Challenge 25' rule and ask for ID;
- No, they should ask for ID, supermarkets do it.



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

### **Other Proposals**

Apart from these 3 proposals, should the government consider anything else to protect under 18s from exploitation and gambling related harm?

- Raise awareness in schools, we have days devoted to drug and alcohol harm, but never gambling related harm;
- Include gambling in the syllabus, like drugs and alcohol have been;
- Education should explain the dangers of gambling; I'd never thought about it before this event;
- Include real stories in education about gambling, so young people can see how dangerous it is and how easy it is to become addicted.
- Media campaigns showing the harm of gambling, we have ads on TV showing the effects of smoking, but not gambling;
- Ads on TV about gambling only ever show the person winning and happy, they never show them depressed and homeless.