

Jane Dodds

Aelod o'r Senedd dros
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru

—
Member of the Senedd for
Mid and West Wales

Senedd Cymru

Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1SN
Jane.Dodds@senedd.cymru

Welsh Parliament

Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN
Jane.Dodds@senedd.wales

0300 200 6565 

@janedoddsdld 

@DoddsJane 

/JaneDoddsWLD 

Russell George MS

Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee

5th Floor

Tŷ Hywel

Cardiff Bay

CF99 1NA

Dyddiad | Date: 24th December 2024

Pwnc | Subject: Proposal for Inquiry into Gambling-Related Harm in Wales

Annwyl Russell

I am writing to respectfully request that the Health and Social Care Committee consider undertaking a short inquiry into gambling-related harm in Wales and its impact on public health and social care services.

Recent data reveals a deeply concerning picture: 19% of all gambling premises are concentrated in Wales's 10% most deprived areas, demonstrating a clear pattern of industry targeting of vulnerable communities. The human cost is stark - new data from the Gambling Commission indicates gambling addiction now affects 2.5% of the population of Great Britain, eight times higher than previously thought, with clear links to suicide and mental health issues.

While England has established 15 NHS gambling clinics, Wales has none - leaving an estimated 120,000 Welsh people struggling with gambling harm without access to specialized NHS treatment. This service gap is particularly concerning given that a survey in 2018 found that gambling harms are three times higher in our most deprived areas.

Key areas that would benefit from committee scrutiny include:

1. The urgent need for dedicated NHS gambling treatment services in Wales, including assessment of potential locations and required funding models.
2. The effectiveness of gambling education and prevention, particularly given that 27% of young people aged 11-17 have gambled using their own money in the past year, with reported impacts on sleep, school attendance, and academic performance.



3. The concentration of gambling premises in deprived areas and potential policy responses within devolved competencies.
4. The adequacy of current support services and their funding, noting that frontline support charities are severely under-resourced compared to industry marketing capabilities.

A review at this time is particularly pertinent given the UK Government's recent introduction of a statutory levy to support gambling harm research, prevention, and treatment, alongside plans to impose limits on online casino customers' stakes for slot machines. This statutory levy presents a critical opportunity for Wales to align services with the UK framework while leveraging devolved powers in public health, mental health, education, and local government to take meaningful action.

I would welcome the opportunity to provide any additional information that might assist the Committee in considering this proposal.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Yn gywir,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jane Dodds". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Jane Dodds MS/AS

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