**Press release**

**Churches and charities warn Government to act now to prevent more harm from gambling**

Churches and charities have joined together to urge the UK Government to act decisively and urgently in tackling the harm caused by gambling.

They issued the following statement ahead of the deadline for submissions to a review of the Gambling Act [https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-review-to-ensure-gambling-laws-are-fit-for-digital-age]:

“Our Churches and charities, which will all be making submissions to the UK Government’s Review of the 2005 Gambling Act, have united to call on the Government to treat gambling as a public health issue. Gambling related harms affect families, communities, colleagues and friends as well as individuals, and can cause mental and physical ill health, indebtedness, family breakdown and most tragically may even result in suicide. These harms simply cannot be tackled by focusing on individuals’ gambling habits or relying on individual organisations to provide solutions. Instead the devolved and UK Governments must adopt a public health approach to prevent harm and address population level risks.

One area where this is urgently needed is remote gambling. The extent of internet gambling or advertising was barely imagined when the 2005 Act was passed. It is a more complex environment with people able to gamble almost anywhere and at anytime. Government needs to use this opportunity to require the gambling industry to implement measures, such as caps on expenditure or losses with the aim of reducing risks of gambling-related harm.

As Churches and charities,we have all expressed a particular concern for children, teenagers and young adults, who are especially vulnerable to the harms caused by gambling. We are calling for gambling advertising to be dramatically reduced or banned altogether, and for unethical marketing practices to be identified and prevented. We have all welcomed plans to increase the age limit on the National Lottery, called for this to be extended across all lottery products, and for an end to the anomaly that children are still allowed to gamble on Category D gamingmachines. Gambling is an adult activity, and a regulated industry must not be allowed to entice or market to children, or to provide any gambling products for them.

We have also re-iterated calls for the UK Government to use the powers given in the 2005 Act to introduce a compulsory levy on the industry to pay for the treatment of gambling related harm, independent research and preventative measures, including education and public awareness campaigns. It is not acceptable that so many charities and organisations providing help and support still have to rely on gambling industry donations.

As Churches and charities, we urge Government to act immediately to prevent further gambling related harm. The UK Government is only seeking evidence at this stage, and action on any of these issues may be left for many months even years. In the meantime, more children, young adults, families and others will suffer harm and damage. Our society cannot afford to delay.”

**Ends**

**Notes for editors**

The signatories to the statement are:

* The Baptist Union of Great Britain
* The Church of England
* The Church of Scotland
* The Methodist Church
* The United Reformed Church
* The Evangelical Alliance
* Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs

**Interviews:**

Rachel Lampard, Team Leader of the Joint Public Issues Team for the Methodist Church is available for interviews