

The issue of Fixed Odds Betting Terminals is something which I have campaigned on for a number of years having seen a clustering of bookmakers in town centres across Medway, all of whom had a number of B2 machines in their premises.

Since speaking out about them I have taken part in a Medway Council cross party piece of work which included visiting a number of bookmakers unannounced and having quite informal conversations with them. It was clear in those conversations that staff, many of whom have worked in the industry for up to 25 years have an incredibly negative view of these machines.

As I have often stated I am not anti gambling but I am anti problem gambling and the stories and experiences residents have shared when it comes to this issue have been powerful, in the worst cases individuals losing their jobs, their homes, their families.

I have repeatedly said that B2 machines should come into line with other gaming products and have a maximum stake of £2 rather than the current stake of £100.

Chatham was also the pilot for the multi operator exclusion scheme following the cross party informal work and engagement with the ABB. In my view this didn't increase the number of people self excluding and therefore didn't have the impact required. It also remained at that point a mainly analogue rather than digital approach.

I would urge the government to take the appropriate measure and bring B2 machines in line removing the high stakes from our high streets.

Vince Maple
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