

To whom it may concern,

I am responding on behalf of the London Borough of Islington to the call for evidence by the Department for Culture, Media & Sport, as part of the review of Gaming Machines and Social Responsibility Measures.

In Islington, we have clustering of betting shops containing FOBTs in our most deprived wards and town centres. In order to address this we adopted an SPD earlier in the year and are still concerned that even this and the new controls we can adopt in our gambling policy will not stop more units.

Crime analysis within Islington reveals that existing gambling premises in certain locations are more vulnerable to crime and disorder than other areas. For example, between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2016, 29% of all criminal offences arising from betting shops and adult gaming centres took place in Finsbury Park Ward. 39% of all betting shop crime in the same period took place on either Holloway Road or Seven Sisters Road. Many of these crimes involved FOBTs or patrons who had been using them.

Across Islington, during the period between 1st April 2013 and 31st March 2016, there were 234 recorded criminal offences at betting shops. These crimes have seen a year-on-year increase over the last three years in Islington.

Between 1 April 2013 and 31st March 2016, 64 criminal offences were recorded where it was reported that 'machines got damaged'.

Managing the stake would reduce the harm and consequent crime and violence that arises when people lose large sums of money very quickly.

We strongly support representations made by colleagues in the London Borough of Newham concerning FOBTs, including lowering the stake to £2, bringing FOBTs in line with other on-street gambling machines.

It is clear that local authorities need to be given further powers through the planning and licensing system to better support a balanced and mixed use of our high streets. Existing powers do not sufficiently allow for local authorities to support local communities that do not wish to see clustering of betting shops at the detriment of a diverse high street and to have to live with the increased criminal behaviour as evidenced above.

On behalf of Islington, I would strongly urge the Government to use this review as an opportunity to make much needed changes to lower the stake on FOBTs and to give

local authorities the powers we need to support our high streets to remain diverse places to support employment and our communities more generally.

Yours sincerely,

Richard

Cllr Richard Watts