

Wandsworth Council

Department of Culture Media and Sport
4th Floor
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

Our ref:ES/S&L/SB

Date: 28th November 2016

Dear Sirs,

Review of Gaming Machines and Social Responsibility Measures – Call for evidence

I am writing on behalf of the London Borough of Wandsworth in response to the call for evidence as part of the DCMS review of Gaming Machines and Social Responsibility Measures. The response relates largely to the provision of B2 (FOBT) gaming machines in high street licensed betting offices. This Authority has no concerns, at present, in respect of the maximum stakes and prizes for gaming machines in premises other than betting shops but would not like to see any increase in the current maximum stake and prize levels.

It is difficult for any one Local Authority to provide evidence of harm to local residents caused by the ready access to FOBT's. However, it is our view that the national evidence quoted in the Call for Evidence paper supports the need to introduce greater controls on FOBT's in high street betting offices as the research links these types of machine with higher levels of gambling related harm compared to other types of gambling. It is also interesting to note that gaming machine revenue now accounts for 56% of revenue for licensed betting offices which must call into question whether betting offices are really providing betting as the primary gambling activity

Although there has not been an increase in the total number of betting offices in the Borough, there is evidence that there is clustering in the more deprived, ethnically diverse area of the Borough thus targeting residents most vulnerable to gambling related harm. It is too early to tell whether the changes to planning law will give local authorities adequate control over the location of betting offices. However, any future controls will not impact on existing premises. Consequently, it is the opinion of this Authority that the only meaningful way to safeguard those vulnerable to gambling related harm is to reduce the current £100 maximum stake for B2 gaming machines either to £2 to bring them into line with other licensed high street gambling outlets or to £5 as for casinos. This Authority would also re-iterate the view of the Local Government Association that, in addition to controls over the maximum stake for FOBT's, Licensing

Chief Executive and Director of Administration: 

Authorities should have the power to reject applications for new betting shops where there is already existing clusters of shops (a cumulative impact test) and to have the ability to restrict the number of FOBT terminals that can be provided in any licensed betting office if there is evidence to do so.

Yours sincerely

