

Michael Dugher
Chief Executive
Betting and Gaming Council
1 Bedford Row
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17 August 2023

Dear Michael

I am writing to respond to remarks you recently made in oral evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee gambling regulation inquiry, where you referenced Samaritans' message that suicide is complex in response to a question about the safety of gambling products.

It is important to recognise that suicide is often caused by a number of inter-relating factors but this doesn't mean that there aren't particular experiences or occurrences that can put people at higher risk – including stressors that trigger feelings of shame or hopelessness, which can be antecedents to suicidal thoughts. It is recognised now by experts that gambling can be a dominant factor in a suicide without which the death would not occur.

I am concerned that Samaritans' messaging around talking about suicide responsibly is being deliberately used to evade recognition of the established link between gambling and suicide risk. People experiencing gambling related harms are an at-risk group for the experience of suicidal thoughts, attempts and death by suicide. The question you were asked by a Committee Member related to a tragic death where the coroner concluded that gambling disorder was the medical cause of the death and has directed the industry to put more stringent safety measures in place.

There is a clear imperative to take a public health approach to reducing gambling related harms, including assessing products against harm indicators, slowing the speed of play and the scale of losses, an end to irresponsible VIP schemes and a complete ban on communications to customers who have self-excluded. While the proposals in the Gambling White Paper may go some way towards addressing these issues over time, there is nevertheless room for BGC members to increase safety in the here and now, well in advance of any future regulatory requirements.

It is always important to talk about suicide responsibly, to reduce the risks of suicide contagion and – as Charles Ritchie, Chair of Gambling with Lives, noted in his subsequent oral evidence – to ensure that there is no barrier to help seeking for anyone who needs it.

The Upper Mill, Kingston Road, Ewell, Surrey KT17 2AF

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It is also vital that suicide prevention, including the role that the gambling sector can play in reducing risk, receives proper political scrutiny. Suicide prevention is everyone's business, and I urge BGC and your members to properly recognise the link between suicide and gambling and to take action to help prevent further suicides.

Yours sincerely,



Julie Bentley
Chief Executive

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