



Gambling Reform APPG Evidence Session: New and Emerging Forms of Gambling

Date: 15 April 2026

Time: 10:30am - 12:00pm

Location: Room M, Portcullis House

Chair: Alex Ballinger MP

Minutes: Martha Sharp, DGA Group

Members Present:

- Alex Ballinger MP (Co-Chair)
- Sir Iain Duncan Smith MP (Chair)
- Lord Foster of Bath (Vice-Chair)
- Dawn Butler MP
- Beccy Cooper MP
- Chris Evans MP

External Guests:

- Dr Jamie Torrance, Swansea University
- Dr Leon Xiao, City University of Hong Kong
- Maxence Peigne, Investigate Europe
- Matt Zarb-Cousin, Gamban / Clean Up Gambling
- Oliver Behrendorff, Ecstatic
- Dr David Zendle, University of York
- Fiona Palmer, Gamstop

Alex Ballinger MP opened by welcoming members, speakers and observers to the session. Mr Ballinger outlined that the session formed part of the APPG's wider inquiry into the future of gambling regulation, and that the evidence received would help inform recommendations to Government. Mr Ballinger then asked speakers to open the session with their introductory remarks and research.

Speakers said the defining characteristic of many emerging gambling products was not simply novelty, but the way product design, marketing and ease of access combined to increase harm. They said that online gambling environments were becoming more immersive, more personalised and harder to regulate using traditional tools. They stressed that public health approaches should be central to any future framework.

Furthermore, speakers focused on loot boxes and gambling-like monetisation in games. They explained how these systems often reproduce core features associated with gambling, particularly randomised rewards, repeated spending and blurred boundaries between entertainment and financial risk. They noted concern that these products remain outside formal gambling regulation despite growing evidence of a link between loot box spending and gambling-related harm in later years.

Speakers also discussed the findings from recent investigations into AI chatbots and illegal online gambling. They outlined how, in some cases, AI tools had recommended unlicensed gambling sites and even suggested ways users could get around age restrictions or self-exclusion measures.

They warned that technological developments were creating a new route by which consumers could be directed towards harmful or illegal products.

Speakers discussed the illegal and offshore gambling market and explained that it was now being amplified through affiliate networks, social media promotion and crypto-based payment systems. They stated that the existing framework remained too reactive and did not provide regulators with the sufficient tools or powers to tackle fast-moving digital harms.

Continuing on, speakers spoke from an esports perspective, explaining that gambling and gambling-adjacent content had become deeply embedded in some parts of gaming culture. They outlined how younger audiences can be exposed to risk through skins-style economies, influencer promotion and normalisation of speculative behaviour. They said that competitive gaming could thrive without relying on harmful commercial models, such as gambling.

They also highlighted evidence linking spending on loot boxes with problem gambling severity, especially among younger users. They said there was now a stronger evidence base than when the issue was first debated publicly, and that the absence of meaningful consumer protections was increasingly difficult to justify.

Finally, speakers described how self-exclusion tools such as Gamstop could be undermined when individuals were directed to offshore or unlicensed sites. They stressed that people seeking help were particularly vulnerable to circumvention tools, including VPNs, and that stronger disruption and enforcement mechanisms were needed.

***At this stage, the discussion was opened to the floor.
Key themes that emerged from the discussion are as follows:***

- Emerging products are often not entirely new in substance, but are delivered in new ways that increased exposure, speed and intensity of risk.
- Children and young people were repeatedly identified as a particularly exposed group, especially where gambling-like content appeared within gaming or creator-led environments.
- Offshore operators, affiliates, influencers and digital intermediaries were playing an increasingly important role in directing users towards unregulated products.
- Existing safeguards, including self-exclusion, age checks and limits within the licensed market, could be undermined where consumers were pushed outside that market.
- Speakers favoured a more agile and outcomes-focused regulatory model, rather than one dependent on narrow product definitions.
- Speakers were supportive of stronger collaboration across regulators, government departments and online platforms.

Mr Ballinger invited witnesses to provide any further written evidence via the Secretariat following the conclusion of the session. Mr Ballinger closed the session by thanking members, witnesses and observers for their attendance and contributions.

SESSION CONCLUDES