

# The Royal College of Psychiatrists

## Supplementary Briefing for the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Gambling Bill

The Royal College of Psychiatrists advises the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Gambling Bill that the proposed deregulation of casino gaming will still result in an increase in gambling addiction, even if the number of casinos is capped.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists provides guidelines and advice regarding the prevention, treatment and care of behavioural and mental disorders. Therefore, the Royal College has already submitted a briefing drawing attention to the harmful effect that the original Gambling Bill would have on the incidence of excessive gambling.

Since then, the Government has indicated that it will introduce amendments to restrict the number of regional casinos to eight. In addition, there are now reports that there will also be similar restrictions on large and small casinos.

These proposals are introducing a fundamental change, which is inconsistent with the remainder of the Bill. It is wholly desirable that market forces should not be the main determining factor as far as the number of casinos is concerned. However, the increased promotion of gaming and a sizable expansion in gaming machines, many with unlimited jackpots, will be retained in the Bill. **These latter aspects will inevitably lead to a marked increase in individual and social disorder as a result of excessive gambling, whatever other preventative measures are set up.**

The drafting of this legislation requires more careful and detailed consideration, especially where it involves regulating the most addictive forms of gambling.

**The Royal College of Psychiatrists agrees that there is an urgent need to set up a Gambling Commission and update the regulation of other forms of gambling. This is especially so in relation to remote gambling and 'fixed odds betting terminals', as well as ensuring that children do not have access to jackpot gaming machines. The Gambling Bill should be limited to these urgent and important issues and the deregulation of casino gaming should be abandoned.**

The earlier Royal College briefing to the Standing Committee on the Gambling Bill can be viewed on <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/press/parliament/GambBriefNov04.pdf>

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Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> December 2004