



Journalist briefing pack

Gambling with Lives is a charity set up in 2018 by families bereaved by gambling-related suicide.

We support bereaved families, raise awareness of the devastating effects of gambling disorder, and campaign for change.

Our vision

A world free from gambling-related suicide.

Our mission

To support those bereaved by gambling-related suicide and to improve mental health and save lives through raising awareness of the risks to health posed by gambling.

In support of our mission we:

- Support families who have been bereaved by gambling-related suicides
- Raise awareness of the dangerous effects of gambling on mental health & the high suicide risk
- Campaign to reform the UK's outdated gambling laws

Gambling with Lives runs a support service for bereaved families, and we are piloting an education programme for UK schools. We will soon be launching a gambling information and training project.

Our background

Our co-founders, Liz and Charles Ritchie MBEs, lost their son Jack to gambling-related suicide in 2017 which led them to find and meet other bereaved families.

Many of the loved ones lost to gambling were young, and for many gambling was the only challenge they faced.

Gambling with Lives' campaigning has had a remarkable impact on the discourse surrounding the risks of gambling. Thanks to the efforts of bereaved families, the clear link between gambling disorder is now widely recognised.

The Gambling Act review

Charles and Liz Ritchie were instrumental in campaigning for the long-awaited review of the UK's 2005 Gambling Act, which was announced at the end of 2020. The review is currently underway, with the whitepaper due in early 2023.

Previously the focus was largely on financial loss and often neglected the far more serious and widespread impacts on people's mental health as well as on their family, relationships, and the wider community. The review of the Gambling Act is a once-in-a-generation chance to prevent harm for future generations and to hold the industry to account for its harmful practices.

Our demands from the Gambling Act review are:

- Every gambling-related suicide to be investigated & learned from
- A statutory levy on gambling operators to pay for independent research, education, & treatment
- Stringent, evidence-based affordability checks, enforced across operators
- An end to all gambling advertising, including sponsorship of sports
- Dangerous products to be made safer, including slowing down speeds of play & stake limits
- Classifications & licensing conditions for gambling products based on the harm they cause
- An end to all VIP schemes & inducements to gamble such as "free bet" bonuses
- Independent evidence-based public health messages about risks to life, health & wellbeing
- The implementation of a comprehensive NHS prevention & treatment programme
- Training for frontline health and other support workers to recognise, diagnose, prevent & treat gambling disorder
- An independent ombudsman to enforce gambling operators' duty of care
- Gambling awareness education delivered in all schools, independently approved & delivered

Some key facts on gambling

- Up to 496 gambling-related suicides in England every year, according to a [2023 Office of Health Improvement and Disparities report](#)
- 250–650 gambling-related suicides every year in the UK, [GwL research finds](#)
- [1.44 million](#) adults addicted to gambling in the UK
- [105,000 children](#) already addicted to gambling or at risk of addiction
- [86% of gross online betting profits](#) come from just 5% of customers
- The UK gambling industry makes around [£14 billion gross profit](#) and spends [£1.5 billion each year on advertising](#) each year
- Heavy gambling is associated with a [37% increased mortality rate](#)
- 35% of people with gambling disorder receive [daily incentives to gamble](#), compared to 4% of those not suffering gambling harm
- 1 in 4 gamblers are at [substantially higher risk](#) of suffering serious harm
- 45% addiction and at-risk rates for [some online casino and slot games](#)
- 78% of people engaging with micro sports ("in play") betting are addicted, according to this [study](#)
- People with gambling disorder are up to 15 times more likely to take their lives, according to [research from Sweden](#)
- 22% [addiction and at-risk rate](#) for those who gamble more than once a week

Spokespeople

Liz and Charles Ritchie MBEs

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Liz and Charles co-founded Gambling with Lives in 2018 after their son Jack took his life seven years after starting gambling while still at school. Liz is a qualified psychotherapist whilst Charles has a strong research background, having been Head of Higher Education Research in the Civil Service. They both sit on the board of trustees

Will Prochaska

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Will is our strategy director and is best placed to speak on topics regarding the charity's policies, political positions, and ongoing strategy. Will has previously held leadership positions and trustee roles in UK and international charities and is presently a Fellow of the RSA.

James Grimes

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Using his own experience of gambling disorder, James founded The Big Step – a campaign to end all gambling advertising and sponsorship in football. James also oversees our education programme, including leading delivery in England.

Tom Fleming

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Tom, who also has lived experience of gambling harm, is responsible for supporting the development and delivery of our external affairs strategy. Tom can speak on a range of issues including campaigns, upcoming events and his own experience.

Barry Fennell

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Barry has a background in youth outreach and is our programme manager for Northern Ireland, where he is responsible for co-ordinating and delivering our education programme.

Bereaved families

Gambling with Lives supports several other families who have been bereaved by gambling-related suicide, some of whom may be available interview on a case-by-case basis.