

Lynne Neagle AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd Meddwl a Llesiant
Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Darren Millar MS
Welsh Parliament
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14 November 2023

Dear Darren,

During Business Questions in Plenary on 17 October 2023, you called for a statement from me on what action the Welsh Government is taking to address problem gambling amongst children and young people in Wales.

As a Government, we have been working across portfolios to identify the actions that we can take to reduce the gambling related harm and the impact it has on health and wider society, particularly children and young people. We are currently working to implement the four recommendations made by the [Task and Finish Group on Gambling related harm](#) and asked Public Health Wales to undertake a [Gambling health needs assessment for Wales](#) to review the needs of people experiencing harms and inform a public health approach to reducing these in Wales.

In terms of education and the awareness our young people have of the risks of gambling and gaming, I agree that this is a troubling issue. The Welsh Government is aware that organisations such as [GambleAware](#), Big [Deal](#) (funded by GamCare) and [YGAM](#) make available education resources and materials on gambling which some schools in Wales choose to use, and many Members had the opportunity to discuss gaming and gambling with the charity YGAM during their reception in the Senedd on 11 October.

The new curriculum includes the Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience (Area) which enhances the focus on the health and well-being of learners. In particular, it is mandatory learning for all learners to consider the impact of decision making and a variety of social influences on learners' health and well-being and to think critically about these in their daily lives. This gives schools and settings clear opportunity to address issues of problem gambling and their impact on learners' health and well-being.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Digital competence is a cross cutting theme within the new curriculum, and learning in this area is fundamental to developing safe behaviour in relation to digital media and the online world. Learners will be supported and encouraged to develop their understanding of the increasing influence of technology on their daily lives and the implications this may have for their health and well-being, decision-making, risk assessment and safe and unsafe situations and interactions - all to be considered in digital contexts. This includes relationships with others, online safety, legal implications and *social influences* online, including social media.

As technology develops, our statutory guidance is clear that schools need to maintain a current understanding of what learners are accessing/using and how they are going about this and schools should also consider how they promote positive engagement with media and the online world as well as how they prepare learners to deal with the challenges these can present.

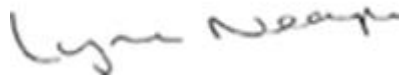
The emotional mental health and wellbeing of our children and young people is an absolute priority and comprehensive surveys such as School Health Research Network (SHRN) provide us with the vital evidence we need to ensure young people's voices are being heard and that we understand the key issues which affect them. The 2021/2022 ['Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Survey and School Health Research Network Student Health and Wellbeing Survey'](#) which was published in April highlighted the prevalence of gambling, which increases from year 7 to year 11. We continue to consider and draw upon the findings of these national surveys to understand how we can best support schools and learners.

We know that our younger generation is exposed to gambling-type behaviours from an early age through online gaming and advertisements. Through Hwb, we have raised awareness of the issues [in-game purchases](#), such as loot boxes present for children and young people. We also provide advice to parents and carers on the risk of in-game purchases through our ['In the Know' app guides](#) which cover some of the most popular games among children and young people. We have recently published an [expert article](#) that provides tips on how to support children and young people who watch or participate in competitions online.

You will also be aware of the broader work being undertaken to modernise the regulation of the gambling sector and the [white paper](#) published by the UK government in April 2023. One of the key proposals in this white paper, which the UK government are currently consulting on, is the introduction of a [statutory levy on gambling operators](#) with the intention of providing an independent funding mechanism to directly support gambling research, prevention and treatment in Great Britain. Whilst gambling policy is substantially reserved in relation to Wales and Scotland, health policy is devolved and therefore the Welsh Government is working closely with the UK government to ensure the levy's design provides the fair allocation of funding to Wales.

Given the significance for Wales of the proposals in the white paper and to support our broader policy work on gambling, officials have recently established the Gambling Expert Advisory Group. The Group, which will report to me, includes a broad range of experts and stakeholders and includes those with lived experience of gambling related harm. Education, and the impact on children and young people will also be considered as part of this group.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynne Neagle". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Lynne Neagle AS/MS

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