



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- Campaign to reform the UK's outdated gambling laws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 the UK's only support service for families bereaved by gambling,

We also run Chapter One, an information, training and support hub for everyone affected by gambling.

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, with gambling included in the government's National Suicide Prevention Strategy for the first time, which was published in autumn 2023.

Also in 2023, Professor Sir Louis Appleby, Chair of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy Advisory Group, [stated that gambling can be a dominant factor in suicide](#), without which a suicide would not have occurred, with [the Samaritans supporting this view in a public statement](#).

Gambling with Lives is free of the gambling industry's influence and we scrutinise the industry's role in facilitating and sustaining gambling addiction. We challenge the gambling industry's prevailing "responsible gambling" narrative which puts the responsibility to limit gambling harm on the individual and deflects attention away from the industry itself and its addictive products and predatory practices.

We are calling on the Government to implement:

- Investigations of every gambling-related suicide
- 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

- 117 to 496 gambling-related suicides in England every year, according to a [2023 Office of Health Improvement and Disparities report](#)
- **2.5%** of GB adults are [suffering "problem gambling"](#)
- **9.1%** of GB 18-24-year-olds who gamble [suffer "problem gambling"](#)
- **44%** of people suffering "problem gambling" are [classified as at "high risk of suicidal behaviour"](#)
- **190,000** GB children [suffering from or at risk of "problem gambling"](#)
- [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](#)
- 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

liz@gamblingwithlives.org; charles@gamblingwithlives.org;

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.

Tom Fleming

tom@gamblingwithlives.org;

Tom uses his political knowledge and skills to play a key role in the development and delivery of our public affairs strategy, which is aimed at influencing the reform of gambling legislation in the UK. Tom can speak on a range of issues including campaigns, upcoming events and policy.

Catherine Wilson

catherine@gamblingwithlives.org

Catherine combines her lived experience of gambling harms with her extensive education, business, and coaching knowledge to lead the delivery of training for the Chapter One project.

Declan Cregan

Declan@gamblingwithlives.org

Declan leads delivery of Chapter One across the island of Ireland and contributes to UK prevention work. His education background and lived experience of gambling harm fuels his passion to reach as many people as possible.

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.