

Mandatory gambling levy and stake limits praised by anti-addiction campaigners

Wednesday 27 November, 2024

Over 430,000 people are thought to be addicted to gambling in the UK. David Bradford, 68, was an unlikely candidate to fall victim to the addiction. On the surface to his family, he had a good job as an accountant, there were no money worries and family life was relatively normal. However in April 2014, he revealed to his family that he would be attending court the next day but assured his worried wife Denise and twins Alex and Ryan, that it was work related and he was not in trouble.

By late afternoon the next day David had not returned home and soon after the family received a call from his solicitor, letting them know he was in the back of a van on his way to prison - he was due to serve a two year prison sentence.

The family scrambled to find out what was happening, with no information left by David his son Adam described the situation as a 'nightmare' having to piece together the mess they had been left in, as well as sorting out the family finances. David had left behind almost £500,000 of debt through loans, remortgaging of the house, late bills, credit cards and payday loans. He had been gambling away the family's money for over 30 years, in an addiction David now himself says he never realised he was in the grips of. His addiction began on arcade machines and fruit machines in the pub, until it escalated to Fixed Odds Betting Terminals and a devastating online gambling habit which cost him over £40,000 per year.

Now, after 10 years of tireless campaigning by son Adam since his dad was jailed, the pair have helped to change the debate around gambling in the UK. Today's Government announcement brings forward a statutory levy funding treatment and research to the tune of £100m into the addiction and limits the amount that can be spent on online slots to £5 for adults and for young people £2 per every spin.

Adam said: 'This announcement has been a long time in coming but we welcome the measures announced by the Minister today. For too long, gambling companies have taken advantage of the most vulnerable people in society and been allowed by successive governments to get away with it. These new measures will have a very positive impact on the outcomes for those struggling with gambling and they are long overdue. If these measures had been in place when my father was gambling, we might not have ended up in the position that we did. Now, further work needs to continue to be done to combat the addiction and its effects on society. We are not saying gambling should be completely prohibited, but it disproportionately affects the most vulnerable and it is high time that the addiction was given the attention it deserves.'

— ENDS —

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Company Contact:

ABA GLOBAL HOLDINGS

T. 07441396378

E. adambradford@gmail.com

W. <https://www.greenhorizonafrika.com>

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