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## Covid-19 - A message from Neil McArthur to online gambling operators

Since I wrote to you last week, the response to Covid-19 has affected everyone in Great Britain.

Over the last week, I have spoken to representatives across the industry and understand the significant impact that these uncertain and unsettling events are having on your businesses, your customers and your employees. We have been drawing up an initial assessment on the impact recent events will have on the gambling industry and assessing how we should approach our own work over the coming months.

Protecting children and vulnerable people from being harmed by gambling has always been a major priority and we are very mindful – as you should be – of the fact that the risks of harm arising from online gambling have increased as a result of recent events. As you know, the social distancing measures that have been imposed this week now mean that anyone other than key workers will be at home for most of the day. We are already seeing reports of an increase in online slots, poker, casino gaming and virtual sports.

In light of these developments, whilst I recognise the enormous challenges businesses are facing, I want to make the Commission's expectations absolutely clear:

- **Consumer protection must be paramount**
  - We expect you to act responsibly, especially around individual customer affordability checks and increased social responsibility interactions.
  - We expect you to be very mindful that customers may be vulnerable and experiencing financial uncertainty, whilst others may be experiencing other effects of being isolated including, for example, feelings of anxiety, loneliness or boredom.
  - We expect you to know your customers and step in if they are showing signs that they are experiencing or at risk of harm.
- **Marketing must be conducted responsibly**
  - We expect you to on-board new customers in a socially responsible way.
  - You must not exploit the current situation for marketing purposes and should be very cautious when seeking to cross-sell online gaming products to customers who signed up with you in order to bet.
  - We expect you to ensure that your affiliates are conducting themselves appropriately.
- **Compliance with licence conditions and codes of practice**
  - We expect you to act in a way that minimises the risks to the licensing objectives.
  - Treat consumers fairly and communicate with them in a clear way that allows them to make a properly informed judgment about whether to gamble.
  - Work with the Commission in an open and co-operative way and act in accordance with both the letter or the spirit of the regulatory framework we have set.

If we see irresponsible behaviour we will step in immediately. So, whilst I know that the current climate is unprecedented, gambling operators must play their part in making sure that people are kept safe.

If you want to share your own analysis of impacts to the industry, or share other information that may be relevant to our work on this issue, you can talk to [Ben Haden](#), Programme Director for Industry Insight, who is collating all of the information about how Covid-19 is affecting the industry.

If you have information or concerns about the behaviour of an operator then our [Confidential Intelligence Hotline](#) is continuing to take calls or you can [email](#) the team. Finally, you can continue to contact your Account Manager in

the normal way to notify of any key events or questions you have during this time. If you have other questions or queries, please let us know and we will do our best to get you an answer.

Yours sincerely,  
Neil McArthur

Posted on 26 March 2020

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