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Government White Paper 'Next Steps' To Define UK Gambling

All changes scheduled to be in force by summer 2024

Industry urged to "engage with government" again

Horseracing still plans to push back on affordability

The UK is set to face a raft of consultations over the next 12 months as the government enacts the proposed changes in its gambling white paper, as all sides prepare for new waves of lobbying.

“Our intention is that the main measures in the white paper will be in force by summer 2024,” according to the [policy paper](#).

Both the industry and its advisors have welcomed the long-delayed release of the white paper and are shifting focus to the many consultations it calls for on its key changes.

Bahar Alaeddini, a partner at law firm Harris Hagan, said the white paper “brings at least the beginnings of some certainty and direction to the industry about government plans to ensure our gambling laws are ‘fit for the digital age’ and on important issues such as affordability, where speculation (often of the worst-case variety) and uncertainty has been casting a long shadow over the future of the industry”.

“The white paper does not include a draft bill, because the proposed reforms (with just a few exceptions) do not require primary legislation,” Alaeddini told VIXIO GamblingCompliance.

This means that “most reforms can be achieved through secondary legislation and regulation, and that the government has far more important legislative priorities in the present socio-economic climate”, Alaeddini said.

She urged the industry to “engage with government and the Gambling Commission to ensure that the proposed reforms are delivered in a timely, sensible and, critically, workable way”.

Secretary of state for culture, media and sport, Lucy Frazer, said in parliament yesterday (April 27) that action will happen “swiftly” and despite warning that “various technical consultations need to take place”, said the process would be done “as quickly as possible”.

The Betting & Gaming Council (BGC), a trade group, has similarly said it is putting all of its focus on delivering these changes as quickly as possible.

The BGC also welcomed the consultation on new stake limits for online slots and in particular “the steps taken to protect young people”.

Limits will be set between £2 and £15, with a possible split between the highest available stakes for young people and those over 25.

In total, there are 17 significant policy changes that have been addressed in terms of “next steps” in the policy paper.

Seven of them require Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) consultations, scheduled to take place in 2023, except for the one on reviewing commission fees, which will take place in 2024.

Five of them require UK Gambling Commission-led consultations and, subject to trial outcomes, there could also be a consultation on making data sharing between online operators on high-risk customers mandatory for collaborative harm prevention; otherwise known as the single customer view.

Law firm Wiggin wrote in its [blog](#) on the white paper that it hopes the Gambling Commission has “learned from the procedural mistakes made during consultation processes in the past”.

“The commission must avoid the deserved criticism it received of the botched way it handled last year’s Customer Interaction Guidance consultation (including from us). There is too much at stake for the Commission to ignore the established process,” Wiggin said.

Nick Arron, the lead partner in the betting and gaming team at law firm Poppleston Allen, says it's “worth noting” the two Gambling Commission consultations on affordability checks.

One will be done on background checks at moderate levels of spend, to check for financial vulnerability indicators such as County Court Judgments.

“They propose these should take place at £125 net loss within a month or £500 within a year. The paper suggests these levels are only expected to have an impact on 20 percent of players, so not every customer will have to undergo an affordability assessment,” Arron said.

Secondly, one will look into higher levels of spend which may indicate harmful binge gambling or sustained unaffordable losses, with currently proposed thresholds of £1,000 net loss within 24 hours or £2,000 within 90 days.

“They also propose that the triggers for enhanced checks should be halved for those aged 18 to 24 given the evidence of increased risk. The number subjected to more detailed checks is likely to be fewer than 5 percent,” Arron said.

There will also be an appointment process for a new ombudsman that will commence in the spring or summer of 2023, with the government expecting it to “be accepting complaints within a year”.

Stakeholder engagement, evidence gathering and analysis for the Horserace Betting Levy review will take place in the Spring and Summer of 2023, said the government.

The British Horseracing Authority (BHA) has already promised to "continue to make our case that sweeping blanket checks on affordability are not appropriate, with any measures needing to be proportionate and targeted at individuals and their specific circumstances".

A government working group will commence summer of 2023 to strengthen informational messaging, including the risks associated with gambling.

The Premier League will implement its voluntary front-of-shirt gambling sponsorship ban from the end of the 2025/26 English football season.

Industry stakeholders are already preparing to contribute to the consultations.

In an announcement on Thursday, Flutter said looks forward to contributing to the upcoming reviews.

Some groups that focus on research, education and treatment, such as EPIC Risk Management, have also already confirmed they “are happy to provide our experience and expertise by working closely in the upcoming consultations and providing that lived experience and professional input to make gambling safer for all”.

Jurisdictions

United Kingdom

Sectors

Affiliates	Binary Options	Bingo
Casinos	Charitable Gaming	Esports
Fantasy Sports	Gaming Machines	Loot Boxes
Lotteries	Online Gambling	Poker/Cardrooms
Racing	Skill Games	Social Gaming
Sports Betting	Sweepstakes	

Specialisms

Advertising Regulation	Licence Requirements	Responsible Gambling
Limits	Affordability	Tax
Enforcement		