The Gambling Bill allows 8 year olds to gamble unaccompanied on certain types of fruit machine.

82% of the population thinks this is wrong.¹

Do you?

The Methodist Church, The Salvation Army and NCH strongly believe that:
- gambling is an adult activity
- fruit-machines – regardless of the size – can be addictive
- there is already convincing evidence that a significant number of children have gambling problems arising from Category D fruit-machines
- children should be prohibited from using Category D fruit-machines

Important Note
- Category D machines include both fruit-machines and “teddy bear cranes”. We do not argue that all machines currently classified as Category D are dangerous for children – this briefing focuses solely on fruit-machines. We would support moves to remove amusement machines, such as cranes or “grabbers” or even low value “penny falls” machines, from the Category D classification.

Gambling is an adult activity
- Britain is the only developed country that allows children of any age to gamble.²
- Gambling is an adult activity. As gambling researcher Dr Sue Fisher wrote: “Controlling one’s response to gambling requires certain life skills which are likely to be under-developed in children and young people.”³
- The Government agrees that children and young people under 18 should not be allowed to gamble, clearly stating that ‘gambling and children don’t mix’.⁴ Yet, under the Gambling Bill children and young people are not banned from using Category D machines.

The addictive nature of fruit-machines
- Research has shown that fruit-machines are highly addictive. They are interactive and solitary, involve rapid re-staking and encourage a temptation to chase losses. The addictive nature of fruit machines is the same regardless of stake. GamCare, which runs a gambling helpline, states that a third of its calls come from people whose problems relate to gambling on slot machines.⁵ Yet we continue to allow children to play on them.
- Fruit/slot machines are the most popular form of gambling amongst children between 12-15.⁶

Category D machines are gambling machines
- The Government has made a distinction in the Bill between gambling machines (Category A-C) and amusement machines (Category D, with 10p stake and £5 prizes). However, this distinction is erroneous and deeply misleading. The £5 prize may be a trivial amount for adults but for a child is quite a significant amount of money. The label of “amusement” machines implies that these machines are “safe” for children. They are not.

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Problem gambling amongst children

- There is evidence to suggest that starting gambling early in childhood or adolescence puts young people at greater risk of subsequent gambling problems. Researchers have found a noticeable association between problem gambling and starting gambling at the age of 14 or younger.
- Research suggests that as many as 1 in 20 children have already demonstrated behaviour which would classify them as “problem gamblers” on slot machines. Their behaviour – which includes lying and stealing, disrupted relationship at home, and distracted behaviour at school – impacts negatively on the children and their families and friends.
- Some teenage problem gamblers will graduate onto harder forms of gambling as they grow up. And, although some teenage problem gamblers appear to break their gambling habit when they take on new responsibilities, such as marriage or a baby, their lives will continue to be affected by a history of school absences, broken relationships and possible criminal records arising from their earlier addiction at a crucial stage of their development.
- At the moment it is estimated that there are between 275,000 and 325,000 problem gamblers in the UK and that the proportion of problem gamblers among adolescents in the UK could be more than three times that of adults.

Amusement arcades – a safe environment for children?

- Some people argue that arcades are a good place for children to learn about gambling in safety. However, the statistics above suggest that for some children the experience is far from safe. There is no requirement that children should be accompanied or supervised whilst playing Category D machines. It is much better that children learn about gambling in a supportive environment, such as schools or youth clubs, using structured material, such as A Certain Bet? - Exploring Gambling, a pack produced by the charity GamCare.

The nature of Category D machines

- Category D encompasses a number of very different ‘amusement’ machines - from fruit machines, to ‘grabber cranes’ and coin pushers.
- There are fundamental differences between grabber machines and fruit machines - children cannot chase their losses in the same way that they can with fruit machines, and the addictive potential of winning soft toys is far less than winning money - therefore our particular concerns are focused around gambling machines.
- If Category D machines were divided into D1 (fruit machines) and D2 (others), children could be prohibited from using Category D machines, and arcades would still be able to provide the popular grabbers, computer games and dancing machines.

We therefore ask you to press for the separation of Category D machines into fruit-machines and others, and prohibit children from the use of any fruit machines.

The government says it is concerned about the protection of children - please help ensure that the reality matches the rhetoric and stop children gambling on dangerous fruit machines.

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1 82 % of the population believes that children and young people under 18 should not be allowed to play fruit machines. NOP poll commissioned by the Salvation Army was conducted by telephone between 28-30 November 2003 amongst a representative sample of the British population consisting of 973 adults aged 18 and over.
3 Dr Sue Fisher, Gambling and Problem Gambling among young people in England and Wales, 1998
5 33.4% of first time callers to the GamCare helpline had problems with fruit machines, and these machines remain the major issue for players in the under 18 and 18-25 age group. GamCare Care Services Report 2003.
6 See Gamcare's website: www.gamcare.org.uk/site.builder/facts.html
10 Rincon, Paul: Problem gambling 'set to explode', 9 September 2004 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/3641512.stm
11 Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Gambling Review Report, Chapter 17: Protecting the Vulnerable, p. 89.