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### **Worth the gamble? HSBC UK increases gambling block feature to 72-hours**

With lockdown causing an \*increase in gambling, HSBC UK and first direct have today announced an increased cooling off period to their gambling block feature, from 24 hours to 72 hours.

The self-restriction tool, which prevents customers from being able to make gambling payments on their accounts after it's switched on, will automatically decline any gambling transactions for three days, to help people control their urge to gamble.

Recently published \*data from the UK Gambling Commission (UKGC) highlights that lockdown measures have had an impact on gambling behavior in the UK, with a month-on-month increase of 29% in gross gambling yield (GGY), and a 7% increase in active accounts.

**Maxine Pritchard, Head of Financial Inclusion and Vulnerability at HSBC UK said:** "This is a challenging time for many of our customers, with some not working and perhaps facing financial difficulty. By increasing the restriction to 72 hours, this will help give our customers time to pause when they are tempted to return to gambling.

"We are always looking for new ways to support our customers and make it easier for them to manage their finances. Customer feedback on our gambling control showed us there was more we could do to help and we've worked closely with them and with GamCare to design the solution."

Available to HSBC UK and first direct customers with an active debit card, the option can be switched on via the 'Manage Cards' section on the HSBC UK mobile app (within the 'Cards' section of the fd mobile app), as well as via telephone banking or by going into a branch – giving customers added control over their spending.

**Anna Hemmings, CEO of GamCare, says:** "The ability to block gambling transactions through your bank card or app is an important tool for those struggling

with their gambling, and is ideally used together with other practical tools such as self-exclusion, blocking software, and specialist support around the issue – as we have recently emphasised through our ‘TalkBanStop’ partnership and campaign.

“The University of Bristol Personal Finance Research Centre has also highlighted that ‘positive friction’ such as a cooling off period is important for the success of blocks, as this prevents them being turned off in the event of urges to gamble. GamCare is pleased to see HSBC UK and first direct take this positive step to support their customers.”

HSBC UK and first direct both have their own specialist support teams on hand to help vulnerable customers including those at risk of financial harm from gambling and can refer customers to a trusted external organisations where needed.

Customers who feel that gambling is affecting their finances can find useful information on the HSBC UK website: [hsbc.co.uk/accessibility/addictions](https://www.hsbc.co.uk/accessibility/addictions) and on first direct’s website: [www1.firstdirect.com/help/useful-information/financial-management/#debt](https://www1.firstdirect.com/help/useful-information/financial-management/#debt)

Free information, support and counselling is available from GamCare. They also run the National Gambling Helpline (0808 8020 133) where advisers are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In April 2020, HSBC UK [announced a ban on gambling transactions on credit cards](#), a move designed to provide an extra layer of protection for customers.

***Ends***

\* <https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/news-action-and-statistics/news/2020/Data-shows-impact-of-Covid-19-in-October-2020.aspx>

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## **HSBC UK**

HSBC UK serves around 14.5 million customers across the UK, supported by 32,000 colleagues. HSBC UK offers a complete range of retail banking and wealth management to personal and private banking customers, as well as commercial banking for small to medium businesses and large corporates.

## **HSBC Holdings plc**

HSBC Holdings plc, the parent company of HSBC, is headquartered in London. HSBC serves customers worldwide from offices in 64 countries and territories in its geographical regions: Europe, Asia, North America, Latin America, and Middle East and North Africa. With assets of \$2,956bn at 30 September 2020, HSBC is one of the world's largest banking and financial services organisations.

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