

Lotto minister's daughter works for Camelot lobbying company

Andrew Ellison

The daughter of the minister responsible for lotteries works at a lobbying firm employed by Camelot, it has emerged, raising concerns over a potential conflict of interest.

John Whittingdale, who is a minister at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), has been in charge of gambling and lotteries since March when the role was transferred from the sports minister, Nigel Huddleston. Whittingdale's daughter, Alice Whittingdale, works for Pagefield, a public relations company that counts Camelot, the company that has operated the national lottery since its inception, among its clients.

Pagefield's website says Whittingdale's daughter joined in 2018 after graduating from the University of Exeter. It says she works in corporate communications and public affairs, describing her job as "helping clients navigate challenging policy areas".

Pagefield says there is no conflict of interest because Whittingdale's daughter joined before her father was appointed and has never worked on the Camelot account or had any access to information about the company. Whittingdale lists his daughter's job on the parliamentary register of members' interests, describing her as a "researcher". Her profile on Pagefield's website says she is a "senior executive".

In August last year the Gambling Commission, a non-departmental public body sponsored by DCMS, launched a competition to award the next ten-year lottery licence after the existing deal expires in 2023. The regulator is due to reveal its preferred bidder in February but gambling campaigners are now questioning the transparency of the process.

Matt Zarb-Cousin, of the Clean Up Gambling campaign, said: "Alongside the former gambling minister Hugh Robertson subsequently being appointed chair of Camelot, these revelations call into question the impartiality of an opaque process for the next lottery licence. There has to be appropriate scrutiny of Camelot's poor record, and the public has a right to know what other operators bidding for the contract



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John Whittingdale's daughter, Alice, is an executive at the PR firm Pagefield, which denies a conflict of interest

cent to retailers and 5 per cent to the operator. That translates to £395 million of revenue to Camelot and after costs, its profit was £79 million.

Dr Alex May, a blogger and campaigner on transparency, who uncovered the potential conflict of interest, said: "I'm astonished none of the other publicly known bidders have called out Mr Whittingdale on this. The gambling minister should have nothing to do with the gambling industry or those who act for it."

Whittingdale's appointment as gambling minister had surprised campaigners because of his record of voting against stronger regulation of the industry. He is now in charge of a departmental review of the Gambling Act.

A source at DCMS said the independent adviser at the Cabinet Office propriety and ethics office was notified that the minister's daughter works at Pagefield and was content that there was no conflict of interest. Camelot denied any conflict of interest.

would do differently." The commission says the competition is run independently of DCMS and Whittingdale Sr has no direct involvement. However, the department could in theory overrule the decision, and Oliver Dowden,

the culture secretary, appoints the regulator's chairman.

Camelot generated lottery sales of £79 billion last year, of which 52 per cent goes to winners, 25 per cent to good causes, 12 per cent in duty, 5 per

Doctor asked patient for a threesome

Tom Ball

A "predatory" doctor who was found to have asked a vulnerable patient he had met in A&E for a threesome has been struck off.

Dr Nenad Dordovic, of the Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother Hospital (QEQM) in Margate, Kent, made advances as he treated the woman for self-harm wounds, a tribunal was told. Later he allegedly retrieved her mobile number from medical records and harassed her with "inappropriate" messages.

The woman was so "terrified" that when an ambulance was sent to her flat a few months later, she told paramedics she did not want to go to hospital for fear of seeing Dordovic. When she was taken to A&E a second time, the doctor approached her again.

On the first occasion the woman — named only as Patient B — had gone to A&E late at night in March 2018 with self-inflicted injuries. A medical practitioner's tribunal heard that as Dordovic stitched her arm, he asked "deplorable" questions, including: "Would you want to have a threesome with me?" Dordovic denied making the comments.

At the tribunal, Chloe Fortham, counsel for the General Medical Council, described his actions as "predatory" and said Patient B feared he "might just turn up at her house".

A year earlier, Dordovic was found to have messaged another vulnerable young patient. In March 2017 a woman referred to as Patient A attended A&E at the Good Hope Hospital in Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham, where Dordovic was working as a locum registrar.

After treating her, Dordovic suggested meeting for coffee so that he could help with her Crohn's disease, a condition that causes inflammation of the digestive system. Dordovic said it was "only intended as a friendly and supportive gesture". But he was alleged to have taken the woman's mobile phone number from her medical records and sent her a WhatsApp message. She had a history of depression and self-harm.

The tribunal described Dordovic's actions as "deplorable" and found he had brought the profession into disrepute. He was erased from the Medical Register with an immediate suspension to cover the 28-day appeal period.

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