
PRESS STATEMENT

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Ground-breaking research distinguishes problem and non-problem play on gaming machines

The Responsible Gambling Trust has today published world-leading and independently conducted research into gaming machines in licensed betting offices that shows it is possible to distinguish between problem and non-problem gambling behaviour.

The programme of research was commissioned by the Responsible Gambling Trust to build the knowledge base available to identify harmful machine play and to understand what measures might limit harmful play without impacting on those who do not exhibit harmful behaviours.

The research has been conducted independently by leading experts in gambling behaviour and social research, and reviewed by a panel of international academics to ensure it meets the standards expected of high quality academic research. The findings of the research have been provided to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Gambling Commission to inform policy decisions they may wish to make with regard to these machines. The findings will be presented to the industry at the Responsible Gambling Trust's annual 'harm minimisation' conference on 10 December.

Marc Etches, Chief Executive of the Responsible Gambling Trust, said:

"This research speaks for itself. The government, the gambling regulator and the industry all asked us to provide wholly independent research using industry-held data to help inform policy decisions and we have delivered a ground-breaking set of papers in just ten months. When we started this programme there was no credible research into gaming machines in licensed betting offices. Our understanding of these machines and the way people use them is now greatly enhanced.

"The bookmaking industry deserves credit for opening itself up to scrutiny. We hope that everyone will consider carefully how the findings of this ground-breaking research can be used to help all gamblers to make better informed decisions and, in particular, to protect those that are vulnerable to gambling-related harm."

Neil Goulden, Chairman of the Responsible Gambling Trust, said:

"The researchers have shown that it is possible to distinguish between problem and non-problem gaming machine play, and they have provided many important insights about player behaviour. This research has huge potential to inform the industry's approach to minimising gambling-related harm and we strongly urge the industry to make every effort to improve how problem behaviour is more effectively monitored and managed in the future."

Professor Alex Blaszczynski, Chairman of the independent review panel, said:

"It is important to highlight the substantive and world-leading contribution to our understanding of problem gambling made by this research. This programme represents the first collaborative endeavour between multiple industry operators and independent researchers. It is of outstanding significance."

-ENDS-

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NOTES TO EDITORS

- The research is published online at www.responsiblegamblingtrust.org.uk.
- The Responsible Gambling Trust (RGT) is a national charity committed to minimising problem gambling and gambling-related harm in Britain through effective education and prevention techniques.
- The Gambling Commission, RGT, and the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board (RGSB) published a Statement of Intent in August 2012 in which they set out arrangements for prioritising, commissioning, funding and evaluating the research, education and treatment elements of a national responsible gambling strategy. <http://www.responsiblegamblingtrust.org.uk/PDFs/statementofintent.pdf>
- The RGSB provides the Gambling Commission with an independent, unbiased, evidence-based national responsible gambling strategy. RGT implements the priorities set out in that strategy once endorsed by the Commission. The Commission was established by statute to regulate gambling in Great Britain and the members of the RGSB are appointed by the Commission.
- In November 2012, the Responsible Gambling Trust launched a £500,000 research programme into Category B gaming machines to be conducted by NatCen Social Research (NatCen). NatCen previously undertook the Government's Gambling Prevalence Study. The first stage in the research sought to understand data the industry currently holds on such machines and was published in December 2013.
- Following input by the Government, the Gambling Commission, and the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board the research was expanded in February 2014 in recognition of growing concern about gaming machines in LBOs and to ensure that RGT meets its original aim of commissioning research that will provide substantive knowledge to better describe,

understand, identify and mitigate gambling-related harm in relation to gaming machines. The second stage of the programme increased the overall cost to circa £1million.

- The RGT is today publishing 7 documents:
 - Report 1 - Theoretical markers of harm for machine play in a bookmaker's. A rapid scoping review. Authors: Heather Wardle, Jonathan Parke and David Excell
 - Report 2: Identifying problem gambling – findings from a survey of loyalty card customers. Authors: Heather Wardle, David Excell, Eleanor Ireland, Nevena Ilic and Stephen Sharman
 - Report 3: Using industry data to identify gambling related harm. Authors: David Excell, Georgiy Bobashev, Heather Wardle, Daniel Gonzalez-Ordonez, Tom Whitehead, Robert J. Morris, Paul Ruddle
 - Patterns of play: analysis of data from machines in bookmakers. Authors: Heather Wardle, Eleanor Ireland, Stephen Sharman, David Excell and Daniel Gonzalez-Ordonez
 - Understanding of Return to Player messages: Findings from user testing. Authors: Debbie Collins, Sophie Green, Jo d'Ardenne , Heather Wardle & Shauna-Kaye
 - The role of stake size in loss of control in within-session gambling. Authors: Adrian Parke, Andrew Harris, Jonathan Parke and Paul Goddard
 - Changes in machine gambling behaviour. Headline findings from a follow-up study of participants to the Health Survey for England 2012, Scottish Health Survey 2012 and the British Gambling Prevalence Survey 2010. Authors: Heather Wardle & Dan Philo

- In order to ensure that all research commissioned is entirely independent RGT put in place a robust governance process to underpin stakeholder confidence in the quality, objectivity and independence of the gaming machine research programme.

- Internally, all research activity is wholly the responsibility of the Responsible Gambling Trust's Research Committee which is chaired by Jo Wolff, Senior Independent Trustee. The Research Committee consists of five trustees who are wholly independent of the gambling industry and two RGT staff members, including the Chief Executive Marc Etches. All 'industry' trustees, including RGT's Chairman, are entirely excluded from directing or otherwise influencing any research activity that the Responsible Gambling Trust undertakes. In addition, Professor David Miers participates as an observer on behalf the RGSB.

- Externally, a panel of international experts has provided the necessary expert and independent oversight and comment on the scientific rigour and methodology to underpin stakeholder confidence in the objectivity and quality of all research outputs. This expert panel - the Machine Research Oversight Panel (MROP) - is independent of both the RGT and the industry, and is chaired by Professor Alex Blaszczynski (University of Sydney). All aspects of the research programme were transparent to the RGSB, the Gambling Commission and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.