

Responsible Gambling Trust

Third Annual Harm Minimisation Conference

The King's Fund, London, 9th December 2015

Over 220 delegates attended a conference organised by the Responsible Gambling Trust (RGT). This annual event, now in its third year, provided a forum to look at all aspects of harm minimisation in the gambling industry, from policy to regulation, research to industry driven initiatives.

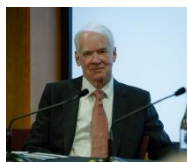


Tracey Crouch MP, the minister with responsibility for Gambling, opened the Conference on a personal note, explaining how she had experienced the harm that problem gambling can cause through both her constituents and personal friends. She emphasised that “goodwill was not enough” and firmly supported RGT’s fundraising efforts.



The new chief executive of the Gambling Commission, Sarah Harrison, drew a picture of the complex jigsaw of multiple initiatives in the field of harm minimisation. She welcomed the extent of the effort, but cautioned about the need for a coherent strategy to maximise the effectiveness of this good work.

The day’s keynote speech was by Dr. Jon Kelly, CEO of Canada’s Responsible Gambling Council. He focused on the gamblers with examples of adults.



Jon Kelly, CEO of Canada’s Responsible Gambling Council, spoke about the importance of effective messaging to campaigns aimed at young men and older adults.

Clive Hawkswood of the Industry Group for Responsible Gambling (IGRG) introduced a panel session to discuss the recently published Gambling Industry Code of Socially Responsible Advertising. Shahriar Coupal of the Advertising Standards Authority spoke about their efforts to enforce the code. Ron Finlay, from the Senet Group, outlined their latest campaign. Dr Margaret Carran, a senior lecturer in Law from City University whose PhD was sponsored by RGT described her work on the impact of advertising on young people. And Calum Macaulay, Managing Director of TalkSport, explained how important the revenue from gambling advertisements was to commercial broadcasters, and how seriously they take the responsibilities which come with this source of income.



RGT's senior independent trustee, Professor Jo Wolff of UCL, then introduced a series of updates about ongoing research funded by the Trust.

PwC set out their plans for research in to the remote gambling sector, which complements the work that Dr Jonathan Parke of Sophro Ltd is doing on Ethnomining, in partnership with Unibet who were represented by Maris Bonello.

John Kennedy from Ipsos MORI set out plans for research into the Bingo sector, jointly commissioned by the Bingo Association and RGT. They would be surveying customers in Bingo premises across the country to identify the levels of problem gambling and help the sector take action to address it if necessary.



The highlight of the research update was the presentation of the results of a study into the impact of the increase in the limits on stakes and prizes for casino machines. Professor David Forrest of Liverpool University and Professor Ian McHale from the University of Salford had worked with data provided by the The Rank Group to analyse the differences in spending before and after the change. Their work confirmed an increase in spending of 7%, close to the 5% predicted by the government's impact assessment. It also identified differences between casinos in poorer areas versus those in more affluent neighbourhoods.

There then followed a lively panel discussion about the ethics and impact of the industry funding research into its own impact. Professor Jo Wolff set out the structures RGT have in place to protect research from any direct influence by the industry. Professor Forrest supported these efforts. Professor Mark Birkin of Leeds University's ESRC funded data centre explained how he hoped their resources could open up access to industry data to more researchers. Andrew Lyman from William



Hill reminded attendees of the benefits of working in partnership with the industry, both in terms of access to data and the opportunity to implement the recommendations that emerged from research.

Professor Jim Orford of Birmingham University offered the counter-argument that any research funded by the industry was inherently tainted, even with the safeguards RGT had put in place but there was then agreement that it would be better if alternative sources of funding were available, but for now, only RGT had the resources to support this important work.

Alex Krasodonski-Jones from Demos opened the afternoon session with a fascinating exposition of how social media reflected gambling. His principal conclusion was that there was a disconnect between sources which offered support and advice around problem gambling and the enormous number of people interested in gambling itself.



A group led by the Association of British Bookmakers (ABB) then announced that a new Player Awareness System was now in operation across the full estate of LBOs in Great Britain, thanks to the cooperation of the two main suppliers of fixed odds betting terminals. This system had brought together the work being done by multiple operators on Customer Behaviour Analytics, allowing operators to monitor all account based play and contact customers where three or more indicators of harm were apparent in their patterns of play.

The Industry Group for Responsible Gambling (IGRG) then assembled in full on stage, comprising BACTA, the Bingo Association, the ABB, the Remote Gaming Association and the National Casino Forum. They set out the work-streams which the industry has agreed to undertake collaboratively, namely player and product messaging, social messaging, staff training and signposting to self-exclusion schemes.



The importance of evaluating such initiatives was then underlined by Professor David Parsons from Leeds Beckett University. He is working with RGT to provide specialist advice to operators on how to construct effective evaluations.



The final session was delivered by Sir Christopher Kelly, Chairman of the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board (RGSB), outlining the draft Responsible Gambling Strategy for 2016-19.

Closing remarks were delivered by Neil Goulden, RGT's Chairman. After summarising the day and thanking all those who had attended and participated, he took the opportunity to encourage the industry, led by IGRG members, to "up its game" and increase the amount raised for research, treatment and harm-prevention from the current £6.3million annually to £9m that represents 0.1% of industry gross gaming yield, excluding the National Lottery.