

GambleAware

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PRESS STATEMENT

GambleAware publishes new research with implications for regulatory review on gaming machines.

London 8th December: As the Government conducts its review of gaming machines, new research, funded by GambleAware, suggests policy makers need to look beyond stake reductions to minimise harm.

Researchers from Sophro looked at game characteristics within electronic gaming machines including speed of play, free spins, return to player, payment methods as well as stakes and prizes. The report identified risks, potential policy implications and the evidence gaps that still need to be addressed to give industry and regulatory stakeholders a more comprehensive picture of product-based harm-minimisation.

Significant and important risk factors for problem gambling on machines include:

1. **Access to additional funds** in venues – using remote loading via debit cards, ATMs and contactless payment from digital wallets (e.g. smartphone payments).
2. **High frequency participation** – frequency of opportunity to bet is more important than the number of different gambling activities one participates in and is more likely to be associated with gambling-related harm.
3. **Automatic play** – this maximises event frequency and enables players to dissociate when playing. The report suggests a strong theoretical foundation to consider it a risk, although this has not yet been supported with empirical evidence.
4. **Near misses** – despite being poorly understood these are believed to create a change in emotion via an increase in arousal, which gives rise to risk of persistent gambling.
5. **In-running betting** provides more opportunities to bet, or more realistically, further opportunity to continue betting, which can lead to spending beyond ones means.

Dr Jonathan Parke, lead researcher at Sophro said:

“There is growing evidence that access to additional funds in a gambling venue is a significant risk factor for problem gambling. This may be because it facilitates the decision to continue spending more than planned. Stopping players from spending more than they can afford is important. However, restricting stake size while failing to consider the other cost determinants, like game speed and volatility, will likely prove ineffective.”

We identified a number of areas for policy makers to consider beyond stakes and prize restrictions, as well as the need to address to evidence gap that will pave the way towards a better understanding of product-based harm-minimisation.”

The report suggests a number of potential options to consider for mitigating risks associated with ‘remote loading’, including but not limited to:

- Removing the option to use debit cards in remote loading altogether;
- Restricting the number of times debit cards can be used;
- Placing a daily limit on the amount that can be withdrawn using debit cards;
- Exploring options to permit customers to block voluntarily gambling-related payments using relevant merchant category codes associated with debit card transactions; and,
- A general requirement that operators avoid making taking money out harder than putting money in.
- Restrictions on making fast games, like gaming machines, any faster through the use of ‘turbo mode’ for example.

Marc Etches, Chief Executive of Gamble Aware said:

“GambleAware does not devise policy and does not give advice directly to policy makers but the research we commission is available for all those, including policy makers, who wish to refer to it. However, what we can say with confidence is that while stakes and prizes are one tool in the policy-makers’ tool-kit, research evidence suggests adjustments to these two variables in isolation are unlikely to be sufficiently effective in reducing either problem gambling, or the wider concept of gambling-related harm in Britain as a whole. The most effective approach will be far more comprehensive and take a wide range of actions which in aggregate, is more likely to have the desired impact.”

-ENDS-

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NOTES

- The report is available on the GambleAware website:
<http://about.gambleaware.org/research/research-publications/>
- The Responsible Gambling Trust operating as GambleAware is the leading charity in the UK committed to minimising gambling-related harm. As an independent national charity funded by donations from the gambling industry, GambleAware funds education, prevention and treatment services and commissions research to broaden public understanding of gambling-related harm. The aim is to stop people getting into problems with their gambling, and ensure that those that do develop problems receive fast and effective treatment and support. Click here to find out more: <http://about.gambleaware.org/>

- **GambleAware** aims to raise a minimum of £10million each year in voluntary contributions from the gambling industry operating in Great Britain. This donation based system was proposed under the Gambling Act 2005 and is prescribed by the Gambling Commission in its Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice.
- **GambleAware's** programme of treatment, education, harm prevention and research are guided by the National Responsible Gambling Strategy, which is defined by the independent Responsible Gambling Strategy Board (RGSB) and endorsed by the Gambling Commission. The RGSB, the Gambling Commission and **GambleAware** work together under the terms of an agreement in place since 2012: <http://about.gambleaware.org/media/1216/statementofintent.pdf>. Research is conducted under the terms of a 'Research Commissioning and Governance Procedure' agreed in 2016 by the RGSB, the Gambling Commission and **GambleAware**: <http://about.gambleaware.org/media/1270/research-commissioning-and-governance-procedure-may-2016-final.pdf>.