
PRESS STATEMENT

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Responsible Gambling Trust Announce Stage 2 of Machines Research

The Responsible Gambling Trust (RGT) has today announced further details of the next stage of the independent research it is commissioning into gambling machines with the highest stakes and prizes in Britain. Following discussions with government, the RGT has made the decision to expand its research programme and increase the available budget by 50% to £750,000 to provide the focused research needed to inform policy decisions in relation to gambling machines in licensed betting offices (LBOs).

The second stage of the programme will include:

- Ground breaking research into both industry data and players to explore the way that people use machines in LBOs to identify behaviour that is potentially harmful
- Cognitive and physiological studies to explore the impact of higher stakes and prizes and information provision on players' behaviour in LBOs
- Geographical modelling to understand how 'clustering' or the locations of LBOs and the populations they serve may influence behaviour
- Surveys of machine players to understand more about who plays machines in LBOs and to inform effective harm minimisation measures
- Evaluation of the Association of British Bookmakers' new 'code of practice' to assess impacts on behaviour

Commenting, Marc Etches, Chief Executive, said:

"The Responsible Gambling Trust understands that there is growing concern about gaming machines in LBOs and that is why we are expanding our research programme to ensure that policy makers have access to the best possible research to inform decisions.

"The research the RGT is commissioning is ground-breaking and will involve a number of internationally recognised experts who will seek to consider all aspects of this issue from the way people play machines to where they are located.

"We believe this independent research has the potential to significantly advance our knowledge and understanding of harmful gaming machine play and help to identify the most effective means of protecting all those who choose to gamble."

-ENDS-

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NOTES TO EDITORS

- 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. (www.responsiblegamblingtrust.org.uk).
- The RGT has commissioned a two-stage independent research programme into Category B gaming machines. Teams working on research programme include NatCen Social Research, Featurespace and Geofutures, along with other academic teams. Featurespace will analyse how industry data may be used to potentially identify harmful patterns of play and will assess how reliable this information is and NatCen will conduct qualitative work with machine players to explore attitudes to player tracking and loyalty cards as well as scoping the development of a survey of machine players. 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 completed in December 2013.
- Following input by the Government, the Gambling Commission, and the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board the second stage of research has been expanded in recognition of growing concern about gaming machines in LBOs and to ensure that the 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 by autumn 2014.
- The second stage of the programme, which will increase the overall cost to circa £750,000, includes:
 - o A review of existing international evidence on the effectiveness of harm minimisation;
 - o An independent evaluation of the machine harm minimisation features outlined in the ABB 'code of practice' which are planned to be implemented from March 2014;
 - o A dedicated group of studies which will explore whether it is possible to identify markers for gambling-related harm in gambling machines using industry-held data and customer surveys;
 - o Geographical modelling exploring the environmental context of where these machines are located and how play may vary from place to place;
 - o Interrogating transactional level data and providing descriptive understanding of what aggregate patterns of play look like including staking levels and transaction types at different levels of aggregation;
 - o Survey of machine players (either recruited in venues or followed-up from other surveys or both) to provide an opportunity to explore behaviour in-depth and to examine these behaviour against markers of risk;

- o Experimental work exploring physiological and cognitive impacts from gambling with higher stakes and prizes;
- o 'Return to Player' (RTP) cognitive testing of players to assess the effectiveness of information provision as a potential harm-minimisation technique.
- In order to ensure that all research commissioned is entirely independent the RGT has put in place a 'triple-lock' process to be applied to further underpin stakeholder confidence in the quality, objectivity and independence of the gaming machine research programme:
- o Internally, all research activity is wholly the responsibility of the RGT's Research Committee which is chaired by Liz Barclay, 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 our Chairman, are entirely excluded from directing or otherwise influencing any research activity. Furthermore, all RGT meetings are observed by representatives from the Gambling Commission, its advisors the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board (RGSB), and the Government.

- o The research contracts with all contractors are subject to termination by either party if there is any interference from any third party that seeks to undermine the independence and objectivity of the research (a 'whistle-blower' clause);
- o A further panel of experts has been appointed to provide academic oversight of both the development and the implementation of the research programme as well as ensuring that the research is appropriately peer-reviewed and published.