

Industry

Your daily news feed www.coinslot.co.uk

Bad data, bad research, bad evidence: Gambling Business Group sounds a warning over more unsound research in the latest “credibility-stretching” report by the OHID

REGULATION

The recent review by the OHID into Public Health England's controversial 2021 report into the cost of gambling harms has acknowledged “the limits of the evidence available,” and yet it still produced another alarmingly unsafe review based on the very same untrustworthy data. The **Gambling Business Group** has strongly criticised the latest set of recommendations into the costing analysis and argues the debate over the cost of problem gambling deserves better than the pejorative interpretation of research currently being served up.

First, there was Public Health England's report into the economic costs of problem gambling which effectively stuck its finger in the air and conjured up a figure of £1.27bn. Then, a year later, along comes the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, a branch of the Department of Health, which took yet another look at the cost of gambling harm issue - all at the expense of the public purse.

If only London buses were as frequent, the capital's transport problems would be...well, probably in a worst state than they currently are if the OHID model on the economic costs of problem gambling was applied.

Effectively using the same tarnished and unsubstantiated data as its predecessor PHE, the new study has come up with an economic cost of between £1bn and £1.8bn.

Among those first out of the blocks to question the figures when Public Health England unveiled its study in 2021 was the Gambling Business Group which, to be fair, was somewhat numbed by the worryingly vacuous research used to determine the economic cost of £1.27bn.

If it was bad then, well, it hasn't got any better this time round with the latest report by the OHID point-



From credible to incredulous

Peter Hannibal says...

“It is time for the Government to review how taxpayers' funds are spent on blatantly biased reports like this. Until this happens there is a danger that Government Policy is being influenced by bad data, bad research or bad evidence.”

Regulus: “In short, the OHID and PHE reports provide an array of unreliable estimates of costs of unknown origin, to - in most cases - unknown entities...”

Respected analysts Regulus Partners have issued a 58 page critique of the OHID and PHE reports into the economic costs of problem gambling, drawing a line by line assessment of the data, research methodology and credibility of the two studies.

Reinforcing the criticism lodged by the Gambling Business Group, the Regulus review delivered a scathing assessment of the OHID research and its recommendations.

Regulus analysis found serious factual inaccuracies; incorrect statements were referenced on multiple pages of the OHID report - 6, 17, 22, 34, 39, 42, 64, 81, 90...; there were flaws in the data used - some highlighted by original authors of that very data; misleading references to previous research; and research referenced with no citations.

In all, the report proved itself as untrustworthy as the earlier document issued by Public Health England, but worse still, Regulus found no evidence or record (following a FOI) of the Expert Group ever having met to discuss the report or its findings?

ing in a very similar financial direction - offering up a margin of between 20pc less than the first study - to 50pc more.

That's an extremely wide range with an even wider lack of precision.

Navigating its way around the latest problem gambling cost estimate has, for the Gambling Business Group, been even more mystifying. The maze of unsubstantiated data has led the body to criticise the “blatantly biased” publication for its potential to influence government policy.

Though the OHID report into the economic and social costs of gambling harms acknowledges “the limits of the evidence available,” the review makes a series of recommendations likely to impact both the upcoming White Paper and future legislation.

“Rather than come clean about the manufactured nature of the [PHE] report's estimate of £1.27bn of annual costs, OHID has doubled down - alleging instead that costs were now likely to fall within a credibility-stretching range of £1bn to £1.8bn a year,” said Peter Hannibal, CEO of the Gambling Business Group.

“It changed its estimate of the number of suicides per year “associated with problem gambling only” from 409 to a range of 117 to 496 (with revised costs flexing between £241m

and £962m). The OHID report also now includes a new cost of depression category, previously unseen.”

Noting that the Gambling Commission had recognised PHE's 2021 assessment was “seemingly inaccurate” in its own unpublished review, and that “the reality is that reliable data does not exist,” Hannibal expressed his hope that the Commission “will similarly dismiss the credibility of this new report without the need for a FOI request.”

In its review, the OHID defended its presentation of a range of values for the links between gambling and harms as the advice of its expert panel, stating “the range reflects the limits of the evidence available as well as the sensitivity of the costs to the number of deaths by suicide.”

It added that “most of the evidence has not attempted to or not been able to establish causal links between gambling and harms.”

Citing the potential impact of the review during a time of regulatory upheaval, Hannibal said: “It is time for the Government to review how taxpayers' funds are spent on blatantly biased reports like this. Until this happens there is a danger that Government Policy is being influenced by bad data, bad research or bad evidence, whether intentional or not.”