

Gambling Business Group launches 'fact checking' initiative in face of 'highly questionable' research

DATA

As the industry prepares to engage in the post White Paper consultation process the **Gambling Business Group** is concerned that poor quality research will impact the integrity of gambling policy, so much so that it has launched a fact checking programme to protect the industry from unreliable data - some of which it argues has been supported by funding from voluntary settlements.

As part of its pursuit of objective, transparent and robust research the Gambling Business Group has announced the launch of a 'fact checking' initiative to protect members and the industry at large from what Chief Executive Peter Hannibal described as 'a damaging combination of mis and disinformation' some of which he claims has been approved with funding from voluntary settlements.

Long-time advocates of research transparency the GBG alongside Dan Waugh of Regulus Partners last year exposed the fundamental fault-lines in the Public Health England claim that "409 suicides a year were associated with problem gambling only".

The GBG/Regulus analysis highlighted the fact that the data was a crude extrapolation taken from a small sample of people receiving treatment for gambling disorder in Sweden, something which the researchers had expressly warned against doing.

Taking-up the story Peter Hannibal argued that this was far from being a one-off. He said: "The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities ('OHID') subsequently published a review of the 2021 report by Public Health England, a review which turned out to be an equally crude attempt to estimate the costs of harmful gambling.

"Our contention is that someone in a position of authority should have been reviewing the output and sense-checking it prior to publication."

He continued: "Rewind to summer 2022 and the publica-



tion of '10 questions to ask if you are scrutinising gambling harm' by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (the 'CfGS')

"This was funded from voluntary settlements agreed by the Gambling Commission and aimed at Local Authorities. The Regulus Partners evaluation raised a number of questions: firstly, should the regulator be involved with the dissemination of what we believe to be misleading information about the market it regulates?

"Secondly, should it be encouraging local licensing authorities to impose market restrictions on the basis of misinformation? We are pleased to report that since the GBG brought this to the attention of the Gambling Commission the document has been removed from the CfGS's website."

The most recent body of work to have provoked Hannibal's ire is the report by The National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) entitled 'The Fiscal Costs and Benefits of Problem Gambling: Towards Better Estimates'.

Peter Hannibal has written to Gambling Commission Chief Executive Andrew

Rhodes requesting a meeting in order to discuss a critique produced by Regulus Partners which dismantles the NIESR report. Describing it as another questionable piece of work funded from voluntary settlements Peter Hannibal explained in his correspondence: "We support the Commission in its ambition to be 'authoritative, trusted and impartial'. In order to achieve this aim, it is imperative that we are able to discuss - openly and constructively - how research is undertaken. We therefore request a meeting at your earliest convenience in either Birmingham or London to discuss our shared ambition and our present concerns".

He warned: "With the White Paper now thankfully published, it is critical that the ensuing changes and consultations are informed by robust and factual evidence. The Gambling Business Group's wide range of members are understandably very concerned about the apparent bias in these documents and of the risk that such research will detrimentally affect the quality of gambling policy, regulation changes and the protection of the vulnerable."

Bad research leads to bad decisions

Peter Hannibal says...
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