GBG urges parliamentary group to join its fight to unlock funds already raised for care charities, now

LEVY FUNDS

The **Gambling Business Group** has been a lone voice in championing the cause for funds to be released immediately to third sector charities to keep support going for those with gambling harm. Money has been released, but only drip by drip, forcing important works to be suspended and even shut down. The GBG has stepped up its campaign and called on politicians from the APPG for Gambling Reform to join its battle and get the funds already raised by the industry flowing to gambling care charities.

With all the noise from campaigning MPs about kicking gambling operations off the high streets, not one of them has acknowledged the desperate plight of the third sector charities who are losing access to funding and fear for their ability to treat and support those with gambling harms.

Odd, considering the people being supported by these charities are the most important component of the Statutory Levy.

The only voice that has been sounding the warning of the financial dangers faced by these charities is not the vocal MPs, councillors and mayors, who have all made a big noise in their local newspapers and signing letters to the Prime Minister; no, they haven't done anything about the failings to get money out of the GambleAware bank account and into the hands of the gambling harm support charities.

The solitary voice that's fighting this cause will surprise every one of those politicos: it's the Gambling Business Group.

And the industry trade body has now written to Sir Iain Duncan Smith, chair of the APPG on Gambling Reform, to raise the issue and urge him and his colleagues to join the GBG in getting the funds unlocked and released to gambling care charities immediately.

Peter Hannibal, chief executive of the GBG, was in robust mood when asked about the issue.

"We have been raising this problem with DCMS, the Gambling Commission and the APPG for some time now: the poor transitional arrangements in delivering the Statutory Levy funds has caused a lack of clarity around continuity of funding to existing essential support services. This situation is putting the vulnerable people who are dependent upon this support at serious risk of further harm," he told Coinslot.

And his team has been engaged in discussions with a number of charities about the future of their work. The responses have been grim.

It is already known that numerous charities haven't received promised funding and are now closing treatment services for those facing gambling harm issues.

In his letter to Sir Iain Duncan Smith, Hannibal stressed the point. "We wanted to draw your attention to an article published this week which summarises the dire situation facing the problem gambling charities that have long provided support to those in need.

"I am sure you are equally as distraught as we are that this essential element of the player protection framework that was worked well under the voluntary levy is now in such disarray."

And the headlines say it all: "Multiple UK gambling charities on brink of collapse amid statutory levy disarray"; "UK Statutory Levy Sparks Fears for Gambling Harm Charities"; "A number of Gambling Harm Charities are Under Threat".

And these headlines are just from the last few days - but not from the nationals or the local press. They're all from gaming and gambling industry publications and sites.

The pressure to solve the plight of getting the money to gambling harm charities who are still not receiving and possibly losing funding is coming from the industry - alone. Which goes against the narrative, don't you think?

"It's not the narrative that's worrying me at the moment," Hannibal said. "It's the consequences that the indifference of those stakeholders governing the financial support of the third sector charities is having on the people we are trying to provide support for. It's a shameful situation. There were funds of around £30 million to be allocated to these works for the current year prior to the launch of the Levy - this money is not flowing to many third sector charities at all; and for the others, it's flowing far too slowly."

Which is why the Gambling Business Group is trying to engage the APPG. In the letter to IDS, Hannibal closed: "With the implementation of the Levy being a core focus of the APPG, we are interested to know what actions you have taken in holding the Government to account to prevent this situation from happening, and what you intend to do to ensure that the vulnerable continue to be supported and protected through this critical transition to the new Levy funding structure?"

And he stretched out the hand of collaboration: "If we can be of assistance in your endeavours, then please let me know."

The initial reception from the APPG chair has been warm. Welcoming the intent of the Levy, IDS confirmed: "We fully recognise the challenges involved and share your concerns. These insights are valuable in our ongoing efforts, please be assured that we are actively engaged in efforts to support a smooth and effective transition."

Which leaves the question, what are you going to do about it?

"The effectiveness of the Statutory Levy and its implementation will be a core element in our deliberations and will inform our recommendations to the Government," Sir Iain Duncan Smith responded.

We clearly have a meeting of minds; just a difference over timings. The GBG is urging for action to solve the pressures faced by the gambling harm charities now.

Failing that, Hannibal has warned: "We are going to lose a lot of charities that do great work. It cannot just be the industry fighting the cause for the third sector. They need the government and the Gambling Commission to act now."

Breaking News: UDC's latest launch hits the headlines

Barcelona recently, attracting significant attention from visitors and buyers during the show.

The booth's premise, the company notes, "is simple, choose from one of the customised templates which offer various different magazine, newspaper or poster style frames and pose for your picture to be taken."

And the concept is undoubtedly popular. In seconds, a large printout is making its way out of the machine and into the poser's waiting hands.

"It utilises a fast and effective

monochrome laser A3 printer and regular paper - no special films, inks or paper are required - to keep operating costs to a minimum," explained UDC. And it comes with customised options: operators can have the templates customised to their venue so that visitors can pose for and print off a memento of their day out or visit to your attraction or location.

It also provides options for payment by card, for example via Nayax, and/or cash the machine small form factor will fit virtually anywhere.