
PRESS STATEMENT

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Responsible Gambling Trust response to article in The Independent

The Independent has today published an article which makes very serious allegations against the Responsible Gambling Trust's Director of Commissioning (Treatment and Harm Prevention).

We are extremely concerned that The Independent published this story after being explicitly informed yesterday afternoon that her role is to commission only the £4 million annual programme of treatment we provide for problem gamblers. She is not responsible for commissioning the research we fund which is managed directly by our Chief Executive. Decisions to commission research are the responsibility of our eminent Research Committee, a sub-committee of the board of trustees which deliberately excludes any trustees with interests in the gambling industry to guarantee its independence. The Research Committee also includes observers from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, the Gambling Commission and the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board.

Publishing the article without fully setting out our defence to these damaging accusations demonstrates a significant lack of journalistic integrity. The Independent has lazily printed allegations made by a campaign group lobbying against certain sectors of the gambling industry and decided not to allow the facts to stand in the way of the story. In doing so, they have impugned the reputation of not only a valued and committed member of our staff, but also the reputations of the trustees on the Research Committee who are legally accountable for all commissioning decisions.

Dr Jane Rigbye is a highly respected and qualified individual who did her Ph.D in the area of gambling related harm. Her relationship to Dr Jonathan Parke, another highly respected specialist in this area, was well known to RGT and fully disclosed. There is a very limited field of experts in this area and the Trust was keen to tap into the unique skills provided by Jane and Jonathan. Proper governance processes were put in place to ensure that there was no conflict of interest. There can be absolutely no question of any wrongdoing by either Jane or Jonathan.

RGT will vigorously defend the reputation of its staff and trustees from such unfounded attacks using every available opportunity for redress.

Campaigners are seeking to undermine RGT and all its good work because the outcome of our high quality research did not say what they wanted it to say: A case of "shoot the messenger". In

no article has anyone actually considered the research or sought to analyse its findings or to prove any bias. No-one has produced proof that the research is flawed and biased.

We appreciate how strongly those who campaign against FOBTs feel, and our ongoing programme of research into all forms of gambling-related harm will inform the debate and allow for evidence-based decisions. We continue to deliver the research agenda set independently by Responsible Gambling Strategy Board without fear or favour, and will not be deflected by intimidatory and personal attacks.

-ENDS-

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NOTES TO EDITORS

- The Responsible Gambling Trust 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, the Responsible Gambling Trust 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.
- The Responsible Gambling Trust raises a minimum of £5million each year from the gambling industry operating in Britain within a voluntary (donation based) system and funds research, education, prevention and treatment services. Funding priorities are guided by the national strategy advised by the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board (RGSB) and endorsed by the Gambling Commission. The latest strategy was published in December 2012.