
PRESS STATEMENT

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Betting industry to open up machine data for independent evaluation by PricewaterhouseCoopers

The Responsible Gambling Trust (RGT) has commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to evaluate independently a recent betting industry initiative – Player Awareness Systems (PAS) – designed to help people avoid gambling-related harm when using gaming machines in licensed betting offices.

Independent research commissioned and published in December 2014 by RGT showed for the first time that it is possible to distinguish between problem and non-problem gambling behaviour on machines. In response to this finding, betting industry operators have deployed PAS across the whole UK betting estate, using a variety of analytical algorithms to provide alerts and appropriate interventions for customers showing signs of problem play.

To evaluate the ongoing implementation of these systems, RGT’s independent Research Committee (which includes only those RGT trustees who are wholly independent of the gambling industry) ran an open, competitive tender process in February 2016.

As a result of their appointment, PwC will:

- understand the systems and controls designed in order to implement PAS.
- have full access to machine data and the algorithms being used to identify problematic behaviour in order to understand whether the systems have been implemented as described.
- observe the PAS controls operated within Licensed Betting Offices in order to aid in understanding their operation.
- share observations, findings and best practice.
- submit their report to RGT for academic peer review this summer, prior to publication.

Marc Etches, Chief Executive of the Responsible Gambling Trust, said:

“When RGT published independent research into machine gambling in December 2014, we hoped to see a positive and a coherent policy response from the gambling industry. We look forward to analysing the insights from PwC’s evaluation and encouraging the lessons it highlights to be applied across the industry.”

Mark Jordan, lead partner for PwC said:

“At PwC helping the community is part of our core values. We are proud of the work that we do both voluntarily and professionally with charities, social enterprises and the social investment sector around the country. To ensure the future success of the PAS initiative, it is critical to have an understanding of the different approaches designed and implemented at this early stage.”

Malcolm George, Chief Executive of the ABB said:

“PAS marks a significant step forward in the continued development of the harm minimisation measures available in betting shops by allowing for earlier interactions with customers who may be at risk, before they are displaying overt signs of harm. This evaluation will help ensure that we are able to build on this progress on the basis of evidence and continue to improve the existing PAS systems on machines. We hope that the lessons learnt from this initiative can eventually be transferred into other areas of player protection within shops and this evaluation is an important first step.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

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- 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. Click here to find out more: <http://www.responsiblegamblingtrust.org.uk/>
- The Responsible Gambling Trust raises over £6.5 million each year in voluntary contributions from the gambling industry operating in Great Britain. This donation based system was proposed under the Gambling Act 2005 and is prescribed by the Gambling Commission in its Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice.
- The Responsible Gambling Trust ran an open and competitive tender process inviting proposals from organisations with the relevant expertise and experience. After a rigorous selection process, PwC has been commissioned to undertake the research.
- The Player Awareness Systems (PAS) initiative was developed during 2015 by an ABB-led working group that included representatives of Coral, Ladbrokes, Paddy Power, William Hill and machine manufacturers SG and Inspired (on behalf of independent bookmakers) with the UK Gambling Commission as an observer.

How PAS works

- Systems analyse the behaviour of those playing on gaming machines when they are logged in to a customer account
- Customer behaviour is then assessed against a range of markers of problem gambling
- Alerts (via text, email, or on-screen) can subsequently be sent to players. These include signposting to responsible gambling tools such as setting limits on machines or self-exclusion, and directing customers towards the National Gambling Helpline / gambleaware.co.uk or to speak to a member of staff
- PAS encourages customers to think about how they are gambling. Continued problematic play may result in direct interaction from a member of staff
- Currently, a variety of analytical algorithms are being used by member companies which will ultimately lead to more effective processes for each operator as best practice and learnings are shared