Public Mental Health Learning Community Learning Set

Welcome, and thank you for joining today's event!

Our speakers today include:



Dr Megan Watkins
Head of Public Mental Health Implementation Centre (PMHIC)



Dr May van Schalkwyk
Research Fellow in Commercial Determinants of Health, University of Edinburgh

RC PSYCH ROYAL COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS

Public Mental Health Implementation Centre

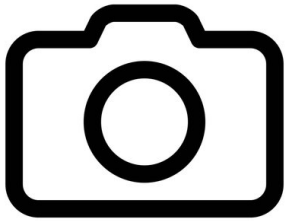
Housekeeping points before we get started



Recording the session



If not speaking, please mute

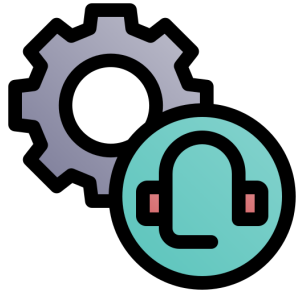


Camera on please, if comfortable to



Please ask Questions

- Raise your hand
- Use the chat function



Tech issues, please contact public.MH@rcpsych.ac.uk

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Shared principles



Listen with respect and openness

We seek to value learning from different people and stay open to new ways of doing things.



Confidentiality

People may share something they wish to be kept confidential. We require everyone's agreement not to share anyone's information without their permission.



Collaborate

We seek to make decisions by consensus. Everyone's input is **equally** valued.

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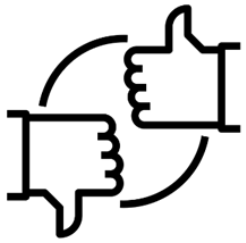
Public Mental Health Implementation Centre

Shared principles



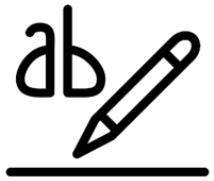
Contribute

We seek to share ideas, ask questions and contribute to discussions. We can also choose not participate at any stage.



Disagree with the point - not the person

We seek to resolve conflicts and tensions.



Use plain language

We seek first to understand, then to be understood. If possible, avoid using jargon and explain acronyms if they must be used.

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Today's agenda

Time	Speaker	Affiliation	Topic
14:00 – 14:15	Dr Megan Watkins	Head of Public Mental Health Implementation Centre (PMHIC)	Welcome and introductions
14:15 – 14:45	Dr May van Schalkwyk	Research Fellow in Commercial Determinants of Health, University of Edinburgh	UK Gambling Policy and recent developments in this area from a commercial determinant of health perspective Followed by Q&A
14:45 – 15:00	Dr Megan Watkins	Head of Public Mental Health Implementation Centre (PMHIC)	Thank you and closing remarks

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Understanding the gambling industry as a commercial determinant of health

Dr May van Schalkwyk

Research Fellow | Commercial Determinants of Health, University of Edinburgh

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Understanding the gambling industry as a commercial determinant of health

PMH Learning Community Workshop
Monday 26 October, 2pm – 3pm

Dr May van Schalkwyk,
Senior Clinical Research Fellow,
Usher Institute and Centre for Pesticide Suicide Prevention, University of Edinburgh

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH | usher institute
"Better health, better futures"

Centre for PESTICIDE SUICIDE PREVENTION

Commercial determinants of health

"the systems, practices, and pathways through which commercial actors drive health and equity"

Gilmore, A et al. The Lancet, Volume 401, Issue 10383, 1194 - 1213





Cassidy, Rebecca. *Vicious Games: Capitalism and Gambling*. London: Pluto Press, 2020.

Understanding the gambling industry as a commercial determinant of health & equity

PRODUCTS

- Technologically advanced products
- High sophisticated marketing strategies
- Enable to rapid, intense gambling
- Exploit normal human cognitive biases
- Designed to keep people playing to "extinction"

PRACTICES

- Frame the problem and solutions
- Establish legitimacy as policy actor & partner
- Promote self-regulation
- Manufacture ignorance about the harms
- Shape the research agenda

Gambling Act 2005

CHAPTER 19

CONTENTS

PART 1

INTERPRETATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Principal concepts

1 The licensing objectives
2 Licensing authorities
3 Gambling
4 Remote gambling
5 Facilities for gambling

Gaming

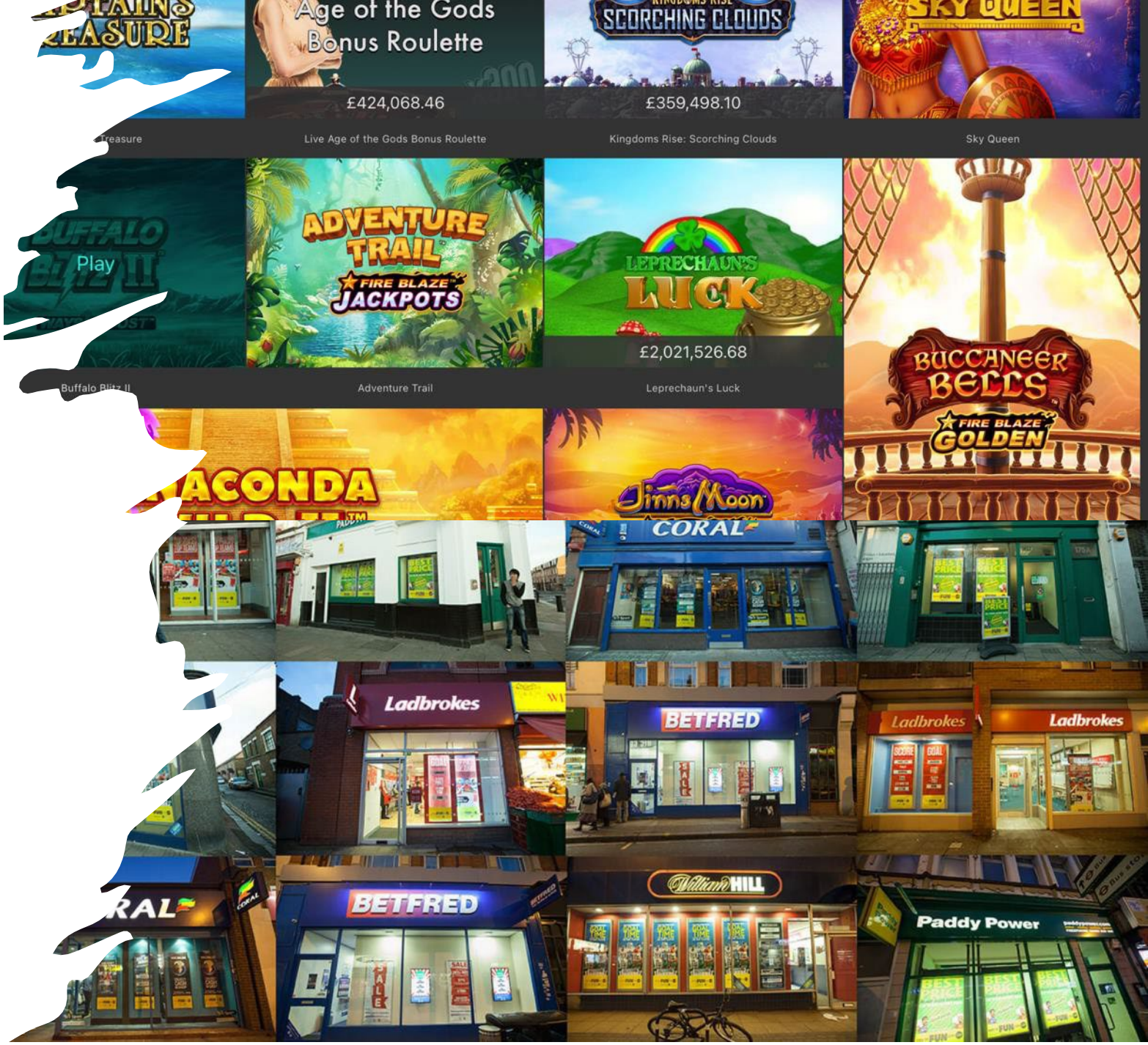
6 Gaming & game of chance
7 Casino
8 Equal chance gaming

Betting

9 Betting: general
10 Spread bets, &c.
11 Betting: prize competitions
12 Pool betting
13 Betting intermediary

Lottery

14 Lottery
15 National Lottery



Cassidy R. **Vicious Games:** Capitalism and gambling. London: Pluto Press; 2020



The Gambling Act 2005: building and embedding an industry-favourable policy system

1) **Reframed** the gambling sector as a legitimate leisure industry to be encouraged to thrive.
2) Underpinned by a logic of "**balance**".
3) Defined **"the vulnerable" as the problem** – to be addressed through public education and treatment for those who cannot or will not **gamble responsibly**.
4) Portrayed industry as a **source of funding** for research, education and treatment and as a **legitimate policy actor** who can help write the rules.

R. Cassidy. Vicious Games: Capitalism and Gambling. Pluto Press, 2020

van Schalkwyk MC, Hawkins B, Eisenkraft Klein D, Koon AD. The role of metaphor in the corporate political strategies of health harming industries: Comparing the concept of balance in the gambling and opioid industry discourses. Soc Sci Med. 2024 Sep;356:117158.

Framing the deregulatory agenda

"At the core of our proposals are improved protections. We propose an independent Gambling Commission with precisely defined objectives and a formidable array of powers.... All in all, the Commission will be a force to be reckoned with."
Rt Hon Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State's speech to the Business in Sport and Leisure annual conference, 2003

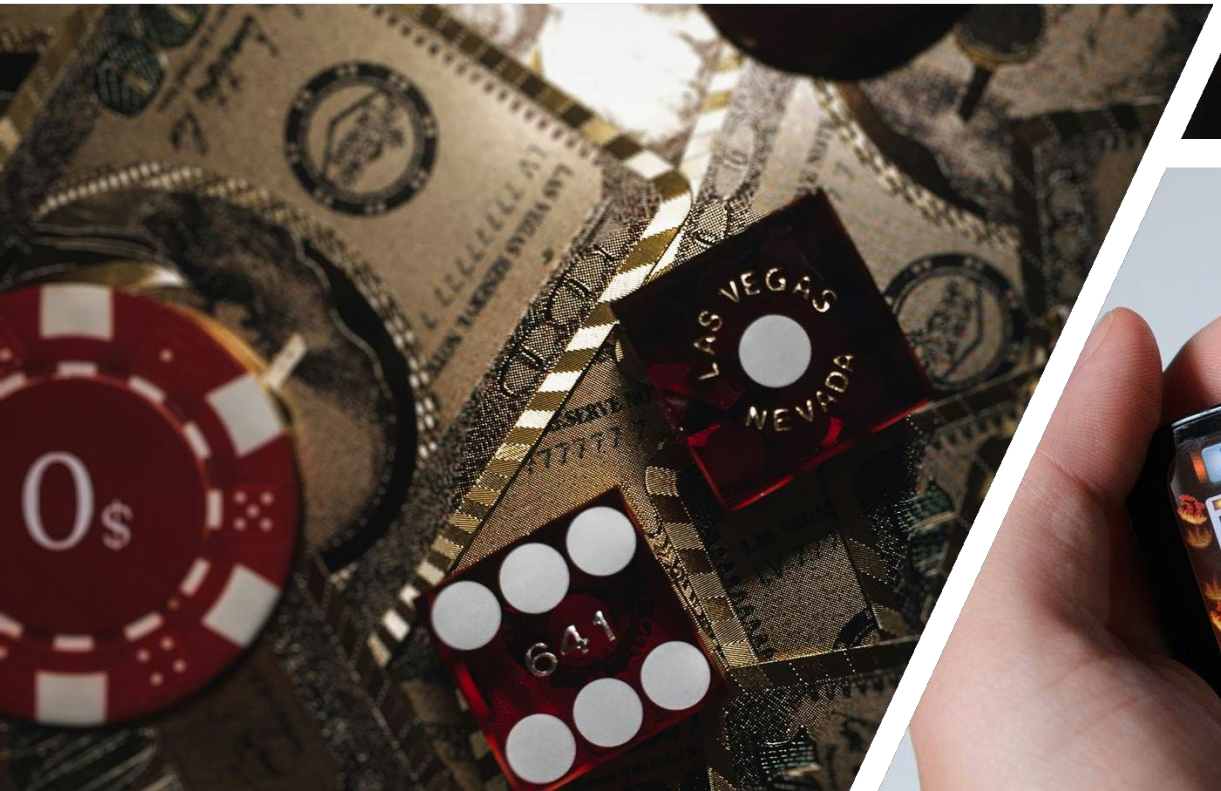
"If evidence of harm emerges through the research and monitoring that is undertaken, we will act swiftly to toughen the controls. We have powers throughout the Bill to **withdraw or move back from the liberalisation if there is evidence of harm**."
Rt Hon Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, 2004

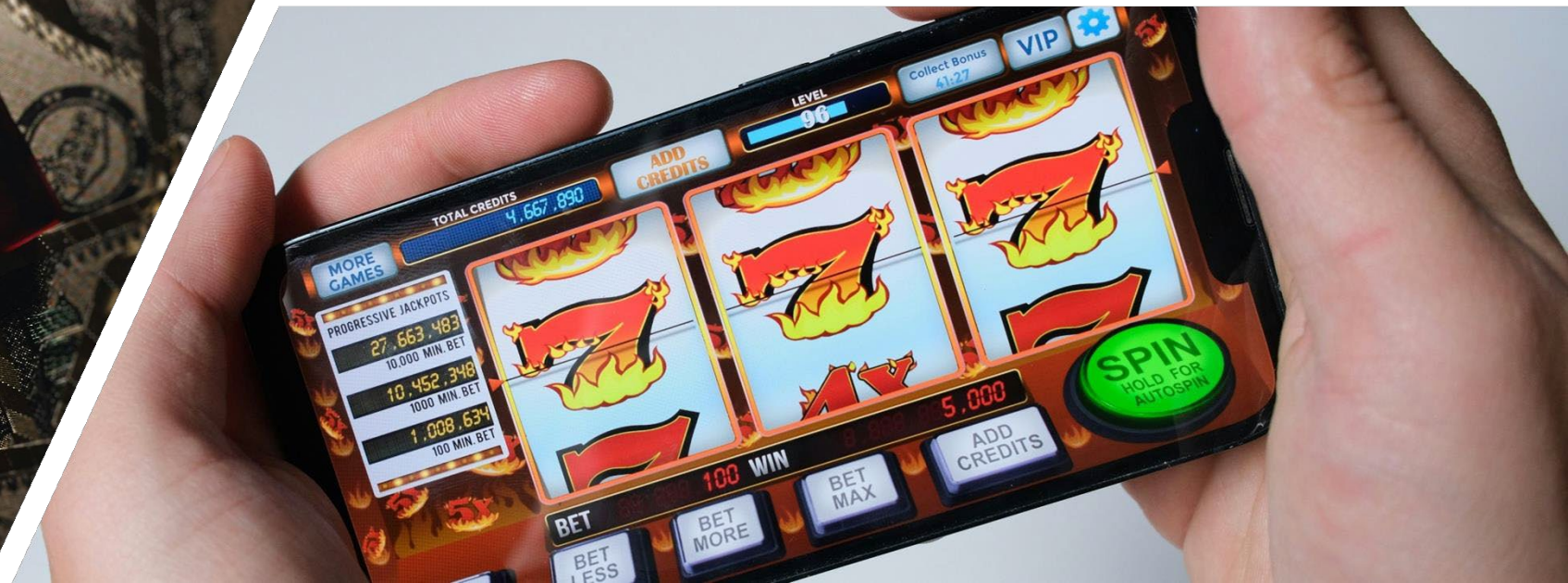





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NEVADA
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TOTAL CREDITS
4,667,890
ADD CREDITS
LEVEL
96
Collect Bonus
41:27
VIP
MORE GAMES
PROGRESSIVE JACKPOTS
27,663,483
10,000 MIN. BET
10,452,348
1000 MIN. BET
1,008,634
100 MIN. BET
5,000
SPIN
HOLD FOR AUTOSPIN
100 WIN
BET
BET MAX
ADD CREDITS
BET MORE
BET LESS



Profound transfer of wealth and power

A Frank Statement

to Cigarette Smokers

RECENT REPORTS on experiments with mice have given wide publicity to a theory that cigarette smoking is in some way linked with lung cancer in human beings.

Although conducted by doctors of professional standing, these experiments are not regarded as conclusive in the field of cancer research. However, we do not believe that any serious medical research, even though its results are inconclusive should be disregarded or lightly dismissed.

At the same time, we feel it is in the public interest to call attention to the fact that eminent doctors and research scientists have publicly questioned the claimed significance of these experiments.

Distinguished authorities point out:

1. That medical research of recent years indicates many possible causes of lung cancer.
2. That there is no agreement among the authorities regarding what the cause is.
3. That there is no proof that cigarette smoking is one of the causes.
4. That statistics purporting to link cigarette smoking with the disease could apply with equal force to any one of many other aspects of modern life. Indeed the validity of the statistics themselves is questioned by numerous scientists.

We accept an interest in people's health as a basic responsibility, paramount to every other consideration in our business.

We believe the products we make are not injurious to health.

We always have and always will cooperate closely with those whose task it is to safeguard the public health.

For more than 300 years tobacco has given solace, relaxation, and enjoyment to mankind. At one time or another during those years critics have held it responsible for practically every disease of the human body. One by one these charges have been abandoned for lack of evidence.

Regardless of the record of the past, the fact that cigarette smoking today should even be suspected as a cause of a serious disease is a matter of deep concern to us.

Many people have asked us what we are doing to meet the public's concern aroused by the recent reports. Here is the answer:

1. We are pledging aid and assistance to the research effort into all phases of tobacco use and health. This joint financial aid will of course be in addition to what is already being contributed by individual companies.
2. For this purpose we are establishing a joint industry group consisting initially of the undersigned. This group will be known as TOBACCO INDUSTRY RESEARCH COMMITTEE.
3. In charge of the research activities of the Committee will be a scientist of unimpeachable integrity and national repute. In addition there will be an Advisory Board of scientists disinterested in the cigarette industry. A group of distinguished men from medicine, science, and education will be invited to serve on this Board. These scientists will advise the Committee on its research activities.

This statement is being issued because we believe the people are entitled to know where we stand on this matter and what we intend to do about it.

TOBACCO INDUSTRY RESEARCH COMMITTEE

5400 EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, NEW YORK 1, N. Y.

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(An organization of flue-cured tobacco growers)
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J. W. Peterson, President

86017454

Advertisement

Gambling industry responds to public concerns

Every day, millions of us place a bet – a freedom that should be enjoyed safely and responsibly.

As leading gambling companies, we have a responsibility to the communities where we operate – offering fun and entertainment for the majority while protecting the vulnerable, especially young people.

Recently concerns about gambling have grown – particularly because of the tone of some of the advertising of betting on TV at times when children may be watching. We are therefore announcing some important changes.

From 1 October:

- We will introduce a voluntary TV advertising ban on sign-up offers (free bets and free money) before 9pm
- We will withdraw all advertising of gaming machines from betting shop windows
- We will commit 20% of shop window advertising to responsible gambling messages

From the start of next year:

- We will fund a major new advertising campaign to educate people on responsible gambling
- All TV advertising will carry more prominent responsible gambling messages
- To increase public confidence, a new body, the Senet Group, chaired by an independent Standards Commissioner, will hold us to account

These undertakings come today from the four of us, but we know that across the industry many others have high standards in their commitment to responsible gambling, and we invite them to join us.

We are listening to what you say and will continue to work constructively with the Government and the Regulator to improve standards of player protection.

James Henderson
Chief Executive Officer
William Hill PLC

Richard Glynn
Chief Executive Officer
Ladbrokes PLC

Carl Leaver
Group Chief Executive
Gala Coral

Patrick Kennedy
Chief Executive Officer
Paddy Power PLC

www.senetgroup.org.uk

THE SENET GROUP

van Schalkwyk M C I, Hawkins B, Cassidy R, Collin J, Gilmore A B, Petticrew M. Learning from tobacco control to tackle gambling industry harms *BMJ* 2025; 388 :e082866 doi:10.1136/bmj-2024-082866

Promoting the idea of the “Problem Gambler”

> *Some people have difficulty gambling responsibly, just as others are prone to misuse credit cards or drive recklessly.* **The problem is not in the products they abuse, but within the individuals.**

Stewart, David. 2010. “Demystifying Slot Machines and Their Impact in the United States.” American Gaming Association White Paper. americangaming.org/industry-resources/research/white-papers



THE SENET GROUP

PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING STANDARDS







van Schalkwyk MC, Maani N, McKee M, Thomas S, Knai C, Petticrew M. "When the Fun Stops, Stop": An analysis of the provenance, framing and evidence of a 'responsible gambling' campaign. *PLOS ONE* 2021; **16**(8): e0255145.


Youth education



Health Promotion International, 2024, **39**, 1–12
https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daad196
Article

OXFORD

Article

Agnogenic practices and corporate political strategy: the legitimation of UK gambling industry-funded youth education programmes

May C. I. van Schalkwyk[1,*], Benjamin Hawkins[2], Mark Petticrew[3], Nason Maani[4], Amandine Garde[5], Aaron Reeves[6], and Martin McKee[1]

Constructing **reassuring narratives** about safeguarding children and young people from gambling harms and **producing ignorance** about evidence and effectiveness

van Schalkwyk MCI, Hawkins B, Petticrew M. The politics and fantasy of the gambling education discourse: An analysis of gambling industry-funded youth education programmes in the United Kingdom. SSM Popul Health. 2022 May 12;18:101122. doi: 10.1016/j.ssmph.2022.101122. PMID: 35637741; PMCID: PMC9142715.

van Schalkwyk MCI, Hawkins B, Petticrew M, Maani N, Garde A, Reeves A, McKee M. Agnogenic practices and corporate political strategy: the legitimation of UK gambling industry-funded youth education programmes. Health Promot Int. 2024 Feb 1;39(1):daad196. doi: 10.1093/heapro/daad196. PMID: 38234277; PMCID: PMC10794875.

What is measured, how and who benefits?

1) The concept of problem gambling and use of problem gambling prevalence surveys
2) Deeply problematic from a public health perspective
3) Help to reproduce industry-favourable framing of the problem
4) Maintains ignorance about the scale and types of harm being experienced



Fair Game:
Producing gambling research

The Goldsmiths Report

R. Cassidy, C. Loussouarn, A. Pisac



European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

Goldsmiths

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON





At the heart of our Review is making sure that we have **the balance right between consumer freedoms and choice on the one hand, and protection from harm on the other.** It has become clear that we must do more to protect **those at risk of addiction and associated unaffordable losses.**

This can and should be done in a **proportionate** way. **Millions of us enjoy gambling every year** and most suffer no ill effects, so state intervention **must be targeted to prevent addictive and harmful gambling.**

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-stakes-gambling-reform-for-the-digital-age/high-stakes-gambling-reform-for-the-digital-age

DCMS Minister Gerry Sutcliffe said:

"The gambling industry has a responsibility to make the right level of **funding available to treat those who are harmed by its products**. And we owe it to the public to make sure that they have ready access to the facts that they need to make informed choices about gambling, to help reduce the risks."

DEPARTMENT FOR CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT News Release (106/07) issued by The Government News Network on 19 September 2007

https://www.wired-gov.net/wg/wg-news-1.nsf/0/D25E467A0A1CFF508025735B0030019F?OpenDocument

"No one should be denied an innocent flutter, but **the public should not have to bear the cost of treatment when a punter becomes an addict.** One important element that will be introduced—backed by campaigners and also by many in the House—is a statutory levy to turn the tables on problem gambling, requiring gambling companies to **fund more** groundbreaking research, education and treatment."

Lucy Frazer, The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport
Gambling Act Review White Paper
Volume 731: debated on Thursday 27 April 2023
https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2023-04-27/debates/3AD440A0-366B-4F33-9BBC-63F62F5CB608/GamblingActReviewWhitePaper

“The levy aims to deliver a sustainable and equitable **funding system** for research, prevention and treatment of gambling-related harm. For the first time, the statutory levy **guarantees increased, ringfenced, and trusted funding** to be used across Great Britain for treatment, but also to tackle the sources of gambling harm through vital investment in research and prevention.”

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-gambling-levy



“Prevention of gambling harm will remain unachievable until the gambling industry is recognised as a corporate vector of harm and effective measures are taken to restrict both its influence on policy and science, and its marketing and communications with the public.”

van Schalkwyk M C I, Hawkins B, Cassidy R, Collin J, Gilmore A B, Petticrew M. Learning from tobacco control to tackle gambling industry harms *BMJ* 2025; 388 :e082866 doi:10.1136/bmj-2024-082866

Why do we tolerate the activities of the gambling industry?

May CI van Schalkwyk[a,b,*], Rebecca Cassidy[c]

[a] Global Health Policy Unit School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, EH8 9LD, United Kingdom
[b] Centre for Pesticide Suicide Prevention, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, EH16 4TJ, United Kingdom
[c] Department of Anthropology, Goldsmiths University, London, SE14 6NW, United Kingdom

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Commercial determinants of health
Gambling industry
Conflicts of interest
Public health
Health policy

ABSTRACT

This article explains how gambling policy in the UK perpetuates exceptionalism by, among other things, promoting a way of understanding the drivers of gambling harm that is highly favourable to the interests of the industry and its political allies. It argues that this exceptionalism should come to an end, that completely transformative ways of thinking about this industry are possible, and considers what that would mean for gambling legislation and research. This is achieved by taking the reader on a reflective journey that involves stepping back and critiquing the taken for granted by posing a set of thought-provoking rhetorical questions. In order to support the case against exceptionalism, the article makes illuminating comparisons between gambling and other industries.

Introduction

The gambling industry behaves like the tobacco industry and its products cause serious harm, but it is treated as a valued part of UK plc.[1] As public health legislation of smoking, alcohol and other harmful products is increasingly accepted, why does gambling remain the exception that proves the rule? Why have we been encouraged to see the sector as the supplier of fun and those who are harmed by its products as faulty? Why are inherently unsafe products marketed by the industry not banned? And finally, why is it so difficult to convince policy makers that other ways of thinking about this industry are possible and that a shift in understanding is fundamental to preventing gambling harm?

UK policy has stimulated the creation and growth of a multi-billion-pound regulated gambling industry that profits disproportionately from those experiencing harm.[1,2] The industry has influenced research, education and treatment through the funding structures set in place by government and operates within regulatory structures based on an industry-written code of conduct.[1] The industry is not held to account –it assesses the impact of its own marketing strategies and writes its own health warnings.[1,3] From a public health perspective, this situation is extraordinary. In this contribution, we reflect briefly on exceptionalism and how it is maintained before looking forwards and considering what approaches we might use to support change, including greater openness to comparisons with other industries.

Contingent paths

One of the reasons that we have found this situation so difficult to challenge is that the dominant position, which frames gambling as a legitimate leisure activity and an important part of UK plc, is presented as inevitable and therefore beyond criticism. The first step towards ending the exceptionalism of gambling is to recognise that the situation in which we find ourselves is contingent: the outcome of interlocking political decisions. To design policy that protects public health, it is first necessary to interrogate the existing system by asking basic questions, including:

1) Who decides the purpose of gambling regulation and whose interests does it serve? The public? The government? The industry?
2) Who gets to define who or what is the problem when it comes to gambling harm, using what expertise and evidence?
3) Who is designing gambling products and their underpinning algorithms, and what scrutiny is applied to their practices?

Perspectives which fail to ask these basic questions and deny or overlook the political origins of the current system do not allow for the possibility of real change, because they place the *status quo* outside criticism, in the realm of common sense or the inevitable. This is where anthropological approaches can be useful. Comparisons through time and space demonstrate that gambling policy and regulation (including how harm is conceptualised and who is to blame) are not based on universal laws,



https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/1122470127



PRESS RELEASE | 10 DOWNING STREET | 11 AUGUST 2026

The Prime Minister intends to scrap the Gambling Act's "Aim to Permit" rule

The 2005 rule stops councils refusing new betting shops and 24-hour slot machine shops, even where **local concern is strong**.

Councils can refuse new betting shops

Revoking the rule gives councils and communities a stronger say over whether to permit a betting shop and stops them spreading unchecked.

Gaming centres will need planning permission

Adult-only venues with up to 24-hour slot and fruit machines currently open under the same rules as coffee shops. Permission will be required from early 2027.

Gambling venues cluster in deprived areas

Brent has more than 80 gambling venues; in Harlesden, 10 betting shops sit within a 10-minute walk of each other.

Source: Prime Minister's Office, 11 August 2026. www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-vows-to-save-hollowed-out-high-streets-with-crackdown-on-vape-and-betting-shops

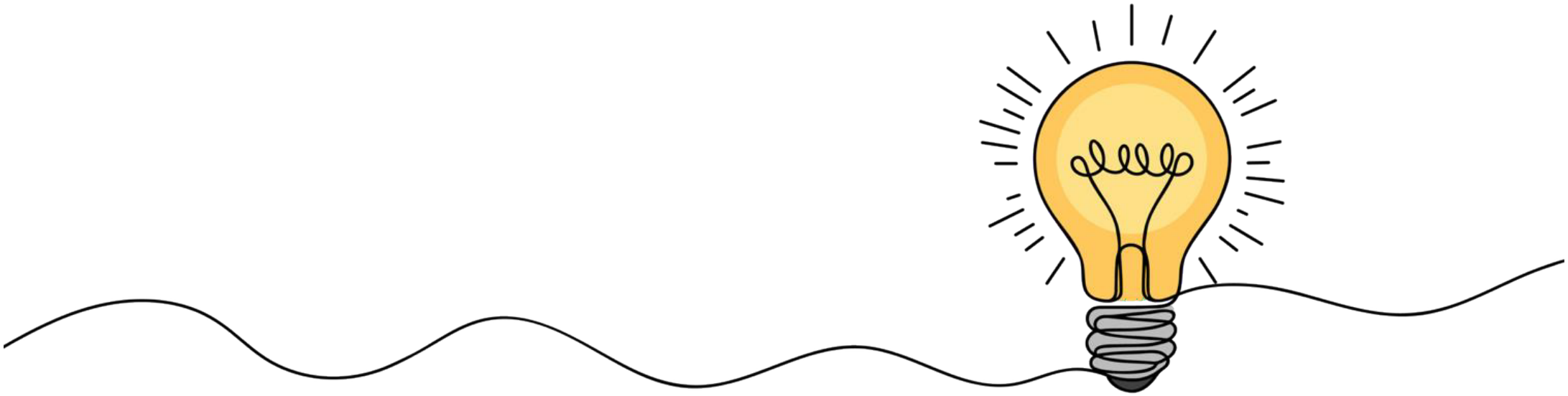
Main messages:

The gambling industry is a **powerful** but often **neglected commercial determinant of health and equity**

Preventing gambling harm requires **policies** that address both the industry's **products and practices**

Strong **systems of governance** to prevent **conflicts of interest and manage engagement** with the industry

Reframing of the problem and necessary solutions





may.vanschalkwyk@ed.ac.uk



Questions from the audience

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Public Mental Health Implementation Centre

Thank you and closing remarks

Dr Megan Watkins

Head of PMHIC

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Public Mental Health Implementation Centre

Upcoming Events

- **Learning Set (virtual)**
  25th November 2026 (Wednesday) at 10am

If you would like to share your experiences of public mental health practice, including challenges and best practice at one of our future events, please email us at

public.mh@rcpsych.ac.uk

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PMHIC Blog Series: Perspectives on public mental health

Aims to highlight the voices of public health experts, promote public mental health as an intrinsic part of psychiatry, and support College members and the wider public

Authors/co-authors are invited to write blog posts that address current and relevant topics in public mental health

Format – co-produced and including a call to action that encourages reader engagement



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How did you find today's event?

We value your feedback as this helps us to continue to improve these events and ensure topics covered are meaningful and relevant to you and your work

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