



Embargoed for: 00:01hrs, Tuesday, July 27, 2004

GamCare Response to the Underage Internet Gambling Study

“GamCare calling for a network of shared responsibility”

GamCare is certainly concerned with the findings from the underage study that showed only 7 out of 37 sites were able to effectively block access from a 16 year old with a debit card.

Whilst in general GamCare has been pleased with the progress made with key sectors of the UK industry in addressing social responsibility, there is still some way to go for the majority of sites, especially when it comes to the effective blocking of underage play. A number of gambling operators have been able to implement age verification processes successfully so there is no reason why others cannot do the same.

Michael Smeaton, GamCare's Remote gambling Specialist states, *“Whilst the implementation of age verification systems will be a requirement within the future gambling regulations, the fact is that children are already accessing gambling opportunities on the Internet, and GamCare has been made aware of several cases recently. Age and ID verification should be a priority now, as this should not really be able to happen within a UK or offshore, regulated industry.”*

As well as highlighting this issue to the gambling industry, GamCare feels that this study has also been important in order to raise awareness of these risks within society. Children and Internet safety has been a major talking point over the last couple of years especially with the risks surrounding chat rooms and access to adult material. However up till now gambling has always been over-looked, yet is now one of the most advertised products on the Internet, and children are more and more likely to be exposed to gambling opportunities and 'play for free' products that exist on many gambling sites.

Andrew Poole, GamCare's Young Persons Education Officer says *“This study clearly shows the need for greater appreciation of the part we can all play in protecting young people from potential harm through gambling. This isn't just about the UK gambling industry adopting more effective systems for age verification, it is imperative that we work with others to develop a network of shared responsibility. As we approach new legislation we recognise that gambling companies are moving forward proactively. However, amongst others, we also need to see parents and education professionals acknowledging the part they can play in developing awareness of the dangers of gambling addiction and in protecting children. We have seen clear parental concern in the past surrounding underage access to adult content on the Internet and online gambling should be should be treated no differently.*



GamCare also feel that more could be done by other sectors of the industry that are involved in some way with Internet, Interactive and Wireless gambling. *“Whilst companies such as Sky Interactive and Vodafone acknowledge the risks from remote gambling and work hard to address these issues, others need to follow suit”* stated Michael Smeaton. He goes on to say, *“ISP’s and organisations that partner with Internet gambling organisations to offer gambling opportunities, should certainly be looking at their policies on how they promote their third party gambling operators, placement of gambling links and advertising within their portal and how effective their partners are at blocking underage access.”*

GamCare has been concerned recently about some ISPs and websites with regards to the placement of gambling advertisements and the advertising of gambling within ‘Games’ portals, that children are clearly going to be attracted to.

Overall GamCare believes this study has been important and has brought to the forefront an issue that needs to be urgently addressed. As well as calling on the industry to do more, GamCare also feels that others who are in some way involved within the promotion and funding of the industry, including ISPs, Banks, websites and platform providers, should also be doing more to address this issue.

Peter Cox, Managing Director of GamCare says, *“There really needs to be an absolute joined up approach to the solution of underage play. Banks and credit/debit card companies must also throw in their committed support to ensure young people literally do not slip through the Net”*

GamCare would welcome any new measures that would improve the current situation and look forward to hopefully working with these companies in the near future to develop effective policies and practices of social responsibility and age verification.

For more on GamCare’s work in these areas please contact:

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Or visit www.gamcare.org.uk