

Former gambling addict launches Safer Online Gambling Group

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This morning, former online gambling addict David Bradford, 62, and his son, entrepreneur and social activist Adam Bradford, 26, have turned their past five tireless years of campaign work into a non-profit which will 'slash the odds' on punters becoming addicted to online gambling.

[The Safer Online Gambling Group](#) aims to raise awareness of online gambling addiction, bring about support for gambling addicts under an NHS framework and work with operators and the government to tighten up gambling policy to protect vulnerable players.

David and Adam already have meetings in the pipeline with Sky Bet and industry self exclusion scheme GAMSTOP with hopes of forming a customer-led coalition between gambling operators, customers with real life experiences and policy makers. They hope to ensure operators commit to a Safer Online Gambling Charter, which the group will also audit through user testing and discrete research.

Last week, the pair [exposed weaknesses](#) in the gambling industry's GAMSTOP self-exclusion scheme which is meant to ensure addicted players cannot gamble again if they exclude themselves. Since their investigation the Gambling Commission has promised to tighten up the scheme's loopholes.

David said: 'Online gambling became a devastating addiction for me. An addict will not know they have the problem until it's too late. Psychologically it takes you over. I was like a hamster in the hamster wheel. This work is going to become the rest of my life and I am proud to be able to turn a corner by providing a solution which will improve the lives of thousands of addicts across the country. Free bets and glamorous adverts kept me betting until there was nowhere else to go but to steal money to keep the whole facade alive. It was a desperate and unforgivable situation, I just wish help was around at the time.'

David's two youngest sons, Alex and Ryan Bradford, who were 17 when David went to jail, have spoken for the first time about the impact their father's gambling addiction had on them. In a statement released to the press, they said: 'Our dad is a very brave man. We understand he lost control of his gambling but nothing was there to help him. We fully stand by him, no matter what happens, our family is united in providing hope and a real-life experience of gambling addiction which will help others if they find themselves in trouble too.'

David hid his 30-year gambling addiction from the family, ending up in jail after stealing £50,000 from his employers. He kept his addiction and the court case secret from his family, with them only finding out about their father's problems through a report on the front page of the local newspaper. David had racked up over £500,000 of debt through payday loans, credit cards, bank loans and even remortgaging the family home. He was helplessly addicted to gambling and only now can reflect on his issues properly. The pair have campaigned nationally towards politicians, 10 Downing Street and industry operators to bring about change. They have had the support of the NHS, the Conservative Party and Labour deputy leader Tom Watson MP.

Recent achievements include work on the successful campaign to bring the Fixed Odds Betting Terminals stake down to £2 from £100 after widespread criticism of the machines and a roll out of NHS problem gambling clinics on the NHS in this year's NHS Long Term Plan.

Over 430,000 people are addicted to gambling in the UK according to the Gambling Commission and a further 2 million people are at risk. 55,000 under 16s have gambling related problems according to charity GambleAware and the rate of advertising for gambling has increased by 600% since the Gambling Act 2005 deregulated many parts of the gambling industry. Adam and David would like to see advertising reduced, robust ID and affordability checks placed on online accounts and national campaigns run to highlight gambling addiction, as well as the further rollout of national NHS gambling addiction provision.

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