Gambling addiction charity hails ban of credit cards for online betting

Tuesday 14 January, 2020

The Gambling Commission has announced a ban on gambling businesses allowing consumers in Great Britain to use credit cards to gamble.

The ban, which comes into effect on 14 April, follows the Commission's review of online gambling and the Government's Review of Gaming Machines and Social Responsibility Measures. A public consultation was carried out between August and November 2019.

24 million adults in Great Britain gamble, with 10.5 million of those gambling online. UK Finance estimate that 800,000* consumers use credit cards to gamble.

Separate research undertaken by the Commission shows that 22%** of online gamblers using credit cards to gamble are classed as problem gamblers – with even more at some risk of harm.

The ban, which will apply to all online and offline gambling products with the exception of non-remote lotteries, will provide a significant layer of additional protection to vulnerable people.

Adam Bradford, co-founder of the Safer Online Gambling Group, said: "*This is welcome news and it will provide an extra layer of support for the hundreds of thousands of people who are addicted to gambling. It has been a long time in coming and we are glad the Commission have acted decisively on this matter. The additional requirement for all online gambling websites to ensure they are signed up to blocking software GAMSTOP is also a further good move to ensure that those with a gambling problem can get help and support in a consistent way throughout the industry.*

This however is not a silver bullet to solve the problem as the gambling industry still needs to improve in many areas - for instance, performing better affordability checks on players and being more careful with its advertising. I hope the industry will react positively to today's news and continue to strive to be more responsible."

Adam set up SOGG, a non-profit organisation, with his father David, 63, who ended up spending time in jail after stealing money to fund his gambling habit. He racked up debts of over £500,000 and remortgaged the family home in secret, to pay for his spiralling online gambling addiction. The pair now campaign for tighter regulation of the industry and work with industry professionals from the NHS to gambling operators to bring about change.

Neil McArthur, Gambling Commission chief executive, today said:

"Credit card gambling can lead to significant financial harm. The ban that we have announced today should minimise the risks of harm to consumers from gambling with money they do not have.

"Research shows that 22% of online gamblers using credit cards are problem gamblers, with even more suffering some form of gambling harm.

'"We also know that there are examples of consumers who have accumulated tens of thousands of pounds of debt through gambling because of credit card availability. There is also evidence that the fees charged by credit cards can exacerbate the situation because the consumer can try to chase losses to a greater extent."

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