



# **Safer Gambling Messaging Project (Phase II)**

A Process Evaluation by The  
Behavioural Insights Team

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# Contents

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<b>Contents</b>	1
<b>Executive summary</b>	3
The project	3
Methodology	4
Key findings	4
Project initiation	4
Intervention co-creation and implementation	5
Intervention and project impacts	5
Conclusions	5
<b>1. Introduction</b>	7
1.1. Background	7
Project conception	7
Operator recruitment	8
Implementation of the second phase	8
Current report	9
<b>2. Methodology</b>	9
Evaluation aims	9
Sampling and recruitment	9
Informed consent	12
Data collection and analysis	13
Ethics	14
<b>3. Findings</b>	15
3.1. Process evaluation	15
Project set-up	15
Motivation	15
Expectations	16
Collaboration with external research agency	17
Communication with commissioning and regulatory bodies	17
Onboarding workshop	18
Collaboration with operators	19
Operator capability and teamwork	21
Internal capabilities and functions	21

Internal collaboration	22
Operator resource and capacity	23
Securing team resource	23
Managing competing priorities	24
Designing and implementing messaging interventions	24
Developing safer messaging testing knowledge	24
Building on existing safer gambling experience	25
Assessing intervention impact	25
Evaluation of safer gambling interventions	26
Gambling behaviour and awareness	26
Limitations to testing and measuring impact	28
<b>4. Conclusions</b>	<b>29</b>
Key findings	29
Project initiation	29
Intervention co-creation and implementation	29
Intervention and project impacts	30
Concluding lessons	31
Project management and communication	31
Fostering positive relationships and collaboration	31
Managing industry changes and expectations	32
Safer gambling messaging testing and evaluation	32
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>33</b>

# Executive summary

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## The project

This report summarises the process evaluation of the *Safer Gambling Messaging Project*, which was run in 2019–20 by a research agency, Revealing Reality, as commissioned by GambleAware. The Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) has also conducted an impact evaluation of the project, which is published separately.

The *Safer Gambling Messaging Project*, first commissioned in 2017, aimed to explore and create best practice principles around safer gambling messaging on the basis of tried and tested ideas. The first project phase was evaluated in 2017, with the aim of exploring a range of potential message interventions, and following the publication of a report, the current phase aimed to evaluate the *process* of undertaking the *Safer Gambling Messaging Project* and this report details the findings of the process evaluation. Revealing Reality have also produced their own summary report documenting the co-creation process as well as the interventions. The co-creation process refers to Revealing Reality working with operators to help design interventions, through a workshop to help upskill operators about evaluation and through ongoing support to design intervention materials.

Safer gambling messaging aims to support customers before they are necessarily identified as engaging in problem or high-risk gambling. Seven gambling operators worked with Revealing Reality to develop messaging campaigns and related interventions with the aim of minimising gambling harms to their customers in line with the Betting and Gaming Council's safer gambling commitments<sup>1</sup>. Five of these operators subsequently completed the project and supplied data for evaluation purposes. The evaluation participants represent a mix of different types of gambling operators, including online slots, sports betting, physical casinos and bingo (both on- and off-line).

The messaging interventions were developed by the operators, supported by Revealing Reality, from summer 2019 until spring 2020.

The original intention was that each operator would run an evaluation during summer and/or autumn 2020, with BIT's help. In practice, the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that some compromises have been made. Some operators were able to conduct evaluations online, some continued with some modifications, some had to be cut short, and some were rendered impossible.

The aim of this report is to perform a summative process evaluation of the co-creation process itself, with the aim of investigating the implementation of the programme, how it was experienced by the operators, and how it might be improved or altered if it were repeated on a larger scale with other operators.

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<sup>1</sup><https://bettingandgamingcouncil.com/safer-gambling/>

We outline the qualitative findings around the setup, co-creation of the interventions and intervention implementation, following interviews with the commissioning and regulatory bodies, GambleAware and Gambling Commission as well as Revealing Reality and several operators<sup>2</sup>.

## Methodology

The process evaluation was split into two parts; the first explored the co-creation process including perceptions and experience of the co-design process between Revealing Reality and the operators. The second part focused on the implementation of the interventions, especially in relation to perceived facilitators and barriers, which may have influenced how successful the interventions were.

In order to ensure a diverse range of experiences of the co-creation process were captured, all evaluation participants involved in the *Safer Gambling Messaging Project* were invited to interview for the first part. The final interview sample consisted of the commissioning and regulatory bodies: GambleAware and Gambling Commission, the research agency: Revealing Reality, and six out of seven gambling operators. For part two, we interviewed three staff members from two operators, who had managed to implement their interventions.

All interviews were semi-structured, conducted over the telephone and lasted between 30 and 70 minutes. Participants were sent their transcripts to review following the interview and were able to request any data to be removed ahead of analysis. The data were then analysed using the framework approach<sup>3</sup> and the findings documented in this report.

## Key findings

### Project initiation

- Commissioning and regulatory bodies viewed the current project as an opportunity to build capacity among operators to explore and consolidate best practice around safer gambling messaging support. It was envisioned that the findings could be rolled out across multiple operators in the industry following the current project.
- Operator motivation for the project was influenced by the opportunity to work with one another, to understand different ways of working and regulatory compliance, to enhance their knowledge about evaluations, and to increase their confidence to run safer gambling messaging trials in the future.

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<sup>2</sup> In this report, the term 'commissioning and / or regulatory body' refers to GambleAware and the Gambling Commission

<sup>3</sup> Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C.M., and Ormston, R., eds. *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. Sage, 2013.

## Intervention co-creation and implementation

- There was diversity in the range of individuals from across the sector involved in this project, leading to variety in both experience and expectations throughout the different interventions. This was beneficial in broadening the scope of potential interventions, but did cause operational challenges at times. This was in relation to what was feasible for different operators to accomplish based on whether they were an online or offline vendor, and the wider resource and capacity available to their safer gambling teams.
- Operators' own experience of running interventions influenced the support they needed and expected from Revealing Reality. Expectation management from the start of the project was key for subsequent positive engagement with the project.
- Internal collaboration and cross-team commitment with operators were a key requirement for efficient design and implementation of interventions. Operator teams working on interventions needed to have a clear understanding of the resources available to them and the project aims.

## Intervention and project impacts

- Customer behaviour was seen to be influenced by their ability to choose the channel from which they received their messages. Messages with non-accusatory tones of voice were also viewed as having a more positive impact on customers' attitudes towards receiving the messages, however operators felt it was too soon to suggest any changes in behaviour were a direct result of the intervention itself.
- Operators, GambleAware, the Gambling Commission and Revealing Reality shared the view that the results from the intervention could be seen as a starting point to generate further interest and evidence-based research in safer gambling messaging. Insights from this project can also be used to support operators to gain momentum within their own organisations for further initiatives.

## Conclusions

We identified some lessons learnt as to how the programme approach could be improved or altered if it were repeated on a larger scale with other operators. A summary of the concluding lessons are as follows:

1. Project management & communications
  - a. During the scoping phase it is important to have agreements in place ahead of the project launching, such as agreed and accessible timelines for updates and information sharing, and clear processes put in place for timeline deviations.
2. Fostering positive relationships and collaboration:
  - a. Holding regular catch ups between operators wishing to be involved can foster healthy competition and enthusiasm for ongoing engagement.
  - b. Knowledge sharing throughout the project process could be beneficial in sustaining the initial sense of community developed in the workshop.
  - c. It is important to have a clear understanding of the intervention idea and project aims, including how these align with the organisation's strategy to facilitate effective collaboration within operators from the start.

3. Managing industry changes and expectations
  - a. It is important to secure senior advocacy for safer gambling messaging initiatives by ensuring the intervention's importance, potential benefits, and internal commitments required are clearly understood by management from the start.
4. Safer gambling messaging testing and evaluation
  - a. Creating positive change in customer's safer gambling attitudes and behaviours takes time. It is key for operators to show ongoing commitment to continuous efforts and ways of interacting with customers through safer gambling messaging testing and evaluation.

# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1. Background

Messaging has an important role to play in reducing gambling related harm. Safer gambling messaging comprises things such as advice about taking breaks or not gambling more than you can afford to lose. Safer gambling messaging can be delivered through vehicles such as advertisements that appear on television, or notifications that appear on-screen when logged into an online gambling platform. Recent evidence indicates that a generic warning label approach may not be effective<sup>4</sup>, and consequently a more individualised, operator-led approach might have more impact. Other research has indicated that the content of these messages is important, with messages encouraging self-reflection having a larger effect on behaviour<sup>5</sup>.

The current project had the aim of supporting gambling operators to develop and evaluate safer gambling messages.

### Project conception

In 2017, the Gambling Commission initiated the *Safer Gambling Messaging Project* with the objective of producing “best practice principles and some specific tested and evaluated ideas” with regard to operators messaging customers about safer gambling. It viewed the project as an opportunity to raise the profile of safer gambling in line with the Commissions’ organisational objectives and to be used as a springboard for future safer gambling interventions and evaluations.

Originally, Revealing Reality, an independent research agency, was brought in to undertake the research that formed the first phase of the project. The first phase of this project had the aim of testing the concept of a range of potential approaches to promote industry change, including proactivity, inclusion, impact, empowerment and continuous improvement, in order to identify and promote good practice for responsible gambling. The report, produced by Revealing Reality<sup>6</sup>, was published in late 2017. For phase two, the focus of this report, the agency’s role evolved into becoming the project facilitator, and they continued to take a collaborative approach, both advising the operators on their interventions and assisting their delivery. In addition, as Revealing Reality already had relationships with some operators due to their involvement in the first stage of the project, the agency was tasked with leading on engagement and recruitment of the operators to take part in the project. Phase two of the *Safer Gambling Messaging Project* was seen as a way to take the findings from the first

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<sup>4</sup> Newall, P., Walasek, L., Singmann, H. and Ludvig, E., 2019. Testing a gambling warning label’s effect on behavior. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/dxfkj>.

<sup>5</sup> Monaghan, S., & Blaszczynski, A. (2009). Electronic gaming machine warning messages: Information versus self-evaluation. *The Journal of Psychology*, 144(1), 83-96.

<sup>6</sup> Rowe, B., De Ionno, D., Holland, J., Flude, C., Brodrick, L., Vinay, A. and Moutos, M., 2017. Responsible gambling: Collaborative innovation identifying good practice and inspiring change. Revealing Reality.



phase and evaluate them further. It aimed to collaborate with operators to help them produce, implement and evaluate safer gambling messaging trialling best practice, which could then be further rolled out across the industry.

This phase had a more complicated commissioning process, whereby GambleAware were the commissioners of the research, in line with the framework agreement in place with the Gambling Commission<sup>7</sup>. The independent advisory board, the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board (RGSB) initially wrote the brief for phase two of the project in November 2017, and an Invitation To Tender (ITT) was issued in January 2018. Revealing Reality won the original tender for the second part of the project, but the final contract was not awarded until May 2019. The project objectives had evolved between those set out in the original brief in 2017 and those included in the agreed proposal in May 2019.

GambleAware wanted to include a diverse range of gambling providers on the project, which they understood would result in working with operators with a variety of capacity and resources available. Operators that were recruited included online operators, bingo organisations and land-based casino operators. Some of the operators had been involved in previous work with Revealing Reality, whereas others were new to the idea of running interventions around safer gambling principles, meaning that less experienced operators had greater support expectations.

## Implementation of the second phase

The second phase of the project comprises two distinct stages. The first stage was the initial commissioning and set-up process between GambleAware, the Gambling Commission, and Revealing Reality. The second stage involved Revealing Reality then engaging and onboarding seven operators, and supporting them in their design, implementation and evaluation of the messaging interventions.

The original intention was that each operator would run an evaluation during summer and autumn 2020. In practice, the Covid-19 pandemic meant that while some evaluations were able to continue with modifications, others had to be cut short or were rendered entirely infeasible.

## Current report

This report sets out the findings of a summative process evaluation of the co-creation process itself (the first phase), with the aim of investigating the implementation of the programme, how it was experienced by the operators, and how it might be improved or altered if it were repeated on a larger scale with other operators. The following chapters describe the research methodology (chapter 2), the findings (chapter 3) and the report conclusions. In addition, research materials, such as information sheets and topic guides, are included in the appendices.

To note, GambleAware is a wholly independent charity and has a framework agreement with the Gambling Commission to deliver the National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harms within the context of arrangements based on voluntary donations from the gambling industry.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://about.gambleaware.org/media/1211/statement-of-intent-document-final-with-logo-v2.pdf>

GambleAware commissions research and evaluation to build knowledge prevention and reduction of gambling harms that is independent of industry, government and the regulator. The authors alone are responsible for the views expressed in this report, which do not necessarily represent the views, decisions or policies of the institutions with which they are affiliated. Due to the limited sample and subsequent ease of identification, we will also not be naming the operators involved in the process evaluation to ensure confidentiality for evaluation participants.

## 2. Methodology

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### Evaluation aims

A summative process evaluation of phase two of the *Safer Gambling Messaging Project* was conducted to understand how the project was implemented, and the factors that influenced its effectiveness. The process evaluation aims to complement the findings from the impact evaluation. Part one of the process evaluation involved exploring the co-creation process, including the perceptions and experiences of the process of operators co-designing the messaging interventions with Revealing Reality, and to identify any factors that influenced the efficiency of this process. The second part of the process evaluation focused on the implementation of interventions, including the barriers and facilitators to intervention design and delivery, and factors influencing how well it was perceived to have worked.

### Sampling and recruitment

All participants involved in the *Safer Gambling Messaging Project* were invited to interview for part one, in order to ensure a diverse range of perceptions and experiences of the co-creation process were captured. Of the 10 participants contacted, nine attended an interview. Two operators who had interviewed during part one responded to an invitation to interview for part two of the process evaluation. The two operators were required to have implemented their interventions, and not withdrawn from the project prior to this point. One staff member from one operator took part in an interview, and two staff members from the second operator took part in interviews. The final participant sample can be found in **Table 1** below.

We also aimed to interview two customers per operator who had received the operator's safer gambling messaging intervention, to gather insights into the differences and similarities in customers' experiences receiving the intervention across two different operators. However, the operators stated it would not be feasible to interview customers as part of the process evaluation due to challenges around recruitment in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. We therefore did not conduct any customer interviews.

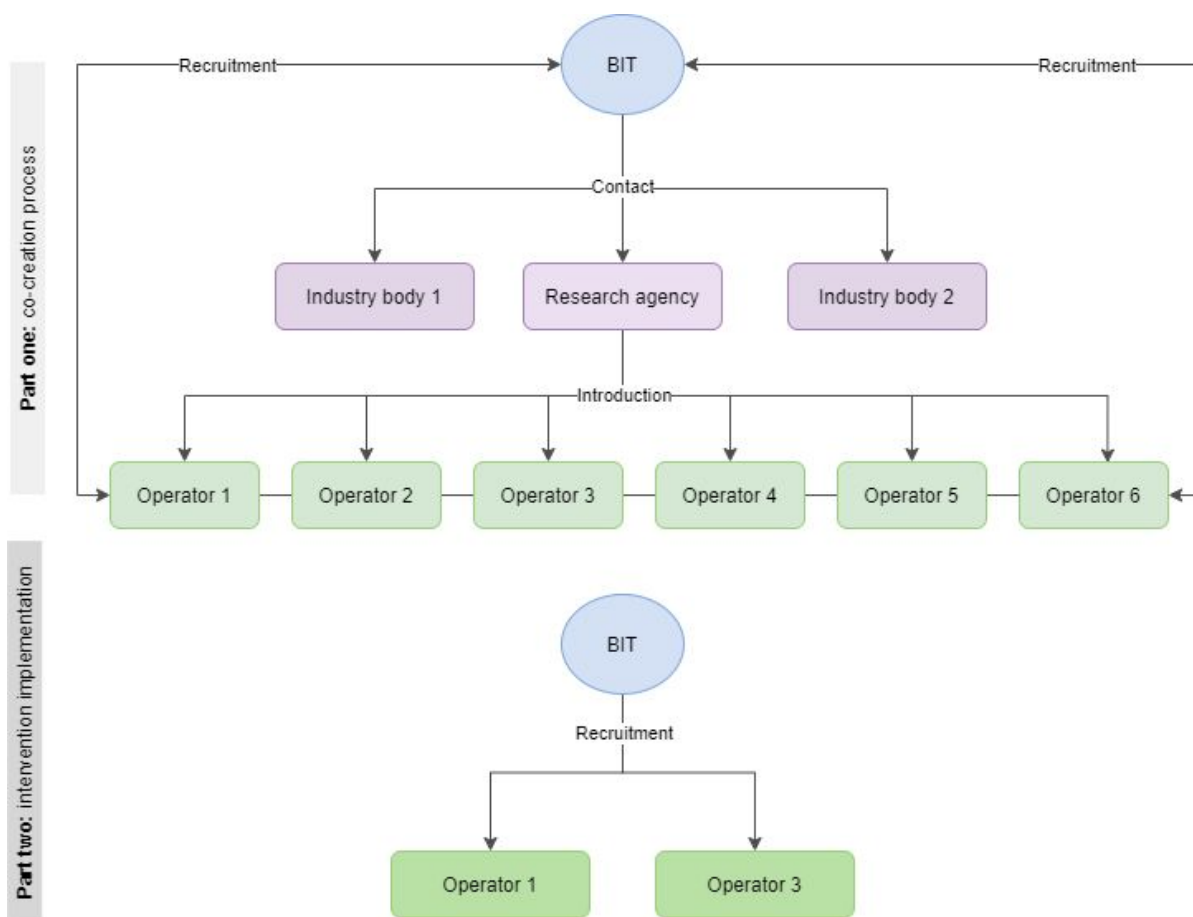
The final interview sample for part one of the process evaluation included GambleAware and the Gambling Commission, the research agency Revealing Reality, and six out of seven gambling operators. The final interview sample for part two of the process evaluation

included four staff per operator (two operators in total). We aimed to interview two operators who had implemented different types of final intervention(s) i.e. text, email, chat notification, or social media. Of the four staff to be interviewed per operator, we purposefully sampled two of whom were involved in the design of the intervention, and two of whom were involved in the implementation of the intervention. In total, we undertook an interview with one staff member in one operator who was Head of Digital Compliance and took a coordination role on the project, and two members of staff from the second operator; one who was Head of Brand involved in the strategy and planning of the campaign, and one who was Brand Manager involved in the planning and implementation of the campaign, making a total of three interviews.

**Table 1:** Final participant sample.

Part one: co-creation process	
Participant	Interview
Commissioning or regulatory body 1	Individual
Commissioning or regulatory body 2	Paired
Research agency	Paired
Operator 1	Individual
Operator 2	Individual
Operator 3	Individual
Operator 4	Individual
Operator 5	Individual
Operator 6	Paired
Part two: intervention implementation	
Operator 1	Individual
	Individual
Operator 3	Individual

The interview recruitment process for part one and two of the process evaluation is detailed in **Figure 1** below.



**Figure 1:** Interview recruitment process for part one and two of the process evaluation.

### Recruitment strategy for participant interviews

For phase one, the co-creation process, BIT contacted GambleAware, the Gambling Commission, and Revealing Reality directly to arrange their interviews. Following Revealing Reality’s interview, they introduced BIT via email to all seven operators who had been onboarded to the project. BIT made initial contact up to three times with all operators, and interviews were offered for a date and time that suited the operator. Revealing Reality also followed up with operators that had not responded to BIT’s initial contact, to ensure they did not miss out on the opportunity to take part in the evaluation.

For phase two, the intervention implementation, BIT contacted the interviewee from each operator that had interviewed during the first phase, to schedule their second interview, and first interviews with their staff involved in the design and/or implementation of their messaging interventions.

## Informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their interview. All participants were sent an information sheet via email ahead of their interview which outlined the purpose of the evaluation, and how the participant's data and responses to the interview would be used and stored (see **Appendices 1. and 2.**). Some participants provided written consent by completing the consent form and returning it to the BIT researcher ahead of the interview; the remaining participants provided their verbal consent to partake. The researcher gave participants the opportunity to ask any questions and sought consent from participants to record before starting the interview.

## Data collection and analysis

Part one interviews were conducted between June and August 2020, and lasted an average of 53 minutes (minimum 30 minutes, maximum 70 minutes). Interviews with GambleAware, the Gambling Commission, and Revealing Reality and operators were guided using interview schedules that explored participants: initial involvement in the project, perceptions of the efficiency of the co-creation process, operators' capabilities and engagement with the process and perceptions of the final messaging interventions.

Part two interviews were conducted in August 2020, and lasted an average of 50 minutes. Interviews with operator staff were guided using an interview schedule that explored participants': experience of planning, designing and implementing their messaging intervention(s), and their perceptions of the impact of delivering the interventions on themselves, their organisation and their customers. All interviews were semi-structured and conducted over the phone. Semi-structured interviews comprise a set of themes and questions used by the researcher to guide the interview, while also allowing interviewees to bring up new ideas for exploration. **Appendices 3. and 4.** contain the interview schedules used in part one, and **Appendix 5.** contains the interview schedule used in part two.

All information and data collected as part of the process evaluation was collected in accordance with BIT's Privacy Policy. Details of the data security and storage processes can be found in **Appendix 6.**

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using the Framework approach<sup>8</sup>. Firstly, emerging themes were identified through familiarisation of the interview data. The analytical framework was then created in Excel using a series of matrices each relating to an emergent theme. The columns represented the key sub-themes drawn from the findings, and the rows represented the individual participants interviewed. The interview data were summarised in the appropriate cell, with all data relevant to a particular theme noted, ordered

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<sup>8</sup> Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C.M., and Ormston, R., eds. *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers.* Sage, 2013.

and accessible, to facilitate a comprehensive approach to analysis grounded in the participants' accounts, with all participants' views and experiences given equal weight.

Analysis involved working through the charted data to identify the range of participants' perceptions and experiences, identifying similarities, differences and links between them. Thematic analysis (undertaken by looking down the theme-based columns in the Framework) identified concepts and themes, and the case-based analysis (undertaken by comparing and contrasting rows in the Framework), enabled links within cases to be established and cases compared with each other.

During the analytical process a balance was maintained between deduction (using existing knowledge and the research objectives to guide the analysis) and induction (allowing concepts and new ways of interpreting experience to emerge from the data). As qualitative data can only be generalised in terms of range and diversity and not in terms of prevalence, the analytical outputs in the findings section of this report focus on the nature of participants' experiences, avoiding numerical language such as 'most' and 'majority'.

## Ethics

The research was subject to BIT's internal ethics review process and was approved. Details about the ethics review process and ethical considerations made for the process evaluation can be found in **Appendix 7**.

## 3. Findings

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### 3.1. Process evaluation

#### Project set-up

##### Motivation

There was a wide range of motivations for operators' participation in the project. In the context that the world of safer gambling regulations was experienced as confusing and challenging to implement at times, involvement in this project was described as an opportunity to gain support to navigate this space effectively and efficiently. Operators with previous experience working in this area recognised the impact of previous interventions and the importance of undertaking high quality research. Linked to this, one operator referenced working with an external research agency as a reason to take part. This operator believed the research agency would help to facilitate their organisations' thinking around intervention and trialling and ultimately assist in upskilling.

The opportunity to work with other operators and learn how they were working to comply with new regulations was also mentioned as a key factor for taking part. The workshop session was seen as attractive because it included all the other operators involved in the project and provided a chance to share intervention ideas and allow for a more open conversation around the way they support customers.

One operator reported that they were particularly interested in understanding how to promote safer gambling tools at an earlier stage in a player's journey than they had previously. The operator felt that it was important to find ways to educate customers further about their own playing behaviour and that operators need to shift from being reactive to a more proactive model when supporting their customers. Representatives of the operator had been informed of the project by another team within their organisation and felt its aims matched what they were wanting to achieve within the safer gambling space.

Revealing Reality's motivation for participation in the project was also linked to the wider impact it could have. It shared the view of both GambleAware and the Gambling Commission that any insights found from this project could be worked into a wider narrative, which could be shared with other operators around potential ways to encourage safer gambling. This also fed into the way the organisation saw itself working with operators, mainly in terms of its aim to push the operators into being innovative with their thinking and intervention design.

*"We wanted there to be a really good story to be able to reflect back to the industry and say, 'Look, this is how this organisation did it. This is how good it is. This is what you need to do. Look, you have all these things so there's absolutely no reason why you can't do the same.'"*

Research agency.



## Expectations

There were substantial differences between the operators and the commissioning and regulatory bodies over what to expect from the project. The commissioning and regulatory bodies said that they felt the project agenda was clear, which was to increase the safer gambling capacity of operators, and they also felt that the project timelines and management were understood by all involved. The commissioning and regulatory bodies had minimal contact with the majority of operators after the recruitment and onboarding stage and therefore were unaware of the variety in expectations felt by the operators.

In contrast to the commissioning and regulatory bodies, operators noted that although they were motivated and interested in taking part in the project, their understanding of what it would involve was at times limited. This was notably true for an operator who was brought on to the project at a later date than the other operators, and thought the onboarding workshop they were attending was for an entirely different project. Other operators thought they would have more intervention design assistance from the Revealing Reality team and therefore found the project required more internal resources than initially expected. Revealing Reality recalled that their pitch to operators during the recruitment process focused on the opportunities that taking part in the project would bring them, such as, the chance for team members to improve their understanding of intervention design.

*“We pitched it as an opportunity; something exciting, to learn skills. Also, yes, to make a bit of a mark in the world, to do something that was a bit more interesting than a day job.”*

Research agency.

The initial pitch was recalled by operators as having less of a focus around the practicalities of the project set up and scope, contributing to some operators' apprehension over what the long-term use of any results would be. Operators reported negotiating the tensions between the ambitions of their internal safer gambling teams and the commercial needs of the retail side of the company, which may compete for importance and space.

*“There’s a lot of negotiation, because we’ve got to deal with commercial stakeholders. For example, on the sports page, would the traders or the sports director be willing to give up any of their space on that page for RG [responsible gambling] messaging? That’s the battle we face. There’s always that battle between RG [responsible gambling] and commercial.”*

Operator.

This tension arose from safer gambling teams wanting to trial different interventions to protect customers, while being conscious of the commercial pressures faced by the retail team around profit and income. Revealing Reality noted that some operators were worried that taking part in the project could lead to potential bad publicity further down the line, if they were seen to fail to commit to a change in practice that had found positive results. There was also concern at being under closer scrutiny from regulatory bodies such as the Gambling Commission and becoming at greater risk of more regulation.

*“They also have a fear that if they do something and it turns out to be good and it gets written up that that will, then, lock them in; that the GC [Gambling Commission] or other interested*

*parties will identify and say, 'You were doing this and you know it works. Why aren't you going to continue doing it?'"* Research agency.

## Collaboration with external research agency

Given the challenges and complexities associated with gambling operators developing safer gambling messages, it was crucial that strong relationships between the different stakeholders in the project were built. This section will look at the different collaborative groupings and the facilitators that helped to foster good working relationships along with the barriers that arose.

### Communication with commissioning and regulatory bodies

Revealing Reality was the research partner commissioned by GambleAware for this project. The commissioning and regulatory bodies explained that the creation of best practice safer gambling messaging relied on Revealing Reality collaborating with operators and developing high levels of operator trust. To achieve this, Revealing Reality built on some of the relationships they had already created in phase 1 of the *Safer Gambling Messaging Project*.

*"I know that by September they had done a lot of contact with all the operators. Don't forget, they'd done phase one, so they knew all the operators, they knew all the names and the people in the Responsible Gambling team. They had the contacts already and they had the personal relationships."* Commissioning or regulatory body.

The commissioning and regulatory bodies felt that Revealing Reality brought a high level of enthusiasm to the project and were effective in encouraging the operators to broaden the scope of their interventions. Revealing Reality's role was perceived both by themselves and commissioning and regulatory bodies as being to work with the operators to get them to think of how they could go one step further with their intervention plans. This was to ensure they were rigorous projects from an evaluation point of view, but were also inventive and innovative. At the outset, the commissioning and regulatory bodies felt that the researchers went 'above and beyond' to assist the operators, including visiting their offices abroad and offering to speak to senior colleagues. They felt this helped to demonstrate commitment and willingness to collaborate with the operators.

*"I think one of the strengths of Revealing Reality throughout this project has been their encouragement of the operators to do more, to think wider. They haven't just accepted the suggestion from the operators and said, 'Great let's go with that!' They've looked at it, they've examined it, and if they've seen an opportunity to say, 'Well, that's wonderful but it could be even better; have you thought about doing this a bit more.'"* Commissioning or regulatory body.

As the project progressed, it was suggested by GambleAware that the level of communication between GambleAware and Revealing Reality had reduced, below the level which was needed in order to assess whether the project was on track. GambleAware acknowledged that they knew the researchers were working hard but would have liked more transparency from them over what exactly they did during this time. They found their project

oversight was better when they received more frequent updates from the Revealing Reality and would have found more information on timelines and any challenges beneficial. GambleAware highlighted that during a certain period on the project, their own senior staff had to reach out to Revealing Reality to obtain their monthly status reports.

*“The bit that I don't know, really, what happened was December to March 2020, they were doing liaison and support for participating operators. There were monthly updates with Revealing Reality, but they really struggled to write their status reports on a monthly basis. I wrote them an email in December and said, 'Look, I really need to know what's happening. I need to understand to keep the pressure on, really, otherwise we're not going to complete this project.’”* Commissioning or regulatory body.

Both the commissioning and regulatory bodies, and Revealing Reality noted that not requiring operators to commit to taking part during project setup led to easy withdrawals further down the line. Withdrawals were a budgetary concern for the project commissioners who were funding the project because withdrawals resulted in previous resources used in supporting operators to set up interventions being lost, with no tangible results to show for it. The commissioners then wanted more information from Revealing Reality around the events that led to any operator disengagement, which added extra pressure on Revealing Reality to provide updates and take accountability for withdrawals and noted that it was problematic that participation was seen as voluntary and not formalised in any way, such as through a written agreement setting out expectations and commitments.

*“The operators have not, and this is really critical I think, signed up, or they have not written anything down, or there were no terms of agreement that they would participate. It was all, I think rather unclear, if you like, and that their participation was voluntary rather than mandated. I think, later on, that became a bit of an issue.”* Commissioning or regulatory body.

### Onboarding workshop

The onboarding workshop was perceived by the operators as being a useful event to have attended. Operators felt it provided the opportunity for knowledge sharing around the way different operators have integrated new regulations into their work, which directly tapped into some operators' initial reasons for taking part in the project. Even operators who had come to the project later, and attended the workshop having just been recruited to the project, felt they were still able to engage on the day of the workshop and felt well supported by the organisers, despite not being as prepared as some of the other attendees.

*“I think then everybody [operators] kind of talked a little about their own businesses. There were obviously bookmakers and online businesses there, but there was quite a variety of people there. So from that perspective it gave us a good insight into what other people were doing; a very good way of showing what current best practice was and where they were looking to go.”* Operator.

The commissioning and regulatory bodies and Revealing Reality also felt the workshop was a success as it created a positive atmosphere, with operators getting excited about the upcoming project and beginning to bounce ideas off one another. Although not intentional,

Revealing Reality observed that the workshop also helped to set up some competitiveness between the operators, which it felt was beneficial to engagement with intervention design. This competition encouraged operators to push themselves from the beginning to be more inventive. It was hoped that this energy would be maintained throughout the project, with operators feeling motivated to keep thinking 'outside the box'. Revealing Reality had not expected the workshop to be received as positively as it was; on reflection, it felt it was mainly due to the fact that it brought individuals with a similar vision into a room together at the right time.

*"I thought it went really well. I couldn't tell you exactly why. It's not because we did some particular planning or we had some cunning exercise. It was just lots of people with a shared vision. I guess some people said some inspiring things and along the way, it felt like it was a serious thing."* Research agency.

### Collaboration with operators

Overall, the operators said they had a good working relationship with Revealing Reality and felt the team was willing to do whatever was needed to support the operators and ensure they could move forward with their interventions.

Revealing Reality was seen as supportive, a notable example being the help they provided to the operators who attended the workshop with late notice and no pitch or idea prepared. In this case, they pre-emptively informed other attendees of this operator's late onboarding and helped to remove any pressure.

*"Revealing Reality have been perfect... I cannot speak highly enough of Revealing Reality, and the patience and the professionalism of those individuals. Nothing bad to say."* Operator.

Collaboration was less successful when the operators' expectation of the research agencies' responsibilities did not align with what the agency felt it was there to do, feeling there was a lack of support and assistance on key tasks. Some operators were expecting more support from Revealing Reality on the actual intervention design and content of the messages, though some of this confusion arose from misunderstandings operators reported from within their own internal teams. When operators were initially contacted by Revealing Reality about the project, the first contact was not always with the relevant safer gambling team. This meant there were different levels of understanding of the project between different internal teams, which caused confusion around what support they were expecting from Revealing Reality.

This confusion impacted one operator when they needed support from another team within their organisation. This other team had held the initial conversations with Revealing Reality about the project and therefore had specific ideas in mind of what the project was about and Revealing Reality's responsibilities. Their understanding differed from the actual realities of the project, which led to them expecting more support from Revealing Reality with designing the intervention messages. There were some capacity and resource issues noted, whereby the two internal teams had to work through the confusion to ensure they could get the required work completed.

A key aspect of Revealing Reality's role was to encourage operators to do more with their interventions and "think wider"; however, for some operators the suggestions the agency was making were not seen as feasible because it involved substantial staff training with limited time to do so. An example of this was a land-based operator whose intervention relied on training floor staff. This meant that last minute tweaks and changes were not possible.

*"Online you can do it with the click of a button and you can have one person doing those algorithms, whereas for us you've got to train 1,500 people. You can't just change that at a flick of a button... So to change something quite fundamentally at the last minute, it's just not possible in our industry."* Operator.

The fact that Revealing Reality continued to suggest what were seen as unfeasible changes, despite operators explaining the limitations of what could be done, implied to operators a lack of understanding about the realities of the industry.

The majority of Revealing Reality staff interactions were described as positive, however operators felt frustrated by the responses of some staff when the issues related to making product changes or accessing data from a third-party application arose. One operator felt they had laid out their reasoning as to why they could not make further suggested changes, but ultimately felt they were not listened to.

*"...we got through the days where we didn't feel that Revealing Reality felt what we were doing was fit for the project. There was just too much talk about trying to change it, reinvent it, but as [my colleague] said it's a package that we bought in and developed and rolled out; that is what it was, it couldn't be adapted or changed... [Revealing Reality proposed] systematic changes to the application which — we don't own the application; it's not something that we could change... and the reporting side, again, — it's a third party, we don't have access to some of that data because it is quite private, the third-party one... So it was just some bits we couldn't possibly change or adapt."* Operator.

This became increasingly frustrating for the operator and was given as a contributing factor as to why they disengaged from the project. Reflecting on what happened, the operator said afterwards that maybe their organisation was not the most appropriate for the project due to the fact that it was not able to make the changes requested by Revealing Reality around the intervention design. The operator said it would have been beneficial for Revealing Reality to acknowledge these challenges and try to find a way to work around them, rather than repeating the proposed changes that were not possible.

*"The changes they were asking for weren't possible and I think when — it just became very frustrating and I think that's where there were multiple emails and phone calls daily. It was just like — we got to the point where we were like well, we're continuing as we believe, we should be continuing as right for the business and right for the customer. So that's where the frustration came in."* Operator.

Revealing Reality felt that from the beginning engagement varied across the operators. The agency said that some operators began intervention design straight after the project kick-off and quickly producing tangible materials to use in an intervention. Other operators were seen

as more hesitant, which the agency believed was due to factors including personnel changes among staff within the organisations.

*“Immediately, some of the operators started engaging in a really sincere way immediately and started to make things happen. Some of them dragged their feet. Some of it's a change of personnel, etc., and all sorts. There were legitimate reasons why that happened.”*

Research agency.

On reflection the agency felt it could have been beneficial to have sustained the sense of community that developed at the workshop, by encouraging knowledge sharing throughout the project process.

*“I think the fact that they were all from different sectors, doing different stuff already, and had different businesses is probably helpful... Actually, if we could have fostered that more throughout the programme, I think that would have been better. There were probably some things we could have done more to remind people that they were part of the programme that other people were working on, as well.”* Research agency.

## Operator capability and teamwork

Operators varied in the nature of their internal functions, capabilities and staff expertise that influenced the degree to which they were able to successfully co-design and implement their interventions. Internal collaboration and cross-team commitment to the project were key for a successful co-design and delivery process.

### Internal capabilities and functions

Operators reported that a wide range of in-house teams (design, technical, commercial, brand, legal, IT) and specialist staff (analysts, designers, copywriters, product specialists) were involved in the co-design process and delivery of the interventions. With regards to the co-design process, one operator felt that they could generate campaigns easily because the designers on their design teams were experienced in creating and building content across different sites. In terms of intervention delivery, an operator's chat community teams were able to implement safer gambling promotions because they had ownership of their chat rooms, which enabled them to add ad-hoc questions, and another operator's business impact team were able to randomly allocate customers to the trial's control and treatment arms with ease.

*“The other team that was heavily involved was our BI [Business Intelligence] team. Our BI team had to go through our database and make sure that they identified all the customers and that we had the right details for those customers, and they set them up into the different groups.”* Operator.

There was a perception among some participants that changes could be made at a faster pace among digital operators compared to land-based. However, some operators' functioning online faced challenges in practice when developing their interventions, such as being unable to alter the coding that was needed for their intervention or facing internal decisions that website development was suspended for a period of time. It was also noted

that while it may appear easy to make changes to and obtain data from an app, it could be difficult in practice for the operator to do when the app was third party. However, one advantage digital platforms had over land-based providers was that they did not need to train high numbers of retail staff, which the land-based operator anticipated needing to do if they were to co-produce a new campaign. The need for adequate planning time and staff capacity was clear for land-based operators, particularly if they were being asked to trial an alternate intervention idea to the one they had originally planned.

Operator staff's understanding of their team's internal functions, and any potential drawbacks they might encounter early on, was key for ensuring efficient implementation. One operator explained how they had checked with their IT department that they had the technological function to send their messages to the high number of customers required for their trial. The operator reflected on the fact that taking these considerations during the planning stage helped to prepare them for the implementation process.

### Internal collaboration

Some operators had collaborative internal working relationships, which helped them to solve practical problems, generate intervention ideas and facilitated the project progressing with consistency. The importance of having all teams that would be involved in the project attending meetings early on was clear, as this reinforced cross-team commitment to the project from the outset. This included ensuring that junior staff were present at meetings if they were to be more involved in the project than their senior staff. Consistent dialogue between team members also enabled staff to anticipate challenges that may occur during the process. In addition, allowing time for follow-up actions and reflection helped staff to come up with suitable ideas for their interventions. Notably, the complexity of having various different teams and staff involved in initial conversations combined with a lack of clarity regarding the expectations of the project, made it difficult for one operator to pin-point which staff would be right to work on the project. This in turn made it difficult for a team to secure ownership of the project and progress with the process.

Other operators encountered challenges in terms of collaboration between internal teams. For example, one operator reported that their legal team would not agree to the data request for the project, because the data form was unclear, and the legal team did not understand the Safer Gambling project. It was also difficult for teams to work together effectively on the project when different teams had distinct current focuses of their work, and the *Safer Gambling Messaging Project* was not deemed a priority in comparison to the team's other areas of work. An operator described generating numerous ideas for safer gambling initiatives they wanted to test, but other staff or management teams in the organisation frequently had their own competing objectives that they wanted to focus on. For example, the operator described staff situated in their own team may want to focus on the range of other tools required for interacting with their customers, as well as staff from other teams, such as the technical team, may be prioritising work on infrastructure over safer gambling messaging interventions.

*"I have a lot of ideas and a lot of things I want to do. I not only compete with myself; I also compete with ideas that other members of the management have. Whether it's the business units that want to integrate new games or want to have new payment methods, or want to*

*have some marketing tools to give bonuses. Whether it's the technical guys that want to have a better infrastructure and they want to develop this database or that." Operator.*

Three key factors encouraged cross-team collaboration and commitment to the project: clearly defining the creative idea for the intervention; ensuring that there was widespread understanding of how the project fitted within the organisation's strategy; and staff working on the initiative being prepared to seek help from another team or colleague. An operator described that once they had determined their campaign idea, their compliance and legal teams became more supportive. Staff from the operator's compliance team displayed more enthusiasm to learn from the brand team and willingness to do more to help, resulting in an effective, sustained two-way collaboration on the project. Following the project, other staff approached the brand team for their co-ordination and input into the operator's safer gambling response during COVID-19, which the participant felt was due to the other teams seeing more value in what the brand side of the organisation could offer to safer gambling initiatives. This signifies that changing other internal teams' attitudes towards safer gambling messaging testing through initiatives implemented as part of this project can yield longer-term benefits such as an increase in consistent communication and cross-collaboration on safer gambling initiatives between teams in the future.

## Operator resource and capacity

### Securing team resource

Securing staff time and team resources for the project was essential for project progress, and was made particularly difficult when operators had to respond to regulatory changes or unforeseen demands, such as those related to COVID-19. The timing of resource requests and gaining senior buy-in were identified as two factors important for securing internal resources on the Safer Gambling project. One operator described how if staff missed an opportunity to request resources from a team when they had the time, the team's window of capacity could quickly pass and it could be months before the team would have time to support the project. For another operator, having executive board buy-in to the project made it easier for the Safer Gambling team to secure resources because staff organisation-wide saw the project as a priority and were willing to dedicate time to working on it. Getting senior buy in from operators' management teams was outlined as pivotal for progression through the next stages of the intervention design and launch. Senior buy-in was present in management staff for whom safer gambling was "high on the list" of agendas that the senior team felt was important, or was obtained through management viewing the project as helpful, sensible and seeing appeal in the messaging interventions themselves.

Participants further highlighted the importance of internal senior buy-in by describing some situations in which operator staff responsible for the project internally did not have the highest profiles in the business. This was problematic for operators when senior staff decided to disengage from the project due to concerns over cost, and the more junior staff had little power to change their senior's decisions. A balance between meeting regulation and not incurring fines by adhering to safer gambling guidance, while also not over-exerting commitment to safer messaging interventions (i.e. monetarily), which later results in senior staff ceasing the intervention's implementation, appeared to need to be maintained by some operators. This has important implications regarding initial scoping and all-round commitment



to the safer gambling initiatives being both achievable for individual operators based on their individual circumstances, and in-line with those envisioned by senior staff from the outset.

The research agency noted that the operators who required the least assistance and input during the project were those who had succeeded in securing interest from their senior management teams early on. This interest translated into securing resources and capacity throughout the project, which meant the project could progress with fewer internal setbacks.

*“Senior buy-in is the number one thing. We had people who spoke; someone like... They got senior buy-in very early and they just got on with it. They liked the idea. They needed very little intervention from us, really. They put all their thoughts and team behind it. They actually progressed faster than we wanted them to.”* Research agency.

### Managing competing priorities

Within the operators' teams, time and resources were sometimes required for unforeseen urgent work, such as responding to new regulations or transitioning customers to new payment methods. When this happened, staff capacity to work on the Safer Gambling project was based on the resource that was left available. COVID-19 also impacted operator capacity to work on the project due to staff furloughs, redundancies and the need to respond to new lock-down related considerations.

*“When the lockdown came in, in the early days, the Commission issued guidance — to the entire industry — with expectations that [operators] will be monitoring their [customer] base carefully because there is enhanced risk of people who were all of a sudden potentially having more free time on their hands... I think a lot of the operators reached out to their customer base quite rapidly in a way that didn't allow participation in this project to co-create those messages and those forms of contact.”* Commissioning or regulatory body.

For other operators, the effects of COVID-19 on people's lifestyles resulted in an increase in the time some customers spent playing online and raised the importance of safer gambling in the industry. This provided some operators with the opportunity to increase the priority of the *Safer Gambling Project* internally because of the urgency required to respond to the impacts of COVID-19 on customer's playing behaviour before it became unmanageable.

## Designing and implementing messaging interventions

### Developing safer messaging testing knowledge

An operator, for whom running and evaluating safer gambling messaging interventions was a new experience, found that conducting background research into which types of messaging are received best by customers, and testing messages through different channels, was helpful in planning their messaging interventions. The operator did, however, find it difficult to know how to reach a large enough sample of customers for their trial, due to the stringent criteria their customers had to meet to be classified as low-risk, in addition to them needing to be active customers. The operator therefore recommended that having more steer from the Gambling Commission with regards to what criteria classifies customer behaviour as being low-, medium- or high-risk, particularly in the context of COVID-19, which was increasing some customers' playing time and moving them to higher risk groups.

An operator whose staff on the project had a brand development perspective, saw an opportunity to target an issue in the messaging content that is typically launched during Safer Gambling week<sup>9</sup>, that customers report as off-putting. The operator was able to take ownership of the project and progress with its implementation after locating this issue that they could tackle. On reflection, they felt it was beneficial to run their campaign from a brand perspective (as opposed to a legal or compliance one) because they understood how to make the messaging engaging for their players, and highlighted the importance of operators knowing their customer base when designing interventions targeted at promoting safer gambling.

### Building on existing safer gambling experience

Existing knowledge and experience of safer gambling normalisation and initiatives helped operators to know how they would design and deliver interventions as part of this project. For example, it was easy for one operator to run the safer gambling messaging intervention in a similar way to how they would run previous safer gambling initiatives because the staff already understood their roles and knew what to do. The operator's analysts, for example, were familiar with safer gambling insights and testing, and the consumer insights team were experienced in surveying customers regularly. The team therefore knew how to approach the planning and implementation process for this project.

Another operator had also acquired knowledge of the processes involved in normalising safer gambling when onboarding customers, because normalisation of safer gambling processes operated as standard in other non-UK-based markets. This familiarity, along with knowledge of what their competitors were trialling and understanding what the project was aiming to achieve, helped the operator to generate intervention ideas for their UK-based safer gambling project.

*“So in all the other countries, jurisdictions that I mentioned, the European ones at least, [setting deposit limits] is mandatory for the customer to do it. In the UK, it's just mandatory for the operator to offer it at some point... We came up [with our idea] because we understood what the project wants us to do, what they're looking to achieve. At the same time, I had the experience of looking at [the normalisation of safer gambling tools] as a norm in other markets. At the same time, I was kind of looking at what our competitors were doing.”*  
Operator.

### Assessing intervention impact

The safer gambling messaging interventions and campaigns were perceived to have had an impact on customers' awareness and understanding of safer gambling, and their gambling behaviour in some cases. However, it was often difficult for operators to attribute the change definitively to their interventions.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://safergamblinguk.org/sgw>

## Evaluation of safer gambling interventions

Operators described an increase in internal focus and staff time spent on safer gambling work since the project. Some had adopted more safer gambling interventions outside of the project that they envisioned would become standard practice in their organisation.

An operator that had experienced a growth in their safer gambling staff headcount, and an increased internal focus on safer gambling initiatives, felt this was facilitated by the changing regulations in the industry that were bringing safer gambling to the forefront of operators' work.

Specific to the adoption of safer gambling messaging interventions, an operator reported that the project had kick-started ideas for ways in which they could test different messaging on other customer groups (i.e. high-risk) to evaluate the impact on their gambling behaviour. For instance, one operator learnt from the project that emails can help change behaviour in customers who are low-risk, and wanted to trial the impact of sending activity statements to customers who are high-risk in order to evaluate the potential impact. Revealing Reality also observed an increased understanding among operators of how to approach safer gambling initiatives, and felt operators were more confident getting other teams, such as marketing, involved to support them.

For an operator who did not feel the project had any impact on the staff directly involved, they did feel that the project had a positive impact on the safer gambling team and at the board level. They felt that by obtaining evidence that a safer gambling intervention had worked and sharing this with the board and safer gambling team, this enabled them to gather more momentum around safer gambling across the organisation. The operator outlined their plans to continue to implement their messaging intervention beyond the end of this project but to also look at testing the impact of the frequency of messaging on sustained change in behaviour, as well as seeking customer feedback on the messaging.

*“It is something that we've already decided we will implement across the board as a standard, so we compared it with the control group. So we are going to implement it longer term. We're just looking at the frequency of sending those messages out, because if it's having an impact on people's playing we want it to be a sustained impact...we said as we are rolling this out we'll do that in the next phase and get that feedback so we can — if the myth-busting isn't working then we won't use it, if they would prefer an infographic to text, let's move towards that.” Operator.*

## Gambling behaviour and awareness

Some operators reported high engagement with their campaigns, and increases in awareness of and sign-up rates to safer gambling tools following their interventions. Others acknowledged that there was no guarantee customers read or comprehended the messaging, and if they did, observing the effects of providing a safer gambling environment takes time. Notably, an operator recommended that the same techniques or figures operators in the industry are using to attract customers to their services, such as celebrities on advertisements, could also be used to promote, and over time, normalise safer gambling in the industry.

An operator who sent messages through different channels (text, email and their internal messaging system inbox) reported that customers, on average, either deposited less money or played for fewer hours, with the text being the most successful channel for communicating the message. Despite the text messages appearing most effective, this channel had a character limit, and the operator therefore had to drop a myth-busting element to their message, which they felt could have had further impact. The operator believed that the success of the texts might have been due to text messages being instant, read more quickly by customers and therefore were more accessible, in comparison to emails which customers may have been less likely to read instantly.

Another operator who used reminder emails to communicate their safer gambling message reported a sharp increase in customers setting session reminders following the email. The operator also reported that customers had rated highly on feedback that the email reminder as part of the project had the right tone of voice, which was previously something that their customers had rated as lower in the operator's previous safer gambling communications, and therefore off-putting.

Commissioning and regulatory bodies described one scenario in which an operator's messaging intervention was "too successful" due to it having a substantial impact on customers setting deposit limits and consequently the amount of money they were depositing. As a result, the operator experienced internal pressure to stop the intervention.

In contrast to the direct, individual messaging interventions described above, an operator who used social media as a channel to communicate their campaign also reported high engagement from customers with the posts. The operator believed that their customers' high levels of engagement with the campaign were due to the content being upfront, interactive and on brand. It was described as one of the first campaigns the operator had launched that was based on lifestyle and interaction, such as chatting with other customers, as well as being fun, in comparison to their usual commercially driven games and quizzes. The messaging itself was based on the presumption that the customer was aware of safer gambling tools, a key difference to former approaches which typically have assumed the customer had never used a tool. Through this approach, the customer was actively encouraged to engage in an activity outside of the gambling space, an approach the operator believed had a positive impact on customer gambling behaviour. The operator felt it was a campaign that their customer base would enjoy, and reported that campaigns that are more overt about their safer gambling messages yield fewer interactions from customers. In contrast, the fun campaign they implemented for a short period as part of the project took a more subliminal, softer approach towards safer gambling messaging, where it was felt customers would feel less judged.

These early insights formed the basis of why the operator believed that this type of messaging campaign would have worked well if it had not been pulled due to COVID-19. The operator had to stop their campaign before evaluating its impact because the safer gambling message encouraged customers to socialise or engage in activities, with friends and family, which was no longer appropriate once lockdown had been introduced.

Despite there being signs of operators trialling safer messaging interventions with higher customer risk groups, one operator emphasised that behaviour change as a result of safer

gambling messaging interventions is limited. This was because the operator felt that messaging interventions were highly dependent on the emotional and contextual state of the customer when they receive the message, as well as being limited to customers that are not engaging in high-risk problem gambling.

*“I don't think there's any type of messaging you could probably convey to a customer at two o'clock in the morning that's going to stop them from doing what they're actually doing... There's no type of messaging that I can see that's going to have any impact on a customer at that time of morning. Those are the customers where it's gone too far already. We're too late. The horse has bolted. Whereas, this project is to try and stop customers from getting to that point in the first place. In that situation, normative messaging I think can work and probably will work as well.”* Operator.

### Limitations to testing and measuring impact

Operators recognised a tension between evaluating interventions using measures of compliance and more innovative measures. One operator described a compliance-based approach where they tested whether a messaging intervention influenced sign-up rates to safer gambling tools. For this operator, this approach was easier to evaluate than an innovative approach which attempted to measure the intervention's impact on outcomes such as a safer gambling awareness and normalisation. Even though newer, innovative objectives such as awareness were viewed by some operators as difficult to measure in terms of impact, Revealing Reality encouraged operators to design and test innovative interventions as part of the project. Despite reassurance from the commissioning and regulatory bodies that operators would not be scrutinised if their interventions did not obtain the desired results, it was clear that operators were still worried about producing concrete evidence of impact. However, for one operator these concerns were of less importance than their goal to improve customer understanding and awareness. For this operator, customer awareness and an understanding of the relevance of the message was of greater significance than actually signing-up, regardless of the challenges in measuring these changes.

In some cases, COVID-19 resulted in some operators' interventions being retracted, or not being able to be implemented in retail outlets, disrupting or inhibiting evaluations. For operators who were able to implement and evaluate their interventions, some noted that it could be difficult to pin-point which of a multitude of factors had brought about any change that had been identified following their Safer Gambling Messaging interventions. For example, one reported that it was difficult to identify the features of the email communication that caused the increase in customer's setting session reminders, stating that the tone of the email, the content of the email or the fact that they were being sent an email at all could have driven behaviour change.

## 4. Conclusions

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The purpose of phase two of the *Safer Gambling Messaging Project* was to build on the findings from the previous phase and collaborate with operators to help them produce, implement and evaluate safer gambling messaging. This phase focused on trialling best practice, which could then be further rolled out across the industry. This final section summarises the findings from the process evaluation of this phase of the project and concludes with lessons learnt that can be taken forward by operators that undertake the design, delivery and evaluation of safer gambling messaging interventions or campaigns in the future.

### Key findings

#### Project initiation

There were a number of individuals involved in the project from across the sector who all brought different expectations and experience to the process involved in co-designing and implementing the messaging interventions. There were differences in operators' prior experience of normalising safer gambling behaviours and running interventions, and their understanding of RCTs. Some operator organisations were larger and had previously deployed greater resources into intervention evaluations, and therefore had more experience running them. Others were familiar with using alternative research methods, in particular qualitative methods. The variety in previous experience was important as it led to different expectations of the level of support required from Revealing Reality in relation to intervention design once the project had commenced. Therefore, understanding these differences and managing the expectations of all parties involved from the very start is key for subsequent positive engagement with the project.

#### Intervention co-creation and implementation

The variation in parties involved was useful in terms of broadening the scope of the interventions that were implemented and findings generated, but did cause operational challenges at times. As discussed, digital operators and land-based operators faced different internal and practical challenges to intervention implementation. Challenges arising from these differences could be prevented by firstly assessing operators' internal functions early on in the process, and ensuring adequate time was available for operators that needed to make any necessary changes, such as training staff.

Regardless, Revealing Reality was keen to include a broad range of industry operators and push operators to be as innovative as they could. This at times clashed with operators' available resources or capabilities. Operators' ability to secure staff time and team resources for the project was essential for consistent progression with intervention design and delivery. This was made particularly difficult when operators had to respond to regulatory changes or unforeseen demands, such as those related to COVID-19. Even though COVID-19 reduced some operators' capacity, and therefore availability to engage with the co-creation process, COVID-19 increased the need for safer gambling considerations. This need subsequently

helped to increase the priority of the *Safer Gambling Messaging Project* internally for some operators.

Collaboration and relationships between all parties were impacted when there were delays or challenges during the project. A major tension for the commissioning and regulatory bodies was operators withdrawing, due to the budgetary implications this caused for them.

Collaboration and internal cross-team commitment to operators was also key for efficiency in their co-design and delivery process. Inevitably, different teams had different focuses, priorities and objectives which sometimes hindered effective collaboration on the project. Importantly, however, operators had internal expertise which, when secured to work on the project, meant key tasks were progressed more efficiently and successfully. In contrast, a drawback of having multiple teams involved with little clarity over project aims and direction is that it can make it difficult for a team to cease ownership of the initiative from the start and progress with consistency.

### **Intervention and project impacts**

Customer choice over which channel to receive safer gambling messages appeared to influence the message's impact on customer's behaviour. This choice also allowed operators to ensure the message used an appropriate tone of voice that was non-accusatory, and this was perceived by operators to have had a positive impact on customer's attitudes towards the communication.

Overall, the interventions were seen by some operators to show promise of a positive impact on customers engaging in low-medium risk gambling and preventing them from reaching a stage of problem gambling. These operators also struggled to identify any potential negative effects of implementing and testing safer gambling messaging interventions. Other operators felt it was too soon to observe changes in customers' gambling behaviour, or to conclude that any changes that had occurred were a direct impact of the safer gambling messaging intervention itself.

Despite the scepticism over direct, observable impacts on customers' gambling behaviours from some operators, commissioning and regulatory bodies and Revealing Reality shared the view that results from this project could be used as a starting point to widen interest and knowledge around safer gambling messaging. Commissioning and regulatory bodies hoped that the initiative would help support the use of evidence-based approaches to developing and testing safer gambling messaging and progressively become an expectation across the industry.

## **Concluding lessons**

### **Project management and communication**

Where there were multiple organisations and phases of the project, there were times when updates or timelines were not shared as often or transparently, leaving some organisations feeling out of the loop. Having agreements in place ahead of the project launching, including agreed and accessible timelines for updates and information sharing, and clear processes put in place, would help to prevent miscommunications, and increase understanding of the

implications of withdrawing from the start. This includes ensuring operators were fully committed publicly or in writing to the project to minimise the chance of withdrawal or clarity on the process involved should they wish to withdraw from the project.

In addition, Revealing Reality would have benefited from a better understanding of the abilities and complexities of each operator. This would have allowed Revealing Reality to have had more awareness of the possibilities within each operator and the definite limitations at the outset. Subsequently, Revealing Reality would have been able to define contingencies ahead of the practical barriers to the implementation of messaging interventions occurring altogether. An example of this includes interventions where floor staff needed to be trained, which had limited capacity for late-stage changes.

### **Fostering positive relationships and collaboration**

The relationships formed between the operators at the onboarding workshop helped to inspire healthy competition and enthusiasm for the project, which seemed to diminish as the project continued. A key recommendation for future projects in which operators are testing safer gambling messaging interventions is to foster this competitive relationship and eagerness by holding regular catch ups between operators if they wish to be involved.

Furthermore, staff working on safer gambling messaging initiatives should be prepared to request time from their colleagues where their skills and team functions are required. Having a clear understanding of the intervention idea and project aims (including how these align with the organisation's strategy) can help to facilitate effective collaboration within operators from the start, as gaps in training and knowledge will become more evident.

### **Managing industry changes and expectations**

Regulatory changes are likely to continue to occur in future, and we cannot predict what unforeseen impacts COVID-19, or other circumstances could pose for operators in the future. This highlights the need for operators in the industry to consider the strategies that helped operators manage sudden changes and competing priorities on this project, such as ongoing senior buy-in. Consistent senior buy-in appears pivotal for installing organisation-wide commitment to safer gambling messaging testing, and requesting team resources to work on such initiatives to ensure they are secured early on. This meant that safer gambling initiatives and evaluations were not deprioritised when misaligned with retail goals.

### **Safer gambling messaging testing and evaluation**

The findings suggest that encouraging customers to adopt safer gambling behaviours is not reliant on the success of a single intervention. Instead it appears to be facilitated by the ongoing commitment of continuous efforts and ways of interacting with customers that require operators to be communicating safer gambling behaviours as though it is a normal part of the customer journey, utilising their brand and creative skills in the process.

Although rare, messaging interventions that result in monetary loss for operators can result in internal pressure to have safer messaging interventions pulled by senior staff, which proves challenging for junior staff that are trying to remain engaged in such projects or initiatives. We therefore advise that conversations should happen across all teams within operator



organisations to make everyone aware of the potential commercial or monetary impacts prior to launching an initiative. This should help ensure that interventions will not be discontinued prematurely based on unforeseen monetary impacts.

Once obtained, evidence of positive impacts from safer gambling messaging interventions can help staff at senior managerial levels (i.e. the board) install momentum through motivation in the organisation for safer gambling initiatives going forward. Therefore supporting operators both to develop effective messaging, and also the capacity to evaluate the effectiveness of those messages, can potentially play an important role in helping operators limit the harms that can be associated with gambling and address a clear public health issue.

# Appendices

**Appendix 1.** Part one: co-creation process staff information sheet and consent form

## Safer Gambling Messaging Phase II

### Information sheet

We'd like to invite you to take part in an evaluation of the [Safer Gambling Messaging Phase II research project](#) commissioned by GambleAware, which aims to explore the processes involved in developing the programme. Before you decide to take part in the evaluation we would like you to understand why the evaluation is being done and what it will involve. **Please read the following information carefully.**

#### Who is conducting this evaluation?

The evaluation is being conducted by the Behavioural Insights Team. The Behavioural Insights Team is an independent social purpose organisation that conducts research and evaluations and makes recommendations for how to improve services. The Behavioural Insights Team have been funded by GambleAware to evaluate the Safer Gambling Messaging programme.

#### Why are we doing this evaluation?

We would like to learn about your experiences of the process in setting up the Safer Gambling Messaging programme. We will use this interview, and other data gathered to:

- map the way in which the process took place;
- identify barriers and facilitators to its effectiveness; and
- gather lessons that can be used for future programme development.

#### Do I have to take part?

Taking part is entirely voluntary. If you consent to taking part then you will be asked to participate in an interview, which will last up to 45 minutes and will be conducted over the phone. The researcher will briefly cover the details of the study, provide an opportunity for you to ask questions and will ask for your consent before starting the interview.

#### What happens with my data?

With your consent, the Behavioural Insights Team will collect your contact information and your responses to the interview for the purposes of the research project. It will not be used for any other purposes. Please refer to our Privacy Policy at <https://www.bi.team/privacy-policy/> for more information.

The interview will be audio recorded. The audio-recording will be uploaded to our secure drive and deleted from the recording device. Following the interview, the audio-recording will be sent securely to a transcription agency, which will act as the data processor for transcribing the audio. The agency will return the transcript securely to BIT and delete the audio-recording and transcript within three months. The transcription will be uploaded and stored to our secure drive.

#### How will you use my data?

We may use anonymous quotes or a summary of your answers in a research report, presentation or other deliverable. This means that we will not use your name, the name or location of your organisation, or any of

the responses you highlighted in the transcript for removal. While we will take the steps detailed above to remove identifiable information, our ability to ensure all information attributable to you is removed will be limited due to the small number of participants and commissioning and regulatory bodies we are interviewing. We will share the report with GambleAware and it will also be published on GambleAware's website. We therefore advise you to only speak about information during the interview that you would be happy to be published.

### Will I be able to review my transcript?

Yes, the transcript will be sent securely to you, and you will have the opportunity to highlight any responses you feel are inaccurate or do not wish to be included, or which you believe could make you specifically identifiable, either in the transcript or if used in any subsequent write up of the findings. You will then securely send the transcript back to BIT, and we will remove the responses that you have highlighted from the transcript. Recordings, transcripts and personal contact information will only be accessed by key members of the research team, and deleted six months after project completion (anticipated to be July 2021).

### More Information

#### Your rights in relation to your personal data

You have the right to withdraw your consent to the processing of your personal data at any time and without giving a reason, up until the point where we have deleted all personal data we collected for the purposes of this research. If you would like to withdraw your consent, please contact the data protection officer at BIT on [dpo@bi.team](mailto:dpo@bi.team). Please see our Privacy Notice at <https://www.bi.team/privacy-policy/> for more details about your rights.

Please note, that if you withdraw consent, we will not process your data any further, but if processing has already occurred (for instance, your interview responses have already been combined with those of other interviewees during analysis or reporting), we may not be able to fully remove all of your data. We may also keep proof of consent which contains personal information, for a number of years after the research has been completed in order to meet legal and statutory requirements and/or because this is a requirement of the research's funder.

You also have the right to make a complaint at any time to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the UK supervisory authority for data protection issues ([www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)). We would, however, appreciate the chance to deal with your concerns before you approach the ICO so please contact us in the first instance.

### Safeguarding

**Your personal information will be treated confidentially and will not be shared with other people except as set out in this information sheet, and except in circumstances where our researchers consider there is a safeguarding or child protection issue; a whistleblowing/malpractice issue; or a risk to your life or the lives of others, when may be necessary to share your personal information.**

Thank you for reading this information. If you have any questions or would like more information about the evaluation, please contact Lauren Crouch on [lauren.crouch@bi.team](mailto:lauren.crouch@bi.team).

Kind regards,  
Lauren Crouch

4 Matthew Parker Street,  
London,  
SW1H 9NP  
[www.bi.team](http://www.bi.team)

## Consent form

If you are happy to participate in the evaluation as set out in this information sheet please read, tick the boxes and sign below:

- I am happy for BIT to use my contact details to schedule the interview
- I am happy to be audio recorded during the interview
- I am happy for my interview responses to be collected and used for the purposes set out in this information sheet
- I consent to participate in the interview

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Contact details

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2. Part two: intervention implementation staff information sheet and consent form

# Safer Gambling Messaging (part II)

## Staff information sheet

We'd like to invite you to take part in an evaluation of the [Safer Gambling Messaging Phase II research project](#) commissioned by GambleAware, which aims to explore the processes involved in designing and implementing safer messaging interventions. Before you decide to take part in the evaluation we would like you to understand why the evaluation is being conducted? and what it will involve. **Please read the following information carefully.**

### Who is conducting this evaluation?

The evaluation is being conducted by the Behavioural Insights Team. The Behavioural Insights Team is an independent social purpose organisation that conducts research and evaluations and makes recommendations for how to improve services. The Behavioural Insights Team have been funded by GambleAware to evaluate the Safer Gambling Messaging programme.

### Why are we doing this evaluation?

We would like to learn about your experiences of implementing the Safer Gambling Messaging intervention, and any benefits in taking part for you and your customers. We will use this interview, and other data gathered to:

- map the way in which the design of the intervention(s) took place;
- identify aspects that helped and hindered the intervention's implementation and effectiveness; and
- gather lessons that can be used for future safer messaging interventions.

### Do I have to take part?

Taking part is entirely voluntary. If you consent to taking part then you will be asked to participate in an interview, which will last up to 60 minutes and will be conducted over the phone. The researcher will briefly cover the details of the study, provide an opportunity for you to ask questions and will ask for your consent before starting the interview.

### What happens with my data?

With your consent, the Behavioural Insights Team will collect your contact information and your responses to the interview for the purposes of the research project. It will not be used for any other purposes. Please refer to our Privacy Policy at <https://www.bi.team/privacy-policy/> for more information.

The interview will be audio recorded. The audio-recording will be uploaded to our secure drive and deleted from the recording device. Following the interview, the audio-recording will be sent securely to a transcription agency, which will act as the data processor for transcribing the audio. The agency will return the transcript securely to BIT and delete the audio-recording and transcript within three months. The transcription will be uploaded and stored to our secure drive.

### How will you use my data?

We may use anonymous quotes or a summary of your answers in a research report, presentation or other deliverable. This means that we will not use your name, the name or location of your organisation, or any of the responses you highlighted in the transcript for removal. While we will take the steps detailed above to remove identifiable information, our ability to ensure all information attributable to you is removed will be

limited due to the small number of participants and commissioning and regulatory bodies we are interviewing. We will share the report with GambleAware and it will also be published on GambleAware's website. We therefore advise you to only speak about information during the interview that you would be happy to be published.

### Will I be able to review my transcript?

Yes, the transcript will be sent securely to you, and you will have the opportunity to highlight any responses you feel are inaccurate or do not wish to be included, or which you believe could make you specifically identifiable, either in the transcript or if used in any subsequent write up of the findings. You will then securely send the transcript back to BIT, and we will remove the responses that you have highlighted from the transcript. Recordings, transcripts and personal contact information will only be accessed by key members of the research team, and deleted six months after project completion (anticipated to be July 2021).

### More Information

#### Your rights in relation to your personal data

You have the right to withdraw your consent to the processing of your personal data at any time and without giving a reason, up until the point where we have deleted all personal data we collected for the purposes of this research. If you would like to withdraw your consent, please contact the data protection officer at BIT on [dpo@bi.team](mailto:dpo@bi.team). Please see our Privacy Notice at <https://www.bi.team/privacy-policy/> for more details about your rights.

Please note, that if you withdraw consent, we will not process your data any further, but if processing has already occurred (for instance, your interview responses have already been combined with those of other interviewees during analysis or reporting), we may not be able to fully remove all of your data. We may also keep proof of consent which contains personal information, for a number of years after the research has been completed in order to meet legal and statutory requirements and/or because this is a requirement of the research's funder.

You also have the right to make a complaint at any time to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the UK supervisory authority for data protection issues ([www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)). We would, however, appreciate the chance to deal with your concerns before you approach the ICO so please contact us in the first instance.

### Safeguarding

**Your personal information will be treated confidentially and will not be shared with other people except as set out in this information sheet, and except in circumstances where our researchers consider there is a safeguarding or child protection issue; a whistleblowing/malpractice issue; or a risk to your life or the lives of others, when may be necessary to share your personal information.**

Thank you for reading this information. If you have any questions or would like more information about the evaluation, please contact Lauren Crouch on [lauren.crouch@bi.team](mailto:lauren.crouch@bi.team).

Kind regards,  
Lauren Crouch

4 Matthew Parker Street,  
London,  
SW1H 9NP  
[www.bi.team](http://www.bi.team)

## Consent form

If you are happy to participate in the evaluation as set out in this information sheet please read, tick the boxes and sign below:

- I am happy for BIT to use my contact details to schedule the interview
- I am happy to be audio recorded during the interview
- I am happy for my interview responses to be collected and used for the purposes set out in this information sheet
- I consent to participate in the interview

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Contact details

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 3.** Part one: co-creation process Gambling Commission and Revealing Reality staff interview schedule

## Safer Gambling Messaging (phase II): Co-creation staff interviews

60 minutes

Interview structure

Main objective	Purpose of section	Guide timings
<b>1. Introductions and background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explains the purpose and guidance for the interview</li> </ul>	5 mins
<b>2. Initial involvement in the project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To understand respondent's initial involvement in the project</li> <li>To understand respondent's perceptions of the research brief (and experience responding to the ITT)</li> <li>To explore respondent's expectations and understanding of their role in the co-creation process</li> </ul>	10 mins
<b>3. Efficiency of the co-creation process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To map all activities undertaken by respondents co-developing phase II of the Safer Gambling Messaging project</li> <li>To identify the range of factors that helped or hindered the efficiency of the co-creation activities identified</li> <li>To explore GC/RRs experience collaborating with each other and GA</li> </ul>	20 mins
<b>4. Operators' capability and engagement with the co-creation process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To understand operators' initial and continued engagement with the project</li> <li>To identify factors that helped or hindered operators' engagement with the co-creation process and activities</li> <li>To understand the differences in operators capabilities to produce Safer Gambling Messaging interventions</li> </ul>	15 mins



<b>5. Perceptions of the interventions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To understand respondent's general perceptions of the interventions, including their views on the likely impact of the interventions</li> </ul>	10 mins
<b>6. Close</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thank you and close</li> </ul>	3 mins

### Topic guide

<b>1. Introductions and background</b>	5 mins
<p>Introduce yourself – stress role as independent research organisation and that we are here to gather all views and explain that all information gathered will be in strict confidence and no-one will be named in any subsequent write-up of this research.</p> <p>Explain the aim of the discussions; we are here to talk about your perceptions and experience of co-developing phase II of the Safer Gambling Messaging project.</p> <p><u>Stress that you want to understand the world from your (the respondent's) point of view. No answers are right or wrong – and we are not here to judge the decisions made or views held by [the interviewee].</u></p> <p>Explain that if at any point they feel uncomfortable or prefer not to answer a specific question they can just say so. The interview can end at any point and any question can be skipped.</p> <p>Get verbal permission to digitally record and take notes (written permission should already have been obtained).</p> <p>Explain that recording enables the interview to be transcribed for analysis alongside other interviews. Responses will be anonymised and combined with others', so they should feel free to speak openly.</p> <p>Once you have consent, start the voice recorder.</p> <p>State interview number and write down the necessary demographic information of the respondent corresponding with the number.</p> <p>Participant ID:.....</p> <p><b>I'd like firstly to know a little bit about you.</b></p> <p><b>1.1 Can you tell me a bit about the organisation you work for?</b></p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your role within the organisation?</li> <li>• How long have you been in the role for?</li> <li>• What does a typical day look like?</li> </ul>	
<b>2. Initial involvement in the project</b>	10 mins
<p>Explain that this section is about understanding their initial involvement and understanding of the project. <i>Note for the interviewer: do not spend longer than 15 minutes on this section of the interview</i></p> <p><b>2.1. Can you tell me about how you first became involved in phase II of the Safer Gambling Messaging project?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When did you first hear about/discuss phase II?</li> <li>• What information was provided about phase II of the project?</li> <li>• What were your initial thoughts?</li> </ul> <p><b>2.2 Gambling Commision: Can you describe any changes that occurred to the Research Commissioning and Governance Procedure during the process?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what ways, if at all, did this impact co-developing the programme?</li> <li>• What changes occurred to agreements between yourself, the Board and GambleAware?</li> <li>• What impact, if any, did updates to the agreements have?</li> </ul> <p><b>2.3 Can you tell me a bit about the research brief and invitation to tender (ITT)?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What did you understand about the project from the research brief/ITT?</li> <li>• What was phase II of the project aiming to achieve?</li> <li>• Gambling Commission: why was it important for the programme to increase operator capability?</li> <li>• Revealing Reality: Why did you decide to respond to the ITT?</li> </ul> <p><b>2.4 What was your understanding of your role in the co-development of the programme?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revealing Reality: What did you envision your role supporting operators would look like in practice?</li> <li>• What is your understanding of i) GambleAware and ii) Gambling Commission/Revealing Reality's roles?</li> <li>• How do their roles compare to yours? What works well/not so well about this?</li> <li>• In practice, has your role been what you had expected?</li> </ul>	
<b>3. Efficiency of the co-creation process</b>	20 mins

Introduce this section explaining that the questions are intended to find out about anything that helped or hindered their ability to co-develop the programme.

**3.1 Starting with the first, can you describe your experience of the activities that took place as part of co-developing the programme?**

- a) Kick off meeting(s)/workshops
- b) Logic model workshops
- c) Creative briefs (sent to operators)
- d) Consumer research
- e) Onboarding workshop (operators)
- f) Intervention toolkits/evaluation proposals
- g) Operator liaison and support

**3.2 In what ways did the activities go well/not so well? Note for the interviewer: aim to capture summaries of the key successes, challenges and barriers including what respondent's would do differently next time, in this section.**

1. Why did X challenges occur and how were they overcome?
2. How could the workshops have been improved?
3. Why did the shift in methodology to include consumer research occur?
4. What did you learn from the consumer research?
5. How well were the operators able to support with recruitment for the consumer research?
6. How was the onboarding workshop delivered? What preparatory work was required? How did operators respond?
7. How were intervention toolkits/proposals created? What could have been improved about i) the toolkits/proposals, ii) the process creating them?

**3.3 How did you work with i) GambleAware and ii) Gambling Commission/Revealing Reality during the co-development activities?**

8. What tasks did you collaborate on? What was useful/not so useful about this?
9. Did working together on X help/hinder any subsequent activities?
10. What could have been improved about working with GA/GC/RR?
11. What could be improved about the support that has been available to you?

**3.4 What impact has COVID-19 had on the co-creation process?**

- How were key events or activities impacted?
- How did operators respond to the impact of COVID-19?
- In what ways did COVID-19 impact your relationship with i) operators, and ii) GA/GC/RR ?

**4. Operators' engagement with the co-creation process**

15 mins

<p>Introduce this section explaining that the questions are intended to ask about operators' engagement with the co-creation process.</p> <p><b>4.1 Can you describe how operators' became involved in the project?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did you/GC/GA/RR communicate with operators? What was efficient/inefficient about this?</li> <li>• How was their involvement in the project confirmed?</li> <li>• Looking back, should any tasks have taken place when involving operators that didn't? What impact did this have on the process thereafter?</li> <li>• Were there any tasks that took place that shouldn't have or were not worthwhile? What would you do differently next time?</li> </ul> <p><b>4.2 Can you describe the different operators' engagement with the project?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At what points were operators particularly engaged/disengaged?</li> <li>• What boundaries did Praesepe set for their continued involvement? How did you respond to those? Why did Praesepe withdraw from the project?</li> <li>• Why were Victoria Gate considering withdrawing?</li> <li>• What was similar/different about Praesepe and Victoria Gate's disengagement?</li> <li>• What do you think it was about the other operators that facilitated them to engage?</li> <li>• What was your approach with the disengaged operator(s)?</li> <li>• Looking back, what key learnings did you take away from engaging operators? Could anything have been done differently to encourage operators' engagement?</li> </ul> <p><b>4.3 What capabilities did operators' display in their ability to create Safer Gambling Messaging interventions?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did operators' capabilities to produce interventions vary?</li> <li>• In what ways did operators differ in their understanding of how to produce safer gambling messaging interventions?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5. Perceptions of the interventions</b></p>	<p>10 mins</p>
<p>Introduce this section by explaining that it aims to understand their general impressions of the operators' safer gambling messaging interventions. <i>Note to interviewer: GC may be unable to answer the questions in this section. Gather any perceptions they have and probe accordingly.</i></p> <p><b>5.1 What are your perceptions of the final interventions?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the interventions' strengths/weaknesses?</li> <li>• What do you like/dislike about the interventions?</li> <li>• How have interventions changed from their original design?</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● How, if at all, did you think the interventions would affect gambling behaviour?</li><li>● What did you think it was about the intervention that would bring about X change in behaviour?</li><li>● Did you anticipate the interventions to have any other impact on customers?</li><li>● What improvements would you make to the interventions as they stand?</li></ul>	
<b>6. Close</b>	<b>3 mins</b>
<p><b>6.1 Do you have any questions on what we have covered in the interview?</b></p> <p><u>You can round off the interview by summarising the main points you learned from the interview and asking the respondent if they want to comment.</u></p> <p>Thank them for their time and reassure them that they will be sent their transcript to review the anonymity of their responses.</p>	

**Appendix 4.** Part one: co-creation process operator staff interview schedule

## Safer Gambling Messaging (phase II): Co-creation staff interviews

60 minutes

**Interview structure**

<b>Main objective</b>	<b>Purpose of section</b>	<b>Guide timings</b>
<b>1. Introductions and background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explains the purpose and guidance for the interview</li> </ul>	5 mins
<b>2. Initial involvement in the project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To understand operator's initial involvement in the project</li> <li>To explore operator's expectations and understanding of their role in co-developing their programme</li> </ul>	15 mins
<b>3. Efficiency of the co-creation process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To map all activities undertaken by operators during the co-creation process, both internally and externally</li> <li>To identify the range of factors that helped or hindered the efficiency of the internal and external co-creation activities identified</li> </ul>	15 mins
<b>4. Operators' engagement and capability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To understand operators' continued engagement including how operators worked with RR</li> <li>To identify factors that helped or hindered operators' engagement with the various activities, organisations and overall process</li> </ul>	15 mins
<b>5. Perceptions of the interventions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To understand operators' perceptions of the final interventions, including their recommendations for improvement</li> </ul>	10 mins
<b>6. Close</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thank you and close</li> </ul>	3 mins

**Topic guide**

<b>1. Introductions and background</b>	<b>5 mins</b>
<p>Introduce yourself – stress role as independent research organisation and that we are here to gather all views and explain that all information gathered will be in strict confidence and no-one will be named in any subsequent write-up of this research.</p> <p>Explain the aim of the discussions; we are here to talk about your perceptions and experience of co-developing phase II of the Safer Gambling Messaging project.</p> <p><u>Stress that you want to understand the world from your (the respondent's) point of view. No answers are right or wrong – and we are not here to judge the decisions made or views held by [the interviewee].</u></p> <p>Explain that if at any point they feel uncomfortable or prefer not to answer a specific question they can just say so. The interview can end at any point and any question can be skipped.</p> <p>Get verbal permission to digitally record and take notes (written permission should already have been obtained).</p> <p>Explain that recording enables the interview to be transcribed for analysis alongside other interviews. Responses will be anonymised and combined with others', so they should feel free to speak openly.</p> <p>Once you have consent, start the voice recorder.</p> <p>State interview number and write down the necessary demographic information of the respondent corresponding with the number.</p> <p>Participant ID:.....</p> <p><b>I'd like firstly to know a little bit about you.</b></p> <p><b>1.1 Can you tell me a bit about the operator you work for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What services do you offer customers?</li> <li>● What is your role within the organisation?</li> <li>● What department/division do you sit in?</li> <li>● How long have you been in the role for?</li> <li>● What does a typical day look like?</li> </ul>	
<b>2. Initial involvement in the project</b>	<b>15 mins</b>
<p>Explain that this section is about understanding their initial involvement and understanding of the project.</p>	

<p><b>2.1. Can you describe when you first heard about this phase of the Safer Gambling Messaging project?</b> <i>Note for the interviewer: operators may refer to the Responsible Gambling Messages project or Revealing Reality project.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What information was provided about the project? <i>Probe: clarity, usefulness, ways in which it was communicated</i></li> <li>• What did you understand the project was trying to achieve?</li> <li>• What types of discussions did you have internally when you first heard about the project? Why did you speak to these colleagues?</li> </ul> <p><b>2.2 Can you tell me a bit about how you became involved in the project?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What made you/your organisation decide to take part? What motivated you to be involved?</li> <li>• How was the decision made &amp; by whom?</li> <li>• What did you hope to achieve from taking part in a project like this?</li> <li>• Did you have any concerns at the time?</li> <li>• How was your involvement in the project confirmed?</li> <li>• Did any tasks internal to your organisation have to take place for you to be able to be partake?</li> <li>• Looking back, could anything have been improved about this process?</li> </ul> <p><b>2.3 What did you understand your role on the project would be?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How was it decided who in your team would have which roles on the project?</li> <li>• What activities/tasks did you expect to undertake?</li> <li>• What did you think working with Revealing Reality would look like in practice?</li> <li>• Has your role been what you had expected?</li> <li>• What is your understanding of the different roles and responsibilities of i) GambleAware, ii) Gambling Commission and iii) Revealing Reality?</li> <li>• How do their roles compare to yours? What works well/not so well about this?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3. Efficiency of the co-creation process</b></p>	<p>15 mins</p>
<p>Introduce this section explaining that the questions are intended to find out about anything that helped or hindered their ability to co-develop the programme.</p> <p><b>3.1 Starting with the first, can you describe your experience of the activities that took place as part of the co-creation process?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Creative briefs</li> <li>b) Consumer research</li> <li>c) Onboarding workshop (operators)</li> <li>d) Intervention toolkits/evaluation proposals</li> </ol>	



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How was it decided who from your team would take part in these activities?</li> </ul> <p><b>3.2 In what ways did the activities go well/not so well?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Why did X challenges occur and how were they overcome?</li> <li>● How prepared did you feel for the onboarding workshop, following the creative briefs? What would you improve about the briefs?</li> <li>● Can you tell me about the site visits as part of the consumer research? How did you find recruiting customers for the interviews?</li> <li>● What impact did the consumer research have on you/your experience co-developing the programme?</li> <li>● Can you describe your experience of the onboarding workshop?</li> <li>● What did you think of the i) draft intervention toolkit and ii) evaluation proposals? How relevant were they to your operator?</li> <li>● In what ways, if at all, did you use the different resources?</li> </ul> <p><b>3.3 What impact has COVID-19 had on the co-creation process?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How were key events or activities impacted?</li> <li>● How did you respond to the impact of COVID-19?</li> <li>● In what ways did COVID-19 impact your relationship with GA/GC/RR?</li> <li>● Did anything positive/good happen as a result of COVID-19 with regards to this project?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>4. Operators' engagement and capability</b></p>	<p>15 mins</p>
<p>Introduce this section explaining that the questions are intended to ask about their engagement throughout the co-creation process.</p> <p><b>4.1 Can you describe how you engaged with the different co-creation stages and activities?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● At what points were you particularly engaged/disengaged? Why did you engage more/less during those stages? Did this match your expectations?</li> <li>● What factors helped/hindered your engagement with the process?</li> <li>● What types of support did you receive internally (colleagues, management) to take part in the project? Did you encounter any barriers? How did you overcome them?</li> <li>● What types of support did you receive externally (RR/GC) to engage in co-developing the programme?</li> <li>● Did you request any changes with regards to your involvement in the project? Why did you request these changes? What did they enable/not enable you to do?</li> <li>● How did i) RR/GC and ii) internal colleagues respond to your requests? What impact did that have on your engagement?</li> <li>● Did you ever consider withdrawing? What influenced you not to withdraw?</li> </ul>	

<p><i>If withdrawn:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why did you withdraw from the project? What discussions happened internally and externally?</li> <li>• How did your team/colleagues reach an agreement to withdraw?</li> <li>• What steps had to be taken within your organisation to withdraw?</li> <li>• What steps did you have to take with GA (if relevant)/GC (if relevant)/RR to withdraw from the project? Who from your team actioned these steps?</li> <li>• How do you feel now about your decision to withdraw from the project?</li> <li>• Could anything have been done differently to encourage you to have remained on the project?</li> </ul> <p><b>4.2 In what ways did you work with Revealing Reality (and, if relevant, GC) during the co-creation process?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At what points did you communicate/have contact? How effective was this communication?</li> <li>• What tasks did you collaborate on? What was useful/not so useful about this?</li> <li>• Did working together on X help/hinder any subsequent activities?</li> <li>• What could have been improved about working with RR/GC?</li> <li>• What could be improved about the support that has been available to you?</li> </ul> <p><b>4.3 Can you describe any impact that working with RR has had on your ability to create safer gambling messages?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Without coaching from RR, would you have created the interventions in similar/different ways? Did RR add any value to the process of creating messages?</li> <li>• Did coaching from RR have any impact on your i) confidence (either positively or negatively) or ii) understanding to create the interventions?</li> <li>• Have learnings from working with RR changed any internal processes or procedures? Has internal capability been improved? In what ways? Have these changes been sustained?</li> <li>• Looking back, in what ways did you feel you could create the interventions without support from RR? How has your experience working with RR compared to these initial expectations?</li> <li>• Did you achieve what you hoped to from the project?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5. Perceptions of the interventions</b></p>	<p>10 mins</p>
<p>Introduce this section by explaining that it aims to understand their perceptions of their safer gambling messaging intervention.</p> <p><b>5.1 Can you describe your final intervention?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does the message contain?</li> <li>• How is the message sent to customers?</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Who are the audiences for the intervention? Were the audiences different from those you aimed to reach? Why were they different?</li> <li>● What triggers a customer to receive the message?</li> <li>● Are there any variations of the message?</li> <li>● How, if at all, has the intervention changed from its original design?</li> </ul> <p><b>5.2 What are your perceptions of the final intervention?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What are the intervention's strengths/weaknesses?</li> <li>● What works well about the intervention?</li> <li>● What areas of the intervention would you want to improve?</li> <li>● What was the intended impact of the intervention on gambling behaviour?</li> <li>● Did you think the intervention would impact customers in any other ways?</li> <li>● What did you think it was about the intervention that would bring about X change?</li> </ul>	
<b>6. Close</b>	<b>3 mins</b>
<p><b>6.1 Do you have any questions on what we have covered in the interview?</b></p> <p><u>You can round off the interview by summarising the main points you learned from the interview and asking the respondent if they want to comment.</u></p> <p>Thank them for their time and reassure them that they will be sent their transcript to review the anonymity of their responses.</p>	

**Appendix 5.** Part two: intervention implementation operator staff interview schedule

## Safer Gambling Messaging: Intervention implementation staff interviews

60 minutes

### Interview structure

Main objective	Purpose of section	Guide timings
<b>1. Introductions and background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explains the purpose and guidance for the interview</li> </ul>	5 mins
<b>2. Planning and designing the intervention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To identify the activities undertaken in designing the intervention, and planning its implementation</li> <li>To understand staff perceptions of the final intervention</li> </ul>	20 mins
<b>3. Implementation of the intervention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To map how the intervention was implemented and understand staff's role in the delivery</li> <li>To identify the barriers and facilitators to implementing the intervention</li> </ul>	20 mins
<b>4. Perceived impact of the intervention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To understand any perceived customer, staff and organisational impact of the intervention</li> <li>To explore the factors that affect customer change</li> </ul>	15 mins
<b>5. Close</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thank you and close</li> </ul>	3 mins

### Topic guide

<b>1. Introductions and background</b>	5 mins
Introduce yourself – stress role as independent research organisation and that we are here to gather all views and explain that all information	

<p>gathered will be in strict confidence and no-one will be named in any subsequent write-up of this research.</p> <p>Explain the aim of the discussions; we are here to talk about your perceptions and experiences of implementing the Safer Gambling Messaging intervention in your organisation.</p> <p><u>Stress that you want to understand the world from your (the respondent's) point of view. No answers are right or wrong – and we are not here to judge the decisions made or views held by [the interviewee].</u></p> <p>Explain that if at any point they feel uncomfortable or prefer not to answer a specific question they can just say so. The interview can end at any point and any question can be skipped.</p> <p>Get verbal permission to digitally record and take notes.</p> <p>Explain that recording enables the interview to be transcribed for analysis alongside other interviews. Responses will be anonymised and combined with other interviewee responses, so they should feel free to speak openly.</p> <p>Once you have consent, start the voice recorder.</p> <p>State interview number and write down the necessary demographic information of the respondent corresponding with the number.</p> <p>Participant ID:.....</p> <p><b><i>Note to interviewer: main questions in bold will launch discussions that are likely to cover many of the sub-questions across the different sections. Therefore, not all sub-questions will need to be asked, but the interviewer should probe on areas not naturally covered by the questions in bold.</i></b></p> <p><b>1.1 Can you tell me a bit about the organisation you work for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is your role within the organisation?</li> <li>● How long have you been in the role for?</li> <li>● What does a typical day look like?</li> </ul>	<p>Orientates respondent and gets them prepared to take part in the discussion.</p> <p>Outlines the 'rules' of the interview.</p> <p>To find out about the general context of their organisation and role within the company.</p>
<p><b>2. Planning and designing the intervention</b></p>	<p>20 mins</p>
<p>Explain that this section is about understanding the activities that were undertaken to design the intervention and plan its delivery, including staff's perceptions of the final message.</p> <p><b>2.1. Can you tell me about how you first got involved in the Safer Gambling Messaging project?</b></p>	<p>Introductory questions</p>

- What were your initial thoughts?
- What information was provided about the project?
- What were you hoping to achieve from the project?

## 2.2 Can you describe the activities that took place to design the messaging intervention?

Probe:

- Team i.e. who was involved
- Level of sponsorship from senior staff
- Organisational systems

- Who was driving the initiative? Probe: board level or below. Was it a cross-departmental initiative between marketing and compliance?
- What was the purpose of each activity?
- How were these activities facilitated? What was your role in designing the intervention?
- What resources were required to design the intervention? How did you access these resources?
- What worked well/not so well about the design process?
- What could have improved the design process?
- Was this process the same or different from other safer gambling initiatives you have undertaken?

## 2.3 Can you describe how your organisation planned the delivery of the intervention?

Probe (sections as before)

- What activities took place to plan the intervention's delivery?
- How were these activities facilitated? What was your role in planning the implementation of the intervention?
- Did you envision any challenges to implementation at this stage?
- What worked well/not so well about planning how the intervention would be implemented?
- How prepared did you feel to deliver the intervention prior to delivery?

## 2.4 Can you provide an overview of the Safer Gambling Messaging intervention?

- What did the message contain?
- What types of customers received the message?
- How was the message sent to customers? Probe: SMS, email, website alert, campaign
- Was there any eligibility criteria for customers to receive the message?
- Did you predict any challenges at this stage?

aimed at understanding staff's initial involvement in the project.

Introduces the focus on identifying the intervention's design and delivery planning process.

Aims to explore staff's perceptions of the final intervention design.

3. Implementation of the intervention	20 mins
<p>Introduce this section explaining that the questions are intended to find out about how the intervention has been implemented in practice, including anything that helped or hindered their organisation's ability to deliver the intervention.</p> <p><b>3.1 Can you describe your role in the delivery of the intervention?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What were your main responsibilities?</li> <li>● How did you fit into the team structure?</li> <li>● Has your role been what you had expected?</li> <li>● In what ways, if any, did your role change during implementation of the intervention?</li> </ul> <p><b>3.2 Can you tell me how the intervention has been <u>delivered</u> in practice?</b></p> <p>Probe:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Team i.e. who was involved</li> <li>ii) Level of sponsorship from senior staff</li> <li>iii) Organisational systems</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Has the intervention changed from the original design?</li> <li>● What worked well when implementing the intervention?</li> <li>● What does 'successful' delivery of the intervention look like?</li> <li>● What challenges did you face implementing the intervention? How have they been overcome?</li> <li>● What impact did COVID-19 have on the delivery of the intervention?</li> <li>● What worked well/not so well when collaborating with other staff internal to your organisation?</li> <li>● What worked well/not so well when collaborating with other staff external to your organisation?</li> <li>● Was this process the same or different from other safer gambling initiatives you have undertaken?</li> </ul> <p><b>3.3 Can you describe anything that has supported you to implement the intervention?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In what ways have you received support or supervision related to the Safer Gambling Messaging project? Probe: senior staff</li> <li>● In what ways, if at all, did this impact the delivery of the intervention?</li> <li>● What could be improved about the support that has been available for you?</li> <li>● Can you tell me about the resources that have been made available?</li> <li>● Is there anything missing that would have enhanced your ability to deliver the intervention?</li> <li>● If you were to deliver the intervention again, what would you do differently?</li> </ul>	<p>Introduces questions aimed at understanding how the intervention has been implemented, including staff's role in delivery.</p> <p>These questions are aimed at understanding the range of factors that enhanced or hindered staff's ability to deliver the intervention.</p>
4. Perceived impact of the intervention	15 mins

<p>Introduce this section by explaining that it aims to understand any perceived impact the intervention has had to date, including any factors that have helped or hindered change from occurring.</p> <p><b>4.1 Can you describe any impact you think the messaging intervention has had so far?</b></p> <p>Probe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) on customers’ actions and gambling behaviours;</li> <li>ii) on staffs’ feelings, actions and experiences at work; and</li> <li>iii) on your organisation’s processes, policies, capabilities, structures and collaborative working.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Are customers doing anything differently?</li> <li>● What types of customers have changed their behaviour? Why?</li> <li>● Have you changed anything you do in your role as a result of the intervention?</li> <li>● Has the organisation adopted any new processes or policies, as a result of implementing the intervention?</li> <li>● Can you describe what aspects to the intervention have brought about the changes you have highlighted?</li> <li>● Can you describe any factors that have enhanced the intervention’s impact in the areas you’ve mentioned? Were these changes expected?</li> </ul> <p><b>4.2 What has the intervention been less able to change?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What types of customers have not changed their behaviour? Why?</li> <li>● Is there anything your organisation wanted to adopt or change, but couldn’t?</li> <li>● What factors have restricted the intervention from bringing about change?</li> <li>● What influence did COVID-19 have on the (potential) impact of the intervention?</li> <li>● What would you change about the way in which the intervention was delivered?</li> <li>● Do you have any final recommendations for improvement to implementing the messaging intervention?</li> </ul>	<p>These questions are designed to find out about the perceived impact of the intervention.</p> <p>These questions are aimed at understanding the areas the intervention has had limited impact and why.</p>
<p><b>5. Close</b></p>	<p>3 mins</p>
<p><b>5.1. Do you have any questions on what we have covered in the interview?</b></p> <p><u>You can round off the interview by summarising the main points you learned from the interview and asking the respondent if they want to comment.</u></p> <p>Thank them for their time and reassure them that they will be sent their transcript to review the anonymity of their responses.</p>	



## **Appendix 6. Data security and storage**

All interviews were audio recorded, and audio recordings were stored on BIT's secure drive and deleted from the recording device. The external transcription agency, acting as data processor for transcribing the audios, deleted the recordings and transcripts within three months, and BIT will delete all personal data including contact information, transcripts and audios after six months of project completion (anticipated to be July 2021).

## **Appendix 7. Internal ethics review and considerations**

The process evaluation was classified as medium risk according to BIT's internal risk assessment. The details of the process evaluation were therefore submitted to BIT's internal ethics panel for review. The key ethical considerations involved ensuring that participants from all backgrounds would be able to take part and that no personal or social harm was experienced. We welcomed participation from anyone who had been involved in the design and implementation of the intervention or experienced it as a customer. The only other requirements were having digital access and speaking English fluently or as a second language (EAL). As interviews were conducted remotely over the phone, we expected participants to incur minimal practical costs for taking part.

Customers using gambling services are deemed vulnerable subjects; therefore we put in place several steps to avoid the research from causing any social or personal harm. This included instructing interviewers to not probe about serious gambling behaviours and harms during the interviews and providing information of where participants could get further support if needed (National Gambling Helpline, Citizens Advice Bureau and Samaritans). We also gave the participants the opportunity to remove their transcript, to remove any data they did not want taken forward for analysis and final write-up.

Following the interviews, all participants were sent their transcripts for review. Participants were requested to highlight any data they would like removed ahead of analysis and write-up. In total, five participants made changes to their transcript and their final transcripts were taken forward, along with the original transcripts of the seven participants who made no changes. One participant requested that no material from their interview was directly quoted in the report.