

GAMBLING COMMISSION

6 November 2017

Dear On-Course Bookmaker

Preventing underage gambling

Protecting children from being harmed or exploited by underage gambling is a vital objective both for the licensed gambling operators and for us. The majority of gambling sectors have demonstrated progress in reducing the risk of children gambling, mainly through their test purchasing programmes. As you know, we have been looking to the on-course bookmakers to do the same. Evidence of progress is mixed:

We are aware of instances at Redcar racecourse on 2 August this year where we consider that adults were placing bets with on-course bookmakers on behalf of children. In some cases, the betting slip was handed to the child directly in front of them. While under-18s are allowed into racecourses, bookmakers must make every reasonable effort to stop bets being placed on their behalf.

On Sunday 13 August, we supported the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead in undertaking a number of underage gambling test purchases at Windsor racecourse during a 'family fun day' meeting. We were pleased that all eleven bookmakers refused service to the underage testers and expect to see similarly good results during future tests. We will continue to support local authorities that wish to carry out age testing of bookmakers at tracks in their areas.

We acknowledge the support of the FRB in arranging regular age tests carried out by Serve Legal, noting that such testing is not a requirement under the Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice. These tests have been running since March 2015, but the pass rate has been very slow to improve. For the most recent period, operators passed 36% of tests. We accept that on-course bookmakers operate in a different environment to those in high street premises. However, this still compares poorly with the rates achieved in other gambling sectors, and with those achieved by providers of other age-controlled products.

We look to all on-course bookmakers to address the challenge of preventing underage gambling, and to justify the 'lighter touch' regulation they currently enjoy.

Yours faithfully,



Paul Hope
Programme Director



Victoria Square House
Victoria Square
Birmingham B2 4BP

T+44 121 230 6666
F+44 121 230 6720
www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk