Summary Report of Stakeholder Roundtable Event

Using Purposeful Collaboration to Support the Digital Wellbeing of Young People

RG PLUS

March 2nd 2021

Overview

RG Plus, with the support of Playtech, hosted an online stakeholder discussion to explore how collaboration can help advance the digital wellbeing of young people.

Held under the Chatham House Rule and chaired by Christian Toennesen, the session included three presentations followed by a Q&A portion. Participants included 34 stakeholders representing charities, corporates, academics, and industry bodies from the UK, US, and Canada. Attendees included contributors to the report and organizations with an interest in collaboration, safer gambling, digital wellbeing, and mental health. The following provides an overview of the discussion, questions, and insights exchanged during the session.

Background

Various sectors are focusing on supporting the wellbeing of young people – both adolescents and young adults – in digital spaces. However, many sectors are operating with limited insights and resources, leaving gaps in knowledge and support across online spaces.

This roundtable focused discussion around a recent piece of work that was undertaken and designed by RG Plus to address key gaps and answer the following question: How can stakeholders build purposeful collaborations to advance the digital wellbeing of young people 12-24 years, specifically as it relates to online entertainment – gaming, gambling, and social media use. The resulting report outlines initial answers to key questions in order to develop a guide for building purposeful collaborations to support the digital wellbeing of young people.

Summary of Roundtable Proceedings

Insights: Highlights from RG Plus Research & What's Next

Dr. Sasha Stark, Responsible Gambling Council (RGC)/RG Plus

Benefits of Multi-Stakeholder Approach:

Those interviewed for the report noted several benefits of a multi-stakeholder approach, such as variety of knowledge, expertise, and perspective; access to data, insights, and leavers out of reach; and the creation of an evidence base.

Key Insights:

There is a need for a shared definition of digital wellbeing that includes gambling; education should cover online spaces broadly; industry needs to acknowledge and act on a shared responsibility for the digital wellbeing of those on their platforms; government should focus on consistency, collaboration, and safeguards; and remaining gaps include additional research, safeguards, and support options, and increased evaluation.

Critical Success Factors:

- Centre goals around a shared definition of digital wellbeing, consolidating ambitions, and industry insights

- Assemble stakeholders from across digital entertainment spaces, including young people, frontline expertise, and independent organizations

- Outline complementary roles for the industry, government, and independent organizations

- Focus activities on building relationships, generating shareable outputs, and addressing areas of need

- Evaluate emerging digital initiatives and share learnings to maximize impacts

Implications

- **Infrastructure:** define digital wellbeing, build multi-stakeholder collaborations, develop a common set of principles for ensuring independence

- **Culture:** build a culture of evaluation and information sharing across sectors, build a culture of responsibility in the industry

- **Collaboration:** engage internationally, harmonize stakeholder ambition, mobilize industry resources

- **Education:** provide holistic education for young people and those who care for them, recruit social media influencers

- **Safeguards & Support:** develop broad and tailored safeguards, encourage innovation among industry, support communication and skill building among young people, expand support delivery options and content

- **Regulation:** focus on collaboration, consistency, and safeguards

Summary of Roundtable Proceedings

Insights: Highlights from RG Plus Research & What's Next Cont'd

Dr. Sasha Stark, Responsible Gambling Council (RGC)/RG Plus

- **Research:** on online gaming and gambling behaviours and opinions, positive and negative impacts of time online, education and support best practices

Research Next Steps:

RG Plus is currently examining 1) how online gambling relates to digital wellbeing and 2) how technology can be used to deliver information and support across the player spectrum

Insights: Collaboration in Action – The DRWG as a Model for Cross Sector Collaboration

Cliff Manning, Parent Zone and UKCIS Digital Resilience Working Group (DRWG)

UKCIS Digital Resilience Definition:

- Digital resilience is a dynamic personality asset that grows through engaging with the appropriate opportunities and challenges online, rather than through avoidance and safety behaviours. It is about learning how to recognize and manage risk, and learn from difficult experiences\

Parent Zone:

- Parent Zone bridges the gaps between parents, policy, and platforms. It provides insights and knowledge in order to shape a better future for all.

UK Council for Internet Safety:

- The government, tech community, and third sector work together to ensure the UK is the safest place in the world to be online.

DRWG:

- The DRWG produced a digital resilience framework (available at www.drwg.org.uk) which outlines how to enable individuals to develop digital resilience. This includes 4 elements of digital resilience – Understand, Learn, Recover, and Know.

Insights: Collaboration in Action – The DRWG as a Model for Cross Sector Collaboration Cont'd

Cliff Manning, Parent Zone and UKCIS Digital Resilience Working Group (DRWG)

What is Resilience:

- Resilience is not a linear process. It is dynamic and it is a collective responsibility. Resilience fluctuates over online spaces and time. It is currently unclear how much digital resilience is affected by different online environments and to what extent it transfers between settings. In including gambling in discussions of digital wellbeing, we need to be cautious to not speak about the positives of gambling for those who are underage.

Fostering Collaboration:

- The DRWG has brought in external speakers and developed an online hub (i.e. resources, case studies).

Insights: Implications for the Broader Digital Entertainment Sector

Dr. Brett Abarbanel, UNLV International Gaming Institute

Stigma:

- There are many similarities between the gaming, gambling, and social media fields, and one of those is stigmatization of gaming and gambling behaviours. Stigma can be addressed through collaboration as individual stakeholders may not know what other stakeholders have experienced on this topic.

Gaming Industry:

- One point that was not highlighted in the report was the history of the gaming industry as a scapegoat for 'enabling' crime and violence (e.g. Doom and Mortal Combat were said to be causing violence). It took decades before scientists discovered that the associations are quite small between gaming and violence. If we want to be open to sharing data and collaboration we have to avoid the same moral panic. We're likely viewing the industry as adversarial because they've been putting their guards up in response to wrongdoing accusations for around 40 years - we have to do the outreach to overcome this and build collaborations.

Digital Wellbeing Initiatives in Gaming Sector:

- There are a few initiatives to note including the Esports Integrity Commission, which is working on establishing a safeguard and wellness centre; focuses on prevention and education on sexual abuse, as well as response to and resolution of this behaviour; and provides resources for victims and wellness programs that are accessible to coaches and athletes. Partners in this initiative include video games streaming and esports companies, leagues, teams, and game publishers. It was also mentioned that popular brand sponsorship in the games industry often includes charity fundraising.

Fostering Collaboration:

- Stakeholders should consider how to communicate wellbeing or safer practices in the context of extensive industry marketing messaging for products. It is also important to consider different stakeholders' motivations. Industry stakeholders shouldn't be afraid to make mistakes and other stakeholders need to embrace their impetus to change even when the attempt isn't exactly right. Transform these into learning experiences.

Themes from Q/A & Discussion

The Trajectory from Gaming to Gambling:

The report defines young people as 12 to 24 years and notes that more research is needed. In exploring the trajectory from being a gamer to a gambler – is there evidence that indicates whether or how risky gaming leads to risky gambling?

- The scope of the research was broad to capture those who are at the beginning of using social media as well as higher risk young adults (18-24) and those who are legal age for gambling. Initiatives for those age groups would be very different. Additional research is needed on the trajectory from online gaming to online gambling, in part because some research is finding that link but there is still a focus on the negatives of these behaviours. We need more research and programming for young people so they do not follow a trajectory to risky gambling.

Effective Communications in Advertising:

How do you communicate responsible gambling in the context of industry advertising?

- More training for marketing teams is needed in order to teach them the ways that these messages can affect people. We need to work with these teams to give them some guidance and help them along the way.

- It is important to note that language used in gaming advertising is very different from gambling (e.g., 'most addictive game, you will never want to stop playing' – are used in gaming but would not be used in gambling).

- There is an important question about measurement: what are we measuring? Is it the clicks? Maybe in COVID we move into wellbeing as the measure as focus is impacts that are long-term for the community.

The Voice of Parents and Young People:

Did the research include interviews with parents and young people and did you see a difference between the parents and young people's view of online safety / digital harm?

- The research included discussions with a couple of young people to get their perspective. They highlighted difficulties in social media spaces specifically as well as concerns around being a student in the COVID 19 context.

The Starting Point for Collaboration:

Is the starting point for collaboration a shared definition? Do you need this to work together?

- A shared definition should be one of the first ambitions but doesn't have to be there as a starting point because it can be too limiting.

- Measurement helps stakeholders set goals and knowing when you achieve them is important. In terms of the definition, for digital wellbeing there is very limited consensus on what it means. It's both defining what it is broadly and conceptually as well as looking at the impact.

Insights from Examining Different Models in the Gaming Sector:

Anime games have a model where a small proportion of players provide the profits for the developers, not dissimilar to the majority of profit for the gambling industry coming from those at risk of gambling. The 'gatcha' system has been criticized because of its addictive nature. Has the team looked at this type of games and is there any learning from Japan that we could consider?

Themes from Q/A & Discussion Cont'd

- During the interviews and focus groups, a few people mentioned the context in Japan and other countries, but mostly around the types of treatments (namely intensive bootcamps) that exist for gaming problems.

Models of Collaboration in Gaming and Gambling:

What do collaborations look like between gaming and gambling – are these different sectors on different trajectories?

- An important difference is regulation. The gambling industry is one of the highest regulated industries in the world whereas the games industry is one of the least regulated. As they have gone through their growth trajectories they haven't followed the same track. Game organizations are seen as stealing the competition where gambling companies need a license.

- A similarity with both gaming and gambling is that parents and families are concerned about the impact.

Effective Communication with Younger People:

How do we best engage with young people?

- A big part of effective communication is to speak to young people and families but to do this effectively, you need to collaborate with the network and influencers around those young people and organizations that can legitimately target and work with them.

Comment on Speculative Investments (e.g. Robinhood):

In the last 6 months there has been an increase in young people coming forward with gambling problems who got into gambling through speculative investments. There are limited resources for educating young people about the differences between investments and gambling as well as limited protection (i.e. blocking software) for speculative investments compared to gambling.

Insights & Concluding Remarks

- A roundtable will be held in the summer to discuss the results of RG Plus' research examining how online gambling and digital wellbeing are related.

To read the full report and executive summary, please visit:

www.rg-plus.com

All in for Safer Gambling

ResponsibleGambling.org

411 Richmond Street East, Suite 205,
Toronto, ON, Canada M5A 3S5
Fax: +1 (416)–499-8260
Phone: +1 (416) 499-9800

Follow us

To read the full report, please visit
www.rg-plus.com