User Audit of Gambling Operator Websites

Gambling Policy and Research Unit, 2025

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THE GAMBLING POLICY & RESEARCH UNIT

BIT is a global research and innovation consultancy which combines a deep understanding of human behaviour with evidence-led problem solving to improve people's lives.

We work with all levels of government, nonprofits and the private sector, applying behaviour science expertise with robust evaluation and data to help clients achieve their goals.

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Contents

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

What we did

In the summer of 2025, BIT **audited five gambling websites** operating in Great Britain. We recruited six **participants**, who completed a set of tasks on these websites, **narrating their thoughts and feelings** throughout. The tasks focused on finding information related to **safer gambling and setting up tools** that limit the time and money customers can spend gambling.

The [methodology](#) enabled us to understand the barriers and facilitators of making well-informed decisions and using gambling management tools, by directly observing user behaviour.

What we found

On some [home pages](#), **safer gambling information was hard to find**, as promotions were much more prominent. However, large 'safer gambling' buttons were easy to notice on websites that had one.

The [safer gambling pages](#) included **plenty of information, but this was often unstructured and repetitive**, hindering comprehension and engagement.

Variation in naming was a barrier to finding the right [tool](#), but participants found **the setup easy**. **Default limits were** often seen as **too high**.

What we recommend

We [recommend to the Gambling Commission (GC)](#) to **explore whether operators' interpretation of regulations aligns with intended outcomes.** We saw a large variation in tool design and naming, which might lead to consumer harm.

We [recommend that operators](#) **simplify finding safer gambling information and using tools**. Participants disliked operators which they thought made these journeys difficult.

We give further recommendations to [researchers](#) and [people who gamble](#) in the last section of this report.

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Background and Methodology

This project focused on how users understand and interact with gambling management tools

What are gambling management tools?

Tools that help people understand and limit their gambling, like spending limits, time reminders, and options to take breaks or stop gambling completely.

Some tools must be offered by all gambling operators licensed in Great Britain.

Why did we conduct this research?

The take-up of tools is low: only 8% use financial limits, the most popular type. This suggests that tool design or presentation does not encourage uptake.

To fully understand barriers to uptake and provide solutions, it is important to conduct research on real gambling websites with potential users of the tools, going beyond lab experiments.

What were we trying to understand?

How do consumers experience and perceive gambling management tools and content on gambling operator platforms?

How do consumers comprehend and interpret information presented on gambling operator platforms?

See Appendix 1 for full research questions.

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We built on BIT's previous work auditing operator websites, games, and gambling management tools

Mar 2024: Audit of gambling management tools
- Inconsistent tool design and offer across platforms.
- Barriers to finding and using tools.
- Limited messaging about safer gambling, framed as the individual's responsibility.

Aug 2025: This project
User Audit of safer gambling pages and tools, building on our previous audits by capturing actual users' perspectives and experiences.

Jul 2022: Audit of gambling operator websites
- Closing accounts took longer than opening, and a minimum balance was needed for withdrawals.
- Tools exploited behavioural biases by introducing frictions and high defaults.
- Customers received no feedback on the time and money they spent gambling.

Aug 2025: Audit of online scratchards
- Safer gambling messaging was less salient than promotions and often focused on individual responsibility.
- Hard to find detailed information on how to play, potential wins, and chances.
- Game design encouraged playing and discouraged exiting.

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To capture real users' views and experiences, we ran think-aloud sessions
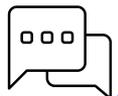
What is the think-aloud method?

The think-aloud method is a research technique where participants are asked to **verbalise their thoughts, feelings, and reasoning** as they perform a specific task — in this case, navigating the gambling websites.

Why did we choose this method?

BIT's previous research auditing gambling platforms relied on existing academic studies and researchers' expert judgement. The think-aloud method complements these approaches by **involving actual users and collecting data on their thoughts and actions in real time**.

What are its limitations?

We had a **small sample**. This enabled quick insights but no subgroup analysis or quantifiable results.

Participants may have struggled to verbalise thoughts or said what they thought researchers expected. We often prompted 'thinking aloud' and stressed that there were no wrong answers.

See the Appendix for more information about the methodology.

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We conducted twelve sessions with six participants

Recruitment June 2025	Think-aloud sessions July 2025	Data management July 2025	Data analysis July – August 2025

We worked with a specialist agency to **recruit six individuals** based in Great Britain for qualitative research.

- Aged 19-64
- Three males, three females
- Representing a range of ethnicities and past gambling behaviours

Each participant **reviewed two websites**, focusing on the home page, safer gambling page, and gambling management tools. Participants narrated their thoughts and feelings while doing so.

The sessions were conducted **in person.**

We collated our notes and transcripts into a **data management framework**, **based on the user journey** that participants followed.

We analysed the data using the **framework approach** to arrive at both cross-operator and operator-specific insights.

The framework approach involves categorising each participant's views and actions by themes. This allows researchers to establish findings specific to participants, but also uncover common themes across participants.

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We audited five gambling operators representing various sizes and products in the market

We used a purposive sampling approach to capture data from a range of operators, representing diverse customer experiences across the gambling market.

Participants were asked to confirm before each session that they were not familiar with the websites of the operators they were asked to audit.

Category	Operator(s)
Popular, well-established operators with a broad product offering (i.e. excluding lottery-only operators)	William Hill; SkyBet
Emerging operators	BetMGM, Pub Casino
Operator focused on bingo products	Tombola

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Participants navigated the home and safer gambling pages, then set up and amended tools

01.

Home page
Browsing promotions and looking for safer gambling messages

02.

Safer gambling page
Reading about the available support

03.

Setting up tools
Deposit limit, reality check, and self-exclusion

04.

Final reflections from participants
Overall views and comparisons with a previously tested website

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Findings

Home page

Participants struggled to find safer gambling content on the home page unless there was a salient button for it

In general, participants struggled to find safer gambling content on the home pages of gambling operators and said they would not look for it unprompted.

- Participants praised operators with a button in their sidebar or toolbar. When this was not available, participants scrolled to the bottom of the page. When they did not find a button there, they stopped searching.
  - Logos of external organisations were frequently listed at the bottom, but these were seen as less useful.

Participants suggested that this search could be made easier by piggybacking on the most utilised aspects of the site, e.g. by placing a button alongside a betting slip or deposit button.
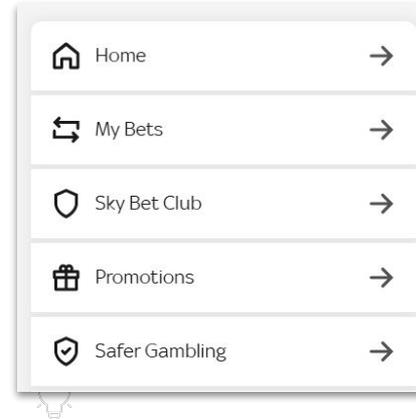

Figure 1: Screenshot of SkyBet's home page, where the sidebar included a direct link to the safer gambling page

'If you are in the zone you aren't going looking for the safer gambling, you are looking at betting slips or depositing — it should be there.' (Female, 38)

Participants found home pages 'overwhelming' due to the large amount of information displayed

Participants felt overloaded with information while navigating home pages, which encouraged them to use shortcuts and ignore much of the content displayed.

- More established operators made use of subheadings and menu bars which made it easier for users to navigate through the homepage.
  - Users found emerging operators more difficult to navigate, as these used subheadings less frequently.
- All operators used colour to direct attention. Whatever was most colourful became most salient and engaging — typically promotions.

Why this is important

Evidence suggests that information overload is underlined harmful to the customer as they are unable to process all the information. As a result, individuals have to be selective with their attention, and less salient aspects (like safer gambling information) can go unread, even if they are important.

'The information is always going to be tucked away.' (Female, 50)

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Promotions dominated participants' attention, making it harder to locate safer gambling content

Use of colour, visual hierarchy and interactivity across all operators meant that promotions took the majority of participant's attention.

- Promotions offering free entry were most salient. Participants consistently commented on being willing to try these as they did not see any risks.

The salience of promotions came at the expense of safer gambling content.

- Participants generally expected this to be the case: safer gambling felt like an afterthought of the operators.
- However, there was a minimum expectation that it should be easy to locate safer gambling information whilst on the homepage.

Figure 2: Screenshot of Tombola's home page, dominated by colourful promotions

'This site is more about making money than staying safe, they all are.' (Male, 64); 'It feels so engaging, I wouldn't even bother to click on safeplay.' (Female, 38)

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Participants were not able to easily understand their chances of winning

Across all operators, participants found it difficult to identify their chances of winning the games and bets promoted on the homepage.

- Participants consistently attempted to click through to find further information, but this did not provide any more clarity to them.

The use of gambling jargon created more confusion than clarity for participants.

- There was a tendency to ignore information that was seen as difficult to comprehend, such as Return to Player figures or unique names assigned to various prizes, such as 'Mega' and 'Major'.

Participants commented that they would only stake their own money if they knew the odds of winning.

Figure 3: Screenshot of a BetMGM promotion on the homepage and the click-through. Despite the additional information, participants remained uncertain, not understanding 'RTP of 70%'.

Why this is important

BIT ran an online trial in 2022, testing how different ways of showing odds information impact comprehension. We found that the Return to Player format, often used in the industry, led to lower comprehension than alternatives.

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The home page gave participants very little information on the terms & conditions of promoted games

Across all operators, participants found little information about the terms and conditions of the promotions and advertisements on the home page.

- On Pub Casino and Tombola, participants struggled to find any T&Cs and assumed they would need to click through to another page. Too much information on the homepage, however, discouraged them from looking for long.
- Even after successfully locating the T&Cs, participants found that there was too much information presented to them, which put them off from engaging with the content.
- Participants also commented that they visit gambling websites for 'fun', and reading T&Cs does not align with that.

Figure 4: Screenshot of Pub Casino's home page, promoting games without disclosing any information about T&Cs

'Looking at these T&Cs, I would probably go and play something else.' (Male, 46)

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Safer gambling page

Structured information made navigation easier, but participants wanted clearer headings

Participants commented on how the segmentation of information (i.e. through the use of dropdown menus) made navigation far easier.

However, there were also some drawbacks to these formats:

- Once finding the information that is most relevant, there was a tendency for the rest of the information to be ignored.
- Headings using gambling management tool names were not always clear and understandable. In contrast, Tombola presented some dropdowns with direct questions, such as 'do you have a gambling problem', which participants found clearer.
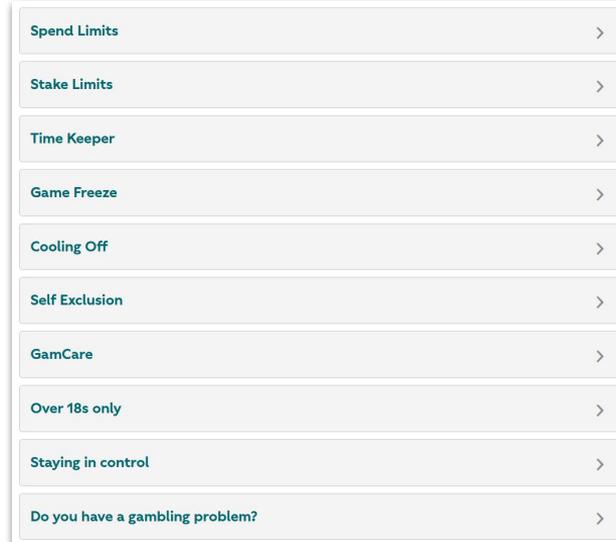
Spend Limits	>
Stake Limits	>
Time Keeper	>
Game Freeze	>
Cooling Off	>
Self Exclusion	>
GamCare	>
Over 18s only	>
Staying in control	>
Do you have a gambling problem?	>

Figure 5: Screenshot of Tombola's safer gambling page, with the dropdown menus and headers for each tool.

'In reality if I was on this page, I wouldn't scroll down further to these final tools once I've been through these top ones.' (Male, 64)

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21

Concise, distinct information helped participants navigate, but repetitive descriptions were off-putting

Well-established operators presented information in distinct sections, keeping information concise and relevant throughout. Participants appreciated this and found it easier to understand and navigate the safer gambling information compared to other sites.

Emerging operators, however, presented the same pieces of information alongside every tool, making the texts feel repetitive and too long.

- This led to information overload and made participants less willing to engage with the relevant information.
- Participants also felt like lengthy, repetitive texts were condescending, reducing their willingness to read them.
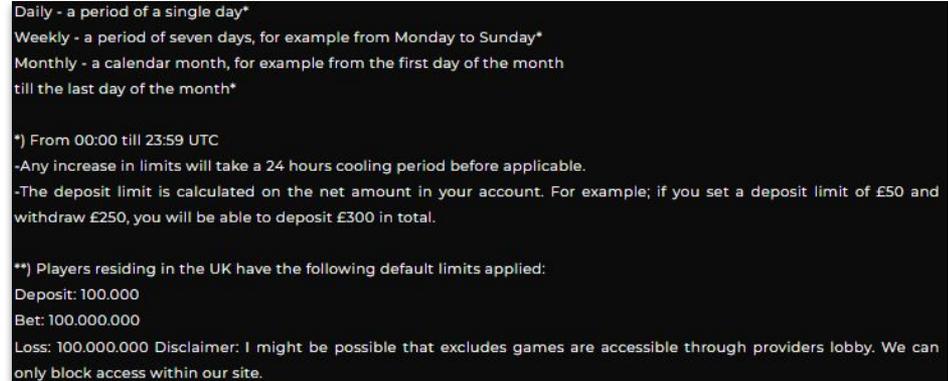

Daily - a period of a single day*
Weekly - a period of seven days, for example from Monday to Sunday*
Monthly - a calendar month, for example from the first day of the month
till the last day of the month*

*) From 00:00 till 23:59 UTC
-Any increase in limits will take a 24 hours cooling period before applicable.
-The deposit limit is calculated on the net amount in your account. For example; if you set a deposit limit of £50 and withdraw £250, you will be able to deposit £300 in total.

**) Players residing in the UK have the following default limits applied:
Deposit: 100.000
Bet: 100.000.000
Loss: 100.000.000 Disclaimer: I might be possible that excludes games are accessible through providers lobby. We can only block access within our site.

Figure 6: Screenshot of the information Pub Casino included next to multiple tools, including the timeout tool, despite its lack of relevance.

'Doesn't feel like you need all the information, it's treating the person like a child' (Male, 46)

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Participants appreciated signposting to external support, but more clarity was needed on how to use them

Overall, the reference to external support organisations was appreciated by participants. However, there was some confusion over how they could be used and what they were.

- Participants were unsure whether the listed support organisations were affiliated with the gambling operators or not.
- Participants were unaware of most organisations listed, for example, someone wrongly assumed that GamCare was the new name for Gamblers Anonymous.

Participants also saw these support organisations as more useful for affected others, such as family members concerned for a loved one.

GAMCARE FORUMS & GROUP CHATROOMS
GamCare offers a moderated online forum and daily online group chatrooms to enable those affected by gambling harms to connect with others in similar situations, share their experience and support one another.

www.gamcare.org.uk/gamcare-forum www.gamcare.org.uk/group-chatroom

Figure 7: Screenshot of GamCare listed as an external support organisations on BET MGM's website

'I'm not sure what GamCare is, it looks like it is spelled wrong [...] I wonder if it's the new name for Gamblers Anonymous..' (Female, 38)

'these [organisations] would be more targeted to loved ones wanting to get in contact over being worried for a family member.' (Male, 46)

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Self-assessment was seen as important, but participants expected clearer next steps

On sites where participants were unable to identify a self-assessment checklist (William Hill, BetMGM) they commented that this is something they would want to see. Tombola, SkyBet and Pub Casino were all praised for having this available.

- Tombola was praised further for having a salient follow-up link to an external organisation. However, on Pub Casino's website, participants couldn't identify this additional step, failing to spot the link below.
- Participants also wanted a suggestion by the operator about which external organisation to go to, rather than leaving it to the user (especially for those screening as 'problem' or 'moderate-risk gambler').

Figure 8: The end of the self-assessment and follow-up information on Tombola (top) and Pub Casino (bottom). The link was immediately available on Tombola, but users had to scroll down further for a link on Pub Casino.

'They could give you a recommendation on who you should go to. If you get a severe score it should recommend you to one of the external orgs.' (Male, 29)

Setting up tools

Too many similarly named tools made choice and navigation more difficult

- On emerging operator websites, a high number of similar tools made it harder to find the right option. One participant noted that seeing three time-based tools made it difficult to understand the differences between them.
- Participants often found tool names unclear, which added friction when trying to set them up quickly.
- Tool names were inconsistent across operators, so even those familiar with a tool on one site were sometimes slow to find the find the right tool on another.
- Participants also spent longer finding relevant tools when this involved friction, such as multiple clicks. This discouraged participants from engaging with tools.

SESSION LIMIT

Session Limits let you set the maximum time you can stay logged in during each session. When you approach your limit, you will be notified. Once the time is up, you'll be automatically logged out. Increasing your Session Limit also includes a 24-hour waiting period, but we recommend asking yourself if you are perhaps missing out on other life commitments by increasing the length of each session.

REALITY CHECK

Reality Check reminders help you stay on top of how long you've spent gambling. Set time-based alerts (e.g. every, 15, 30, 60, or 90 minutes), and a pop-up will appear at each interval. You must engage with the Reality Check message to either continue playing, or log out of your BetMGM account. **Example:** If you turn on a **60-minute** reminder, you'll receive a prompt after every hour of gameplay, with the option to continue or log out.

TIME-OUT

A Time-Out allows you to take a short break from gambling – from 24 hours up to 6 weeks. During this period, your account will be inaccessible and will automatically reopen once the Time-out expires. If you wish to take a much longer break from gambling, please see our Self-exclusion tool. *Please note: If you want to apply a time-out on any other LeoVegas operated sites, you must do so from each site (BetMGM, BetUK, LeoVegas, Pink Casino, 21.co.uk and Slotboss).*

Figure 9: Time-based tools on BetMGM's website that participants found confusing

'You want to gamble, not waste time on other things.' (Female, 50)

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Self-exclusion tools were noticeably harder to find and understand than other tools

Participants were unclear about the difference between timeout and self-exclusion, often selecting the wrong tool and being surprised at the short time limits available.

- Navigation was particularly challenging on Pub Casino, where participants struggled to locate the self-exclusion tool at all.
    - Participants suggested making this section more prominent and placing Timeout and Self-exclusion side by side to clarify their distinct purposes.

William Hill was the only site where participants noticed GAMSTOP, a cross-operator scheme, alongside the operator's own self-exclusion. Although a brief description was provided, participants felt clearer guidance would be helpful.
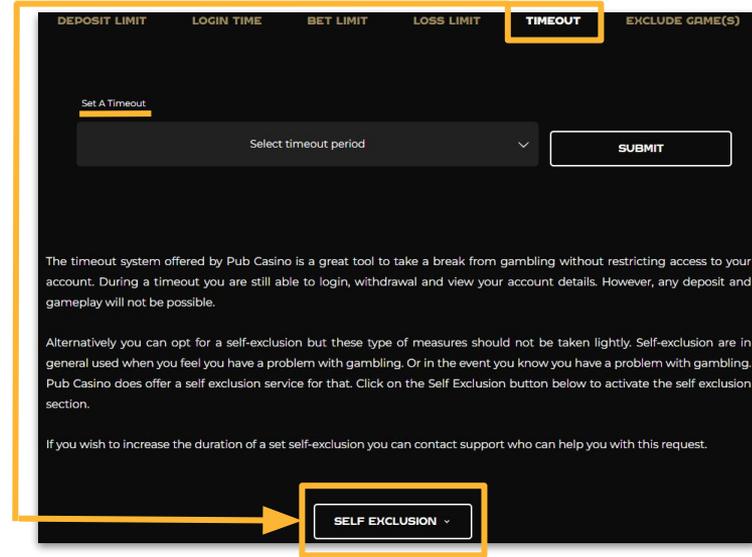

Figure 10: Screenshot showing where Pub Casino's self-exclusion tool is located, which participants found difficult to find.

'It's like they don't want you to take an exclusion period.' (Female, 50)

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The clarity of tool descriptions varied, but participants generally understood what the tools were for

Participants generally understood the purpose of tools once they had found them.

- Their understanding was often based on prior experience, which meant that some participants read little or none of the information provided on the page.
- However, for those who did read the information, clear and simple language was valued:
  - On Tombola, one participant found it easy to understand the description of limits.
  - In contrast, on BetMGM, another participant found the information unclear and said they wanted clearer, more straightforward wording.

SPEND LIMIT

Set daily, weekly, or monthly limits to stay in control of your spending. You can set this anytime, including when making your first deposit, via the Safer Gambling Tools page, via your Wallet or by contacting our Customer Support team. Spend Limits are calculated based on your net position and considers deposits and withdrawals.

Example: Let's say you have a monthly Spend Limit of **£100**, and throughout the month you deposit **£50** and withdraw **£20**, leaving your limit at **£70** remaining. Lowering your limit takes effect immediately. Increasing your limit triggers a 24-hour waiting period, we'll then ask for you to confirm that you still wish to increase it before it takes effect.

Please note: Spend Limits apply across all brands within LeoVegas Group: BetMGM, BetUK, LeoVegas, Pink Casino, 21.co.uk and Slotboss.

Figure 11: Screenshot of the description of spend limits on BetMGM's website, which participants thought was unclear.

Why this is important

A 2023 BIT study found that most people do not correctly understand how gambling management tools work. This highlights the need for clearer explanations on sites, which may encourage more widespread use.

Perceived tool usefulness depended on restrictiveness, ease of use, and who they were thought to help

Deposit limits were seen as helpful across all sites, but views varied on who they were for, from 'sensible people' to those experiencing harm.

- Participants on emerging sites said the tool would only be useful if it was easier to find and set up.

> The process was so frustrating for one participant that they described it as their *first and last time using it.*' *(Male, 46)*

Views on **reality checks** were mixed — some found them helpful for staying aware of time, others said they were not restrictive enough and could be ignored.

- Suggestions included adding more frequent warnings and a short break, or logging out automatically.
- One participant liked that BetMGM offered a choice to keep playing or log off when the warning appeared.

Self-exclusion was seen as helpful, but mainly for people experiencing serious gambling harm.
Some participants saw self-exclusion applying across multiple sites as positive, while others thought it might discourage people from using the tool.

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Setting up gambling management tools was generally easy with some variation across operators

Participants found deposit limits, reality checks, and self-exclusion easy to set up. This was seen as especially important for self-exclusion, to prevent people from being tempted away from using it.

- However, some operator-specific friction points made the process feel less smooth:
  - William Hill: Having the homepage open in the background was distracting during setup.
  - Pub Casino: Confusing and unclear information made it harder for participants to find relevant guidance.
- Participants appreciated clear confirmation that a tool had been activated, rather than having to assume it had worked.
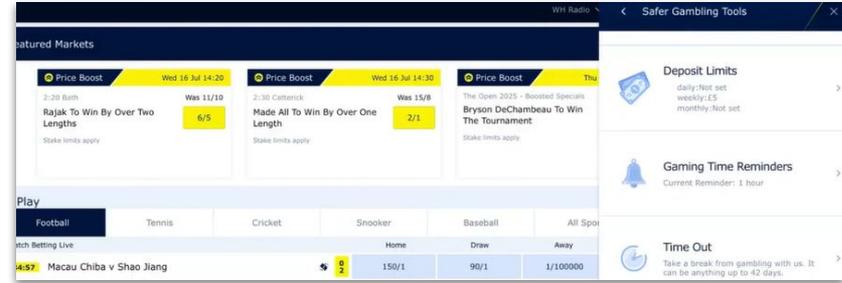
Figure 12: Screenshot of William Hill's gambling management tools setup page, with the homepage visible in the background.

Tombola's tools had features that participants liked:

- A 'Lock limits' option, which allowed users to fix limits for between 24 hours and 12 months;
- A £1 reward for setting up a tool for the first time. We recommend further research to explore the effects of gambling-related incentives for tool setup, as these may have backfire effects, such as encouraging more gambling.

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30

Participants did not like high default limits

Default and minimum values for deposit limits and reality checks varied widely across sites. Established operators tended to have lower defaults than emerging sites.

- High defaults were seen as off-putting and led to concerns that people might set higher limits than intended.
- Operators with high defaults were seen as irresponsible or as though they did not care about customers' losses.
- There was less concern about maximum values, which were viewed as necessary to cater for all needs.

The £100,000 default deposit limit on Pub Casino was seen as off-putting. One participant said it was '*Quite daunting to see that number to start with.*' (Male, 29)

**) Players residing in the UK have the following default limits applied:
Deposit: 100.000

Figure 13: Screenshot of a note telling Pub Casino customers that their default deposit limit is £100,000

Why this is important

Suggested values influence the limits people set — a phenomenon called anchoring. BIT tested this effect in 2020 on a gambling website. We found that a lower anchor reduced the average limit set by 45%.

A participant in the user audit said that she might easily gloss over the option to lower a default setting.

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Participants valued choice and flexible options when setting limits

Participants generally wanted more flexibility when setting limits.

- Some preferred using a free text box, as it gave them the freedom to set values that suited them.
- Others were comfortable with dropdown menus, but only if they included smaller increments and started at lower values to make them more accommodating.
- For self-exclusion, the 6-month minimum was viewed as too long. Participants were confused about how tools aimed at shorter exclusion, such as timeouts, differed.
  - One suggestion was to align these tools so that self-exclusion could also offer shorter durations.
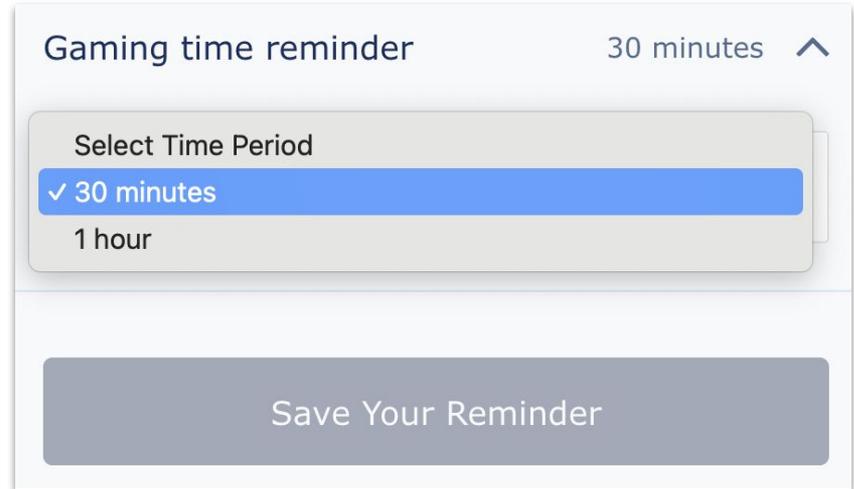

Figure 14: Screenshot of a time-based tool on William Hill with only two options.

Participants valued cool-off periods but suggested making them more restrictive and providing more clarity

The 24-hour cool-off period on amending limits was seen as helpful.

- However, some felt it should be more restrictive. For example, by matching the cool-off period to the timeframe of the limit, limiting how often changes can be made, or removing the option to amend tools altogether.

For both limits and self-exclusion, participants could not always find information about increasing the limit or removing the tool. In both cases, they assumed it wasn't possible, but felt this should be more clearly stated.

Manage my limits ✕

All limits on Sky Betting & Gaming are net limits. You can set new limits or decrease an existing limit at any time, but increasing or removing them will take 24 hours to process.
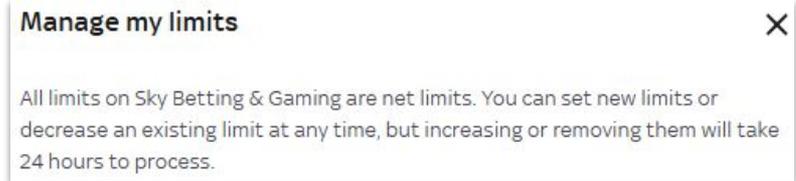
Figure 15: Screenshot of the 24 hour cool-off period description on SkyBet

'It encourages people to stop and think and shows an increase in a negative light.' (Female, 40)

'If you set a limit, you should stick to it.' (Male, 64)

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Final reflections from participants

Participants gave high-level comments at the end of the sessions

We asked participants for their overall reflections on the experience of navigating the gambling websites. They highlighted the following:

Navigation

Ease of access varied by operator; some tools felt hidden or hard to locate.

Users favoured clear, prominent buttons to find safer gambling information.

Design

There was a preference for a single page listing all safer gambling tools and related information.

Participants did not want to see any promotions while reading about safer gambling or setting up tools.

Perceived users

Participants saw tools as useful for those with 'gambling problems'.

External support was seen as useful for family members wanting to help loved ones.

Tone

Language used on safer gambling pages varied greatly. Participants wanted operators to move from 'robotic' to 'caring'.

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Participants also reflected on how to improve the design and functionality of safer gambling tools

Safer gambling tools should stand out

Participants wanted the tools to be **easy to find**, for example, by having a designated button next to the deposits.

Operators should proactively offer the tools on the site rather than hiding them.

Improve page design

All tools should be listed on a **single page with easy to understand, empathetic text.**

Operators should improve the clarity of tool descriptions, through writing these in simple, concise language.

Tools should have a **clear button** for setup.

Tools could be made more effective

Once set, **limits such as a cool-off period should not be able to be changed** for a specified period.

There could be **more options given when setting tools**, for example, offering lower deposit limits options.

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Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings support previous research done by BIT

User audit finding	Relevant BIT gambling project and takeaway
Participants were not able to easily understand their chances of winning, calling out RTP as gambling jargon they do not understand.	Comprehension of gambling odds: the common industry format of displaying odds, RTP, was hard to understand by participants.
Some tool descriptions were text-heavy and unclear, causing confusion.	Gambling management tool survey results: only a third to half of participants correctly understood most tools.
Participants struggled to find safer gambling content on the home page unless there was a salient button for it.	Behavioural audit of gambling management tools: hidden buttons made it difficult to find safer gambling pages.
Promotions dominated participants' attention, making it harder to locate safer gambling content.	Behavioural risk audit of scratchcards/instant win games: Gambling promotions were more visible than safer gambling content.
Participants did not like high default limits for the gambling management tools.	Applying behavioural insights to design better safer gambling tools: Deposit limit tools should avoid offering customers excessively high predefined limit options.

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This research also produced new insights that were not detected using other methodologies

Perceptions of promotions

Promotions were seen as not only attractive, but also risk-free. Participants ignored their lack of understanding of the odds and the terms and conditions whenever they thought they were not risking their own money.

Tools seen as useful for others

Participants saw tools as useful for others and would not have considered using any themselves. They viewed tools as appropriate for people with 'gambling problems' but not for themselves, even when engaging with gambling sites. This perception barrier may significantly limit proactive tool adoption.

Unfamiliarity with support organisations

Participants had a lack of familiarity with support organisations, such as GamCare. This suggests clearer explanations of what these organisations offer and how to access them could improve their effectiveness.

The importance of experience with gambling

Those with more experience with gambling were more confident in navigating the site, understanding the odds, and gambling management tools. However, they often did not read the information displayed, thinking that they already knew what was there.

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Recommendations for regulators

Minimise distractions when setting gambling management tools

Participants often had to navigate multiple pages to find safer gambling settings, increasing exposure to advertising and other on-site content. In some cases, the homepage remained visible in the background, making it harder to focus on the tools.

We recommend the GC explore requiring these pages to be directly accessible from the home page and free from promotions, including in the background.

Reduce inconsistency between tools

We observed wide variation between operators in how gambling management tools were named, placed, and explained. This forces users to re-learn each system and can lead to delays or errors in setting up protections.

This suggests inconsistent interpretations of current requirements. The GC might need to set clearer expectations, so that all operators follow a standardised approach.
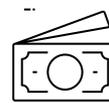
Review excessive default limits

Default limits varied greatly between operators, with some set at very high levels (such as £100,000 at Pub Casino). High defaults can anchor users to set higher limits than intended.

Based on previous research combined with the current findings, we support the upcoming legislative change requiring the use of free text boxes when setting deposit limits.

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Recommendations for operators

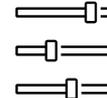| **Make gambling management tools easy to find**	**Be transparent about how tools work**	**Give users more control over limits**
Participants viewed operators less favourably when tools were hidden or spread across multiple pages, making them harder to use and increasing exposure to distracting promotions.	Trust was higher when operators clearly explained how tools worked, provided details such as cool-off periods, and confirmed when protections were in place. Participants were frustrated when this information was missing, vague or overly complex.	High default limits were seen as signals that the operator prioritised profit at the expense of player wellbeing. Participants also reacted negatively to restrictions that prevented them from choosing their own limits, such as drop-down menus with limited options.
We recommend that operators use A/B testing to identify the placement of the safer gambling page that enables customers to access tools most quickly, and share findings to improve industry practice.	**Our findings suggest that providing plain-language explanations at an accessible reading level and giving timely confirmations could improve the user experience.**	**Allowing users to set their own limits without unnecessary restrictions could boost user safety, build trust, and improve perceptions of the operator.**

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Recommendations for researchers

Where user audits have potential

- Well-suited to research questions where first-hand experience is central, allowing researchers to capture any differences between what participants say and what they do.

- Particularly effective for mapping end-to-end user journeys, identifying friction points, and uncovering moments of confusion or disengagement.

- Can highlight gaps between intended design and real-world use, offering insight into how tools are actually experienced.

- Valuable as a scoping stage before larger studies, such as RCTs, to refine hypotheses and identify which interventions to test.

Further research recommendations

- Test participant-generated ideas from this audit to assess their effectiveness in improving usability, comprehension, and uptake of gambling management tools.

- Examine how framing, tone, and placement of tools influence perceived relevance among a wider range of users, including those who do not see themselves as experiencing gambling harm.

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Recommendations for people who gamble

Remember, operators must offer gambling management tools

All licensed operators are required to provide dedicated safer gambling information and offer certain tools such as financial limits, and self-exclusion via GAMSTOP.

Our audit found that some tools and information can be hidden or buried in multiple menus, so it can be helpful to locate them early, before you might need them.

Use tools proactively as well as reactively

Gambling management tools can benefit everyone, not just those experiencing harm. They can help you regain control, but can also be used as a preventative measure, helping you stay in control before problems arise.

Setting limits or reminders before you experience any harm can help you stay in control and make the tools more effective.

Consider protection beyond operators

Tools outside gambling sites, such as phone screen time limits, bank gambling blocks, or independent software, can complement operator tools or may be better suited to some people.

Exploring options beyond operator tools can help you build a stronger safety net and find the tool that works best for you.

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Get in touch:

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Research Questions

This research revisited key questions from BIT's previous behavioural audits:

- How do consumers experience and perceive gambling management tools and content on gambling operator platforms?
  - How do these perceptions impact their use and effectiveness?
  - What changes, if any, would consumers suggest to better support user engagement and control?

- How do consumers comprehend and interpret information presented on gambling operator platforms?
  - How do users engage with key informational content such as terms and conditions, odds, and wagering requirements?
  - How clear and trustworthy do they perceive this information to be?
  - How does their understanding of this content affect their behaviour on the platform?

In addition, we explored a new research question related to the methodology:

- How effective is the think-aloud approach for auditing gambling operator sites, what are its key benefits and limitations, and should it be adopted more widely in future research?

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Appendix 2: Topic guide

Researchers used a semi-structured topic guide to facilitate the think-aloud sessions. The topic guide contained questions and prompts that guided participants' attention, gave them instructions, and helped them narrate their thoughts and experiences.

| **Main instruction** | → | **Instructions for facilitators** | → | **Follow-up prompt** |

'Now, imagine you are trying to find information about how to stay safe while gambling. What would you do? Can you take me through how you would do this on the website?'

'If the participant is clearly struggling with navigating to the page, prompt them with a helpful, non-judgemental, pointer (i.e. clicking a hamburger menu, or checking the menu banner)'

'What was your experience like trying to find this page (the safer gambling page)?
- *Was it easy or difficult? Why?*
- *Were the menus easy or hard to navigate?*
- *Did you expect it to be easier? More difficult?'*