

Government pushes gambling industry into forming new body

The gambling industry has been forced to establish a new body to draw up a voluntary code for socially responsible advertising, weeks before the Gambling Act 2005 comes into force.

The group will monitor the code, adding to the plethora of different bodies, including the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), already regulating the industry. Members will be drawn from representatives of a number of gambling associations.

The formation of the group, however, has bewildered some in the industry. Jeremy Stern, managing director of gambling and promotion compliance experts Promoveritas, says: „There is already an organisation that controls restricted advertising. Why is there the need for another?“ Stern suggests that the gambling industry should have asked the ASA to adopt and police the guidelines which, as they stand, will have no statutory powers. Other sources predict that, in time, the ASA codes will have to be reconsidered to see if they should reflect these principles.

The code includes a pre-9pm watershed ban on television advertising and an end to gambling company logos on merchandise for children, such as replica football shirts. Advertisers are also required to include a reference to a website that provides advice on responsible gambling.

The guidelines are in addition to the legislation laid out in the Gambling Act 2005, due to come into force on September 1, and were thrashed out between the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and industry representatives after Gordon

Brown's newly appointed secretary of state, James Purnell, ordered a review of the new rules.

Some gambling companies are concerned that the 9pm watershed will aggravate demand and lead to price inflation. Online bookmaker Betfair's brand director, Oscar Nieboer says: „The limited inventory will force advertisers to be more aggressive in their messages and tactics, which is the last thing the government wants.“