

A photograph of three young men of diverse backgrounds looking at a smartphone together. The man in the foreground is of Asian descent, wearing a white t-shirt. Behind him are two other men, one of whom is holding the phone. The image is partially covered by a dark blue diagonal band that contains the main title and subtitle.

Executive
summary

Supporting the digital wellbeing of young people

Recommendations for moving forward
using purposeful collaboration

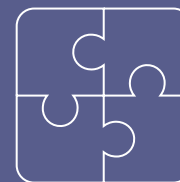
Context and rationale

Various sectors are focusing on supporting the wellbeing of young people — both adolescents and young adults — in digital spaces. The COVID-19 crisis has underlined the importance of digital wellbeing, with emerging research showing that many young people are experiencing increased difficulty maintaining control over the time they spend online. While broad efforts are being made to foster the digital wellbeing of young people, many sectors are operating with limited insights and resources, leaving gaps in knowledge and support across online spaces.

Purpose and approach

The current piece of work has been undertaken and designed to address key gaps by answering 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?* It is our hope that this endeavour will inspire positive collaboration and innovation among stakeholders in digital entertainment fields and inform practical action across sectors for supporting the digital wellbeing of young people.

This 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. It was developed using the insights generously provided by a diverse set of experienced and knowledgeable stakeholders — 33 people representing 27 organizations — in a series of group discussions and one-on-one interviews.



Key insights

A shared understanding of what we mean by **digital wellbeing** is needed in order to effectively direct collaboration efforts in this space.

The definition of and programs to support the digital wellbeing of young people should include **online gambling**. In particular, holistic education encompassing risks and risk mitigation strategies **across** digital entertainment spaces is needed for young people as well as their parents, peers, and support professionals. Similarly, collaborations should focus on including stakeholders of **various types from across sectors**.

The **COVID-19 pandemic** has highlighted areas of need as well as opportunities to be mobilized around the digital wellbeing of young people that can best be targeted through collaboration.

Digital entertainment industries should acknowledge a **shared responsibility** for and take steps to support the digital wellbeing of the people who engage with or on their platforms or products. Efforts should be supported by regulatory and policy focus on supporting **collaboration, consistency, and safeguards** across digital entertainment industries.

While important work is ongoing, there is much room for progress in supporting the digital wellbeing of young people that can be targeted through collaboration, namely the need for more **research**, additional **safeguards**, improved **support options**, and **evaluation** of initiatives.

Digital wellbeing is the balance between time spent online and offline and the maximization of positive and reduction of negative uses of digital tools and spaces — including gambling — that lead to an overall positive impact for the person and those around them.



Five critical success factors

Purposeful collaboration to support the digital wellbeing of young people is a complex process that requires stakeholders to work across sectors and be committed to and engaged in the partnerships for the long term. **Five critical success factors** have been identified that provide a framework for moving forward in implementing effective collaborations in this space.

1

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

2

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

3

Outline complementary roles for the digital entertainment industry, government, and independent organizations

4

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

5

Evaluate emerging digital initiatives and share learnings to maximize impacts from the front lines to policy

Implications and next steps

While many important insights have been uncovered in this initial piece of work, more research and discussion is required to further specify what we mean by digital wellbeing and how best to support it. Learnings from the current report are being taken forward in a series of **roundtable discussions** and have also informed a piece of **independent research** being conducted by RG Plus to gather insights on the definition and measurement of digital wellbeing as well as the links between digital wellbeing and online gambling among adults.

Based on the key insights above, the following **next steps** can guide practical actions for building collaborations across digital entertainment fields in efforts to support the digital wellbeing of young people.

Infrastructure



- Establish an agreed upon **definition** of digital wellbeing that includes online gambling
- Build (on) **multi-stakeholder groups** like the Digital Resilience Working Group UK in other countries and internationally
- Develop a common set of operating principles for industry to support digital wellbeing initiatives while ensuring the **independence** of non-industry stakeholders and to maximize the impact of sharing these resources

Culture



- Cultivate a culture of **responsibility** where the wellbeing of those using their platforms is a priority within all digital entertainment industries, including approaches directed to people on their platforms as well as initiatives with external stakeholders
- Foster a culture of **evaluation and information sharing** to maximize the use of available resources and inform frontline work as well as policy

Collaboration



- Share learnings across sectors, including applying learnings from the **online gambling** field to other digital entertainment fields and vice versa
- Capitalize on improved technology and breadth of expertise by engaging in **international** collaborations
- Harmonize ambition** and foster improved relationships between digital entertainment stakeholders by establishing shared goals, engaging in regular communication to build trust, and focusing on key issues in the context of COVID-19
- Mobilize industry resources** to identify areas of need and risk, by including stakeholders from across digital entertainment fields in collaborations, to evaluate initiative impacts, and to create outputs that can be used by others, particularly in the COVID-19 context

Education programs



Develop holistic education programs that cover risk and risk mitigation strategies **across digital entertainment spaces** and that are targeted at young people, their parents, teachers, and health professionals

Identify and recruit **social media influencers** for the provision of educational messaging

Safeguards and support



Digital entertainment platforms should create **broad and tailored safeguards** and tools for young people that are relevant across spaces, particularly during COVID-19 restrictions

Industry should use its insights and resources to **innovate** ways to support those on their platforms in their digital wellbeing

Identify approaches to support the communication as well as **community and skill building** of young people online, particularly during COVID-19 restrictions

Develop additional wellbeing support options for young people that offer a broad array of **delivery options**, include content on gaming and gambling harm, and integrate with digital entertainment platforms

Regulation



Implement evidence-based regulation that focuses on ensuring **consistency** in supports across online spaces, encouraging stakeholder **collaboration** on key topics, and outlining **safeguards**

Research



Conduct more research on online gaming and gambling **behaviours and opinions**, the positive and negative **impacts** of spending time in digital entertainment spaces, and appropriate **prevention and education** approaches

By implementing the key **insights** and **guide** for building purposeful collaborations outlined in this report, and directing next steps to addressing the **needs** around infrastructure, culture collaboration, education, safeguards, supports, regulation, and research noted above, digital entertainment industries will be well positioned to provide meaningful and widespread support for the digital wellbeing of young people.



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