

Bingo under the Gambling Act 2005

This fact sheet is intended to provide a general explanation of the circumstances in which “bingo” can be played under the Gambling Act 2005. It does not deal with every detail of the legislative provisions, or with the individual circumstances of a particular case. This fact sheet does not constitute legal advice and is not a substitute for the relevant legal provisions. If you are in any doubt about the legality of any gambling activities that you intend to promote or for which you intend to provide facilities, you are strongly advised to seek independent legal advice.

Cash Bingo

Cash bingo is primarily a commercial activity, and is licensed and regulated by the Gambling Commission. If you wish to provide cash bingo on a commercial basis you should consult the Commission: www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk.

Prize Bingo

Prize bingo is the kind normally played in funfairs and amusement arcades, for small participation fees and modest prizes.

It is typical of the prize gaming defined in section 288 of the Act, in which neither the nature nor the size of the prize are determined by the number of people playing or the amount paid for or raised by the gaming. Instead, the prize is put up in advance by the organiser of the game.

Under their existing permissions, bingo halls, adult gaming centres, travelling fairs, licensed family entertainment centres and holders of family entertainment centre gaming machine permits are automatically entitled to offer prize bingo. It may also be provided, for example in holiday camps and theme parks, under a prize gaming permit issued by a local licensing authority.

The maximum participation fee that may be charged for any one chance to win a prize in a game of prize bingo, wherever it is played, is 50 pence. The aggregate amount of participation fees, and the amount or value of prizes for which a game may be played, may not exceed £500.

Where prize bingo is played for money prizes, the following limits apply to the amount of a prize:

Adult Gaming Centres:	£50
Licensed bingo premises (where under 18s are excluded):	£50
Licensed bingo premises (where under 18s are permitted):	£35
All other cases:	£35

Club Bingo

Clubs that wish to provide facilities for bingo may do so under the “exempt gaming” provisions in Part 12 of the Act (section 269). Clubs need to meet a number of statutory criteria before they can offer gaming – please refer to the separate fact sheet on gaming in clubs.

The following rules apply to bingo played in clubs and institutes:

- no amounts may be deducted from sums staked or won;
- the maximum participation fee is £1 per person, per day (or £3 where a club gaming permit is held);
- there should be no linking of games between premises; and
- in the case of members’ clubs and institutes, people may only participate in the gaming if they have been a member (or applied or were nominated for membership) at least 48 hours before playing, or are genuine guests of such a person.

There are no limits on stakes and prizes for individual games of club bingo.

However, clubs or institutes that wish to offer high turnover bingo (i.e. where stakes or prizes exceed £2000 per week) will require a bingo operating licence from the Gambling Commission. See the Commission’s website (details above) for further information.

Pub bingo

Pubs that wish to provide facilities for bingo may do so under section 279 of the Act. The following rules apply:

- the maximum amount that may be staked by a player in a game of bingo is £5;
- no amounts may be deducted from sums staked or won;
- players may not be charged a fee for taking part;
- there should be no linking of games between premises; and,
- nobody under 18 may participate.

As with clubs, pubs that wish to offer high turnover bingo (i.e. where stakes or prizes exceed £2000 per week) will require a bingo operating licence from the Gambling Commission. See the Commission’s website (details above) for further information.

Bingo for “good causes”

Organisations that wish to provide bingo (or other types of gaming) for charitable or other non-commercial purposes (e.g. to raise funds for a society) may do so under Part 14 of the Act. Non-commercial gaming may only take place at events where none of the proceeds from the event itself are used for private gain. There are two types of non-commercial gaming.

Prize gaming: where the prizes are put up in advance, and are not dependent on the number of players taking part or the amount of money staked. There are no statutory limits on stakes, prizes, participation fees or other charges for this type of gaming.

Equal chance gaming: where the amount or value of the prizes varies according to the number of players who participate and/or the amount of money they stake. Here a single payment of £8 per day may be charged to cover admission, stakes and any other charges for playing. The total value of prizes must not exceed £600 in one day. Where an event is the final one of series in which all of the players have previously taken part, a higher prize fund of no more than £900 is permitted.

In all cases, the players participating in non-commercial bingo must be told what "good cause" is to benefit from the profits from the gaming.