

Q: I want to set up a commercial bingo club, what do I do?

Under current legislation (the Gaming Act 1968) you must first obtain the Gambling Commission's certificate of consent, and second apply to the local magistrates for a gaming licence. Please go to the **Bingo** section of this website for further information.

Q: How long does it take the Gambling Commission to process an application for a certificate of consent?

If you are already known to the Commission it takes 6 – 8 weeks to complete the processing of an application. Applicants who are new to the industry may be invited to interview before a panel of Commissioners, which means the procedure can take approximately 12 weeks.

Q: Can social clubs hold bingo games for their members?

Section 40 of the Gaming Act 1968 allows clubs that have at least 25 members and have been established for purposes other than gaming to play bingo as one of its activities. Members of the public cannot be admitted. A charge of no more than 60p per person per day can be levied but those fees must be used for the benefit of the club. Although there is no limit on the stakes for this type of bingo, the stakes must be returned in the form of prizes to those participating. Although there are no legal age restrictions on players, the club committee may set an age limit as part of its own club rules.

Q: I run a private members' or proprietary club registered under part II of the 1968 Gaming Act. Can bingo be played on the premises?

Bingo may be played in a members' club with at least 25 members provided that it has been established for a principal purpose other than gaming. The premises may be registered under Part II of the Act with the local licensing authority. The cost of registration is £235 on first being granted (duration 1 year) and £120 on renewal (which may cover a period of up to 10 years). Clubs registered in this way may make charges of up to £2.00 per person per day, which is a separate charge from the stakes. There is no limit on stakes, which must be distributed in full as winnings in the games in which they are hazarded (less any bingo duty which may be payable). Bona fide guests, that is to say in this connection, guests who are not required to make any payments themselves either for admission or - apart from any stakes hazarded - for playing bingo, may take part in the bingo. No person under the age of 18 may be present in the room while bingo is taking place.

Q: Can I run a bingo game for charity without obtaining a licence?

Yes, Section 41 of the Gaming Act allows bingo at entertainments not held for private gain to be played for charitable purposes. A single payment of up to £4.00 per person per day may be charged to cover admission and stakes. The total value of prizes must not exceed £400 and after the deduction of prize money and reasonable expenses all surplus profits must be used for purposes other than private gain.

There is no need to return as prizes all stake money taken from the purchase of bingo tickets. The only stipulation is that all the proceeds from the bingo, after the deduction of reasonable expenses and the allocation of prizes, are applied to purposes other than private

gain. Anyone may participate in Section 41 bingo, including children.

Q: I am a publican and would like to play bingo on the premises for the benefit of my customers – am I allowed to?

Bingo is a game of chance and, as such, the licensing authorities may consider applications for it to be authorised under Section 6(3) of the Gaming Act 1968. However, in the Commission's view, bingo would most likely induce persons to attend the premises primarily for the purposes of taking part in the gaming, over which the Commission's Gaming Inspectorate has no statutory control. The aim of these applications under Section 6 appears to be to boost bar takings, whereas the purpose of this section is to allow minor gaming for harmless amusement with no commercial motive. It appears to the Gambling Commission inappropriate that bingo should be played in public houses.

Q: I am running a corporate or private function with entertainments to raise money for a charitable cause – can bingo be played at such an event?

Section 15 of the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976 allows for "amusements with prizes" where the organiser or promoter of an "exempt entertainment" (for example, a fete, dinner, dance, sporting event or bazaar) may lawfully provide as part of the entertainment any "amusement with prizes", whether it is a lottery or gaming or both, provided the following conditions are met:

- The whole proceeds of the entertainment, after deducting the expenses of the entertainment, must be devoted to purposes other than private gain;
- The facilities for winning prizes at such amusements are not the only or substantial inducement to persons to attend the entertainment.

Commercial promoters

- For many years, commercial organisations have offered to provide equipment and gaming staff to persons organising gaming nights. These events are becoming more numerous and may not always fall within the law
- In many instances it is clear that, far from being incidental to the overall entertainment, it is intended to be the main if not the only attraction of the event and is, therefore, unlawful
- The legality of such gaming depends very much on individual circumstances and only the courts can interpret definitively whether an entertainment is lawful or not. If any doubt exists, a promoter should seek legal advice

Q: Jackpot machines at my bingo club regularly malfunction and do not pay out when they should. Also the club management does not remove or switch off those machines when malfunctioning. Although I have complained to the club management and a gaming machine technician has visited the premises, the machines continue to be unreliable – what can I do?

The Gambling Commission is unable to arbitrate in such matters but would advise the bingo club concerned to take the malfunctioning machine out of service.

Q: Can young people under the age of 18 be admitted to a bingo club?

People under the age of 18 are not excluded by the Gaming Act 1968 from admission to, or being present on premises licensed for bingo, provided that they do not take part in the

playing of bingo. It may be, however, that company policy or the club rules do not permit persons under the age of 18 to be on the premises.

Q: Can someone aged under 18 work in a bingo club?

Persons under the age of 18 may be employed on the staff, subject to any age restrictions imposed by employment legislation.

Q: Can the relative of an employee of a bingo club play bingo in the club?

It is recommended that close relatives of key members of staff (for example, callers, managers and cashiers) should not be allowed to play bingo in the clubs in which other relatives are employed. This recommendation may be relaxed where there is only one bingo club in the district.

Q: Are there any bingo rules of play?

There are no legal definitions of the game of bingo or a standard set of rules under which the game is played. But the game and its rules have evolved over the years to the point where, despite the absence of any formal industry standard, the way in which bingo is played is the same throughout Great Britain.