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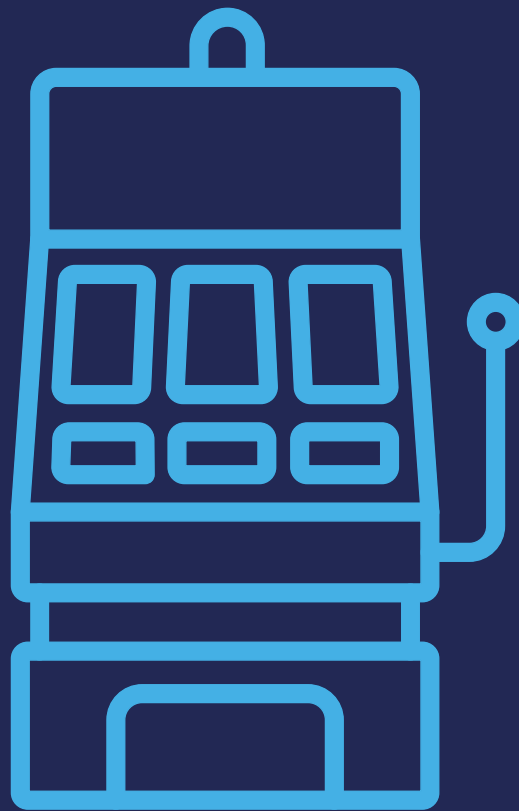
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The law on gaming machines in Northern Ireland

April 2025

Alternative formats

Versions of this leaflet in other languages and formats may be made available from:

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The Law on Gaming Machines in Northern Ireland

Purpose of this leaflet

1. This leaflet provides information on some aspects of the law on the operation of gaming machines in Northern Ireland. It is not an authoritative nor a complete statement of the law and is only intended to provide a brief overview and highlight some of the major legal requirements and conditions.

The Northern Ireland law on gaming machines

2. The Northern Ireland law on gaming machines is contained in the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (the 1985 Order) as amended and associated subordinate legislation. It regulates the conditions under which gaming machines may be supplied, maintained and used. A list of current relevant legislation on gaming machines is attached at Annex A.

Definition of a gaming machine

3. A gaming machine is defined in Article 2 of the 1985 Order as a machine constructed or adapted for playing a game of chance by means of it and

having a slot or other aperture for the insertion of cash or tokens.

Supply and maintenance of gaming machines¹

4. Anyone who wishes to supply or maintain gaming machines must obtain a gaming machine certificate or permit from a court authorising him to do so. A permit is intended to cover a single transaction ie the supply or maintenance of an individual machine; a certificate is required for a person acting in a regular way of business.
5. These procedures apply to manufacturers, importers, wholesalers and converters of gaming machines as well as retailers.
6. A person under the age of 18 is disqualified from holding a gaming machine certificate or permit.
7. No gaming machines may be supplied to any premises unless the supplier's full name and address, together with the manufacturer's serial number (if any), are prominently displayed on the front of the machine (SR 1989 No 142).

¹ Articles 81-94 of, and Schedules 7, 11 & 12 to the 1985 Order.

Terminology

8. In this leaflet:

- a “jackpot” machine means a gaming machine played for large prizes of up to the statutory limit of £400;
- an “amusement with prizes” machine means a gaming machine played for small prizes with statutory limits applying (paragraphs 14 and 16).

Jackpot gaming machines

9. Jackpot machines may be used:

- in registered clubs ie private members’ clubs which have been registered with the courts under the 1985 Order or the Registration of Clubs (Northern Ireland) Order 1996; and
- as an incidental attraction at entertainments such as fetes, sales of work, dinners or dances, provided the entertainments are not run for private gain (Articles 95(1)(c) and 122).

10. In a registered club:

- the maximum stake per game is £2 (Article 106(3)) of the 1985 Order;

- the maximum value of a prize is £400 (Article 106(5)) which must be in coins delivered by the machine itself (Article 106(4)) of the 1985 Order;
- no more than 3 machines may be made available for gaming (Article 106(2)) of the 1985 Order.

11. For gaming machines used as an incidental attraction at entertainments such as fetes etc under Article 122, there are no statutory limits on the number of machines, stakes or prizes.

Amusement with prizes machines

12. Articles 95(1)(b) and 108 of the 1985 Order allow amusement with prizes (AWP) machines to be used in:

- amusement arcades and similar premises which have been granted an amusement permit for the purposes of Article 108(1)(c) or (1)(ca) of the 1985 Order by the local district council;
- commercial bingo clubs licensed by the courts and for which the court has given a direction under Article 63(9) or 68(6)(a);
- licensed bookmaking offices (subject to a maximum of two machines) per licensed office;
- the bar areas of public houses and licensed hotels; and
- travelling showmen’s pleasure fairs.

£8 prize machines

13. AWP machines with a maximum prize value of £8 may be used in:
- amusement arcades and similar premises which have been granted an amusement permit for the purposes of Article 108(1)(c) or (1)(ca) of the 1985 Order by the local district council;
 - commercial bingo clubs licensed by the courts and for which the court has given a direction under Article 63(9) or 68(6)(a); and
 - travelling showmen's pleasure fairs.
14. The following conditions apply:
- the maximum stake per game is 30p; this must be in cash, tokens may not be used (Article 108(6)(a));
 - the maximum value of a prize is £8 (Article 108(7)); there are three options for payment – up to £8 in cash; or a non-monetary prize or tokens exchangeable for a non-monetary prize of up to £8 in value; or a combination of a cash prize and a non-monetary prize or tokens exchangeable for such a combination up to a total value of £8.

£100 prize machines

15. AWP machines with all-cash prizes of up to £100 may be operated in:
- the bar areas of public houses and

hotels;

16. The following conditions apply:
- the maximum stake per game is £1; this must be in cash, tokens may not be used (Article 108(6));
 - the maximum prize is £100; it must be paid directly from the machine in cash (Article 108(8)).

£500 prize machines

17. AWP machines with all-cash prizes of up to £500 may be operated in:
- amusement arcades and similar premises which have been granted an amusement permit for the purposes of Article 108(1)(ca) of the 1985 Order by the local district council;
 - commercial bingo clubs licensed by the courts and for which the court has given a direction under Article 63(9) or 68(6)(a); and
 - licensed bookmaking offices (subject to a maximum of two machines) per licensed office;
18. The following conditions apply:
- the maximum stake per game is £2; this must be in cash, tokens may not be used (Article 108(6));
 - the maximum prize is £500; it must

be paid directly from the machine in cash (Article 108(8));

- re premises holding an amusement permit granted for the purposes of Article 108(1)(ca) of the 1985 Order, age-related conditions apply which are intended to ensure that under 18 year olds do not have access to the premises or parts of the premises in which £500 prize machines are operated (Articles 111(6A) and 115(7A)).

19. Except for licensed bookmaking offices, there is no statutory limit in the 1985 Order on the number of gaming machines which may be used in the premises listed in paragraph 12 above. A licensing court does, however, have power to specify a maximum limit on the number of gaming machines made available for gaming in particular premises when considering:
- an application for the grant or renewal of a bingo club licence (Articles 63(9) and 68(6)); and
 - at the request of the police, an application for the grant or renewal of a licence for a public house or a hotel under the Licensing (NI) Order 1996 (Articles 7(13) and 15(6) of the Licensing Order and Article 108(4) of the 1985 Order).

20. In addition, when considering the grant or renewal of amusement permits, a

district council has power to limit the number of gaming machines available for gaming in certain premises. The power applies only to premises where gaming machines are not the main activity eg pleasure fairs. (Articles 110(2)(c), 110(3), 111(5)(b), 111(6)(a), 115(6)(b) and 115(7)(a)).

Cancellation of registration of clubs etc

21. A court may also, on the application of the police:
- cancel the registration of a specific club registered under the 1985 Order (Article 103);
 - make a declaration withdrawing the authority to operate gaming machines in a specific club registered under the Registration of Clubs (NI) Order 1996 (Article 105); of the 1985 Order;
 - make a declaration withdrawing the authority to operate gaming machines in a specific bingo club, bookmaking office, public house or licensed hotel (Article 107) of the 1985 Order.

Children and gaming machines

22. There are some restrictions in the 1985 Order specifically on the use of certain types of gaming machines by children. There are also restrictions on the access of under 18 year olds to certain premises in which gaming machines

may be available for use:

- it is an offence for any person to invite, cause or permit an individual under the age of 18 to play a gaming machine other than a lower limit gaming machine (Article 124A);
- under 18s must not be admitted to licensed bookmaking offices; this prohibition does not apply to a young person who has reached the upper limit of compulsory school age and is apprenticed to the licensed bookmaker (Article 50) and;
- in amusement arcades and similar premises holding an Article 108(1) (ca) amusement permit, under 18s must not be admitted to premises or parts of premises in which £500 prize machines are operated (Articles 111(6A) and 115(7A)).

Restrictions on simulated card game machines

23. The supply, maintenance and use of gaming machines constructed or adapted for playing simulated card games such as poker are prohibited unless the machines are to be used in accordance with the 1985 Order on premises where gaming machines are permitted by the Order (SR 1989 No 141). The prohibition on the supply of such machines applies only to their supply for use in Northern Ireland.

Prohibition of profit-sharing agreements

24. Except in the case of travelling showmen's pleasure fairs, amusement arcade- type premises and pleasure piers, no supplier may supply to, or maintain gaming machines in, any premises on any form of profit-sharing agreement (Article 82).

Restrictions on advertising of gaming machines

25. Article 130 of the 1985 Order prohibits the advertising of gaming machines **except** those:
- in amusement arcades and similar premises which have been granted an amusement permit by the local district council;
 - used as an incidental attraction at entertainments such as fetes, sales of work, dinners or dances, provided the entertainments are not run for private gain; and
 - in travelling showmen's pleasure fairs.

Removal of money from machines - bingo clubs and registered clubs

26. Only authorised persons may remove money, other than prize money delivered by the machine, from a gaming machine in a licensed bingo club or a registered club (Article 123):
- in the case of a licensed bingo club, the licensee and employees authorised in writing by him; and

- in the case of a registered club², officers nominated by the club and persons authorised in writing by such officers.

Bingo clubs - restrictions on use of gaming machines on certain days

27. Gaming machines in licensed bingo clubs may not be made available for gaming on Christmas Day (Article 108(3)).

General advice

28. Further information on the law on gaming machines may be obtained from Social Policy Unit (address below). Legal advice on the law should be obtained from a professional legal adviser.

29. Additional copies of this leaflet are available from:

Department for Communities Social Policy Unit

8th Floor, Causeway Exchange 1-7
Bedford Street

Belfast BT2 7EG

Tel: 028 9082 3140

Email: **social.policy@communities-ni.gov.uk**

² See also additional requirements under paragraph 3 of Schedule 2 to the Registration of Clubs (Accounts) Regulations (NI) 1997 - SR 1997 No 333.

Northern Ireland Law on Gaming Machines

Primary legislation

The Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985

SI 1985 No 1204 (N.I. 11)

Relevant associated subordinate legislation

The Gaming Machine (Forms of Certificates and Permit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1986

SR 1986 No 125

The Amusement Permit (Prescribed Premises) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1986 SR 1986 No 126

(which prescribe the premises in respect of which a person may be granted an amusement permit by a district council)

The Gaming Machine (Prohibition of Melding Games) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989 SR 1989 No 141

(which prohibit the supply, maintenance and use of gaming machines which simulate card games like poker unless the machines are to be used in accordance with the 1985 Order on premises where gaming machines are permitted by the Order)

The Gaming Machine (Identification of Supplier) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989 SR 1989 No 142

(which require the supplier's full name and address, together with the manufacturer's serial number (if any), are prominently displayed on the front of the machine)

The Gaming and Gaming Machine (Variation of Monetary Limits and Charges) Order (Northern Ireland) 1992

SR 1992 No 43

(which specifies the current charges for gaming machine certificates)

The Amusement Permit (Additional Grounds for Refusal) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993

SR 1993 No 431

The Gaming (Variation of Monetary Limits) Order (Northern Ireland) 1995 SR 1995 No 442

(which increased the maximum AWP prize to £8 for a non-monetary prize, £4 for a money prize (later increased to £5 by SR 1998 No 56 and to £8 by SI 2004 No 310 (NI 1))

**The Gaming (Variation of Monetary Limits)
Order (Northern Ireland) 1998 SR 1998 No 56**

(which increased the maximum money prize for AWP machines to £5 (later increased to £8 by SI 2004 No 310 (NI 1)) and the maximum stake for AWP machines to 30p)

**The Gaming Machine (Prescribed Licensed
Premises) Regulations (Northern Ireland)
1998**

SR 1998 No 57

(which prescribe the licensed premises in which gaming machines may be used - the bar areas of public houses and licensed hotels)

**The Gaming (Variation of Monetary Limits)
Order (Northern Ireland) 1999 SR 1999 No 4**

(which specifies the maximum amount of weekly winnings in games of bingo played simultaneously on different bingo club premises and the maximum amount weekly winnings on bingo club premises may exceed the stakes hazarded)

**The Gaming Machine (Form of Amusement
Permit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004**

SR 2004 No 353

**The Gaming (Variation of Monetary Limits)
Order (Northern Ireland) 2025**

(which prescribe £1 as the maximum stake for gaming machines in pubs and hotels; £2 as the maximum stake for gaming machines in registered clubs, bingo clubs, licensed bookmaking offices and premises holding an Article 108(1)(ca) amusement permit; and £100 as the maximum prize for gaming machines in pubs and hotels, and £500 as the maximum prize for gaming machines in bingo clubs, licensed bookmaking offices and premises holding an Article 108(1)(ca) amusement permit.)

**The Gaming (Gaming Machines in Registered
Clubs) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025**

(which prescribe £400 as the maximum prize for gaming machines in registered clubs)

The above legislation may be accessed at
www.legislation.gov.uk

Available in alternative formats.

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