




Department for  
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[www.communities-ni.gov.uk](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)



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

## Gambling Code of Practice

October 2024

### **Alternative formats**

Alternative versions of this Code of Practice in other languages and formats may be made available on request from:

Department for Communities  
Social Policy Unit  
Causeway Exchange  
1-7 Bedford Street  
BELFAST BT2 7EG

Tel: 028 9082 3140

Email: [gamblingcop@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:gamblingcop@communities-ni.gov.uk)

# DfC: Gambling Code of Practice

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# General Application

## 1. Application

This Code of Practice shall apply to all facilities in which gambling is made available to the public whether by the holder of a licence, permit or certificate under The Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

## 2. Scope of Code

Under this Code, and in accordance with Article 180A(12) of The Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, “gambling” means betting, gaming or participating in a lottery. In respect of lotteries, this Code is applicable to societies’ lotteries rather than small lotteries and private lotteries regulated under Articles 133 and 134 respectively of the 1985 legislation. The Code also does not apply to or have any bearing upon the operation of the National Lottery which is separately regulated under the National Lottery Act etc. 1993 and the National Lottery Act 2006.

## 3. Purpose of Code

This Code is issued and published with the purpose of ensuring that, as specified by Article 180A(2) of The Betting, Gaming,

Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, gambling operations:

- a) are conducted in a fair and open way;
- b) protect those under the legal age for gambling and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling; and
- c) assist persons who are or may be affected by problems relating to gambling.

## 4. Failure to comply with a provision of a code

Failure to comply with a provision of a code does not of itself make a person providing facilities for gambling liable to criminal or civil proceedings. However, under Article 180A(9) of The Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, a code:

- a) is admissible in evidence in criminal or civil proceedings;
- b) must be taken into account by a court or tribunal in any case in which it appears to the court or tribunal to be relevant; and
- c) must be taken into account by the Department, a court or a district council

in the exercise of a function under the 1985 Order.

Serious, significant, continuing or multiple breaches of a code are also grounds for revocation or cancellation of a bookmakers' licence, a bookmaking office licence, a track betting licence, a gaming machine certificate, registration of a club or an amusement or pleasure permit in accordance with Article 180A(11) of The Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

## 5. **Guides on aspects of gambling law**

The Department for Communities has published a number of guides on various aspects of the law on gambling. DfC guidance leaflets can be found at the link below:

**Betting, gaming, lotteries and amusements | Department for Communities ([communities-ni.gov.uk](https://communities-ni.gov.uk))**

# Credit and Automated Teller Machines

## 1. Credit

1.1 Any form of credit or credit payment (including the use of a credit card to load an account held in the premises) should not be accepted from customers who are not themselves gambling operators, by any person, any organisation or any person acting on behalf of any person or organisation holding one or more of the following under The Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985:

- A bookmakers' licence;
- A bookmaking office licence;
- A track betting licence;
- A bingo club licence;
- A gaming machine certificate;
- An amusement permit;
- A societies' lottery certificate;
- A pleasure permit.

## 2. Automated Teller Machines

2.1 No person should be permitted to withdraw cash from a financial institution, by Automated Teller Machine (ATM) or any other method, within the following gambling premises:

- a premises for which a bookmaking office licence has been granted under The Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985;
- a premises for which bingo and gaming for prizes is authorised by a bingo club licence under The Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985; and
- a premises authorised by a pleasure permit under The Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 and which is used wholly or mainly for the provision of amusements.

# Special provisions with respect to children and young persons

## 1. General

1.1. The Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 contains several provisions that are designed to discourage and prevent children and young people from participating in betting, gaming, amusements and lottery activities. These are:

- persons under the age of 18 are prohibited from being admitted to licensed offices (unless they have reached the upper limit of compulsory school age and are apprenticed to the licensed bookmaker through a written contract);<sup>1</sup>
- engaging in a betting transaction with a person under 18, employing a person under 18 to effect a betting transaction, receiving or negotiating

any bet through a person under 18 and using a person under 18 to carry any communication relating to a betting transaction are all prohibited;<sup>2</sup>

- sending or causing to be sent any circular, notice, advertisement, letter, telegram or other document which invites, or may be reasonably interpreted to invite, a person under 18 to make any bet, enter or take a share or an interest in a betting transaction or obtain information to make a bet is prohibited;<sup>3</sup>
- inviting, causing or permitting an individual under the age of 18 to play anything other than a lower limit gaming machine is prohibited;<sup>4</sup> and
- the sale of tickets or chances in a societies' lottery to a person who has not attained the age of 16 years is prohibited.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Article 50 of The Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (NI) Order 1985.

2 Article 51(1) of The Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (NI) Order 1985.

3 Article 52 of The Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (NI) Order 1985.

4 Article 124A of The Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (NI) Order 1985 as amended.

5 Regulation 3 of The Lotteries Regulations (NI) 1994, No. 467.

1.2. It is an offence for any person (or their servant or agent in a licensed office) to breach these prohibitions. On that basis alone, persons providing facilities for gambling should ensure that, as a minimum, the following precautions are taken to help prevent young persons below the requisite legal age for gambling from participating in betting, gaming, amusements and societies' lottery activities. These minimal precautions are set out in sections 2-3 and 5 below.

## 2. Age limit notices

2.1. Age limit notices should be displayed both outside and immediately inside the following locations or parts of locations where gambling (including gaming on anything other than lower limit gaming machine) may take place:

- Licensed tracks;
- Bookmakers' offices and shops;
- Licensed bingo clubs;
- Registered clubs;
- Licensed premises;
- Entertainments not held for private gain;
- Amusement arcades and adult gaming centres;
- Travelling fairs;

- Premises hosting societies lottery events; and
- Gambling or gaming on other premises

2.2. All such notices should include warnings that causing or permitting an underage person to gamble or (in instances where higher limit gaming machines are available) to play anything other than a lower limit gaming machine is an offence.

2.3. Age limit notices should be in a position where they are readily visible to any person seeking to gamble. They should also be contained in a document the dimensions of which are no less than 297 mm in length and 210 mm in width.

2.4. In all circumstances where a person is found to be below the requisite legal age for gambling (16 for societies' lotteries and 18 for betting, bingo and playing higher limit gaming machines) no payment should be accepted from, or on behalf of, such persons.

2.5. Where a person who enters a licensed bookmakers' offices or a premises offering higher stakes or adult only gaming is found not to have attained the requisite legal age for gambling then that person should be immediately required to leave the premises.



### 3. Age verification checks

3.1 All employees and agents of persons providing facilities for gambling and who are tasked with receiving payments on the provider's behalf from customers should be informed of the relevant legal age limits and advised of the law in this area.

3.2 Age verification checks should be carried out wherever doubt arises as to whether a customer or prospective customer has attained the legal age for gambling or wherever a person(s) providing facilities for gambling, or anyone employed or authorised to act on their behalf, suspects that a customer may be under age. There should be particular vigilance around self-service tills operated at licensed bookmaking offices.

3.3 No payment or bet should be accepted from any customer, regardless of age, who fails to show a person providing facilities for gambling, or person employed by or acting on their behalf, an appropriate form of age verification on request (see para 3.4 below).

3.4 Appropriate forms of age verification should include a photograph of the prospective customer and also clearly show the person's date of birth. Examples of acceptable forms of verification include:

- Passport;
- Photo card driving licence;
- Electoral identity card;
- CitizenCard;
- NI Translink yLink card
- Transport for Ireland Student Leap card; or
- Photographic identity card of a type approved and recommended by either the British Retail Consortium or Retail Ireland as part of their respective proof of age schemes for the sale of age-restricted products.

### 4. 'Challenge 25'

4.1. It is acceptable for age verification procedures for gambling to operate under the principles of the 'Challenge 25' scheme operated by the Retail Standards of Alcohol Challenge Group (RASG). A link to the RASG's Northern Ireland Guidance, which contains helpful information and advice on the scheme, refusal approaches, minimising conflict etc is provided below:

**RASG2017NI.pdf ([wsta.co.uk](http://wsta.co.uk))**

4.2 Under 'Challenge 25', persons providing facilities for gambling and their employees, agents etc. may choose to seek proof of age only from individuals who appear to be younger than 25 or whom they suspect may be below the requisite legal age for gambling.

## 5. Societies' lotteries – fundraising involving children

5.1 Organisers of societies' lotteries should take particular care when involving children in fundraising, whether as fundraisers or as donors. No person under the age of 16 may carry out street collections or house-to-house collections on behalf of a societies' lottery.<sup>6</sup>

5.2 The exception to 5.1 above is if a house-to-house collection is taking place across Northern Ireland and the organisation concerned is a youth organisation which the Department for Communities has approved for carrying out the collection under an exemption order, in which case the lottery may have collectors aged 12 and over. Further information on Department for Communities' exemption orders can be found in the link below:

**House to house charitable collections - exemption orders | Department for Communities ([communities-ni.gov.uk](http://communities-ni.gov.uk))**

5.3 In respect of fundraising involving children, organisers of societies' lotteries should also adhere to the relevant provisions of the UK Code of Fund Raising Practice published by the Fundraising Regulator. A link to the relevant provisions of this Code is provided below:

## Fundraising involving children | Fundraising Regulator

### 6. Advertising that causes or invites children and young people to gamble

6.1 No advertising, marketing etc of gambling services and products should ever be targeted at people below the statutory legal age for gambling.

6.2 In considering how to avoid marketing that could appeal to children and young people, persons providing facilities for gambling should comply with the relevant guidance and codes published by the UK Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), which is the UK's independent advertising regulator, and its sister organisation, the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP). A link to the ASA and CAP guide, entitled 'Particularly Appealing Guidance for Gambling Operators, not Children', including the applicable CAP codes, can be found in the link below:

**Particularly Appealing Guidance for Gambling Operators, not Children - ASA | CAP**

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<sup>6</sup> Sections 3-4 of the House to House Charitable Collections Act (NI) 1952.

# Self- Exclusion

## 1. Customer Self-Exclusion

1.1 Any person or organisation holding one or more of the following under The Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 should operate a customer self-exclusion scheme and make self-exclusion available to any customer who wishes to avail of it:

- A bookmakers' office licence;
- A track betting licence;
- A bingo club licence;
- A gaming machine certificate
- An amusement permit.

1.2 Self-exclusion schemes should include:

- either a requirement for applicants to show proof of identity including a photo, or provision for the holder of the relevant licence, certificate or permit at 1.1 above (or their employee, agent etc) to enable them to carry out an identity-check prior to acceptance of their request to be excluded;
- the removal of self-excluded customers from all of the relevant holder's personalised and direct marketing;

- a requirement for customers who wish to self-exclude to be informed of 'problems with gambling' advice services and support tools available and published on NI Direct – link **Gambling | nidirect**;
- the basic principle that the applicant determines the duration of the exclusion period, with a **minimum** period of not less than six months (brought into effect within two days of receiving the request and which may, on request, be extended for one or more further periods of six months or longer); and
- a prohibition on the automatic re-adding of a self-excluded customer to the relevant holder's marketing databases once any temporary period of self-exclusion expires.

1.3 In cases where customers do ask to self-exclude, it is important that relevant licence, certificate and permit holders are transparent about how they will use and process any personal data and ensure that individuals are informed as to what will happen to their data. Holders (and/or their employees, agents etc) must not keep personal data for longer than they need it. Self-exclusion procedures should also adhere to the seven 'data protection

principles' of the UK's General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and may need to undergo a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) prior to implementation. A link to the relevant sections of the UK Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) Guide to the GDPR (ie 'Right to be Informed, 'data protection principles' and DPIA guidance) is provided below:

**Right to be informed | ICO**

**A guide to the data protection principles | ICO**

**Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) | ICO**

## **Date of Coming into Operation**

This Code of Practice comes into operation with effect from .....

**Approved by  
Date**

**(A senior officer in the Department for  
Communities)**

Available in alternative formats.

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