

Review of Gaming Machines and Social Responsibility Measures Call for Evidence

City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council - Licensing Authority

Q1. What, if any, changes in maximum stakes and/or prizes across the different categories of gaming machines support the Government's objective set out in this document? Please provide evidence to support this position.

The Licensing Authority does not have access to evidence of the impact of current limits on problem gambling and so is not in a position to recommend any specific changes to stakes and prizes limits.

The Licensing Authority has concerns regarding the maximum stake of B2 machines and careful consideration needs to be given to evidence provided by organisations supporting people with problem gambling.

Q2. To what extent have industry measures on gaming machines mitigated harm or improved player protections and mitigated harm to consumers and communities? Please provide evidence to support this position.

The Licensing Authority does not have access to the impact of industry measures and so cannot comment on whether improvements have been made.

Licensing Officers inspecting premises have been approached by customers in recent years who have expressed concern at the ease of gambling large sums of money within a short period of time on B2 gaming machines. These customers have stated that measures to address problem gambling have limited impact. Customers have also made reference to loyalty schemes, which they feel increases their risk of problem gambling.

Documented evidence of betting shop staff challenging customers appearing to spend large amounts of money mainly relates to B2 gaming machines, with any recorded incidents of anti-social behaviour occurring following losses on gaming machines.

Q3. What other factors should Government be considering to ensure the correct balance in gaming machine regulation? Please provide evidence to support this position.

Access to a high number of 'hard gambling' facilities on the high street and the impact this has on local communities needs consideration. Licensing Officers have seen a clear shift in the nature of betting premises following the introduction of high stake gaming machines, with some customers visiting bookmakers to only use gaming machines.

Q4. What, if any, changes in the number and location of current gaming machine allocations support the Government's objective set out in this document? Please provide evidence to support this position.

Gaming machine allocations should not be relaxed for any premises type without direct evidence that this would meet the Government's objective of the review.

Serious consideration should be given to reducing the maximum stake of B2 gaming machines, to bring these in line with other gaming machines and remove the easy availability of 'hard gambling' facilities from the high street.

Q5. What has been the impact of social responsibility measures since 2013, especially on vulnerable consumers and communities with high levels of deprivation?

Information on the impact of social responsibility measures is not provided to the licensing authority, so it is difficult for us to comment on this.

Independent research indicates that local betting offices are clustering in areas of higher deprivation. The Bradford district has over 65 betting offices, 20% of which are located within Bradford City Centre with many being located in adjoining properties. Customers have openly stated to Licensing Officers that clustering of betting premises has an adverse effect on their gambling behaviour.

Licensing Authorities are unable to take into consideration clustering of premises when determining licence applications and in reality have very limited grounds on which to refuse premises applications. Where licensing authorities have tried to refuse applications, they have been successfully challenged in the Courts.

Q6. Is there anything further that should be considered to improve social responsibility measures across the industry? Please provide evidence to support this position.

No comment

Q7. Is there any evidence on whether existing rules on gambling advertising are appropriate to protect children and vulnerable people from the possible harmful impact of gambling advertising?

As advertising is regulated by the Advertising Standards Agency and Gambling Commission, the Licensing Authority does not hold any evidence to suggest existing controls are either adequate or inadequate.

However, there is a general concern that increased advertising, including television and internet advertising, is both normalising and glamorizing gambling.

Q8. Any other relevant issues, supported by evidence that you would like to raise as part of this review but that has not been covered by questions 1-7?

The Licensing Authority is regularly called upon to control the number of betting premises operating within the district and to consider the impact high stake machines have on vulnerable people and the wider community.

It is clear that there is widespread public concern on the clustering of betting shops and the high stake gaming machines easily available on high streets. This strength of feeling was clearly demonstrated by number of local authorities supporting Newham Council in their campaign to reduce these high stakes from £100 to £2, in line with other gaming machines.

The Licensing Authority also supports the proposals put forward by the Local Government Association and its member councils to:

- Reduce high street gaming machine stakes
- Give local authorities more powers to manage and respond to clusters of gambling premises
- Align the licensing objectives in the Gambling Act with those in the Licensing Act 2003, to include an anti-social behaviour / public nuisance objective.

Contact:

