



# Gambling

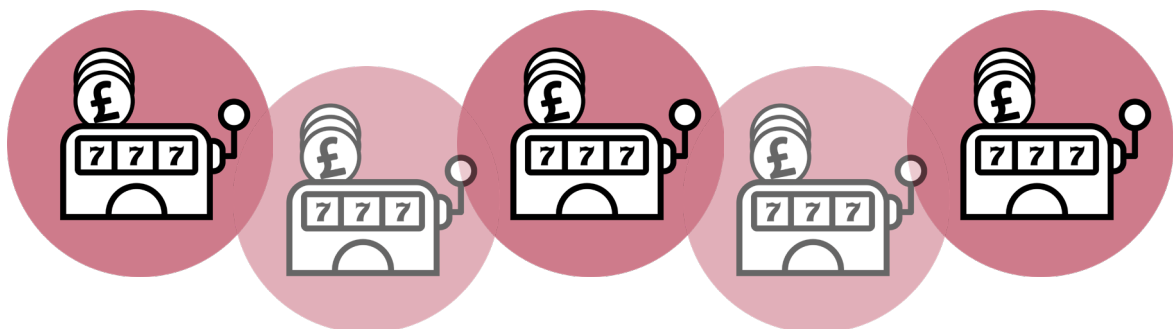
Over recent years, many areas have seen a reduction in the number of applications for gambling premises licences, or they may not have had many to begin with. While licensing committee members may not need to make decisions on individual licences, there are other steps they can take to ensure an effective approach to local gambling licensing. This tip sheet provides a brief overview of the full role members can play, along with some best practice ideas.

Further information can be seen in our [councillor handbook on the Gambling Act 2005](#).

## Statement of principles and local area profile

- **Check your statement of principles and if you have a local area profile**

The statement of principles and supporting local area profile are intended to help prevent gambling related harm occurring. They provide an opportunity to set out the local approach to gambling regulation, expectations of gambling operators and specific local circumstances. Members of licensing committees can play an important role in shaping the statement of principles and ensuring it adequately safeguards local residents, for example, by ensuring a focus on public health is incorporated in the statement of principles.



Not every council has a local area profile, but the LGA and the Gambling Commission strongly recommends that each council develops one. This can help identify the cumulative impact of the potential harms caused by gambling on a local community and what risks this might pose to the licensing objectives. There is still value in developing a local area profile, even in areas that do not have many gambling premises.

Further guidance on this can be found in the [LGA's councillor handbook on the Gambling Act 2005](#).

## If you receive a licence application

- **Make decisions on the application**

Committee members can decide whether to grant, refuse or add conditions (where necessary and proportionate) to a licence application. Committee members should make their decisions in line with the licensing objectives and consider their local statement of principles and local area profile.

- **Check if you are receiving engagement from responsible authorities**

Representations from responsible authorities, such as the police and the planning authority, often provide information that is extremely helpful to councillors and helps to ensure decisions are being made after considering all available evidence. If you do not receive these representations, you could consider contacting relevant officers to request more engagement with the licensing process in the future (though you cannot ask for comments on a matter before you where the consultation period has passed, and the responsible authority did not initially comment).

## Understand your council's compliance and enforcement activity

- **Review the Gambling Commission's annual statistics**

This can help committee members to understand the most recent trends in gambling, as well as understanding what compliance and enforcement work your officers have undertaken in your area. Your council may not be dealing with new applications or large numbers of premises, but how are they overseeing the premises that are already in your area?

- **Ensure officers are working with partners to undertake test purchase checks**

In 2019 a review of pubs in England and Wales showed 84 per cent of them failed to prevent under 18-year-olds from playing on fruit machines they are entitled to have. Staff in licensed premises are expected to stop children playing on the machines and there should be clear signage indicating the age restriction. Councillors can make a big difference in driving progress in this area by checking to what extent their council is undertaking test purchase checks in pubs, and what procedures are in place in the event of a test purchase check failure. This can be

a resource intensive process, so some licensing teams undertake this enforcement activity with colleagues in the police or trading standards. Other councils, such as Southampton City Council, have used age verification technology to tackle under-age use of gambling machines in licensed premises.

## Help to tackle gambling related harms

- **Ensure gambling related harms are recognised as an issue**

Councillors are able to represent communities who may be affected by gambling related harms and they can encourage conversations across community settings. They can also influence and set the tone of how gambling is discussed within a local area, ensure stigmatising language is avoided, and ensure services do not shame or blame people who gamble.

- **Consider to what extent your council is taking a whole council approach to tackling gambling harms**

You can advocate for training for council staff on tackling gambling related harms. This can ensure that staff in a range of council teams, such as financial inclusion, housing and adult social care, have a good understanding of how they can signpost people experiencing gambling related harms to services. It can also assist with collecting data on gambling harms locally, if, for example, services like financial inclusion are trained to ask screening questions. The LGA has produced guidance on taking a whole council approach to tackling gambling related harms.

- **Work with Cabinet members who may have an interest in tackling gambling related harms**

Cabinet members for areas like health and wellbeing or community safety are also likely to be interested in tackling gambling harms and their engagement can help drive progress within the council. Working with them can ensure alignment with the council's wider priorities.

- **Ask whether your council has an organisational lead on tackling gambling related harms**

An organisational lead at member or officer level can help drive work on developing a council-wide approach to tackling gambling related harm. This role may naturally fit with public health teams, although council licensing and financial inclusion teams have played a leading role in some places.

## Work with external partners

### **Improve your knowledge of gambling**

- **Ensure you take advantage of any training opportunities**

This is a good way of ensuring you are aware of current issues in licensing and that you are able to discharge your duties on the licensing committee to a high standard. Regular officer training should also be encouraged.

- **Meet with lived experience groups**

People affected by gambling related harms may be able to support committee members to develop their statement of licensing principles and also give committee members an understanding of some of the harmful impacts gambling can have. Meeting with local gambling charities may also be helpful.



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