

Subject: Gambling Commission puts block on illegal poker

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For immediate release

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The Gambling Commission has today written to police forces, local authorities and the licensing trade associations throughout the country as part of a clampdown on illegal poker games.

Under the 1968 Gaming Act there are strict restrictions on gaming for money in licensed premises. A local authority permit is required to run games, the games must not be used as an inducement for people to visit a pub, and any stakes and prizes should be low. The Commission has published new guidance on these rules, which apply to all pubs and members clubs in Britain.

Gambling Commission Director of Operations Phill Brear said: "Poker has become increasingly popular in the last 12 months and a number of people are seeking to cash in on the demand to play. The law is complex, but we have two simple messages: Firstly, under the existing law many of these games are illegal or are likely to lead to illegal games being played. Secondly, illegal poker games can lead to people being cheated into losing very substantial sums of money, and we are concerned that people will be exploited if games are not properly supervised."

The Commission's advice ensures that players, organisers and 'hosts', especially pub landlords and

licensees, recognise their responsibilities and discourage the establishment or organisation of games outside licensed casinos or card rooms.

Phill Brear continued: "Poker is a great game, but properly regulated operators such as casinos employ trained and licensed staff as dealers and supervisors, they use CCTV to monitor play, they offer protections to players, and they are closely monitored and supervised by the Gambling Commission. Poker in pubs and similar arrangements offer none of these safeguards and we will work with the authorities to clamp down on illegal games."

"Our overarching objectives are to keep crime out of gambling, protect players and make sure that the games are run fairly and openly. The Gambling Commission has significant powers at its disposal to crack down on those breaking the law, and we won't hesitate to use those powers."

Notes to editors

1. For further information please contact John Travers on 0121 230 6541 email j.travers@gamblingcommission.gov.uk or Poppy Turner on 0121 230 6539 email p.turner@gamblingcommission.gov.uk.
2. This guidance is being issued under the current 1968 Gaming Act. Under the new Gambling Act 2005 (which will come into effect from September 2007), equal chance gaming will be permitted in premises with alcohol licences without requiring any specific permission, but it will also be subject to statutory restrictions. These will include limits on stakes and prizes, a prohibition on any levy or deductions from stakes and prizes, no charge to play, and a prohibition on linking games between premises. These regulations will be published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.
3. The Gambling Commission regulates gambling in the public interest. It does so by keeping crime out of gambling, by ensuring that gambling is conducted fairly and openly, and by protecting children and vulnerable people. The Commission also provides independent advice to government on gambling in Britain.
4. The Commission will regulate all gambling Britain other than The National Lottery and spread betting, which will remain, respectively, the responsibility of the National Lottery Commission and the Financial Services Authority.

www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk

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