

Bingo In Pubs – The Legal Way To Play

Description



Bingo in pubs & bars in the UK?

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The quick answer is yes, you can play bingo and offer cash prizes in

pubs without applying for an additional license. But you have to stick by the rules of the law or face heavy penalties.

Pubs

In this article, we will concentrate on the law regarding bingo in pubs. Not private clubs, commercial clubs, holiday parks, or any other licensed establishment. Just pubs.

Bingo Laws in Scotland the Same as England / Wales.

The legislation and guidelines set out by the Gambling Commission are the same for pubs in Scotland as they are for pubs in England & Wales. Penalties for breaching the rules differ in Scotland but the rules are the same.

What's Legal or Illegal?

In this article we are going to highlight the main clauses in the law and break them down with clear facts.

If you are planning to play bingo in a pub, the licensee is responsible that these rules are strictly adhered to.

Here are the legal clauses set out by the Government Gambling Commission. Their clauses in bold, with our plain-English explanation below each one.

Be for adults only

Under 18s are not allowed to participate in any way. Do not even let them play along by allowing them to mark the tickets off. If there are under 18s on the premises, before beginning a game, the caller should clearly announce that minors are prohibited from any participation in the game.

No participation fee is charged.

The wording of this clause may cause confusion. You may be mistaken for thinking that this means that players cannot buy bingo cards. This actually means that you cannot charge a bingo entry fee. Whether it be to take part in the bingo or pay an entrance fee to get in because it's "Bingo Night". You can sell bingo tickets.

Remain within stake limit of charging maximum of Â£5 per person, per game.

This rule doesn't require further explanation.

Do not exceed the maximum of Â£2,000 per week in stakes/prizes.

Again self-explanatory but if you are taking in or paying out anything near to this amount per week from running bingo in a pub, you really should seek the advice of your solicitor that handles your license application.

Prize must not be determined by Prize Gaming.

Here are the facts. You can offer cash prizes. But the prize must not be determined by *the number of people playing or the amount raised by the sales of bingo tickets*. So by announcing that you have sold 120 bingo tickets at Â£1 each, therefore a prize of Â£120 will be awarded, would be breaking the law.

But here is another point. In clause 8.3 of the [Gambling Act 2005](#), no rake is allowed. Therefore collecting Â£120, handing out Â£100 of that in prizes and keeping the excess Â£20 is also breaking the law.

This is certainly a tricky one as you cannot profit from running bingo without a Bingo Operating License. Basically you will have to predict how much will be raised and donate the excess to charity or put towards the costs of running the game.

Not be linked with games played on other premises.

In other words, as they call it in Bingo halls ‘The Nationals’ where different venues link together creating bigger stakes. If you are playing bingo in one venue, the game cannot be linked to another unit.

Here is a working example of a game that would be acceptable.

Working with the same example figures throughout this article being 120 tickets sold at £1.

If you can gauge that you will sell at least 100 tickets, use that as your benchmark.

You will be offering £20 for a line, £30 for 2 lines and £50 for the full house.

This leaves £20 (some weeks more). Put that in to a charity cash-builder. Play a snowball charity cash builder game over weeks. Whoever wins, gets to choose which charity will benefit from the funds accumulated.

Snowball Bingo explained: If the winner calls full house in x numbers or less, they win. In 90 bingo start at a particular number and lower it one every week. So week 1 you start at number 50. Week 2 go down to number 49! On week 10 the number has lowered to 40. The winner calls full house when 40 (or less) numbers have been called. They win a 10 week snowball.

So To Conclude

Make sure that duty managers and entertainment employees are clearly briefed on the rules. Breaching these rules could land you a charge of operating illegal gambling on licensed premises.

Bingo is very popular. It can attract big crowds. It can add an enhancement to existing events such as quiz nights.

Eyes down.

Category

1. Blog

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