

Due to the impact Covid-19 is having on operations across the UK we have had to reduce our phonline opening hours.

Our phonelines are open on Monday, Wednesday and Friday between 10 am and 4 pm.

The [contact us service](#) is also available for answers to common questions and we will aim to respond to these enquiries as quickly as possible.

If you have a question about your gambling, or the gambling of someone close to you, our [FAQs from gambling consumers during lockdown](#) may provide valuable information. Our [what we do page](#) also provides an overview of the types of queries we are able to help consumers with in the first instance.

The National Gambling Helpline is also available 24 hours a day, seven days a week through GamCare. It is there to support those suffering from gambling problems or those concerned about the affect gambling is having on people close to them. You can call them free on 0808 8020 133, or visit [gamcare.org.uk](https://gamcare.org.uk).

If you are a gambling operator please read our [Frequently Asked Questions for gambling businesses](#).

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[Home](#) > [News action and statistics](#) > [News](#)

## Covid-19 Guidance & FAQ's

As the situation with Covid-19 continues to impact daily life in Great Britain, the Commission is following Public Health England guidance and we have told all staff to work from home until further notice.

**If the Commission's offices are closed, will my postal application be processed?**

Since 17 March, we have asked that people **do not send in any company**

**related documentation by post.** Instead, documents should be scanned and sent in via email to your Account Manager (if original documents are required). Many relevant company related documents will already be PDFs of electronic documents so please continue to provide these by email.

If you have already posted an application or supporting documents to us and are waiting for a response please email [licensing@gamblingcommission.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@gamblingcommission.gov.uk).

Applications are a priority for Licensing and although our teams are working from home, we have set up steps and processes to ensure we can process applications should anyone fall ill or become unable to work.

We will work hard to continue a good level of service, but please do bear with us should we experience increased levels of absence.

### **How can I make a licence application?**

We ask businesses and individuals to make applications online where they can. All applications can be made online apart from:

1. Change of Corporate Control applications
2. Operating Licence Variation applications which do not include adding/removing an activity or changing a fee category.

If the application cannot be made online or you want to send supporting documents to us, we are currently unable to deal with post. Please therefore scan and email documents to [licensing@gamblingcommission.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@gamblingcommission.gov.uk).

### **Your contact details and invoicing**

We are currently sending invoices by email rather than post using the primary contact email address. If this email address has changed, you can tell us about this online via [eServices](#).

## My employer has closed down

We know that, regrettably, many people have been temporarily or permanently laid off from their jobs because of this unprecedented situation. The following information is to assist Personal Licence holders and those holding Annex A's:

### Personal licence holders

If the decision by your employer is to close the business, either permanently or temporarily, your personal licence remains active because it is not linked to your employer's operating licence.

If you decide to seek alternative employment within the gambling industry in a role that requires a personal licence, please update your personal contact details via the [Manage your personal licence](#) service. This is particularly important if your email and phone contact details relate to your previous employer.

If you are unable or no longer wish to remain employed in the gambling industry, you can surrender your personal licence via the [Manage your personal licence](#) service.

**NOTE:** If your email address has changed since you were granted your licence and you have not informed the Commission, you will need to email [mypl@gamblingcommission.gov.uk](mailto:mypl@gamblingcommission.gov.uk) with your new email address so that we can update this before you sign in to [Manage your personal licence](#)

### Approved Annex A's

If your employer has been required to close the business temporarily, and you remain employed by the operator, your approval remains in place whilst you wait for your employer to become operational again.

If the decision by your employer to close down the business is permanent and you have not found employment with another operator, your Annex A will no

longer be approved.

Should you find alternative employment in the industry your approval remains in place, however if this after a period of absence, please contact us to discuss, as you may need to go through the approvals process again.

### **Important information for ALL personal licence, maintenance and Annex A applicants**

#### **Checking of identity documents**

Please **do not** post original identity documents to the Commission as our offices are closed. If possible try and use 3<sup>rd</sup> party services e.g. solicitors, lawyers, notaries or your employer to verify identity documents. If this is not possible, take a photo of your documentation using your mobile phone and email the Licensing Department at [licensing@gamblingcommission.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@gamblingcommission.gov.uk), clearly referencing your application or account number so that we can link your documents to your application.

If you have already submitted your documentation by post, and it arrived before 30 March, we will have already returned your documents to you or contacted you to make alternative arrangements.

After this date, your documents should be held with Royal Mail as part of their Keep Safe scheme (although there is a very small amount of post which may be in our offices if delivered on 30 or 31 March). When we return to our office, we will be processing this outstanding post as a matter of priority and will endeavour to return your documents to you as soon as possible. However, we do not currently know when we will be advised that it is safe to return to the offices.

If you require your original documents urgently, we advise that you contact the issuing office for further advice.

If your original documents were submitted by post as part of a licence application, and you have copies of these documents, please scan the copies and send them into us by email (to your Account Manager if you have one, or

else to [licensing@gamblingcommission.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@gamblingcommission.gov.uk).

If you do not hold copies of your posted documents, please scan and email in alternative documents in order for us to carry out our necessary checks – see the [approved list of documents you can send](#).

## **Processing of criminality checks**

### **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or Disclosure Scotland (DS) forms**

If you have received a DBS or DS form from us to complete, you will need to post it to back to the Commission and we will send it on to the Disclosure and Barring Service or Disclosure Scotland when we return to the office.

Licensing will undertake the DBS or DS check at a later date, once we are back in the office and able to issue the required forms. If we find that you have a conviction that would have led us to refusing your application or revoking your licence, then we will:

- use Section 342 of the Gambling Act to remove your licence if you did not declare the conviction in your application; or
- undertake a Section 116 review of your licence with a view to revoking it.

Your application will be processed as outlined above.

### **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or Disclosure Scotland (DS) certificates**

If you have received your criminal record check certificate, take a photo of all pages of the certificate and email this to your account manager, if you do not have these details you should send to the Licensing Department at [licensing@gamblingcommission.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@gamblingcommission.gov.uk) clearly referencing your application number or account number so that we can link it to your application.

## **Overseas police reports**

Overseas police reports (and translations) should be uploaded into the relevant application service as normal. If you are unable to upload the document to your application, email it to your account manager. If you do not

have these details you should send to the Licensing Department at [licensing@gamblingcommission.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@gamblingcommission.gov.uk) clearly referencing your application or account number.

If you are unable to provide a necessary police report, please email your account manager. If you do not have these details you should send to the Licensing Department at [licensing@gamblingcommission.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@gamblingcommission.gov.uk) with an explanation and this will be dealt with on a case by case basis. Remember to include a reference to your application or account number.

## Fees information

### Land-based operators

The Gambling Commission recognises the current unprecedented Covid-19 circumstances leaves the affected sectors facing uncertain and unsettling times with the closure of premises.

We have received a number of enquiries asking for a reduction in fees or the option to pay by instalments. Unfortunately, due to the way that our fee system is structured we are not able to offer either of these options.

One option for reducing the fee would be for licensees to apply to decrease their fee category given the reduction in gross gambling yield (GGY). Actioning this at the earliest opportunity will reduce the annual fee. You must submit the application as soon as possible and before the annual fee becomes payable.

You can use the [fee calculator](#) on our website to work out the reduced annual fee.

Operators may also wish to consider applying to make a change to their existing licence for example moving to a remote licence and this can be done [here](#).

Given the uncertain nature of the length of this crisis, some operators may feel they have no option but to surrender their licence. If a licence is surrendered

the annual fee will no longer be payable. To surrender a licence, email your Account Manager directly or send your email to [licensing@gamblingcommission.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@gamblingcommission.gov.uk)

### **Personal Licence holders – maintenance fees**

If your maintenance fee is due for payment and you wish to retain your licence, please pay the fee online via the [Manage your personal licence](#) page.

We know that many people have been temporarily or permanently laid off from their jobs because of this unprecedented situation. Should you choose to do so you can surrender your licence online using the link above and the maintenance fee will no longer be payable.

If a business or individual is not able to pay the fee, this will lead to the revocation of the licence.

### **Can I vary the terms of my licence?**

An application to vary your licence can be made on the [make changes to your licence](#) page on our website.

### **A reminder for online operators**

The social distancing measures that are being put in place will mean that more people will be at home and we would like to remind online operators that they must continue to act responsibly, especially in regards to individual customer affordability and increased social responsibility interactions.

As a reminder, we expect licensees to:

- Assess individual affordability on an ongoing basis – customers may be experiencing disrupted income. (Social Responsibility code 3.4 refers to our guidance - '[Customer interaction- formal guidance for remote gambling operators](#)')
- Increase social responsibility interactions and intervene where customers



are showing signs of gambling-related harm

- Onboard new customers in a socially responsible way and not exploit the current situation for marketing purposes
- Refresh the information they have on customers regularly
- Review the levels which trigger interaction for AML and SR
- Ensure that your gambling products have been tested by a test house before they are released to the market.

You can see [here](#) a letter sent by Chief Executive Neil McArthur to online operators on 25 March.

### **How is the Commission carrying out its compliance assessments?**

We are continuing to undertake our compliance activity and assessments remotely.

### **Gambling Commission reminder to all licensed casinos: furloughed Nominated Officers**

The Gambling Commission recognises the major impact the current unprecedented Covid-19 crisis is having on affected sectors with the closure of premises. We are aware you are facing uncertain and unsettling times and dealing with significant challenges impacting your businesses, your customers and your employees.

Following engagement with the Industry about an emerging risk, we appreciate that part of your management of these challenges may include the furloughing of your staff. The Commission would like to remind casino businesses that during this time, compliance with the Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulations continues to apply, particularly Regulation 21 regarding



Nominated Officers. If operators are engaging in the furloughing of staff please ensure you notify the Commission of who will be undertaking Nominated Officer responsibilities within 14 days of any appointment changes through our key events portal.

Please see the Gambling Commission website, specifically the [AML page](#), for further details.

**How do Test Houses continue to meet their audit obligations if locations cannot be visited as normal?**

If necessary, audits can be completed in two stages. The first stage can be conducted remotely, with all controls to be assessed. As part of this the auditor should make clear within the audit report the scope of the audit and the methods to be used (such as video conferencing, using tools such as Skype or Zoom) and the measures in place to mitigate any risks.

The second stage, and in addition to the first stage process, the auditor must provide assurances that an onsite visit will be conducted once travel restrictions are lifted. We would expect a report in the usual manner for the Commission to review and store on the account. When the next annual audit is due we will then compare both reports and review onsite inspection areas.

**Is it possible to put back the draw dates on lotteries or raffles if sales are being effected due to the current situation?**

Societies conducting raffles may feel that they need to delay the draw date – in which case they must take steps to notify the public of the new date. They should publish this fact to players by as many methods as reasonably practicable, such as a letter/email/phone call to supporters, placing information on their website and contact all those who have received tickets in the post or have already purchased tickets.

**Also, can a lottery draw be conducted digitally instead if someone isn't present physically to conduct the draw?**

All societies must be able to demonstrate that the drawing of the lottery is conducted fairly and equally, and if requested, are able to demonstrate to the Commission that the draw was completely random. Society lottery operators should ensure they are familiar with the requirements before making any changes.

**If I am running a small local authority-licensed society lottery, am I able to change the draw date due to current restrictions?**

For small society lotteries, there is the requirement to have the draw date on the ticket or explanation of how date will be determined. If a small society was to change the draw date, you are only required to ensure players are notified. You could also switch from non-remote to remote ticket sales without needing extra permissions, unlike Gambling Commission-licensed society lotteries where the appropriate licences must be held. A local authority registration permits both remote and non-remote sales.

**Why has the GC introduced this new guidance at this time?**

The Covid-19 Guidance builds on the Guidance we issued in July 2019 to support Social Responsibility Code Provision 3.4.1. In the July 2019 Customer Interaction Guidance we said:

**How to use this guidance**

1.4 The purpose of this guidance is to share knowledge based on research, current practice and lessons learned in order to support licensees in determining how they can meet the outcomes. It sets out why customer interaction is important and makes our expectations clear. Not all of the content of the guidance will be relevant to all operators, but licensees must take it into account and be able to demonstrate how they have done so.

**How the Commission will use this guidance**

1.6 For compliance and enforcement purposes, we will expect licensees to demonstrate how their policies, procedures and practices meet the required outcomes. This can be through implementing relevant parts of the guidance or demonstrating how and why implementing alternative solutions equally meet the outcomes.

1.7 Our understanding of gambling harms and how they manifest is constantly evolving, so for the purposes of raising standards, protecting consumer interests, and preventing harm to consumers, we will update and re-issue guidance where new evidence or risks emerge which may have a meaningful impact on how the outcomes can be met.

Based on our understanding of data relating to the present situation and the likelihood that some customers may be experiencing harms, we judge this additional guidance to be necessary to address the emerging risks

**Can you give further guidance on preventing reverse withdrawal options for customers?**

Whilst the aim should be for the reverse withdrawal option to be removed from your website, we recognise that operators may either be reliant on third party software providers or subject to quality assurance processes. Therefore, operators may decide to prevent or block reverse withdrawals for now and completely remove the option as soon as they are able to. In any event, it should not be possible for a customer to reverse a withdrawal after and provided this is no later than 31 May 2020

**What if operators cannot make the changes by 31 May 2020?**

Where operators cannot make the changes by 31 May 2020, we expect them to contact their Compliance contact to discuss their timetable for implementation and/or suitable interim workarounds.

**What if customers ask for a reverse withdrawal?**

If a consumer asks an operator to proceed with a reverse withdrawal, operators may find it beneficial to make it clear to customers that it is a

regulatory requirement to prevent reverse withdrawals.

**Does this require amendments to terms and conditions?**

We do not require operators to alter their terms and conditions to include the suspension of reverse withdrawal but it may be sensible to consider user-friendly communications to ensure the message is delivered.

**There is a requirement to cease to offer bonuses or promotions to all customers who are displaying indicators of harm. Should this just be applied to stopping the marketing itself or does it also extend to preventing the take up of bonuses by the customers displaying indicators of harm?**

This applies to stopping direct marketing and preventing the take up of bonuses by consumers displaying indicators of harm.

**Are affordability assessments a new requirement?**

The requirement to consider affordability is not new. Considering what a consumer can afford to spend is referenced within the July 2019 Guidance at 2.8 to 2.11.

**Can you give further guidance on the expectations of interaction with customers who have been playing for an hour in a single session of play?**

As part of their drive to make gambling as safe as possible, operators should be using all the information they know about a customer to determine the most suitable form of interaction. See also section 3 in the Guidance issued in July 2019 titled 'Interact'.

Posted on 30 March 2020

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