

Gambling Act 2005

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Local Area Profile

The Gambling Commission issue codes of practice under section 24 of the Gambling Act 2005, about the manner in which facilities for gambling are provided to ensure that:

- Gambling is conducted in a fair and open way
- Children and other vulnerable people are protected from being harmed or exploited by gambling
- Assistance is made available to people who are, or may be, affected by problems relating to gambling.

In addition, changes to the Gambling Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice (LCCP) that took effect in April 2018, require all industry operators to undertake local area risk assessments to identify the risks their gambling venues pose to the licensing objectives. These risk assessments will consider the nature and characteristics of the locality in which they are situated. Licensees must review and update their risk assessment if significant changes occur to local circumstances, when there are significant changes at a licensee's premises that may affect their mitigation of risks, or they apply for a licence or variation.

The Gambling Commission's 5th Edition of the Guidance last updated in March 2024 recommends that Licensing Authorities complete their own assessment of local risks and concerns by developing local area profiles to help shape their statements. There is no statutory requirement on the licensing authority to do this as it is discretionary; however, it is considered good practice.

The objective of the profile is to set out what the area is like; what risks this might pose to the licensing objectives and what the implications of this are for the Licensing Authority and operators.

In our Borough there are currently only 16 gambling premises licences of which 15 are betting shops and one bingo premises. There are no areas with a high density of gambling premises.

In assessing local area profiles, licensing authorities can also consider the location of:

- schools, sixth form colleges, youth centres etc. with regard to the potential risk of under-age gambling
- hostels or support services for vulnerable people, such as those with addiction issues or who are homeless, given the greater risk of problem gambling among these groups
- religious buildings
- any known information about issues with problem gambling

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- the surrounding night time economy and possible interaction with gambling premises
- patterns of crime or anti-social behaviour in the area where they are specifically linked to gambling premises
- the socio-economic makeup of the area
- the density of different types of gambling premises in certain locations
- specific types of gambling premises in the local area

We do not have any evidence that there are specific issues currently. However, we will expect an operator to include the above factors when carrying out risk assessments of the area in which the new premises is proposed.

The council expects matters such as the following to be considered by operators when making their risk assessment in order to demonstrate they have considered the local area. Some or many of these matters will have been considered and addressed by existing premises.

Matters relating to children and young persons, such as:

- The footfall in the local area, for example, does it predominately comprise residents, workers or visitors, is it a family orientated area, popular with children and young people;
- Significant presence of young children;
- Institutions, places or areas where presence of children and young persons should be expected such as schools, youth clubs, parks, playgrounds and entertainment venues such as bowling allies, cinemas etc.;
- Any premises where children congregate including bus stops, cafés, shops, and any other place where children are attracted;
- Areas that are prone to issues of youths participating in anti-social behaviour, including such activities as graffiti/tagging, underage drinking, etc.;
- Recorded incidents of attempted underage gambling;
- Transport links and parking facilities;
- Community centres;
- High crime area;
- Other gambling premises in the vicinity.

Matters relating to vulnerable adults, such as:

- Information held by the licensee regarding self-exclusions and incidences of underage gambling;
- Gaming trends that may mirror days for financial payments such as pay days or benefit payments;

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- Arrangement for localised exchange of information regarding self-exclusions and gaming trends;
- Proximity of premises which may be frequented by vulnerable people such as hospitals, mental health providers, residential care homes, medical facilities, doctor's surgeries, council housing offices, addiction clinics or help centres, places where alcohol or drug dependant people may congregate, etc.;
- Homeless or rough sleeper shelters, hostels and support services;
- Transport links and parking facilities;
- Community centres;
- High crime area;
- High unemployment area;
- Pawn broker/pay day loan businesses in the vicinity;
- Other gambling premises in the vicinity.

Maps have been produced for 16 areas in Welwyn Hatfield as follows.

- Brookmans Park
- Cuffley
- Digswell
- Essendon
- Hatfield North
- Hatfield South
- Little Heath
- Newgate Street
- North Mymms
- Northaw
- Oaklands and Mardley Heath
- Welham Green
- Welwyn
- WGC North
- WGC South
- Woolmer Green

Each map will be updated to show,

- Schools/colleges
- Youth /Scout/Cadet/Community Centre
- Playground
- Parks and Sports venues
- Banks
- Post Offices
- Entertainment facilities
- Hospitals

- Residential Care Homes
- Doctor/Medical Facility
- Addiction centres and help centres
- Places of worship

This is an ongoing process, and we will review the position with regard to Gambling premises and update this Guidance as necessary.

Public Health Implications

1. The Licensing Authority recognises that when gambling becomes harmful it becomes a public health issue. Whilst gambling is a leisure activity enjoyed harmlessly by many, some individuals experience significant harm as a result of their gambling. Problem gambling is defined as gambling to a degree that compromises or disrupts or damages personal, family or recreational pursuits. Certain people are more vulnerable to gambling-related harm, including those with substance misuse problems, poor mental health, those living in deprived areas, and children and young people. Problem gamblers are more likely than other people to experience the following harms:

2. Financial harms: overdue utility bills; borrowing from family friends and loan sharks; debts; pawning or selling possessions; eviction or repossession; defaults; committing illegal acts like fraud, theft, embezzlement to finance gambling; bankruptcy; etc.

3. Family harms: preoccupied with gambling so normal family life becomes difficult; increased arguments over money and debts; emotional and physical abuse, neglect and violence towards spouse/partner and/or children; relationship problems and separation/divorce.

4. Health harms: low self-esteem; stress-related disorders; anxious, worried or mood swings; poor sleep and appetite; substance misuse; depression, suicidal ideas and attempts; etc.

5. School/college/work harms: poor school, college or work performance; increased absenteeism; expulsion or dismissal.

Crime analysis

The police looked at criminality associated with Gambling in Welwyn and Hatfield, during the period 2021-2023 and reported that things have not changed significantly. The Betting shop locations are not disproportionately represented in the crime statistics and are no more problematic than most retail locations. Robberies are still present but reduced in number, and hence less of a concern than before.

The police licensing officer is not aware of any evidence that Gambling is being used to support crime, or that children or vulnerable people were being harmed or exploited by gambling or any crime trends that would indicate this.

Best Practice Holding Information

Keeping track of the incidence and handling of problem gambling is a key part of promoting the licensing objectives. We expect all gambling premises to maintain a log and share this and other information with the Licensing service upon request. Data that we consider should be recorded and shared includes (but is not exclusive to):

- number of interventions in a calendar month along with a short description of the cause and effect
- number of cases in a calendar month where persons who have voluntarily or mandatorily been excluded from the premises have tried to gain entry
- attempts to enter by those underage whether alone or accompanied in a calendar month along with short description of incident and action
- Incidents that have been reported to the police.

Informed Businesses

We expect all customer-facing and management staff in premises licensed under the Gambling Act 2005 to have sufficient knowledge and training to tackle risks associated with gambling and know how to promote responsible gambling.

Above and beyond this we expect managers to have an in-depth knowledge and be able to support staff in ensuring the highest standards with regard to protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling and not expect staff to work alone, as they themselves could be vulnerable and possibly unable to meet the highest standards of supervision and customer care.

Managing Clients

We expect all premises to operate a voluntary exclusion scheme. This means that wherever customers request to be excluded from the premises, they are excluded for an agreed time. A self-exclusion process should be in place and supported by a written agreement drawn up in accordance with the relevant code of practice and trade association advice. The premises must take responsibility for ensuring the person who requests voluntary exclusion is not readmitted during the agreed period.

Managing crime and risk of harm

Applicants will be expected to have consulted a local Crime Reduction Officer and to have regular security reviews. The licensing authority will have specific regard for the need to protect children and vulnerable persons from harm, or being exploited, by gambling and will expect the applicant to satisfy the authority. This will include implementing monitoring measures to ensure that under-18s do not have access to adult-only gaming machine areas. The Council will expect applicants to offer their own measures to meet the licensing objectives.

Additional recommendations

Where Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBT's) are provided, these gaming machines shall be in direct sight of the supervised counter. Leaflets and posters

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aimed at customers and their families/friends, which will include how to identify signs of problem gambling and pathways to advice and assist e.g. helpline number and online counselling facility, shall be provided in close proximity to the location of any FOBT's. The Authority has the power to restrict the number of betting machines, their nature and the circumstances in which they are made available (as per S181). This may be done by attaching a licence condition to a betting premises licence. Prize gaming premises will appeal to children and young persons and weight will be given to child protection issues. Therefore, the licensing authority will expect the applicant to demonstrate that they are suitable to hold a permit (i.e. if the applicant has any convictions which would make them unsuitable to operate prize gaming) and the suitability of the premises.

Adopted by Welwyn Hatfield Council alongside the 2025-2028 Gambling policy statement of principles.