



Betting

A bet is an agreement between two parties, whereby money is paid to the party that correctly predicts the outcome of an event. The Gambling Act defines betting as: “making or accepting a bet on the outcome of a race, competition or other event or process; the likelihood of anything occurring or not occurring; or whether anything is or is not true”. The current law allows betting to take place either on-course (for example, at horseracing events), or off-course (i.e. within betting shops or remotely via telephone or online betting accounts). Pools betting at home or at dog tracks and football pools betting are also permitted.

Off-course betting

UK bookmakers obtain ‘bookmakers permits’ issued by the Betting Licensing Committee at their local Magistrates Courts, and a ‘betting office licence’ available from the Betting Licensing Committee. There are more than 8,000 licensed betting premises in Britain, visited by over 7 million customers a year – nearly one fifth of the adult population. Off-course betting is increasingly taking place remotely, such as through the Internet, interactive television and telephone services.

On-course betting

On-course betting is regulated by the National Joint Pitch Council and is overseen by the Jockey Club and the British Horseracing Board (BHB) with regard to horseracing, and the National Greyhound Racing Club (NGRC) and the British Greyhound Racing Board (BGRB) with regard to greyhound racing. The Independent Betting Arbitration Service (IBAS) will investigate certain betting related disputes.

Future changes

Under the Gambling Act, from 2007 all betting operators will be regulated by the Gambling Commission. The Act replaces an outmoded set of laws dating back to the 1960s and brings betting in line with other gambling activities. It requires betting, in common with all gambling activities, to meet the three core licensing objectives of keeping crime out of gambling, ensuring gambling is conducted fairly and openly, and protecting children and vulnerable people.

The Commission is already working closely with betting industry organisations to ensure the right level of licence controls, and will be consulting widely on its draft licensing conditions and codes of practice early next year.