

## Response

Thank you for your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

At the Gambling Commission our regional compliance managers work with licensing and trading standards officers from local authorities to conduct 'test purchasing' (mystery shopping) exercises of gambling premises in their area.

These exercises take the format of an underage volunteer entering into a bookmaker, arcade, etc and attempting to play a gaming machine. In some of the tests, if the volunteer has not been challenged for ID after playing the machine for a period of time, they then approach the counter to ask for change, giving another 'opportunity' to be challenged. There have also been some testing exercises focusing on on-course bookmakers. With these, the tester is 'placing a bet' in the traditional sense.

There is other test purchasing activity that goes on that supports compliance with the law and LCCP. For example, local authorities may choose to test premises in their area by themselves, they do not have to do it with a member of Gambling Commission staff. Furthermore, all casinos and the larger (category C and above) arcades, bingo and betting premises are required by the LCCP to carry out testing to make sure their policies and procedures to prevent underage gambling are effective. The operators will typically use a third-party company to do the testing with 'young-looking' 18 and 19 year olds. The Gambling Commission encourages operators to adopt 'Think 21' policies when it comes to asking for ID so, in theory, the 18 and 19 year olds should be challenged.

After completing a check of our records I can confirm that Gambling Commission does not hold an exact figure for the amount of money placed on bets or the returns made during test purchasing exercises. A record is maintained of any testing carried out by the Gambling Commission or jointly with local authorities. However, we only keep a log of nature of the result (pass or fail) of these exercises.

Further information can be found on our website in our [approach to test purchasing](#) document.

I hope you find this information useful

### Review of the decision

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your Freedom of Information request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you should write to FOI Team, Gambling Commission, 4th floor, Victoria Square House, Victoria Square, Birmingham, B2 4BP.

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner (ICO) for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the Gambling Commission. The ICO can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.

## Request

Please treat this as a request pursuant to section 1(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Do you, directly or through your officers, servants or agents, conduct 'mystery shopping' exercises to seek to ensure that licensees comply with the law and/ or with conditions of their license?

Do mystery shoppers ever place bets?

What was the total amount of money mystery shoppers placed on bets in (i) the calendar year 2015 and (ii) the calendar year 2016?

What was the total return (or total loss) from bets placed by mystery shoppers in (i) the calendar year 2015 and (ii) the calendar year 2016?

Please provide an electronic copy of any policy, guidance or other instructive material you hold regarding the placing of bets by mystery shoppers.