

Details of breaches of the National Lottery Act 2013 and National Lottery Licence

There have been 10 incidences of breaches found between the commencement of the Licence in November 2014 and 2024. Details of each incident and the breaches determined have been published in each instance, in the Regulator’s annual report.

Year of Finding	Nature of Breach	Impact of Breach	Remedy & Outcome
2017	Self-excluded players re-admitted to their online account before end of their one month or six month self-exclusion period, via customer contact centre	Investigation by Regulator’s office found that 19 Players were able to play National Lottery games and 4 received marketing messages during a self-exclusion period taken some time between 30 Nov 2014 and 17 Oct 2016.	Regulator directed Operator to ensure that self-exclusion is irrevocable for the period chosen. Controls put in place to make self-exclusion irrevocable and add friction to re-admittance after self-exclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System doesn’t allow any re-admittance prior to expiry of self-exclusion • Account doesn’t automatically reactivate at end of self-exclusion period • Player must call Operator to reactivate account and is advised of tools and facilities to help manage their play prior to re-activation.
2017	Advertisement depicting winning as an alternative to work and showing under 18s in non-incident roles	Such advertising can excessively stimulate emotional triggers to play. Advertisement was withdrawn soon after it first aired.	Advertisement withdrawn promptly. All advertisements continue to be reviewed by the Regulator’s office as they are broadcast/published and no further breaches have been found to date.
2018	A jackpot notification email was sent to players who had opted out of receiving such emails, due to “human error”	Unwanted intrusion for affected players. Regulator established that the email did not go to any self-excluded players.	Controls put in place to prevent recurrence. No recurrence to date. Data Protection Commissioner notified. Confirmed that “human error” not an accepted defence for breaches – the Operator must have effective controls.

Year of Finding	Nature of Breach	Impact of Breach	Remedy & Outcome
2018	<p>Press release presented winning as a way out of financial difficulties, through winner quotes</p>	<p>Such promotional content targets the financially vulnerable.</p> <p>Impact confined to a single press release.</p>	<p>Press release removed from database.</p> <p>All press releases continue to be reviewed by the Regulator’s office as they are issued and no further breaches have been found to date.</p>
2019	<p>Trademarked National Lottery logo missing from press releases issued</p>	<p>No direct impact.</p> <p>Over time, failures to use the National Lottery trademarks as required could lead the National Lottery to be seen as belonging to the Operator and not, in fact, to the State.</p>	<p>Press release template amended to include the National Lottery logo.</p> <p>Regulator’s annual reviews of the Operator’s compliance with its trademark obligations continue. No further breaches have been found to date.</p>
2020	<p>Top Prizes omitted from 3 scratch card games due to errors made in spreadsheet when ordering new print runs of different sizes to previous print runs.</p> <p>Operator failed to apply control for ensuring that all scratch card games printed matched the approved prize structure. (The operator only applied it to the first print run and relied on a spreadsheet thereafter.)</p>	<p>Players who purchased tickets in the three scratch card games did not have the same chance of winning the top prize as per the game approved by the Regulator.</p> <p>It was not possible to identify the players who missed out on the chance to win these prizes and compensate them (as tickets are purchased anonymously).</p> <p>The Regulator ensured that the total value of the omitted prizes of €180,000 was paid out to scratch card players generally through a special draw, funded entirely by the</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Regulator directed the Operator to remove the affected game still on sale in December 2019. 2. Public apology by National Lottery to players in December 2019. 3. Special New Year’s Draw held to return €180,000 prize value to players without delay. 4. The €180,000 prize money for the Special Draw was taken from Operator’s own funds and, to ensure the Operator did not benefit financially from the Special Draw, a €50,000 donation was made by the Operator to a mental health charity. 5. A full examination conducted by Regulator established that the Operator did not profit from the error or withhold information from Regulator and no other games were affected. The findings were published in a standalone report in 2020.

Year of Finding	Nature of Breach	Impact of Breach	Remedy & Outcome
		Operator, in a prompt manner. No prize went unclaimed.	<p>6. New measures by Operator to prevent the recurrence of such omissions.</p> <p>7. New measures by Regulator's office to detect any recurrence earlier in the lifecycle of a game.</p> <p>8. No recurrence found to date.</p> <p>There was no apparent diminution of the reputation of the National Lottery following the incident (based on sales figures and independent reputation measurement tracking reports) - suggesting the remedy was effective.</p>
2020	A software change resulted in an unforeseen technical issue where the weekly spend limit restarted mid-week on 1 st January 2020	116 players spent more than the maximum weekly player spend for online National Lottery games, in the week overlapping the end of 2019 and start of 2020.	<p>Affected players refunded amounts spent over the weekly limit.</p> <p>Software fix deployed, tested and confirmed to be working correctly.</p>
2021	A time-lag in systems allowed marketing communications to be sent to players who had self-excluded, up to 36 hours from the time the player chose to self-exclude.	<p>48 self-excluded players received marketing emails up to 36 hours after a self-exclusion commenced.</p> <p>Regulator established that no affected player went on to spend online.</p>	<p>Systems enhanced to ensure the cessation of marketing messages takes effect in real time.</p> <p>It was not possible to ascertain the impact on or apply any remedy for players beyond this - that would require further contact with self-excluded players which would be further intrusion by the National Lottery triggering the impulse to play.</p>
2022	The online accounts of 126 players who opted for permanent self-exclusion were inadvertently deleted by an algorithm	16 affected individuals opened new accounts, of whom 10 purchased tickets totalling €3,292 and 4 received marketing emails.	<p>1. The 16 accounts were closed and the 126 deleted accounts were recreated as permanently self-excluded accounts.</p> <p>2. The GDPR algorithm was amended to not include accounts subject to permanent self-exclusion.</p>

Year of Finding	Nature of Breach	Impact of Breach	Remedy & Outcome
	<p>designed to delete closed accounts after two years (to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations) thus permitting those players to open a new account.</p>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Existing controls to prevent any self-excluded player from opening another account were tightened. 4. The Regulator issued a statutory direction to the Operator which had the effect of (a) enhancing the controls supporting self-exclusion and (b) empowering the Regulator to seek a financial sanction by the High Court on the Operator for any future non-compliance with its selfexclusion obligations. 5. The Regulator withheld €150,000 in payments due to the Operator and transferred this amount to the Exchequer for good causes
2024	<p>Check My Numbers Facility on the National Lottery website became available at times when draw results were still being verified – during a six week period in 2022 - such that some players received a “<i>Ticket Not a Winner</i>” message when, in fact, the numbers they had entered were winning numbers in the draw that had just taken place and was still being verified.</p>	<p>This may have contributed to up to 394 prizes going unclaimed, though there was no noticeable increase in the rate of unclaimed prizes. The total value of the unclaimed prizes that might not have been claimed due to this incident was at most €2,299; one €250 prize and all others ranging from €24 down to €2.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A permanent fix was put in place so that this technical glitch could not recur. 2. The €2,299 unclaimed prizes potentially affected was returned to players as prizes in other National Lottery games. 3. The Regulator withheld €23,000 in payments due to the Operator and transferred this amount to the Exchequer for good causes. 4. The Regulator commissioned independent external IT experts to confirm that all prize-checking facilities were operating correctly.