

# Betting giant to test GBP 500 gaming machines in Liverpool

Betting giant Ladbrokes is using Liverpool as a testbed for a new breed of "adult gaming centres" featuring new jackpot gaming machines.

The centres, described by the company as an adult version of traditional amusement arcades, will feature up to four jackpot gaming machines with top prizes of GBP 500. The centres will also include up to 40 regular slot machines with prizes of up to GBP 35.

The other centres are in Barnsley and Hull.

A Ladbrokes spokesman told the Daily Post that, while similar centres could be rolled out across the country, plans were at a "very early stage".

Merseyside is a key base for Ladbrokes as the company's successful telephone betting business employs more than 150 people at Aintree.

Ladbrokes last week said that its telephone betting business saw operating profits rise to GBP 183.6m in 2007, up from GBP 17.3m in 2006, thanks to increased activity from high-spending "high rollers".

That helped Ladbrokes' group profits rise 45% to GBP 344.2m.

The company last year sold Vernons Pools to Sportech for £51m. Once Vernons has completed its move to Sportech's Walton base, Ladbrokes plans to expand its Aintree call centre.