

Lotto card left punters scratching their heads

■ Game is frozen out by poor maths

■ Players didn't know if they had won or not

EXCLUSIVE
CIARA LEEMING

A LOTTERY scratchcard has been withdrawn from sale because players couldn't understand it.

The Cool Cash game – launched on Monday by Camelot – was taken out of shops yesterday after some players failed to grasp whether or not they had won.

To win a prize, players had to scratch away a window to reveal a temperature lower than the figure displayed on each card. As the game had a winter theme, the temperature was usually below freezing.

But the concept of comparing negative numbers proved too difficult for some – Camelot received dozens of complaints on the first day from players who could not understand how, for example, -5 is higher than -6.

Tina Farrell, from Levenshulme, called Camelot after failing to win with several cards.

The 23-year-old, who said she left school without a maths GCSE,

said: "On one of my cards it said I had to find temperatures lower than -8. The numbers I uncovered were -6 and -7 so I thought I had won, and so did the woman in the shop. But when she scanned the card, the machine said I hadn't."

"I phoned Camelot and they fobbed me off with some story that -6 is higher – not lower – than -8 but I'm not having it."

"I think Camelot are giving people the wrong impression – the card doesn't say to look for a colder or warmer temperature, it says to look for a higher or lower number. Six is a lower number than eight. Imagine how many people have been misled."

A Camelot spokeswoman said the game was withdrawn after reports some players had not understood it.

She said: "The instructions for playing the Cool Cash scratchcard are clear and are printed on each card and in the game procedures available at each retailer. However, because of the potential for player confusion we have withdrawn the game."

More than 15m adults in Britain have poor numeracy –

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the equivalent of a G or below at GCSE maths – which is almost three times more than the number with poor literacy skills, according to the government's Skills for Life survey.

Peter Hall, of the Association of Teachers of Mathematics, said:

"The concept of minus numbers is something we would cover with 11 or 12-year-olds, and we would expect them to have come across it before."

"The concept of smaller numbers is something some people do seem to struggle with."

Seven is clearly smaller than eight, so they focus on that and don't really see the minus sign. There is also a subtle difference in language between smaller – or lower – and colder."

"There have always been some people who find numbers and basic mathematics difficult. Maybe in the past it was less noticeable because people could find jobs they could excel in without having qualifications in maths."

'I thought I had won, and so did the woman in the shop'



COLD COMFORT Tina Farrell with the Cool Cash scratchcard which didn't have the winning formula

