PARENT FACTSHEET – FEBRUARY 2025

Loot boxes and skins betting

What are they?

Loot boxes: a feature of online games where players pay to get unknown rewards, like items or modifications for their character. It's similar to gambling, because most of the time you don't know what you're going to get before you pay.

One example is 'player packs' in EA Sports FC or FIFA, where you buy a 'pack' of player cards, but don't know who you're going to get when you make the purchase.

Skins betting: where people use 'skins' as betting currency ('skins' are extra items in online games, for example visual upgrades for their weapons or character). You can earn real money if you win. People usually do this through specific websites that let you use skins to bet.

What's the problem?

- Some children say they end up chasing a win with loot boxes, like gamblers do
- Skins betting is a backdoor way for children to gamble underage
- Gambling can be addictive, like drugs or alcohol, with a severe impact on emotional health and wellbeing
- Teens have reported spending hundreds of pounds in a year on loot boxes, and losing skins worth thousands through gambling

3 steps you can take

1. Make sure your child knows the risks

Your child might not realise they could lose hundreds or thousands of pounds. They might not understand the risk of addiction or that, in general, it's illegal to gamble when you're under 18.

Explain that websites that guarantee wins or have offers that seem too good to be true are using these to entice you. Behind these promotions is a business looking to make money.

Explain how loot boxes are also like gambling, as you take a risk for the chance of a reward.

Tell them they should report skins gambling websites to The Gambling Commission.

2. Set limits on in-game spending to control how much your child can spend

This will also help you stop them from spending a lot of money without realising it.

- On **Xbox** set up your Family Safety account first, then follow the instructions here to manage in-game spending
- On **Android** devices follow the instructions here to set spending limits for Google Play
- On **Apple** devices follow these instructions to set up Family Sharing, and follow the instructions here to restrict in-app spending
- On **PlayStation** you'll need to set up accounts for family members, with adult and child accounts. Then follow the instructions here to manage spending

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3. Know the signs of problematic activity

Look out for signs, like if your child:

- Is short of money or has unexplained sources of money
- Becomes secretive or starts lying
- Loses interest in school and other hobbies, as well as in their health and appearance
- Has mood swings if they're not able to access games or devices
- Speak to our school if you're concerned about your child, and seek support from organisations like BigDeal (https://www.bigdeal.org.uk) and The Gambling Commission

Sources

- Skin betting: children as young as 11 introduced to gambling, BBC News, 12 December 2017
  https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-42311533
- Gambling and young people, Gambling Commission
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