

# 'I spent £700 on loot boxes in a month'

By Lydia Thomas & Mike Young  
You and Yours, Radio 4

7 March 2019



GEORGE PROUD

George Proud says loot boxes are addictive

**George Proud from County Durham, a keen online gamer, spent nearly £700 in a month opening loot boxes as he progressed through a game.**

The boxes - which offer players new weapons or character skins - can be opened by playing the game for a long time or by paying money.

George says they're addictive: "Over time you will gamble money away trying to get the item you want," he told **Radio 4's You & Yours.**

Popular games such as Overwatch and Call of Duty: Black Ops 4 are just some of the dozens of games that have loot boxes in them.

The issue of whether paying to open loot boxes constitutes gambling behaviour is an issue currently being looked at by the government and the industry regulator, the Gambling Commission.

- **Labour pledges tougher online bet limits**
- **YouTubers under fire for 'loot box' videos**
- **Number of child gamblers quadruples**

Last week the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee heard from researchers who said they needed games companies to hand over player data so they could conduct thorough studies into the issue.

A survey of more than 2,000 adults conducted by market research company Populus adults found that while only one third had heard of loot boxes, 74% of people who were aware of them believed loot boxes blurred the lines between gaming and gambling.

Almost three-quarters (72%) agreed they teach children how to gamble, and 68% agreed they should be classed as gambling.

Conservative Peer Lord Chadlington, who commissioned the survey, said loot boxes should be classed as gambling.

"Notice the words George Proud uses. He said, 'I've gambled away this money', and that's what happens.

"Because you don't know in many cases when you go into the loot box what you're going to get, and if you use money this creates the risk feeling."



LORD CHADLINGTON

| Lord Chadlington says loot boxes should be classed as gambling

He added: "I'm only concerned about one thing, I'm not fighting the gambling companies or gaming companies or anyone else. We just have to be very careful we do not ignore evidence which suggests that there will be a gambling epidemic among young people in the years ahead."

The Gambling Commission says current regulation does not cover loot boxes because the prize in a loot box is not worth real money.

However, Radio 4's *You & Yours* has seen loot boxes and the contents of the boxes being bought and sold in online marketplaces. Some items that are really desirable can fetch hundreds of pounds.

The regulator said it's looking into this problem, as where in-game items from loot boxes can be readily exchanged for cash, the loot boxes could fall within the definition of gambling.

Players can end up spending a lot of money to get the item they want. There's also the added pressure from other gamers to get a unique or limited edition reward in the loot box.

Australia, the Netherlands and Belgium have now regulated loot boxes under gambling laws. Those countries believe that loot boxes replicate gambling behaviour, because the gamer is repeatedly spending money to try and hit a jackpot.



However, in the UK current legislation doesn't allow loot boxes to be regulated under gambling law as no money is "cashed out" as a prize.

The Gambling Commission said: "We are concerned with the growth in examples where the line between video gaming and gambling is becoming

increasingly blurred and where we are clear that a product has passed the line into gambling and is posing a risk to players, we will take action.

"In 2017 we successfully brought the first criminal prosecution in this area in relation to Futgalaxy who we prosecuted for providing skins gambling to the underage."