BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO...
ESPORTS
IT'S MORE THAN A GAME

Esports (short for 'electronic sports') are best understood as competitive-level video gaming. Players compete against each other for prizes, money, and prestige.

Any videogame with the potential for competition can become an esport – from sports games (e.g. FIFA) to first-person shooter games (like Call of Duty).

Esports can be team-based or solo experiences. They require training, skills, and time. Teams have coaches, sponsorships, and friendly matches for practice (called scrims) before competitions. Tournaments can range from small-scale events aimed at amateur enthusiasts or large-scale events for professional teams sponsored by game publishers.

Esports may have been around for a long time but their recent rise in popularity can be attributed to livestreaming on platforms like Twitch and YouTube. Livestreaming has helped expand esports as a legitimate career option or goal for young people.

OFFLINE VS ONLINE

OFFLINE		ONLINE
✓	Team or Solo Performances	✓
✓	Tournaments	✓
✓	Player contracts	✓
✓	Spectators and fans	✓
✓	Sponsorships	✓
✓	Training required	✓
✓	Amateur opportunities	✓
✗	Online	✓

RISKS

INAPPROPRIATE AND DISTRESSING CONTENT
Games may contain inappropriate or distressing content which a child or young person could be introduced to through watching or by playing. This could include violence or inappropriate language.

GAMBLING
Most games have a form of loot boxes (in-game virtual items bought with real-world money) for purchase, which could result in unhealthy spending habits, especially when boxes offer competitive advantages. Children and young people may not understand the mechanics of gambling.

RAPPORT IN GAMES
Esports are played by people of all ages, all over the world. When playing team-based games, the child in your care could match up against strangers in a team. This could create a potential environment for grooming.

CROSS-PLATFORM RISKS
While playing online, there is a risk that gameplay sessions move across platforms (such as using Discord for voice chat). Young people may want to follow their favourite esports teams and players on social media and engage in discussions with other fans. This could make it easier for strangers to contact them and introduces more avenues where abuse could take place.

TIME CONSUMING
Practicing and competing in tournaments requires a time commitment. This could interfere with schoolwork, sleep schedules, and family routines. It could also introduce added stress if a young person is using all their free time to engage in training and competition, without leaving time to relax by doing other things.

EMOTIONAL DISTRESS
Much like traditional sports competition, especially in a team setting, there is a chance that a bad match could frustrate a child or young person playing the game. They may also get upset if their favourite team doesn't win or perform well. This could result in negative emotional reactions such as outbursts, sulking, or fixation.

LACK OF OVERSIGHT
Esports lack an overarching authority body like those in traditional sports, such as the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) in football. Bodies, like the International Esports Federation (IESF), are still in the early stages of attempting to introduce global regulation standards. This is problematic because there are no standards for accountability and a disparity in rules and requirements for competitions.

SPONSORSHIPS
It is common for pro-players to be sponsored by companies, like powder caffeine drinks such as G Fuel or Glytch Energy. This could influence a child or young person to want to buy these products despite potential dangers of excessive caffeine intake.

TIPS

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BE MINDFUL OF AGE LIMITS FOR GAMES
Check a game's PEGI rating to determine if it is appropriate for your child or young person to spectate or play the game.

ENGAGE IN ESPORTS WITH YOUR CHILD
Parents and carers should aim to gain an understanding of esports. Watching tournaments and competitions is the easiest way to get a grasp on what esports are and why they appeal to the young people in your care. Watch livestreams of tournaments with your child and discuss teams, players, and what happens in the competitions.

FIND THE RIGHT BALANCE
Encourage screen time limits to find the right balance between competitiveness and healthy habits. It is important for young people to feel in control of their time to avoid stress.

NOT EVERYONE MAKES IT
The young person in your care may express a desire to become a pro-player so it is important to know how to manage expectations while still supporting their 'dreams'. Set realistic goals and understand that this may be a legitimate ambition for the child or young person in your care.

ENCOURAGE DIGITAL SAFETY
Advise children to never share any personal identifiable information with other players, even friends. This includes a player's gamertag or username - make sure these doesn't have any identifiable information too!

ESPORTS BUZZWORDS

We understand that a topic like esports brings along new terms and concepts – so we've developed a list of buzzwords to help you understand terms associated with the world of esports.

SPONSORSHIPS
These are deals made with players, organisations or tournaments that provide opportunities to make money.

ORGANISATIONS
Players can be signed to organisations that feature teams in multiple esports. Players are signed to organisations on contracts and earn money based on sponsorships from organisations.

TOURNAMENTS
Competitions (of any scale) for any skill level that can include qualifying rounds, group stages, semi-finals, and finals. Tournaments can be officially sponsored by brands and game publishers like EA. These include Private, Amateur and Professional tournaments.

SHOUTCASTER
An esports commentator.

CONTENT CREATOR
Players who are signed to an organisation who don't tend to compete in professional tournaments but instead create content like livestreaming.

ROSTER
The line-up or list of players that will be competing in an event or season.

STREAMER
A player who 'live-streams' or broadcasts their gameplay on sites such as Twitch and Discord. These can be players of any level and helps to build popularity within the esports community.

BUFF
A term used for an in-game enhancement that strengthens a character's ability.

PRO-PLAYER
A professional player who engages in esports as their career.

RPG
'Role-Playing Game'. This is when a gamer assumes the role of a character in a fictional setting.

SCRIMS
Friendly practice matches.

DLC
'Downloadable Content'. Content such as skins, armour or weapons that can be downloaded or purchased in a game.

COACH
Coaches look to improve or 'coach' an esports team's performance by creating strategies and tactics.

VS

CLAN
Also known as a community, guild, party or faction. Used to describe a team of players who regularly play multiplayer games together.

SP
Or 'Single Player Game' is a game that can only have one player at a time.

BOTS
Computer controlled players which real-life users can play and practice against.

LAN
'Local Area Network'. A group of devices that share a common network within a distinct geographic area.

SEASON PASS
Additional cost that allows access to specific areas of a game or to access DLC.

GAMERTAG
The username or nickname of a player. e.g.Ineqe_Geek22

MICROTRANSACTION
The act of paying money to buy items within a game, such as weapons, abilities and loot boxes.

GAMEPLAY
Describes the player's experience of a game.

MOBA
Stands for 'Multiplayer Online Battle Arenas'. These are singular map action games, which are fast paced, and team oriented with each player having a specific role.

MULTIPLATFORM
A game that allows multiplayer gameplay across different devices.

EASTER EGG
Hidden video game features or surprises. These can be scattered throughout the game.