LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

MATTHEW 5:16

Safeguarding Update - February

This month's staff safeguarding Newsletter focuses on Child Sexual Exploitation

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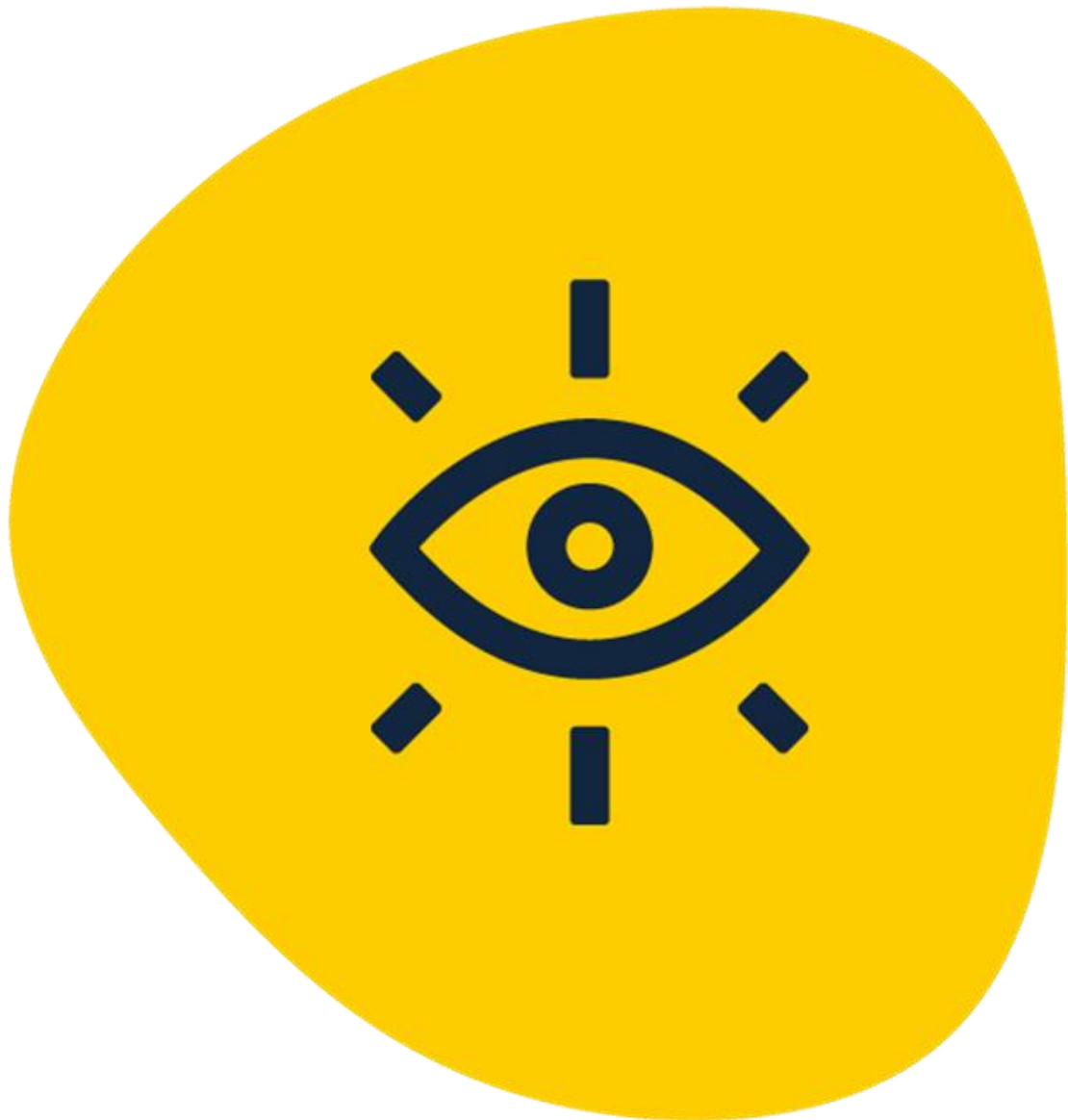- Reminder of DSL Team

What is CSE?

What is child sexual exploitation (CSE)?

- A form of child sexual abuse

- An individual or group taking advantage of an imbalance of power to **coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual activity**

- The sexual activity may be:

· In exchange for something the child needs or wants, and/or

· For the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator, and/or

· Through violence or the threat of violence

What is CSE?

- It can affect any child (male or female) under 18

- The child may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Children who are 16 or 17, and can legally consent to have sex, can be victims too

- It doesn't always involve physical contact – it can include non-contact sexual activity and can happen through technology, e.g. involving children in the production of sexual images or grooming a child via the internet

- It may happen without the child's immediate knowledge, e.g. through others sharing videos or images of them on social media

- It can be a one-off event, or a series of events over time, and can be opportunistic or organised

- It can be carried out by individuals or groups, men or women, and children or adults

- It can be more frequent in difficult times like the cost-of-living crisis, where criminal gangs can take advantage of families struggling under financial pressure

· High tensions at home and less money to spend on activities/clubs means children may spend more time online or out and about unsupervised in places where they can be targeted

What else should you look out for?

Associating with other children involved in exploitation.

Misusing drugs and alcohol

Displaying sexual behaviours beyond expected level of sexual development.

Having older boyfriends or girlfriends.

Suffering from sexually transmitted infections. Staff may notice them looking uncomfortable or going to the toilet more.

Pregnancy.

Being absent from education for prolonged periods or on repeat occasions.

A child may be frightened of some people, places or situations.

A child may become secretive.

A child may show changes in mood, character, behaviour or emotional wellbeing.

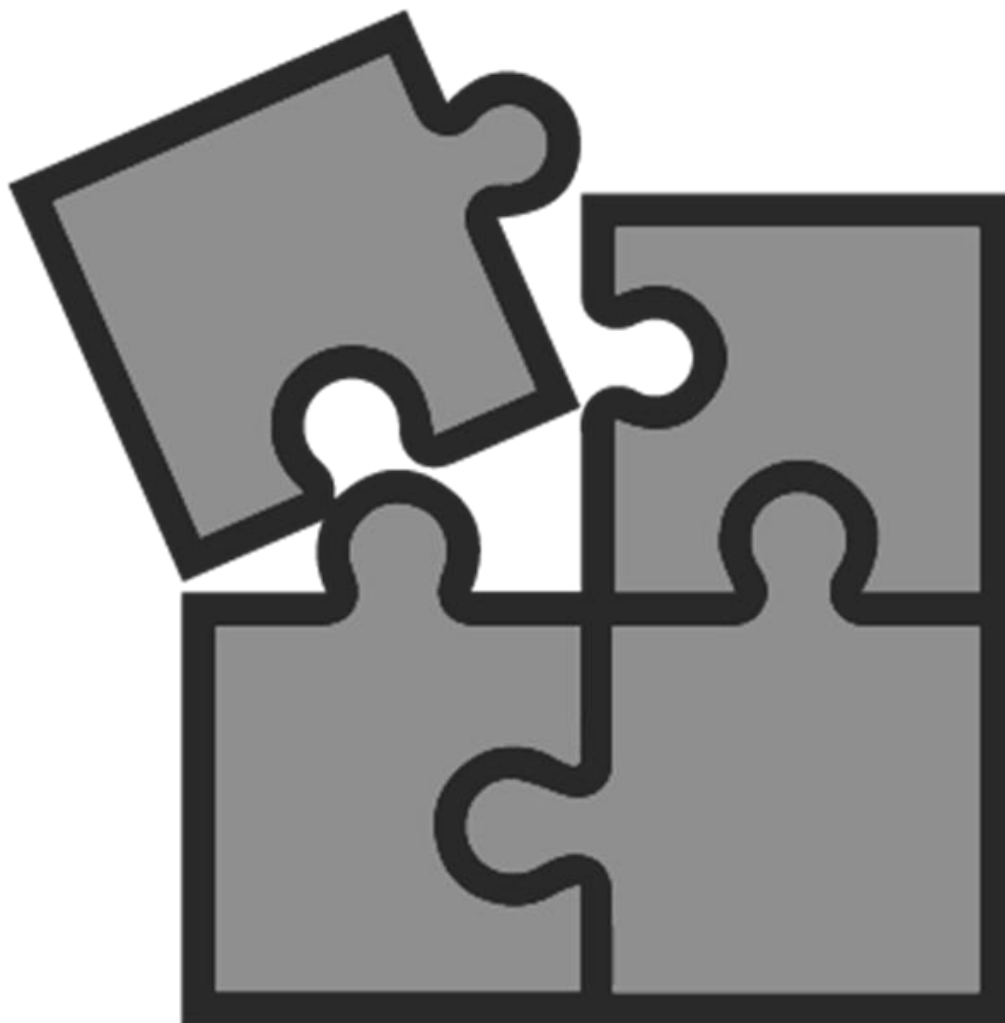A child may suddenly have money or items that they can't or won't explain.

The cost of living Crisis!

It can make more pupils vulnerable to child exploitation:

- Criminal gangs exploit children from families struggling to afford basic goods.

- There could be more tension and stress at home due to money and debt worries.

- More families are unable to afford activities over holidays, on weekends and after school. So children are 'hanging around' more.

- Children might spend more time in their rooms online and exposed to harmful content, or out and about unsupervised in places where they can be targeted by criminals.

CSE: A real DSL's story

Staff had been worried about some of the children in our school for a long time …

The problem was that we couldn't join up the dots, as we had missing pieces of the jigsaw. We were stuck.

We'd spoken to social care about our concerns, but no action was being taken.

It was very frustrating.

However, help came from 3 staff members who had not been involved in any of the multi-agency meetings at the school.

If they hadn't come forward, I genuinely don't know what would have happened.

Learning mentor at the behaviour centre:

I knew I needed to speak to the DSL when I overheard some of the girls I was mentoring talk about a party.

The party sounded suspicious. It was seemingly for adults, yet one of the girls I mentor was going, along with another girl from our school. I also overheard a nickname for one of the adults who was going.

I contacted my DSL.

Midday supervisor:

I didn't really see much – just one of the girls showing the others a picture of her boyfriend on her phone.

But, as I listened, I became worried. The boyfriend was a lot older than the girl, and she called the boys in the school "wimps" compared to "her man".

I spoke to my boss, who contacted the DSL.

Caretaker:

I saw a black car parked near the school gates. I only noticed it because it wasn't one of the usual parents' cars or taxis that pick up the kids.

I also saw one of our girls getting into it.

I just mentioned it to the receptionist, who thought it was strange and managed to capture it on our CCTV system. She sent the CCTV image to our office manager.

With all these new snippets of information, we could speak to the police and social care again. This time, they took action.

- Identifying a young child with an older boyfriend was crucial

- It was important to know there was going to be a party involving children from our school and adults

- Having the nickname of the adult and an image of the car helped the police to intervene earlier. It gave them enough intelligence to be able to stop the party from going ahead

This real life example shows just how valuable small pieces of information are - they join together to make a bigger picture, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. This is why it is so important to report any suspicions to the DSL.

It is highly unlikely that a pupil will disclose that they are caught up in CSE - and they may not understand that they are. It is therefore really important that everyone is alert to signs.

Everybody's role has a part to play in looking out for signs. Some examples of things different roles might pick up on are:

•**Midday supervisors – look out for:** pupils who are anxious or withdrawn from their peer groups (lunchtime may be the only time when you can see isolation); changes in eating habits, as children may manage anxieties through food; how pupils behave in groups – in particular, mobile phone activity which may include sharing images which could cause a child to display aggressive or passive behaviour

•**Teachers/teaching assistants – look out for:** changes in a pupil's physical appearance (clothes, gifts, make-up, new trainers, etc.); unexpected changes in academic work; changes in attendance and punctuality; subtle changes in behaviour, like a lack of focus or being distracted; signs of anxiety; a pupil who is becoming isolated/withdrawn from their peers; mobile phone use during lessons and in and around school/college

•**Volunteers – look out for:** differences in a pupil's behaviour, or signs of anxiety; be mindful that pupils may be more inclined to see you as someone they can talk to in confidence if they are suffering or in need of support

•**Caretakers/site managers – look out for:** children who are isolated from their peers – they may hide in different parts of the school site; pupils who congregate around the school site, perhaps sharing images on mobile phones; children leaving the premises, particularly if they are leaving in cars with adults not known to the school

•**Receptionists/office staff – look out for:** pupils coming in late – patterns, or anything concerning; pupils' appearance and behaviour as they arrive and leave – how they dress, body language (do they look anxious, uptight or worried?). Pupils may be in the reception area for a variety of reasons – look at their behaviour and notice differences, anxieties, any potential distress

Reminder of DSL Team