

TREES Newsletter

Together Reducing & Ending Exploitation in Shropshire



Issue 8 • Autumn 2022

Welcome

A warm welcome to all of our partner agencies to latest edition of our TREES newsletter. This quarter, I would like to raise your awareness around the increasing concerns we have seen regarding children's use of vapes. Our new Young Person's Substance Misuse Advisor, George Davies, shares that:

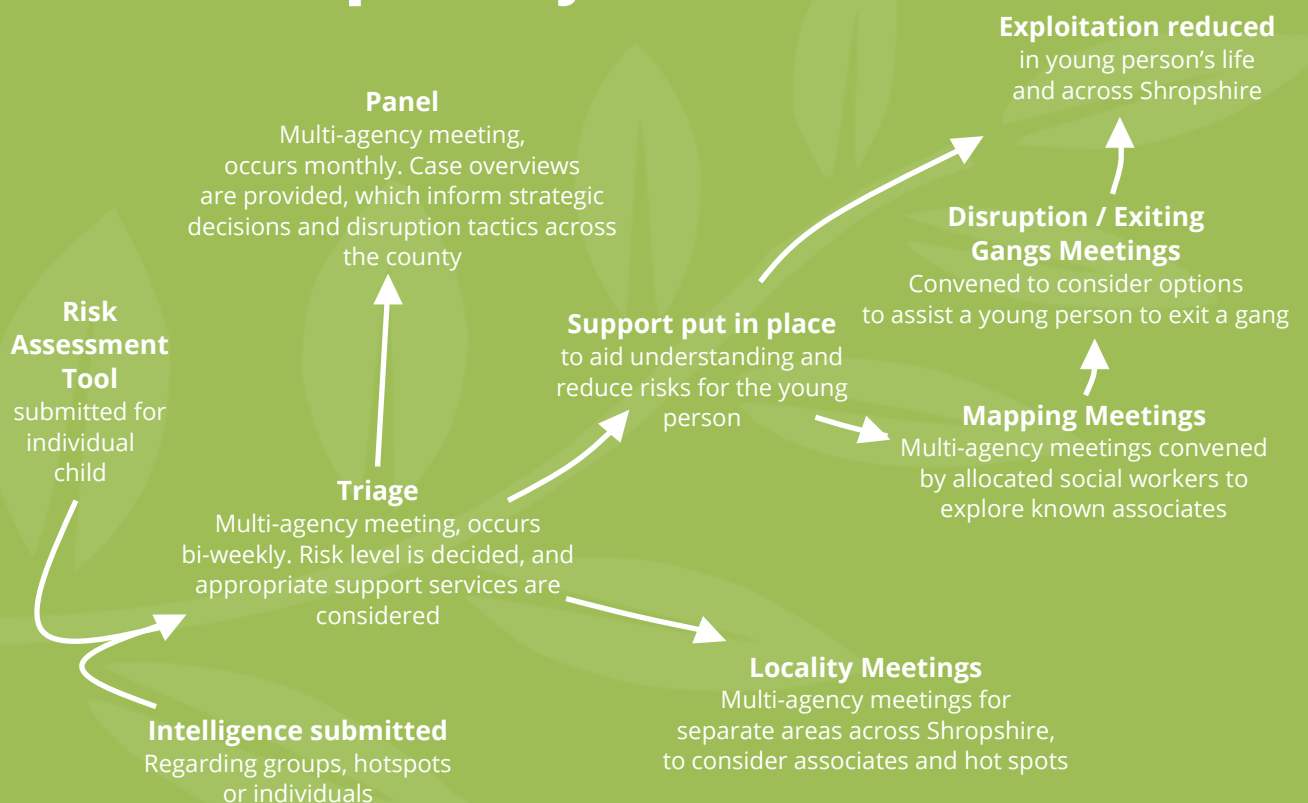
Vaping in particular (use of e-cigarettes, elf/geek bars, mod/pods etc) is something that is likely to become increasingly more popular, and very early research is shown that, smoking cessation, is not what young people are using them for – instead going straight into using them. Increasing reports suggest adults, or fellow CCE YPs, are using vapes as a cheap 'buy-in' to curry favour with them, starting the debt-bondage process. It should be noted that NDTMS (National Government Statistics) DO NOT track vape use. It is likely to be much, much higher than reported.

Please see [Pages 4-5](#) for more insight around this .

Clare Jervis, CE & Missing Operational Lead and Team Manager of the TREES Hub
clare.jervis@shropshire.gov.uk



How does the pathway work?



Current patterns and emerging themes

Update from Clare Jervis, CE & Missing Operational Lead

Child Exploitation referral figures are analysed each month, to gain a picture of CE in Shropshire - this information can then be used to identify what is going well, and what needs improvement. This data is reflected in monthly, quarterly and annual reports.

There was been a reduction in the number of referrals for males this quarter (51% compared with 62% in the first quarter of the 2021/22 fiscal year) with an increase of females (47% compared to 38% in the first quarter of the 2021/22 fiscal year)

CCE still continues to be the main risk identified within risk assessments with 63% compared to 37% CSE. It has been noted that CCE and CSE risks are present for the majority of the females referred. Figures are comparable with the first quarter of the 2021/22 fiscal year where we saw CCE figures of 69% and CSE 31%.

It has also been noted that 23% of referrals this quarter have been reviews – which is a positive increase to last year, when we received mainly new referrals and re-referrals. This suggests that children who are considered as being exploited or groomed/targeted are being regularly reviewed.

32% of children discussed this quarter have no plan in place, which raises concerns around ‘missed opportunities’ and whether risks regarding exploitation are being identified early enough; this however is a decrease to last year where we saw 41% without a plan at the point of referral.

Cannabis and Class A drugs continue to be raised, with alcohol also remaining a concern. We have also noted a high volume of children with ongoing mental health concerns, and children continuing to be abused via social media/online harm.

Please see [Pages 4-5](#) for an article by our Young Person’s Substance Misuse Advisor around vaping and other substances of concern at the moment. Sonya Jones has also provided interesting insight around the increase in alcohol use amongst young people on [Page 6](#).

Hot Spots of concern

Recent referrals and intel have identified the following areas of concern. Disruption tactics will be considered as part of regular multi-agency meetings, but if you hear about or witness anything concerning in these areas, please be alert and report any concerns as intel (please see [Page 3](#) for more information on how to do this)

- **Shrewsbury**

The Quarry park and KFC in the town centre remain areas where young people hang out. Alcohol has been noted as an ongoing issue within the Quarry, with young people using the area to drink and socialise which makes them easier targets for CE perpetrators. Matalan car park has also been raised in relation to anti-social behaviour.

- **Whitchurch**

There have also been some concerns around hotspots in the Whitchurch area – including the Queensway area and Jubilee Park. We have been informed of a place in known locally as “The Spot” – a den built by young people near the railway line where a BB gun and a knife were found.



Reporting Intelligence

There may be behaviour that you witness in communities that cause you to be concerned that unknown children are being exploited, such as activity around associates, addresses or locations.

If you have information about any anti-social or criminal activity or behaviour (even where you do not know who is at risk or of concern) which indicates that child exploitation may be occurring, please ensure you pass this information to West Mercia Police as soon as possible to enable them to prevent and detect crime (s115 Crime and Disorder Act 1998). Please provide names if you are aware of them, and as much detail as possible.

If you are a professional, please email the information directly to the Shropshire CE Team at: CETeamShropshire@westmercia.police.uk (please note that this inbox is only monitored on weekdays between 8am – 4pm) or call the team on 01743 237413.

The below methods can also be used for reporting concerns:

- Where you think there is an immediate risk to a person or you witness a crime taking place, phone **999** (or dial 55 if you are unable to talk).
- Report under the **"Tell Us About" section on the West Mercia Police website** or phone **101**.
- Anonymously to Crimestoppers online at <https://crimestoppers-uk.org> or by calling **0800 555111**.
- Children, their families and/or other members of the community may be worried about sharing information about crime with the police, but you can encourage them to do so anonymously by signposting them to Crimestoppers, or Fearless for young people - www.fearless.org

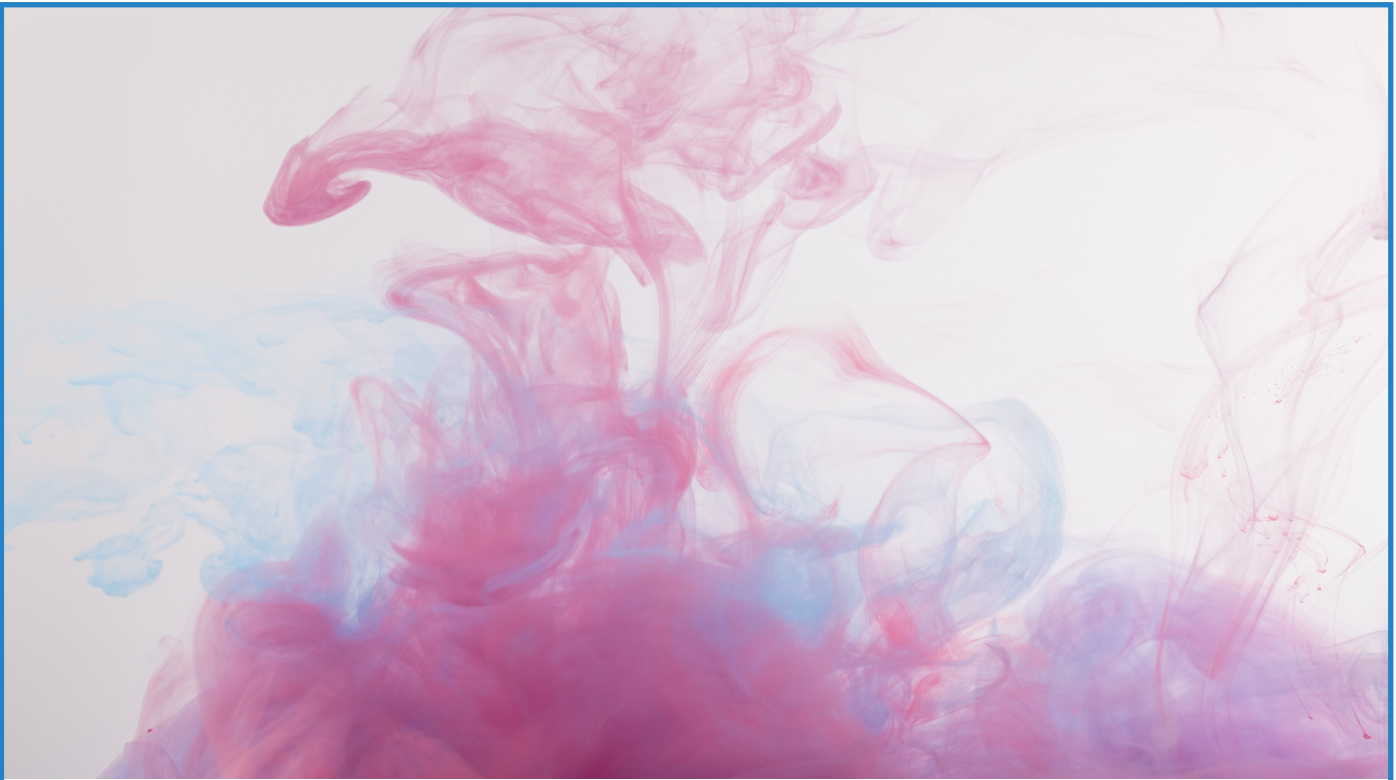
Please note: Where you have child specific information which suggests that a child is at risk of or experiencing harm as a result of exploitation, you must follow the Child Exploitation Pathway and pass information related to criminal activity or behaviour posing a risk to West Mercia Police.

What is classed as intelligence?

Both information and intelligence are welcome, here is a useful summary to describe each:

Information: Something that is learned or provided about something or someone. Information is defined as knowledge gained through experience or study; facts or knowledge provided or learned; knowledge of specific and timely events or situations, news. Information can relate to all forms of processed data and can include intelligence.

Intelligence: The analytics (interpretation of meaningful patterns) of information gathered from many sources. This is information that has been compiled, analysed, and/or disseminated to anticipate, prevent, or monitor criminal activity. It is information that has been subject to a defined evaluation and risk assessment process in order to assist with police decision making. This is to supply robust, verifiable information which can be evaluated, assessed for risk and then acted upon.



The rise of the vape

Update from George Davies, Young Person's Substance Misuse Advisor

Commonly referred to as 'vaping' - electronic cigarettes (e-cigs, vapes, cloud chasing, vooping) refers to the use of a battery-powered portable device which vaporises a liquid when inhaled. This liquid commonly is flavoured and typically contains nicotine. Vaping has dramatically increased in popularity over the last 20 years and is subject of several controversies - including corporations marketing it towards children, The unknown long-term health effects of vaping, and the fact most young vapers start with vaping and not cigarettes, is increasingly concerning.

It's important to note that e-cigarettes were originally designed as a safer alternative to smoking traditional tobacco cigarettes, and is widely accepted that as a direct replacement with the intention of stopping nicotine use - vaping is very effective.. But, an unforeseen consequence seems to have been the glamourisation of vaping and international and societal acceptance of vaping (including a nicotine addiction being overlooked) - this appears to be especially true amongst young people.

Studies show that smokers generally inhale 10 to 15 puffs in 5 to 8 minutes, making 12.5 puffs the average number of puffs for one single cigarette. This means a 20 pack of cigarettes is equal to approximately 250 puffs. As such, a 600 puff disposable vape device such as the Elf Bar Pink Lemonade is the equivalent of about 48 cigarettes.

Discussions are being held with Shropshire Council, Public Health, the nursing service and We Are With You in tackling this emerging issue. Guidance will be disseminated to partner agencies and education provisions shortly.

Opinion - Vaping as a "Gateway Drug" & Exploitation

The phrase "Gateway Drug" is often overused and misunderstood. It refers to a 'slippery slope' whereby a person using something less harmful, for example cigarettes, will end up using illegal substances like cannabis or cocaine. A lot of people suspect vapes will cause a similar effect. Cases like this are closely followed and it doesn't really happen - and it's more a manipulation of statistics. Statistically speaking, people who smoke are more likely to use other substances as well, including illegal ones. Research indicates that this is due to a person's circumstances (i.e. the reason they use substances to begin with) rather than one substance leading to the next.

However, in Shropshire (and it's unlikely to be just this area) organised criminal gangs (OCGs), drug dealers and exploited young people involved in County Lines have used vapes as a way of enticing new members in. Colourful, vibrant, cool and slick vapes are super attractive to young people. It's a very effective way to get someone interested in substances and a cheap way to buy a young person's interest. They don't need to know anything and can just use it straight out the packet.



Vapes also have become a big problem in schools and are often used as a form of currency. Whilst being mindful of the facts above, the general clinical consensus is that starting a nicotine addiction isn't something anyone really needs, and vapes haven't been around long enough to study the long term effects.

Vaping is soaked in political bias and controversy, with different countries and their governments having polar-opposite views on vaping. The rise and popularity of vaping seems to have caught the policy-makers by surprise and it's likely there will be more legislation around this in the future. Vapes are very effective for smoking cessation (to stop using tobacco) but should not be used as a hobby. Young people should be careful when offered one for free - drugs are not free, neither are vapes, and there will be a hidden cost somewhere.

Other current substances of concern

This quarter has seen a concerning rise and popularity of the use of Xanax, Ketamine, and opiates - as well as alcohol, which Sonya Jones will be reporting on in this issue. Cannabis and cocaine remains popular, with both retaining strong links to exploitation. This has been evidenced both through hospital admissions, self reporting, national trends, as well as information gathered through triage and police intelligence.

Xanax

Xanax has been popular for a number of years and often isn't the chemical 'Alprazolam' but something else. Often used in conjunction with other substances (poly drug use) it can produce sedative-like effects depending on dosage, method used and interaction with other substances. Alcohol remains popular however often users are reporting using it using alcohol with other substances. There are increasing concerns about the availability of alcohol and how these young people are obtaining it.

Ketamine

Ketamine has rocketed in popularity—it has typically been associated with students (stress of exams) and older users, however has crept it's way down to the teenagers - for reasons that are not clear. A tranquiliser producing distinctive sedative-style effects, when used enough - enter the user into a 'k-hole' basically disabling their basic motor and cognitive functions (think of car in 'limp mode' or a TV on standby - alive, but not on). Lower levels of use produce alcohol-like inebriated effects with potential for hallucinogenic experiences. Clear links to depression, can cause serious damage to the bladder and urinary tract. Not physically addictive, but due to the strong dissociative effect, ketamine users can quickly become psychologically addicted. It's link to CCE and why this is becoming more common are not clear, however reported supply problems with MDMA (ecstasy) are possibly linked.

Opiates

Finally opiates are, very worryingly so, more commonplace in hospital admissions and through assessments. Whilst heroin specific isn't being reported, use of controlled medications such as Codeine, Tramadol, Oramorph are being reported. Any indications of opiate use need serious consideration as the physical and psychological addictive effects are well known, let alone the powerful sedative-like effects, risk of overdose and likely interaction with other substances.

Reported cannabis strains (slang) to look out for

Currently around at the moment: Super Silver, Skittles, Kosher Dog, Haze, Ruthless, Mac 1, Hash.



Rise in use of alcohol amongst young people

Update from Sonya Jones, We Are With You Shropshire Team Manager

The team at We Are With You have noticed a spike in alcohol referrals over recent months, many of the referrals are from both Princess Royal Telford and Royal Shrewsbury Hospitals.

Some of these young people have attended the A&E Department, which has resulted in them being admitted onto the paediatric ward for further medical interventions.

I have raised this at the National Young Persons Managers Forum, other services such as Cornwall and Lancashire have also seen a rise in referrals such as these, so Shropshire is not alone in this.

This has generated much discussion as to why young people are using alcohol which has resulted in medical interventions.

We have concluded that in the post-pandemic period, adult services have seen a sharp rise in alcohol referrals - many adults developed unhealthy relationships with alcohol during the pandemic, so it could be that young people are mirroring this pattern.

The most disturbing aspect of this rise in alcohol use for us in Shropshire is the combination of alcohol with prescription drugs such as Benzodiazepine and powerful pain relief drugs such as Morphine.

This is a lethal combination and sadly it has resulted in a young person being admitted to the ITU Ward, and the fatality of another.

We have also concluded that young people themselves do not consider alcohol to be a drug, and alcohol is so socially acceptable that many professionals do not consider this factor when having discussions with young people about their drug use.

Can I ask when completing the Smarter Screening Tool, to also discuss alcohol use. If any substances are mentioned that you are unsure of, please refer to the glossary attached to Smarter as it may be helpful.

If you have any concerns please contact the team as we are always happy to advise in any way we can.

Alcohol is a drug that is also used to groom children within exploitation, once again it is so socially acceptable that the child will not see this as a danger.

Children will often think they are special and are being treated as an adult, so within exploitation it's the perfect drug to use.

Currently the team at We Are With You do not have a waiting list, so allocations are on a weekly basis.

Please continue to complete the Smarter Screening Tool as our formal pathway - if you are concerned about a young person who is using substances the team have capacity to respond and support.

To access the latest version of the Smarter Screening Tool, please click here:

<http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/21573/with-you-smarter-screening-tool-vnov21.doc>

It's also worth following We Are With You on social media, where useful resources are regularly shared:





**WE DON'T
BUY CRIME**



**West Mercia
POLICE**

Raising awareness of exploitation and vulnerability

FREE training funded by John Campion, Police & Crime Commissioner

Free training sessions are available to anyone who requires a raising awareness of vulnerability and exploitation. The sessions are 2 hours long and are interactive with the use of Slido, and are hosted either face-to-face or online via Zoom or MS Teams. The course is certificated and enhances safeguarding training, and is free to access - any number of sessions can be booked.

On completion of this course you will be able to:

- Identify the vulnerability factors and adverse childhood experiences, understanding the grooming cycle used to draw those into exploitation
- Explain what the various forms of modern day slavery are and how the NRM can support those identified as being exploited
- Recognise the signs, symptoms and indicators of exploitation for adults and children
- Understand how it impacts on a young person and on adults
- Know how to respond, record and report concerns

If you are interested in this free training offer, please email: trainersWDBC@westmercia.police.uk

The Children's Society's CLIMB service

**The
Children's
Society**

CLIMB is here to prevent young people from being drawn into CCE and other forms of criminal activity. We work across West Mercia supporting 10-17 year olds at risk of exploitation. We provide one-to-one support sessions and diversionary activities to divert young people from exploitation and criminal activity.

If you would like more information or would like to refer a young person to Climb, please visit www.childrenssociety.org.uk/climb or email climb@childrenssociety.org.uk

We are looking for volunteers!

Do you have a passion to help young people develop and grow? Our Climb project is looking for volunteers across West Mercia to support young people (10-17) who are at risk of criminal exploitation or exposure to criminal activity. Our Volunteer Mentors will help young people engage with a variety of great activities (from sports to arts), give them a chance to form healthy relationships, find new passions, and be positive about their future.

For more information, contact: amanda.davidson@childrenssociety.org.uk

Updates from

THE BRANCH PROJECT

The Branch Project are pleased to welcome our newly recruited Technically Assisted – Child Exploitation Worker (TA-CSE). Our new TA-CSE worker will provide psychosocial and practical support for children and young people who are at risk, or who have experienced Technology assisted CSE. They are a subject matter expert with current specialist knowledge of online platforms and other technology. They will deliver WMRSASC #MyInternetRight a specialist educational resource to children and young people, as well as external professionals. The TA-CSE worker will provide practical and emotional support to children and young people and their carers through the criminal justice system. And support children and young people to access their rights and access health, education, and other services that they may require.

The Branch Project team continued to support 99% of children and young people on our caseloads throughout the school summer holidays either through face-to-face meetings, text messages, Face Time and calls. Some young people decided to hold their support until school commences in September.

The Branch Project have consulted with the AXIS FiSVA (family independent sexual violence worker) to support Branch Project families in Shropshire. AXIS FiSVA will attend WMRSASC #MyInternetRight specialist training, and WMRSASC Child Sexual Exploitation training alongside the Branch Project resources training. The AXIS FiSVA will have knowledge and understanding of how Branch Project Workers advocate for and support children and young people. The Branch team envisage AXIS FiSVA mirroring the support that WMRSASC FiSVA in Hereford and Worcester offer families impacted by child sexual exploitation either online or offline. The Branch Project also have updated their parents and carers leaflet that outlines the support a Branch Worker offers.

Throughout the summer throughout West Mercia, the Branch Project team have consulted with School Nursing teams, Looked After Children's nurses and Sexual Health nurses to ensure positive partnership working to supporting children and young people. In Shropshire, the team will visit secondary school CHAT services alongside school nurses.

To make a referral to The Branch Project, please visit: www.wmrsasc.org.uk/referrals



To enquire about a referral either into the Branch Project or for family support, or to enquire about receiving a copy of the new Branch Project leaflet, please email The Branch Project Lead: carrie.okeefe@wmrsasc.org.uk

Education programme for 10-18s

The Purple Leaf education programme increases young people’s awareness of sexual abuse and exploitation, both on and offline, equips them with the skills, knowledge, and tools to be able to identify uncomfortable feelings, and to know where to go for help and support. The programme is delivered by experienced specialists, who understand the complexities surrounding sexual violence and child sexual exploitation. It can be delivered in group settings such as schools or on a 1:1 basis, if that is deemed more suitable for the child. The programme includes a one-hour session for parents and professionals to increase awareness of sexual abuse and exploitation, knowledge about Purple Leaf and other services within WMRSASC.

Problematic Sexual Behaviour & Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Purple Leaf’s HSB service can support children and young people who have exhibited, or are at risk of exhibiting, harmful or problematic sexual behaviour (HSB and PSB). Support includes pre-assessments, advice, guidance and liaison with professionals, completion of AIM3 assessments, a range of psycho-social education interventions, and AIM assessment supervision.

Sibling Sexual Abuse

Purple Leaf provides advice, guidance, assessment and support services for children and young people who have displayed inappropriate or problematic behaviours towards siblings; and to children who have experienced harm, caused harm or both as a result of sibling sexual abuse.

Consultative Supervision and Therapeutic Support

Purple Leaf offer consultative supervision and therapeutic support to external professionals and organisations to help mitigate the risks associated with exposure to traumatic testimony.

Training and CPD

Purple Leaf provides accredited and non-accredited training and awareness-raising sessions to professionals working in the sexual violence sector or aligned fields. We can also create bespoke courses to meet specific training needs. The following courses are available this Autumn:

Date	Time	Course	Delivery	Cost (per person)
7th October	09.30 - 16.00	Demystifying CSE	Online	£150
11th October	12.30 - 16.00	Feminist Theory in Practice	Online/ E-learning blended	£150
12th & 18th Oct	09.30 - 16.00	Protective Behaviours Foundation Course	Day 1 - Online Day 2 - Worcester	£300
20th October	09.30 - 16.00	Responding to a disclosure of sexual violence	Online	£150
2nd November	09.30 - 16.00	Emotional & Societal Responses to Rape & Sexual Violence	Online	£150
9th November	10.00 - 13.00	Introduction to Harmful Sexual Behaviour	Online	Free
6th December	09.30 - 16.00	Technology Assisted CSE (price includes personal set of accompanying resources)	Worcester	£195

For further information or booking enquiries please visit www.purpleleaf.org.uk or contact us on enquiries@purpleleaf.org.uk or 01905 677444.

Child Exploitation Consultation Sessions

We are here to support you 😊

Do you have a particular young person who you would like to discuss in more depth? If so, we are offering monthly consultations on the first Tuesday of each month, between 2pm – 4pm.

The following professionals will be on hand to offer advice and support regarding all CCE, CSE and substance misuse queries:

- Clare Jervis, Exploitation & Missing Operational Lead
- George Davies, Young Persons Substance Misuse Advisor
- Stafford Mason, Exploitation Lead for Early Help
- Jo Smith, Education Access Service
- Sonya Jones, We Are With You
- Carrie O'Keefe, Branch Project

To book your ½ hour slot, please email clare.jervis@shropshire.gov.uk

**THE
BRANCH
PROJECT**



Useful Links

Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Tool

To be completed if you have concerns about a particular young person (parental consent required):

<https://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/local-content/4cjN/exploitation-tools-and-pathways/?b=Shropshire>

Reporting Intelligence

Professionals are welcome to email non-urgent information directly to the police CE Team at: CETeamShropshire@westmercia.police.uk For full guidance on Intelligence Reporting please visit:

<https://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/local-content/4cjN/exploitation-tools-and-pathways/?b=Shropshire>

Child Exploitation Leaflets

A leaflet has been produced to provide an overview of CE, and Shropshire's CE Pathway for parents & carers, there is also a similar leaflet available for local communities:

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/24227/ce-in-shropshire-leaflet-for-parents-carers.pdf>

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/24226/ce-in-shropshire-leaflet-for-local-communities.pdf>

Child Exploitation Directory

Designed to outline the support available to children and young people in Shropshire who are victims of, or at risk of CE, as well as their families and the professionals who support them:

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/21754/ce-directory.pdf>

Smarter Screening Tool

To be completed if you have concerns regarding a young person's use of substances:

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/media/21573/with-you-smarter-screening-tool-vnov21.doc>

Partner Organisations

Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership - www.safeguardingshropshireschildren.org.uk

Early Help - www.shropshire.gov.uk/early-help

West Mercia Police - www.westmercia.police.uk

West Mercia Youth Justice Service - www.westmerciayouthjustice.org.uk

We Are With You - www.wearewithyou.org.uk/services/shropshire

Branch Project - www.wmrsasc.org.uk/the-branch-project

Purple Leaf - www.purpleleaf.org.uk

Climb - www.childrensociety.org.uk/climb

NWG - www.nwgnetwork.org

For support or advice, or to be added to the mailing list for this newsletter, please contact clare.jervis@shropshire.gov.uk