



TREES Newsletter

Together Reducing and Ending Exploitation in Shropshire

Issue 2 • Autumn 2020

Welcome

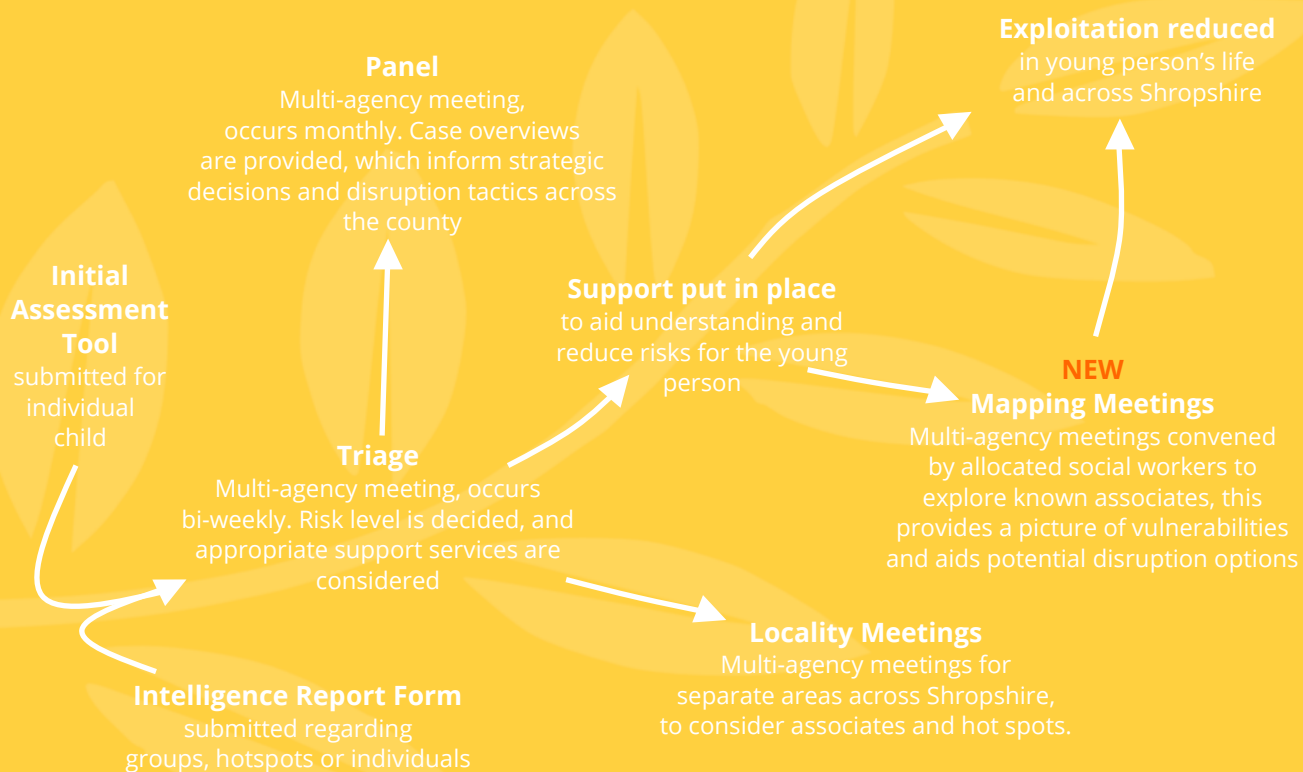
....to our autumn edition of Together Reducing & Ending Exploitation in Shropshire (TREES). I hope that you are all well and that you have been able to have some rest over the summer period. I wanted to kick start our Autumn edition by thanking you for all your positive comments regarding this newsletter. Our aim is to raise awareness regarding Child Exploitation across the whole of Shropshire, so it's been really reassuring to see so many people interested. By raising awareness, we are sending a clear message to the young people of Shropshire that we all care, and are tackling this issue on their behalf.



So please share this issue far & wide, to help raise awareness amongst our community.

Clare Jervis
Exploitation and Missing Lead
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How does the pathway work?



Current patterns and emerging themes

Exploitation referral figures are analysed each month, to gain a picture of Exploitation 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.

For the financial year April 2020 – June 2020 we continued to see a significant increase in the number of exploitation risk assessments, in particular criminal exploitation which made up 82% of all referrals received, compared to 18% of referrals where sexual exploitation was the main identified risk.

April saw a slight decline in new referrals coming through compared to January and February 2020. This is most likely due to the Covid-19 crisis which affected schools and colleges. However, we saw a significant increase in intelligence which has led to contact being made directly with families to ensure that consent is given for exploitation risk assessment tools to be completed.

Within our triage system we have noticed **an increase in violence** and **links to debt bondage with drug use**, mainly cannabis, being identified as the main pull factor for the majority of young people. We have continued to see a pattern regarding children with **drug and alcohol issues** never having had a smarter screening tool completed with them. This was flagged up during a locality meeting held in April, as a number of the young people identified were not known to the We Are With You service. We need to ensure that professionals are aware of the 'Meet & Greet' service that We Are With You offer, particularly where there is some resistance from parents as well as young people who are not sure what to expect from the service.

What is reassuring is that through the intelligence we are able to identify children who are at possible risk of exploitation at the earliest opportunity with parents of young people who are NEET consenting to risk assessments being completed. Our NEET population remain one of the biggest concerns and will continue to be an area of focus for us.

There have been two main areas of concern over the summer period—the Harlescott area of Shrewsbury, and Ellesmere. Multi-agency strategy meetings were held to discuss groups of young people in these areas, which led to Social Work Assessments for many of these young people. It has been identified that exploiters have a preference for young males who have a vehicle, such as a moped or car, which enables them to move around the county and potentially much further. The use of train lines also remains a concern.

It is hoped that now schools and colleges have returned to a normal timetable, professionals will be able to recognise concerns and indicators earlier - since the start of the new academic year in September, we have already seen an increase in referrals.

Hot Spots

Recent referrals and intel have identified the following areas of concern. Disruption tactics will be considered as part of regular triage, locality and panel meetings, but if you hear about or witness anything concerning in these areas, please be alert and report any concerns using the Intelligence Report Form (link provided on back page)

- Harlescott, Shrewsbury
- One Stop shop in Ditherington
- Frankwell and the Quarry Park, Shrewsbury
- Bomere Heath
- Tesco car park, Whitchurch
- Ellesmere Lake
- Ellesmere Cricket Club
- The Centre, Oswestry
- Shifnal—Telford/Midlands train line





County Lines

By Sonya Jones, We Are With You Shropshire Team Manager & Safeguarding Lead

The worldwide drug economy is estimated to be worth 500 billion dollars a year, with the UK market said to be worth 10 billion pounds. It's easy to see that there is a great deal of money "up for grabs"

The National Crime Agency describes County Lines as the following:

"County Lines is where illegal drugs are transported from one area to another, often across police and local authority boundaries (although not exclusively), usually by children or vulnerable people who are coerced into it by gangs. The 'County Line' is the mobile phone line used to take the orders of drugs. Importing areas (areas where drugs are taken to) are reporting increased levels of violence and weapons-related crimes as a result of the trend"

County Lines is a business model that's based on a pyramid-selling format, and like any other business, it's ever-changing in order to grow its operation and reach as many markets as it can.

During the late 70s and very early 80s, drug markets were controlled by a handful of serious organised crime families. Cannabis, Amphetamines, LSD and Heroin dominated these markets. However, in the early 80s the introduction of Crack Cocaine entered into the supply chain and very soon began to establish a strong foothold. The 90s saw the crack markets being controlled by Jamaican gangs which changed the profile from the crime families of old. By the end of the 90s, crack use was starting to spiral out of control, along with a rise in heroin use. It was estimated that crack dealers were making anything up to £12,000 per week, such was the market for the drug.

This continued to spiral, in 2002 research by the Home Office concluded that crack cocaine and heroin had become "one drug". These drugs were referred to as Brown (Heroin) and White (cocaine) - this terminology is still used today. This is when we saw the introduction of 'deals' such as buy two get a third for free. As the marketing of these drugs increased, the drugs markets became saturated particularly in the larger cities of London, Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool. The period between 2002 to 2010 saw the beginning of a mass exodus out of these cities to explore new market places and development of markets into county towns. The use of mobile phones assisted these distribution networks. In 2007 the Police Organised Crime Group mapping database analysed that gangs were working across regional boundaries, but it wasn't until 2015 the term "County Lines" was first used.

It's now such a familiar term, which is used to describe the gangs and organised crime networks that export drugs to all areas of the UK.

As lines became more lucrative, there was a need for more people to keep them running in order for them to reach their profit margins. The gangs looked to recruit people who would be under the radar of law enforcement and children perfectly fitted this profile. Children were then targeted, groomed and recruited for exploitation in order to distribute drugs.

The Criminal Exploitation of Children model, which has been highlighted in the press and on many awareness resources, is of children being trafficked by train from cities to rural county and seaside towns. There are many examples of children from London being found in Cambridge, Southampton, Norwich and Hastings, miles from their family homes.

Another common feature in relation to County Lines is the issue of 'Turf Wars' which see rival gangs competing to control areas. It would be unwise to assume that this only happens in cities, as this was and still is prevalent in all areas of the UK. We are not exempt from this in Shropshire - in 2016, rival Merseyside gangs from Bootle and Speke had trafficked children and young people into Shrewsbury to take control of the drugs market. Sadly during a pitched battle, a 16 year old boy was fatally stabbed. After this tragedy, the model changed throughout Shropshire and we saw a mass targeting of local children for the purposes of exploitation - sadly, this is still the current model we have in the county.

Other updates from We Are With You Shropshire

We Are With You Shropshire have commissioned some research by Rebecca Plimmer, an Intern from Chester University, as we wanted to understand the profile of the young people we are working with in Shropshire. There were some key findings that may differ from other areas of the UK and appear to be quite unique to Shropshire - although as we are the only Young Persons Substance Misuse Service who have commissioned this work, we are unsure what the local profiles are in other parts of the UK. Our research concluded that the majority of County Lines travel in the County by local children and young people happens in private vehicles driven by unknown adults - or, the young people use their own bikes (or bikes purchased for them by their exploiters) Again, we need to air caution, as since the report was completed we have concerns that there are some young people who have started using trains into areas of the West Midlands.

Once again Cannabis was also highlighted as a key significant factor, this has never been recognised nationally and has gathered much interest. I have recently spoken about this at a Cross-Party Parliamentary Group Meeting along with David Lammy. Finally, another key significant factor worth noting was that the majority of the young people identified attended mainstream education and not specialist provisions - once again this is different to the narrative that only children who attend PRUs are at risk of CCE. This research underpins that exploitation can happen to any child, not just vulnerable children—highlighting the need for parents and professionals to be vigilant.

To read the full report, visit: <https://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/media/research/>

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



[wearewithyoushropshire](https://www.facebook.com/wearewithyoushropshire)



[wearewithyoushropshire](https://www.instagram.com/wearewithyoushropshire)



[@withyoushrops](https://twitter.com/withyoushrops)

Important information from West Mercia POLICE

Our absolute priority is protecting children and young people from harm. Often the young people involved may not be aware they are being exploited by criminals, which is why knowing the signs of criminal exploitation is crucial.

The NSPCC website is a great resource for sharing with parents and professionals, as it provides a concise explanation of criminal exploitation: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/gangs-criminal-exploitation/>

Information we receive from the public is vital to help police tackle criminal exploitation, and we would encourage anyone who is concerned that a child or young person may be being exploited by criminals to raise their concerns. Intelligence is the lifeblood of modern policing, as it informs on current trends and activity, and provides direction for enforcement and safeguarding activity. Intelligence from a variety of sources, including partner agencies, is desirable as the diversity of sources can provide a broader understanding of the issues, threats and risk.

Information can be reported to West Mercia Police under the 'Tell Us About' section on the website www.westmercia.police.uk or information can be reported anonymously to Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**.

Locally, there are other options for sharing intelligence:

- By emailing DLfIntel.shropshire@westmercia.pnn.police.uk
- By completing an Intelligence Report Form: <http://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/local-content/4cjN/exploitation-tools-and-pathways/?b=Shropshire>

Children and young people who are concerned about their friends can contact Fearless anonymously. Fearless is a website aimed at children and young people and includes a range of information about crimes affecting them. For more information, visit <https://www.fearless.org/>

An introduction to Shropshire Youth Justice Service

By Lucia Malin, Team Manager

The Youth Justice Service works with children and young people between the ages of 10 and 18. The introduction of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 identified that the principal role of the YJS is “to prevent offending by children and young people”. Shropshire YJS works closely with a number of agencies and partners, including Children’s Social Care, Early Help, Police, Probation, Education and Health to provide support for any child entering the Criminal Justice System. The underlying concept of the YJS, is to empower young people to lead positive and pro-social lives, with a child first, offender second narrative.

The vision of Shropshire YJS is to create an equal and fair opportunity for all children and young people who are open to our service, to access the relevant help and support they require to reduce their risk of re-offending, and ensure they lead positive lives in the future, free from criminality.

In the last two years, Shropshire has seen a significant increase of young people presenting with complex and multiple needs, in which they are vulnerable to any form of exploitation. As such, our primary focus is to divert young people from our service, by affording them the opportunity to engage in diversionary and preventative programmes, in which a child centred tailored intervention programme is addressed. We work with children involved in anti-social behaviour, in respect of our prevention pathways, or statutory Court Orders. The focus for Shropshire YJS is to embrace diversity, recognise a child’s vulnerability at the earliest opportunity, and adopt a whole family approach, including holistic and therapeutic models of delivery. Our core focus, is to continue to rehabilitate young people working with our team to provide a child with a sense of hope for the future.

I have been in post for a period of two years, and within this time, the number of cases open to Shropshire YJS involving children at risk or involved in Child Exploitation has significantly increased. Within our court, we are seeing a number of young people appearing in Shropshire who are out of area/ out of borough, including Shropshire children being found ‘missing’ a vast distance from their home address.

We need to be responsive to an ever changing climate, and an ever changing picture of risk and vulnerability. We must ensure that as a service, we adopt a trauma informed approach by which exploitation and the safety of a child is of paramount importance. The Shropshire team have completed Exploitation and Vulnerability training covering child exploitation screening tools and NRM referrals/Safeguarding. We are responsible for developing and devising a robust programme and safety plan for any child who enters our service where exploitation is prevalent.

Within the YJS, we have substance misuse specialists who are trained in sexual health delivery. These staff members work with children to deliver educational and diversionary approaches, or group work sessions/cannabis clinics for those on preventative and diversionary routes. The YJS also has a health worker, who delivers a provision called BERT (Brief Emotional Regulation Therapy) on a 1:2:1 basis or as part of a virtual group setting to address any emotional welfare matters. When working with cases that involve exploitation, we view the child as a victim. We complete a detailed and thorough 83 page assessment to inform a clear pathway involving agencies, partners and third sector organisations to meaningfully engage with the child.

Very recently we have launched a revised engagement tool, *“let’s work together to stop offending and achieve a good life”*. This tool is for all young people entering our service and their families/parents and/or carers. This tool is specifically designed to capture the voice of the child/family/carer. It encourages actively listening to a child’s experiences and acting upon what our children and families share with us. Getting to know young people is of significant importance to ensure we can build effective and trusting relationships. Hearing first-hand the experiences of a child involved in exploitation enables us to adapt our practice, learn and adopt new working models, and understand the evolving picture of exploitation within Shropshire. We are currently working tirelessly with Courts and the magistrates to ensure they are well informed of the current picture in regards of exploitation through presentations to inform future learning.

Shropshire YJS hold a number of panels, please feel free to virtually shadow our prevention panel, group programmes or practice development/training sessions.

For any further information, please feel free to contact us on 01743 261841, or email us at shropshire.team.wmyjs@westmercia.pnn.police.uk

An introduction to Purple Leaf

Empowering Enabling Transforming

Purple Leaf, through their parent organisation West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (WMRSASC), have over 30 years' experience of delivering front line support to survivors of sexual violence and abuse as well as providing education, training and awareness-raising for survivors and the professionals that support them.

The team at Purple Leaf have developed a free e-learning resource called **An introduction to Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation - Key Messages for Practitioners** which focuses on the following areas:

- What do we mean by sexual abuse and exploitation?
- The importance of not blaming the survivor
- Looking beyond known risk indicators
- Learning lessons from survivors to develop best practice
- Referral pathways and additional support

They are also able to offer Open College Network accredited training for practitioners in a number of areas, including Child Sexual Exploitation. If you are interested in exploring this option, they would be happy to discuss your specific learning needs and desired outcomes. All of their accredited training can be delivered online or face-to-face.

They also offer a programme of education for children and young people called **Purple Leaf Education** which is available in schools, group settings and on an individual basis that is focused on consent, healthy relationships, identifying uncomfortable feelings and accessing information and support.

For further information, please contact enquiries@purpleleaf.org.uk

NWG - Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation

The NWG Exploitation Response Unit is a charitable organisation formed as UK network of over 14,500 practitioners who disseminate NWG information through their own services, to other professionals working on the issue of Child Exploitation within the UK.

The organisation offer training and consultancy to professionals, and produce a variety of resources which can be accessed online by signing up for an account. Many of these resources are available by signing up for a free public account—including their Disruption Toolkit - **Criminal, Civil and Partnership Disruption Options for Perpetrators of Child and Adult Victims of Exploitation**.

The NWG have also released two new free online harm reduction resources, in conjunction with the Marie Collins Foundation (MCF):

- Online Sexual Harm Reduction** - a guide for professionals
- Sexual Abuse Online - How Can I Help My Child?** - a guide for parents and carers

To sign up and access these documents, visit www.nwgnetwork.org

To find out more about the Marie Collins Foundation, visit www.mariecollinsfoundation.org.uk



Responding to early signs of Exploitation

Guidance provided by Stafford Mason, Early Help Exploitation Lead

We all know that responding to early signs of exploitation or offering support at the earliest opportunity to young people who are at increased risk of exploitation is the best way to prevent and disrupt it. So, what are the early indicators, and what increases vulnerability? Broadly no two individuals are the same, so each child's experience will have one or a combination of these elements, and in some cases none.

What we do see quite often though is that professionals, families and other young people have been aware of underlying low level risks and indicators but don't believe they meet threshold for service intervention, don't know who to speak to, or have felt it's not enough to raise concern. What I want to do is help provide some pointers for low level intervention, that can make a difference to the young person, their parents and the community, and potentially prevent an escalation in concern.

Early Indicators

Many of the young people I have seen escalate to social work intervention have had at least one (and in many cases several) of the following indicators for a period of time before the risks escalated:

- **Strained relationships at home**
 - **Secretive behaviour**
- **Social isolation from peers / peer groups**
 - **Changes in friendship groups**
- **Friendships with older young people and adults**
 - **Unexplained STIs**
- **Staying out late / overnight without permission**
- **Being reported as a missing person**
 - **Struggling with education**
 - **Skipping school**
- **Short term exclusions / internal isolation**
 - **Risk of permanent exclusion**
- **Changes in behaviour, mood or appearance**
- **Experimenting with alcohol and cannabis**

What can be done in response - tips for Early Intervention

There are a range of things as a professional that you can do to support the young person and their family. Early Intervention doesn't need to be a big thing, it doesn't always require targeted intervention, and not receiving targeted intervention is not an excuse for not providing early intervention support.

All of these simple, very early interventions could make the difference without the need to refer to external agencies.

1. Raise Awareness with Families

Invite parents and carers in and have an honest discussion about your concerns, and the potential risks to their children. Provide them with information about exploitation and the risks present in the local area, advising of the methods of grooming such as the offer of free gifts, attention, alcohol, drugs and places to hang out. Better understanding means greater vigilance, so parents & carers can act to safeguard their children. There are resources that you can print off or share such as the NSPCC's website pages on Sexual and Criminal Exploitation, and most of the sites aimed at young people have parent and carer sections.

2. Raise Awareness with the young person

Spend some time with the young person and talk through the concerns. There are a number of websites and available resources online to explore topics - including online safety, healthy relationships, sexual exploitation, and criminal exploitation.

Not In Our Community - www.notinourcommunity.org

Covers all areas of CE and has resources and videos arranged in order of topic or age group.

Think You Know - www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Covers online safety and CSE - content is arranged into age appropriate categories.

3. Report low level concerns

The more intelligence that is shared, the greater the likelihood of effective intervention from agencies working to reduce and fight exploitation.

- Report information yourself, using the Intelligence Report Form: <http://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/local-content/4cjN/exploitation-tools-and-pathways/?b=Shropshire>
- Encourage parents to report concerns, either directly with police or anonymously via Crimestoppers: www.crimestoppers-uk.org
- Encourage young people to report concerns anonymously online services via Fearless (which also offers advice to young people on crime): www.fearless.org

4. Provide the young person with opportunities to speak to someone

This could be a trusted adult or mentor. Direct them to other services if they don't wish to speak with yourself (a good example for schools is the CHAT service, if they don't want to speak to a member of school staff) If the young person is experimenting with drugs offer them advice and with their consent, complete a SMARTER Screening tool with them - a link to this is provided on the Early Help website.

5. Provide the parents with opportunities to speak to someone

Parents can seek advice from Shropshire Council's Parenting Support Team by calling 01743 250950. The social media pages for We Are With You are also a helpful resource for parents and young people if there are substance misuse concerns.

For further advice on Early Help and Targeted Early Help, please visit Shropshire's Early Help Webpages at www.shropshire.gov.uk/early-help or call 0345 678 9021

THE STAY TRUE PROJECT



The Stay True Project is a new Bright Star initiative, which uses a child-centred approach to support young people at risk of criminal exploitation to make positive, lasting life changes.

The project is led by Tim Allin, who has lived experience of exploitation. At the age of 11, he was exploited which led to a life of criminal activity and substance misuse, fuelled by fear. Tim has now transformed his own life and has spent many years working with young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, as a youth worker and child residential care manager.

The project offers:

- A bespoke mentoring programme based around relationship building, connecting with the young person and being a positive role model
- Consultation and training for professionals
- Bespoke service packages also available

The project currently isn't funded, therefore there are costs for this service. For more information, get in touch with the team at staytrue015@gmail.com or call Tim on 07903 130803.

Useful resources for young people and their parents

Shared by the team at Climb

Bloom

CHAYN have launched a new web-based support service called Bloom: <https://bloom.chayn.co/>
The service provides five free courses designed for those who have experienced or are experiencing sexual violence, abuse from family members or bullying and harassment at work. CHAYN are also launching a one-year learning programme for organisations who want to replicate this model and do their own.

Parent Zone Hub

Parent Zone have launched a new Parent Hub: www.parents.parentzone.org.uk
The aim of this is to enable families to enjoy safer and more positive experiences online, in partnership with the Be Internet Legends campaign: <https://parentzone.org.uk/legendshome>

There is additional support for families available on Parent Zone, in the form of a regular parent newsletter about the latest resources, downloadable activities and weekly livestream sessions to help provide expert advice for parents and carers on online safety and digital resilience.

Action For Children Parent Talk hub

Action For Children have some new online resources for parents of children aged 0-19. As well as articles covering common issues parents might experience, there's a confidential 1:1 chat service with experienced parenting staff available. For more information, visit the Parent Talk website: www.parents.actionforchildren.org.uk

Internet Matters online safety hub

A new online safety hub from Internet Matters, Youthworks and Facebook was recently launched to help children with special educational needs navigate social media safely. Built with input from young people, the resource is the first-of-its-kind and helps equip both young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their parents and carers with the right tools to stop them 'falling through the net' on social media. www.internetmatters.org/connecting-safely-online

NCA-CEOP online blackmail education resource

NCA-CEOP have launched a new resource which aims to help 15-18 year olds identify characteristics of blackmail online, understand the impact it can have, and how they access help if they experience it. The resource is a structured one-hour session designed to be delivered by professionals in schools/colleges, youth groups etc. It has been informed by the latest research, intelligence from the NCA and engagement with young people and professionals. All online blackmail resources for professionals can be downloaded from www.thinkuknow.co.uk which also contains information and content for parents and carers.

Useful Links

Child Exploitation Initial Assessment Tool - To be completed if you have concerns about a particular young person, consent must be gained from the child or a parent for this to be completed.

Child Exploitation Intelligence Report Form - To report information about activity, perpetrators, hotspots or vehicles. Evidence or consent is not required for this.

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

SSCP (Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership) - www.safeguardingshropshireschildren.org.uk

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

West Mercia Police - www.westmercia.police.uk

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

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

Climb - www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/climb

NWG - www.nwgnetwork.org

SPACE (Stop & Prevent Adolescent Criminal Exploitation) - www.bespaceaware.co.uk

For support or advice, or if you have any comments or suggestions regarding this newsletter, please contact clare.jervis@shropshire.gov.uk