



TREES Newsletter

Together Reducing and Ending Exploitation in Shropshire

Issue 5 • Autumn 2021

Welcome

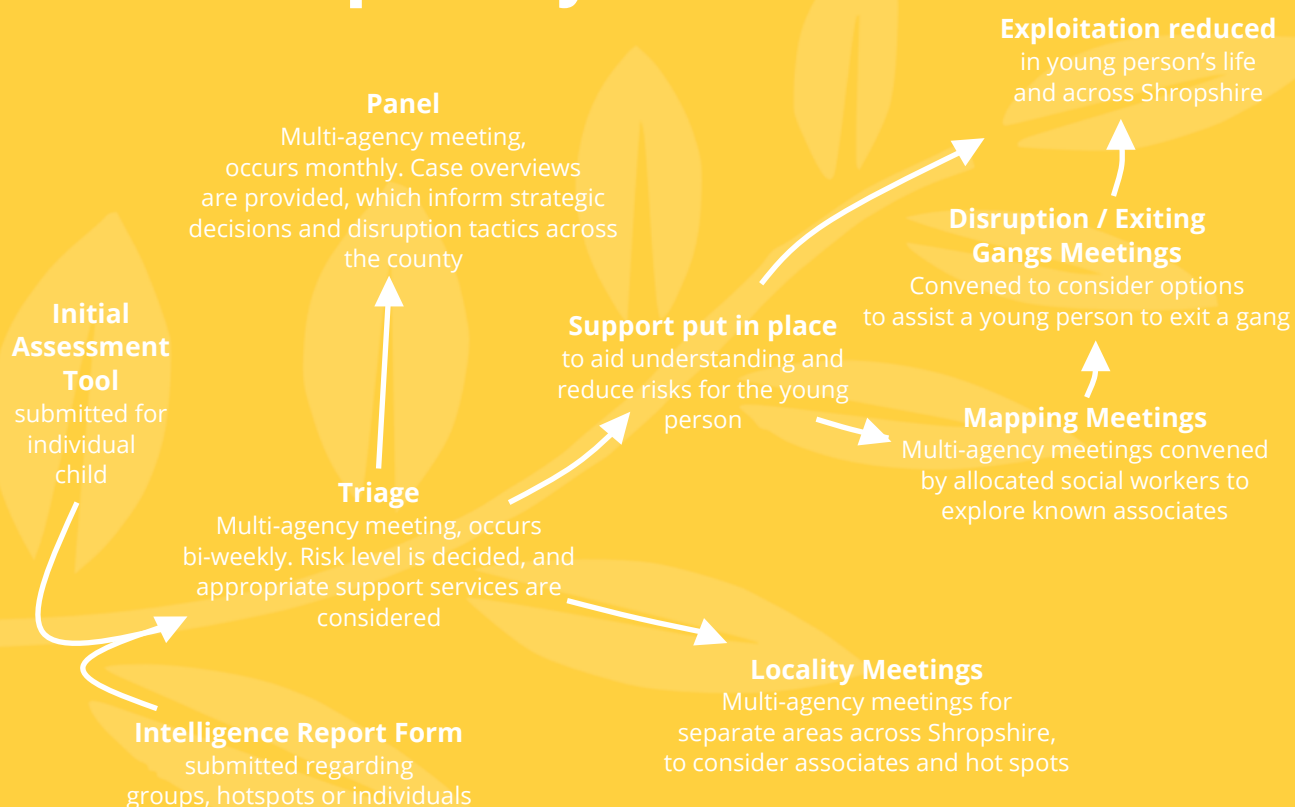
..to the Autumn 2021 edition of the TREES newsletter. This season I would like to raise awareness of some of the indicators regarding 'debt bondage' as this is a pattern of abuse that we frequently see within CE triage. Debt bondage involves being forced to work to pay off a 'drug debt' and is used to control young people. We continually see children telling us that the weed they were given is for "free" this is part of the grooming process & young people will be expected to pay this back somehow; usually through selling/distributing drugs themselves. Young people may appear to be guarded; evasive or anxious, particularly if they have been searched by the police who have confiscated their drugs – leaving the child with the worry of how they are going to pay their exploiter back. Debt is used as a form of control - debt bondage is a form of slavery. We therefore need to reflect on those 'critical moments' when working with children identify the right support & intervention at the earliest opportunity.



Please remember that consultation sessions are held on the first Tuesday of each month, and 30 minute timeslots can be booked by any professional wishing to discuss CE concerns. Please email amy.amber@shropshire.gov.uk to book.

Clare Jervis, Exploitation and Missing Lead
clare.jervis@shropshire.gov.uk

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.

We are still seeing a high number (32%) of children being referred in with no evidence of an Early Help or Targeted Early Help plan in place. We have noted a number of children whose risks significantly increased to the point where a Complex Strategy Meeting was required, with evidence of 'missed opportunities' to support the child and their family members or address the young person's substance misuse issues, which have led to permanent exclusions from school in some cases.

One of the main patterns that we continue to see is cannabis addiction, self-medicating and drug debt; children are also stealing large amounts of cash from parents. We have also noted a number of children with mental health and self-harm difficulties, with family conflict being identified as another push factor for many of the children. Parental denial and lack of acceptance that their child is involved in CE continues to be a factor for us to consider; this emphasises the need to support parents to understand the risks around CE and raise their awareness around contextualised safeguarding.

We continue to see violent crime and note that child-to-parent violence has been reflected within a number of the CE risk assessments. We understand that this can be one of the indicators of exploitation due to the immense pressure, secrecy and stress that children have to carry around with them; this is an area that requires some focus when supporting families.

Childrens' exposure to online harm remains a concern; with a number of young people sharing indecent images. Tik Tok, Snapchat and Instagram remain consistent social media platforms where we see online abuse and harm. We have also noted significant debts from £400 to £14,000 with threats of violence if the debt isn't paid off. This can lead to an increase in violence, with children carrying knives as a way of protecting themselves.

During this quarter we also continue to see childrens' poor mental health as a contributing factor to the additional risks around CE. We have also been made aware of disclosures around some of the challenges they face in school, and how this has led them to self-medicate with cannabis - highlighting the need for much earlier intervention within educational settings. We continue to see online abuse and children being coerced into engaging in sexual activity under the influence of substances, raising questions around issues of consent and the need for further support/education being offered to children within schools around this. In addition, we have seen an 11-year-old child who has been coerced into sharing sexual images of herself online. This has highlighted the need to be targeting support & raising awareness within junior schools, given children's general increase in online use.

Substance misuse continue to not be identified early enough—professionals are asked to consider the Smarter screening tool at the earliest possibility.

Hot Spots

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**
Harlescott & various spots within the Ditherington area, including BBC Radio Shropshire car park, the One Stop shop, Mount Pleasant shops, and Spring Gardens area. The Quarry park continues to be a concern. Percy Thrower's Garden Centre car park and the Nisa shop in Pensfold Court (Bicton Heath) have also been raised.
- **Other areas in the county**
Wem recreational ground, Jubilee Park in Whitchurch, Birch Park in Broseley, and Pont Duncan behind The Marches school in Oswestry.





Child Exploitation Awareness Day in Oswestry

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial: we want our message to be very clear; the only way we can tackle exploitation is to raise awareness amongst our communities including assisting others to know the signs/indicators of criminal & sexual exploitation so that children can be protected from harm.

We are therefore joining forces with West Mercia Police, The Marches school and other partner agencies for an awareness-raising day in Oswestry town centre on Friday 26th November 2021.

The event will be based at the Town Hall, Bailey Head, Oswestry from 10:00am to 4:00pm, where representatives from our team, along with West Mercia Police officers and our partner agencies will be on hand to talk to the residents of Oswestry about Child Exploitation and what it means for the local community.

The aim of the event is to:

- Offer support, advice and guidance to parents, young people, and members of the public who wish to know more about Child Exploitation within Shropshire.
- Raise community awareness of the key indicators of exploitation & how to report concerns.
- Ensure that the issues around exploitation are tackled together, as a community.

Reporting Intelligence



**A reminder from DS Annie Waylett,
West Mercia Shropshire CE Team**

Please continue to submit intelligence in a timely fashion, as this is crucial in our work to safeguard children. Information can be reported to West Mercia Police under the 'Tell Us About' section on the website: www.westmercia.police.uk or anonymously to Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**

Locally, there are other options for sharing intelligence:

- By emailing DLfIntel.shropshire@westmercia.pnn.police.uk
- Children and young people who are concerned about their friends can contact Fearless anonymously: www.fearless.org

Please note: It may take a few days for information you submit to 'go live' on police systems, so if you feel that police need to attend to it promptly you **MUST** report it on 101 so it can be logged and managed appropriately. Discussing information with a local officer does not constitute intelligence submission. If you have any queries or concerns about how best to manage information, feel free to email the police exploitation team directly: CETeamShropshire@westmercia.pnn.police.uk

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 queries:

- Clare Jervis, Exploitation & Missing Lead
- Stafford Mason, 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 the
Exploitation & Missing Co-ordinator:
amy.amber@shropshire.gov.uk**

**THE
BRANCH
PROJECT**





Child Alcohol Abuse - Sharing the Truth

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

On the 18th November I am going to be speaking at an International Alcohol Conference. My talk will focus on child alcohol abuse and child criminal exploitation by county lines drug gangs.

It's a great opportunity to highlight the work of We Are With You Shropshire as I will be discussing why young people drink, and will explore many reasons such as curiosity, to fit in, to have fun, to copy adults - but I will also discuss some of the more concerning reasons such as to feel good, to relax and to reduce stress.

The most high risk group are young people who fall into the concerning reasons category as they are drinking to self regulate emotions which we refer to as Self Medicating.

Drinking alcohol can damage a child's health, even if they are 15 or older it can still affect the normal development of vital organs and functions, including the brain, liver, bones and hormones. Beginning to drink before the age of 14 is also associated with increased health risks, including-related injuries, involvement in violence, self harm, suicidal ideation and attempts.

The team at We Are With You work with young people who fit into these groups, it is this group of children that regularly binge drink and are more vulnerable to developing a problem with alcohol as adults. Early identification is crucial before regular harmful use of alcohol develops into harmful patterns. If you have any concerns about a young person's drinking please complete a Smarter Screening Tool.

As professionals, it's important to have conversations about alcohol with the young people we work with but this is often missed due to alcohol being a socially acceptable drug. Teenage years can be tough and young people may be turning to alcohol in a misguided attempt to cope with a variety of problems such as stress, boredom, the pressure of school work, not fitting in, problems at home, or mental health issues such as anxiety, childhood trauma, ADHD or depression. Since alcohol is a depressant, using it to self medicate will only make problems worse. If a child is regularly drinking on their own or drinking during the day it could be they're struggling to cope with a serious underlying issue.

As part of my talk at the conference I will be discussing the deaths of two exploited boys, I will focus on their Serious Case Reviews, both used alcohol to cope with the trauma of the exploitation

I really hope I can demystify how We Are With You works with young alcohol users at this unique event. There are so many incredible speakers at this conference, here are just a few to note:

- Professor David Nutt, Chair of [Drug Science](#)—a charity that tells the truth about drugs. Professor Nutt is a controversial public figure as he has challenged government drug policy, particularly on alcohol
- Professor Mike Ward, Senior Consultant at [Alcohol Change UK](#)
- Viv Evans OBE, Chief Executive of [Adfam](#) - a charity supporting the loved ones of those struggling with drug and alcohol dependence
- Camilla Tominey, Associate Editor at The Telegraph, and a Patron of [NACOA](#) - a charity that supports children of alcohol-dependant and problematic drinking parents
- Adrian Chiles, Broadcaster and Presenter
- Rachel Robinson, Director of [Public Health Shropshire](#)



Sonya shared the following within an article in the Shropshire Star:

"I shall emphasise early concerns which are an indication of trauma and discuss two Serious Case Reviews that report on the deaths of two boys.

Both these boys had used alcohol to cope with the trauma of Child Criminal Exploitation by County Lines drug gangs which were published by Southampton Safeguarding Partnership and Oxford Safeguarding Children's Board.

Liam was born March 2002 and died January 2020, whilst Jacob was born February 2003 and died April 2019.

Jacob was highlighted in a Channel 4 Dispatches programme. Channel 4 News highlighted figures from the Child Safeguarding Review Panel that over a two year period 47 children are killed or seriously harmed in incidents linked to criminal exploitation.

I shall be giving an overview of data with regard to young persons alcohol use in Shropshire and take an in-depth look at the work of the team at With You Shropshire.

This will be through the story of a Shropshire child Chelsea."

In addition, more young people are accessing support as the number of children treated for drug and alcohol use is on the rise in Shropshire."

The virtual conference will run over two days, 18th—19th November 2021, and is being facilitated by Share Shrewsbury, which was set up by former mayor Jane Mackenzie after the tragic death of her daughter due to alcohol misuse.

Please visit Share Shrewsbury's website if you wish to attend:

<http://shareshrewsbury.org.uk/conference>

To access the latest version of the Smarter Screening Tool, please click on the Substance Misuse Toolkit tab on the Early Help website:

www.shropshire.gov.uk/early-help/practitioners/early-help-tools



Please feel free to contact Sonya Jones directly if you need further support.

Email: sonya.jones@wearewithyou.org.uk

Phone: 01743 294700

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)

Child Exploitation within Targeted Early Help

Targeted Early Help is part of Shropshire Council's wider Early Help offer. A 22-page report has recently been completed to consider Child Exploitation cases open to Targeted Early Help between April 2020 to March 2021, and it has produced some useful findings.

⇒ **A need for greater Contextual Safeguarding approaches to be adopted**

In almost all cases of CSE and CCE most risk factors are community based, exploitation takes place mostly in areas frequented by young people such as parks and open community areas. Many of the young people in local areas are known to one another. Social Media does play a role, but the number of cases in Early Help that involve online grooming is very small. There is a need for greater contextual safeguarding approaches to be adopted, which can involve targeting of hotspots, and targeting of small groups of young people who are harder to reach. There is a role for the new Outreach Youth Workers working in partnership with schools and the Early Help Exploitation Lead to build on work to address these issues.

⇒ **A need for earlier intervention**

The age range for early intervention is very high, 14-16 year olds make up the majority of cases held in Targeted Early Help, and many of these young people could have received support at an earlier stage, referrals to Targeted Early Help often come in after concerns have been building for some time, and key moments for earlier intervention missed. There are a number of common vulnerability factors identified within this report that could be used to facilitate intervention before concerns arise. These are poor attendance at school, fixed and permanent exclusion, attendance at alternative education providers such as TMBSS, history of social care involvement and children reported as missing from home.

⇒ **A need for improved access to resources and advice for the Early Help workforce**

A survey of Early Help staff was completed to identify the levels of confidence within the workforce and identify areas for professional development. Less than half the respondents felt they had adequate skills and knowledge to support families and young people at risk of exploitation, but over half felt levels of supervision and access to resources were adequate. Resources, advice and skills were the top three areas that respondents wanted greater access to support their work.

⇒ **Anticipation of strengthening positive engagement with young people and communities**

One significant development is that of the new Outreach Youth service in Shropshire which aims to work with young people directly in the community spaces they frequent, this could greatly strengthen positive engagement with young people and their communities: "Detached youth work: 'street-based' or 'on-road' approaches can support outreach for open-access provision or targeted support"

⇒ **A need for improvement from some partner agencies in following the Early Help pathway**

From case by case examination, there are partner agencies that follow the Early Help pathway better than others—often this is picked up at the point that an Exploitation Assessment is completed on a child and background checks are made before the assessment is triaged. Feedback and additional support is offered when issues are identified, and in many cases this improves the earlier responses.

⇒ **Non-engagement should not be a barrier to offering support**

Further emphasis on advice to practitioners and agencies supporting families and children needs to be provided to ensure more opportunities are explored and tried to engage young people in support. There needs to be better understanding of the barriers to engagement. Non engagement from young people is not an excuse for not instigating Early Help support when parents and carers can also be supported. Changing the language from “They will not engage” to “working towards engagement” would help in reframing the issue and encourage approaches to overcoming engagement.

⇒ **Areas for Further Development**

What is clear, from the local and national picture is that exploitation continues to be perpetrated in our local communities, in some areas we see repeated patterns amongst new cohorts with the same missed opportunities. There is a need to raise the profile of early intervention in these areas. On the flip side there are many schools and agencies that engage well with early help processes and where this happens the evidence shows that targeted support can prevent escalation and harm in most cases. Targeted Early Help has managed to reduce risks for 67% of cases where exploitation was involved, preventing the need for children to require social work involvement.

To find out more about Early Help and to view regular newsletters, please visit:

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/early-help/practitioners>

THE BRANCH PROJECT

Autumn Update

Branch Project Workers in Shropshire Hereford and Worcester have seen an increase in referrals since September but continue to offer face to face support.

The Branch Project recently recruited a Branch Plus Worker named Laura Kuegler, who is based at our Hereford office and will work specifically with young adults who are sexually exploited, or at risk of sexual exploitation. Laura would particularly like to hear from professionals who support young adults who are leaving care or who are young adult carers. Laura can be contacted by email:

laura.kuegler@wmrsasc.org.uk

To make a referral to the Branch Project, please visit:

www.wmrsasc.org.uk/referral

Training and Awareness Raising Sessions

Purple Leaf is a trading name of West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (WMRSASC). Our education programme (funded by West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner) increases young people's awareness of sexual abuse and exploitation, both on and offline. It equips them with the skills, knowledge, and tools to be able to identify healthy and unhealthy relationships and behaviours and to know where to go for help and support. The resource is designed for children and young people aged from 8 to 18 years who are at risk of child sexual exploitation. The programme can include the following modules: consent, relationships, uncomfortable feelings, gender, sexual exploitation and grooming, sexualisation, social media and criminal exploitation and links to sexual exploitation. We are currently working across several primary and secondary schools in Shropshire and aim to have worked with 500 children and young people by 2022. To find out more, please email enquiries@purpleleaf.org.uk. We will always tailor our sessions to the needs of your young people and your setting.

We also provide training and awareness raising sessions to professionals working in the sexual violence sector or aligned fields. The range of courses we currently provide including peer-on-peer abuse in school, responding to a disclosure of sexual violence, harmful sexual behaviour, contextual safeguarding and protective behaviours. A full list of training can be found on our website: www.purpleleaf.org.uk

Problematic and Harmful Sexual Behaviour (PSB and HSB) Service

Purple Leaf provides a HSB service which 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 AIM 3 Assessments
- ✓ Range of psycho-social education interventions
- ✓ AIM Assessment Supervision

Sibling Sexual Abuse (SSA) Assessment Tool

Purple Leaf/WMRSASC are currently involved in joint two year project with Somerset and Avon Rape Crisis Centre (SARSAS) to look at the support and services available to current and historic victims and survivors of Sibling Sexual Abuse (SSA). Purple Leaf's aspect of the project focuses on support for children, young people and families - this has involved extensive research around current literature support and services available for children and young people who have experienced Sibling Sexual Abuse (SSA). Based on the project research and findings, the project has designed an assessment tool for practitioners supporting children, young people and families that have experienced SSA. This tool is currently being piloted across rape crisis centres and there will be a national roll-out of the assessment tool and good practice guidance in early 2022. The Project will also be holding a free SSA conference in February 2022.

Useful Links

Shropshire Child Exploitation Initial Assessment Tool

To be completed if you have concerns about a particular young person, consent must be gained from a parent for this to be completed.

www.westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/local-content/4cjN/exploitation-tools-and-pathways/?b=Shropshire

Shropshire Child Exploitation Directory *NEW*

This directory has been produced to outline the support available to children and young people in Shropshire who are victims of, or at risk of Child Exploitation - as well as their families and the professionals who support them.

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/21557/ce-directory-autumn-2021.pdf>

Smarter Screening Tool

To be completed if you have concerns regarding a young person's use of substances. Click on the Substance Misuse Toolkit tab on the Early Help website to access the tool.

www.shropshire.gov.uk/early-help/practitioners/early-help-tools

Other 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.childrenssociety.org.uk/climb

NWG - www.nwgnetwork.org

Support for parents: SPACE - www.bespaceaware.co.uk PACE - <https://paceuk.info>

For support or advice, please contact clare.jervis@shropshire.gov.uk

If you would like to be added to the newsletter mailing list, please contact amy.amber@shropshire.gov.uk