



# TREES Newsletter

Together Reducing and Ending Exploitation in Shropshire

Issue 4 • Spring/Summer 2021

## Welcome

..to our Spring Summer edition of the TREES newsletter.

Once again I'd like to start by thanking you all for your continued commitment in following the SSCP exploitation pathway, where we continue to see a steady stream of Exploitation risk assessments and intel coming through to our bi-weekly Triage.

Further lockdown measures throughout the year have continued to cause exploiters to use and develop different methods to target our children, but with restrictions due to be fully lifted this month, it will be interesting to see how this affects the CE concerns we receive. While schools are closed during the summer holiday period, it will be more important than ever for professionals and parents to submit information of concern via intel - further details on how to do this can be found on Page 3.

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Exploitation and Missing Lead  
Compass Exploitation Team  
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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.**

We continue to see cannabis being used by the vast majority of young people discussed within triage, and for many it is seen as a way of self-medicating. Concerns continue to be raised around how substance use is being funded, with a number of young people being discussed who have either no means to purchase drugs, or the amount they are using does not equate to the amount of money they are being given via parents etc. Concerns have been raised with regards to 'missed opportunities', following a number of children we have triaged recently who have long-standing substance misuse issues, yet haven't been referred to We Are With You.

We continue to see debt bondage and violent crimes being committed county-wide, particularly with males aged 15-17 years of age being linked, and parents being forced to pay off debts. Children carrying knives as a form of protection remains a growing concern, and is often a key indicator that a child is being targeted for the purposes of exploitation.

**"Growing criminal activity is a national concern, with many areas reporting a growth in violent crime, often linked to organised activity"  
- Home Office Serious Violence Strategy 2018**

We have seen a similar pattern emerge this year regarding children using bank transfers - these transactions are referenced with clothing descriptions, raising concerns around money laundering, so it's important for professionals and parents to be vigilant with regards to this type of activity. In addition, concerns have been raised regarding a number of young people obtaining designer Canada Goose jackets, so we need to be open to a possible association between county lines OCGs and counterfeit goods. If a child is presenting with new, expensive or counterfeit clothing (a key indicator of CE) then we need to be curious about where they got them, and be alert to responses such as; "I'm not telling you", "I bought it on Amazon", "My mate sold it to me", "Swapped it with my mate", "I robbed it", "I sold my bike", "I sold my Xbox "

Concerns continue to be raised within triage with regards to online abuse and harm with social media apps being used as an opportunity for children to be exploited. We have witnessed this with apps such as Snapchat, Instagram, Tik Tok, Omegle & YOLO. In some cases, we are aware of significant amounts of cash being transferred into Paypal accounts in exchange for indecent images. It's also important to note that the purpose of sites such as Omegle is to pair people up randomly - as well as adults who use the site, children aged 13 and upwards can join with parental consent, which is concerning as it opens up the opportunity for children to have a video conversation with strangers.

## 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)

- **Monkmoor, Harlescott, & the Quarry, Shrewsbury**  
These areas continue to be used by young people to congregate, which has led to ASB and substance misuse in these locations. The areas continue to be monitored by local SNT teams and the new Detached Youth Team.
- **Sundorne Skate Park, Shrewsbury**  
Mentioned as a spot where young people are smoking cannabis, and possibly being used as a place to meet to pay off drug debts.
- **Ellesmere**  
16-17 year old males have been seen with young adult males in this area who are of concern. Although these are just sightings at the moment, some disruption work is needed, such as raising the local secondary school's awareness and ensuring that they link in with the local police to ensure that clear messages and support is offered to families.





## Child Exploitation Awareness and Crime Prevention Day in Shifnal

**On Friday 16th July 2021, we are joining forces with West Mercia Police and Shifnal Town Council for an awareness-raising day in Shifnal town centre - the first event of it's kind in Shropshire.**

The event will be based by the Millennium Clock in Bradford Street, Shifnal from 10:00am to 3:00pm, where representatives from our team, along with West Mercia Police officers and staff from Shifnal Town Council will be on hand to talk to the residents of Shifnal about Child Exploitation and what it means for the local community.

The aim of the event is to offer support, advice and guidance to anyone wishing to know more about exploitation, to raise community awareness of the key indicators of exploitation and how to report concerns, and to ensure that the issues are tackled together as a community.

Local police officers will also be offering crime prevention advice to anyone who wishes to drop in, and local councillors will be on hand to discuss important local issues.

Anyone is welcome to join us, whether it be young people, parents, professionals, or anyone within the local community who would like to learn more about this important matter.

## Reporting Intelligence

**Update 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](http://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](mailto: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 [www.fearless.org](http://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](mailto:CETeamShropshire@westmercia.pnn.police.uk)



## Using the Smarter Screening Tool

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

It is good practice and strongly recommended that a Smarter Screening Tool is completed if you have concerns for a young person and their use of substances. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) highlighted the tool in their 2017 inspection report, under the section "Commitment to Quality Improvement and Innovation." The team do not have a waiting list currently, so are able to allocate new referrals at weekly allocation meetings.

Smarter is easy to use, all questions are young person-friendly and give the team at We Are With You a more comprehensive overview into any other vulnerabilities, such as exploitation.

The tool consists of three sections:

- **At Risk Groups**
- **At Risk Situations**
- **Substance Use Screening**

We Are With You Shropshire have made a few changes to the tool recently, this includes the introduction of a new question regarding plugging, following local concerns around this practice. The team have also added a helpful Glossary in order to support professionals having conversations about substances with young people.

It is important that the young person consents to support prior to completion of the tool, as We Are With You Shropshire are a consent-driven service. If you are unable to obtain this, and have concerns in relation to a young person's substance use, feel free to send your query to [SRPinfo@wearewithyou.org.uk](mailto:SRPinfo@wearewithyou.org.uk) and the team will do their best to assist you.

If you have concerns in relation to substance misuse in relation to exploitation, Sonya is part of the monthly Exploitation Consultation sessions, so please book a slot to discuss further (see details of how to book on Page 7)

**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](http://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](mailto: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)

# THE BRANCH PROJECT

## How Can We Help?

The Branch Project continues to offer support to children and young people from age 5 to 18 and up to 24 years for young adults with additional learning needs. The Branch Project only work with a young person if they have consented to support. On occasions, a young person may be unsure if they would like support and for this reason, we offer an informal “Get to know us first” session. During this meeting introductions are made and information regarding what support is available will be offered to the young person. Please note that a “Get to know us first” session can only take place if the young person consents to this. The Branch sessions are client-led and our framework supports young people to understand the following:

- Consent
- Relationships including understanding control and coercion
- Uncomfortable feelings
- Sexual exploitation and grooming
- Sexualisation
- Social media, sexting & the law – sharing inappropriate images
- Criminal exploitation and links to sexual exploitation
- Peer on peer abuse

The Branch Project supports children and young people who have been identified as vulnerable to exploitation or are victims of exploitation. We do not work from a scale of risk (low/medium/high risk for example) but rather if there is a risk, then we support the young person. In addition, if preventative work is deemed beneficial in terms of education, then support is offered. The Branch Project framework of support consists of supporting the young person to cope, empowerment and identifying psychosocial aspects that can be drawn upon to develop future resilience to exploitation.

If the Branch Project worker identifies that additional support may be beneficial to the young person, then the worker will explore this with them, and with their consent can either make a referral to another agency or signpost them to additional services. Branch support is holistic and therefore we will support young people whilst combining support from other specialist agencies or offer a standalone service.

To make a referral to the Branch Project, visit:

[www.wmrsasc.org.uk/referral](http://www.wmrsasc.org.uk/referral)

## Service Updates from the Branch Project & WMRSASC

- **New Branch Team Lead**

Carrie O'Keefe has been appointed as the new Branch Team Lead for West Mercia - Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire - congratulations Carrie!

- **New Specialist support within the Branch team**

Laura Kuegler has been appointed as new Specialist Branch Worker for supporting people who have been sexually exploited or who are at risk of exploitation through the sex industry.

- **Work with armed forces personnel and their families**

Carrie has introduced WMRSASC and the Branch Project to armed forces personnel, their families, and professionals working in the armed forces community within West Mercia. A number of days are booked in during the summer for Carrie to attend SSAFA at RAF Cosford and RAF Shawbury.

- **Continued work with Purple Leaf**

Branch and WMRSASC's Purple Leaf team are working towards supporting schools to better understand CSE. Independent and local authority schools have been identified, whose students contacted the Everyone's Invited campaign, and the service will endeavour to reach out and support young people and professionals.

- **Funding from Children in Need**

The Branch Project have received funding from Children in Need to develop a training resource for professionals to facilitate an understanding of TA-CSE (Technologically Assisted Child Sexual Exploitation) aimed at children and young people. Carrie O'Keefe and Laura Kuegler from Branch have worked with Purple Leaf Education & Training facilitators for many months to develop the training resource which will be OCN accredited in the Autumn. The TA-CSE training will be available for external professionals to use with young people aged 11-18 in the near future. To sign up for access to the training, please contact [enquiries@purpleleaf.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@purpleleaf.org.uk)

- **Spotlight on the Navigator team**

The Navigator team are located within the WMRSASC offices and their role is to ensure a safe, secure, and supported transition into the service. On receipt of a fully completed online referral, the Navigator checks that all the relevant information has been sent and if needed, will contact the referrer for any incomplete information. The Navigator also contacts the client, usually within 48 hours of the referral being sent, and will explain the services that are available to the client and support them in choosing the service which meets their needs. The Navigator will support the client as they provide information for any assessments, which is essential to complete the process, and if necessary, the Navigator can signpost the client to any third-party services (such as housing, benefits, NHS, etc) and ensure that safeguarding is managed appropriately. The Navigator will ensure that consent is given by the client and offer consent forms to be completed via an online signing facility. The Navigators are the client's single point of contact until they are allocated to the most appropriate service and allocated worker.

- **Other services provided by WMRSASC**

Advocacy services are available, working in partnership with AXIS. To find out more about the range of services available from WMRSASC, please visit [www.wmrsasc.org.uk](http://www.wmrsasc.org.uk)



Targeting Stage



Experience Stage



Hooked Stage



Trapped Stage

## Child Exploitation Consultation Sessions

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 remaining available dates for 2021 are as follows:

**7th September, 5th October, 2nd November, 7th December**

Sonya Jones (We Are With You), Carrie O’Keefe (Branch Project), Jo Smith (Education Access Service), Stafford Mason (Early Help) and Clare Jervis (Exploitation & Missing Lead) will be on hand to offer advice & support regarding all CCE/CSE queries.

## 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.

[www.westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/local-content/4cjN/exploitation-tools-and-pathways/?b=Shropshire](http://www.westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/local-content/4cjN/exploitation-tools-and-pathways/?b=Shropshire)

**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](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/early-help/practitioners/early-help-tools)

**SSCP (Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership)** - [www.safeguardingshropshireschildren.org.uk](http://www.safeguardingshropshireschildren.org.uk)

**Early Help** - [www.shropshire.gov.uk/early-help](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/early-help)

**West Mercia Police** - [www.westmercia.police.uk](http://www.westmercia.police.uk)

**West Mercia Youth Justice Service** - [www.westmerciayouthjustice.org.uk](http://www.westmerciayouthjustice.org.uk)

**We Are With You** - [www.wearewithyou.org.uk/services/shropshire](http://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/services/shropshire)

**Branch Project** - [www.wmrsasc.org.uk/the-branch-project](http://www.wmrsasc.org.uk/the-branch-project)

**Climb** - [www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/climb](http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/climb)

**NWG** - [www.nwgnetwork.org](http://www.nwgnetwork.org)

**SPACE** - [www.bespaceaware.co.uk](http://www.bespaceaware.co.uk)

**For support or advice, please contact** [clare.jervis@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:clare.jervis@shropshire.gov.uk)

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