



TREES Newsletter

Together Reducing and Ending Exploitation in Shropshire

Issue 6 • Winter 2022

Welcome

..to the latest edition of the TREES newsletter.

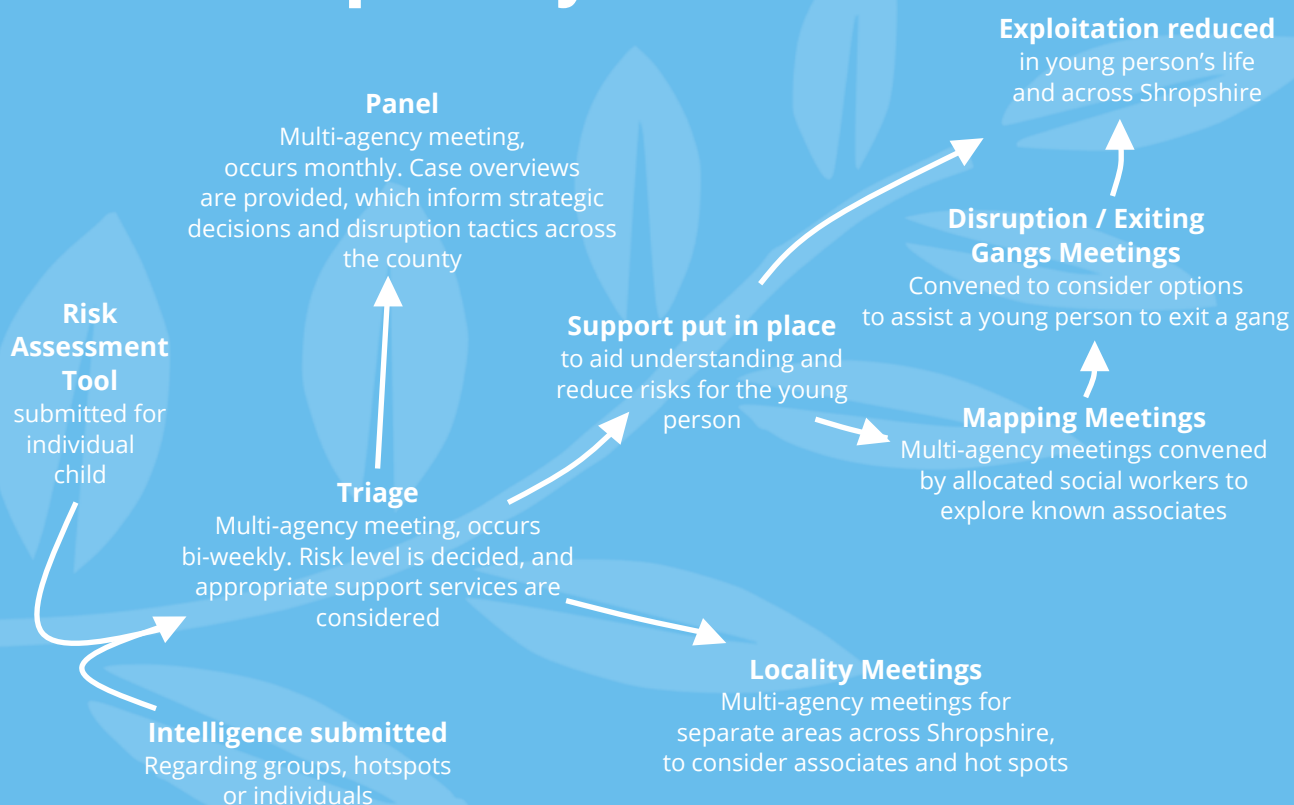
In this issue I want to pay special attention to children who are at risk of becoming permanently excluded where there are known CE concerns; this is a worrying gap in protection which leaves excluded children at risk of falling into the control of criminals seeking to exploit them further increasing the risks. In order to prevent this, we need to ensure that sufficient wrap-around support is in place at the earliest opportunity by pulling together an Exclusion Prevention Meeting. To read more about this, please take a look at Page 4, where the Education Access Service have kindly provided their suggestions around this.

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 Operational Lead
and Team Manager of the TREES Hub**
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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.

CE referrals remain consistent with intel also being submitted, which is really positive considering that the pathway for CE referrals and intel have recently been revised. Boys continue to make up the largest proportion of referrals, with growing concerns around children with fixed term & permanent exclusions and a need for schools to be considering earlier intervention and prevention strategies to reduce the risk of exclusion.

We continue to see online harm and young people being coerced into sending inappropriate photos online, including hate messages which seems to be around peer-on-peer harm and control. Debt bondage continues to be a concern, with threats of physical violence being used as a way of coercing and controlling young people. Snapchat has been used to advertise drugs further afield; we have seen links between Oswestry, Whitchurch & Market Drayton appear. Threats of violence have led to children's offensive weapons as a form of protection; this is a pattern we see emerging each quarter. Parents paying off their child's drug debt has also becoming increasingly common.

We continue to see alcohol & being used by the vast majority of young people this quarter who are discussed within triage, with concerns being raised in relation to crack cocaine. Cannabis remains an issue for many of the young people, with concerns continuing to be raised around increased violence, anti-social behaviour and young people carrying knives. We have noted an increase of 'peer-on-peer' coercion where we believe that young people are being forced to coerce new recruits, as well as issues of young people moving into the territory of using other young people to deal drugs. We are noting secretive behaviours which is often an indicator of debt bondage, which again is something we see very regularly within triage.

Growing concerns have been noted by a number of professionals in regard to young people associating with vulnerable adult drug users; with some young people believed to be using or experimenting with crack cocaine and heroin within the Oswestry area. We are concerned that children may also be visiting properties in Oswestry where there are well-known adult drug users as well as unknown adults from the West Midlands or Merseyside areas, at these properties they may be witnessing violence towards other vulnerable adults and regular adult drug-use. Concerns are exacerbated as these young people are often reported as missing; sometimes overnight.

One of the concerns that appears to be re-emerging is the number of children who are NEET; "At the individual level, young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) are more likely to be socially excluded and exposed to discrimination and poverty (Eurostat, 2017a)" Issues have been raised around the vulnerability of 16-18-year-olds who are being discussed within triage where concerns regarding CE are emerging.

Another key theme this quarter is the number of children who are being assessed prior to triage as being 'groomed & targeted' with no evidence of Targeted Early Help being considered, given the fact that the concerns are contextualised. We need to be clear with partner agencies around the importance of picking up signs and indicators as soon as possible to prevent the risks escalating.

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**
The Quarry Park, KFC in the town centre, the Shoplatch area, the Darwin Centre, and the grounds outside St. Mary's Church at the top of Pride Hill.
- **Other areas in the county**
Oswestry town centre including outside Sainsburys, Gobowen train station, Jubilee Park in Whitchurch.



Reporting Intelligence

The ways in which children are exploited can amount to criminal behaviour by those who are exploiting them and/or as a presenting behaviour of a child who is being exploited.

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

If you have information about 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 and you **do not have information about specific children**, 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](#)). You can submit this information in the following ways:

- Report under the **“Tell Us About” section on the West Mercia Police website** or phone **101**.
- Email the information directly to the West Mercia Police Child Exploitation Team in Shropshire: **CETeamShropshire@westmercia.police.uk** (please note that this inbox is only monitored on weekdays between 8am – 4pm)
- Anonymously to Crimestoppers online at **<https://crimestoppers-uk.org>** or by calling **0800 555111**.
- 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).

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.

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**

Financial Exploitation on Social Media

VICE magazine have recently published a short documentary on their YouTube channel regarding the rise of criminals targeting youth and vulnerable people on social media, convincing them to send and receive illicit earnings.

One reason why so many young people are still vulnerable to this crime is because so few are aware of it. To watch the video, click here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfgbZ5wjszs>





The importance of multi-agency working to prevent exclusions when there are risks of CE

Insight from the Education Access Service

Working together, we can make a difference.

We have had, so far this academic year in Shropshire, 43 students permanently excluded. Of those students, 11 were excluded for matters relating to drugs. In 2020/2021, we had 53 permanent exclusions, and of those 13 were drug related. The figures are hard to interpret because of the partial closures, but there is a significant rise in cases like this within our communities, and therefore in our schools. Schools cannot manage this situation by themselves.

School is most students' safe place - despite the behaviours that their chaotic lifestyles lead them to display. Excluding pupils leaves them more vulnerable to further exploitation, and risks of criminality. We have had a number of schools contact the Inclusion Team prior to reaching a decision to permanently exclude a student for bringing drugs into school, concerned of the impact the exclusion itself could have.

Working together in a multi-agency way, can have a far-reaching positive impact on students and also allow for services to work around a student and their family to forge a pathway of support which has the potential to change lives. A good example of this is when a school contacted the Inclusion Team recently with a difficult situation regarding three students who were involved in purchasing, sharing/dealing and taking drugs on school site. The school wanted to consider how best to resolve this situation without turning to permanent exclusion, as they recognised that there was more at play than the Year 10 students being involved with substances. A multi-agency meeting was called, involving We Are With You, Police, Children's Services, Education Access and the school. Parents were also integral to the meeting. Together, a greater understanding of the situation became clear, which involved adult males grooming one of the individuals. With the wider context being considered, a plan was developed to safeguard and support the students, which allowed school to feel confident in re-integrating the students back in to school, with minimum disruption to their learning, but also being able to address the community concerns which naturally were being demanded of the school.

This is just one example of us working together. It works if we get to talk early enough.

To get in touch with the team, email educationaccessservice@shropshire.gov.uk

National Child Exploitation Awareness Day

Friday 18th March 2022

The National Child Exploitation Awareness Day aims to highlight the issues surrounding CE; encouraging everyone to think, spot and speak out against abuse. To mark this occasion, we have arranged a day of multi-agency online seminars to highlight the work being done in Shropshire to combat this important issue.

The event is open to all professionals via Microsoft Teams. It is hoped that attendees will be able to attend the full event, but if this isn't possible you are welcome to join when available throughout the day. The schedule is as follows:

Start Time	Seminar	Presented By
9.30am	Opening Introduction	Sonya Miller
9.45am	CE Pathway Overview	Jeanette Hill
10.15am	SSCP Learning Overview	Emma Harding
10.45am	Forms of CE disruption used by West Mercia Police	DS Annie Waylett
11.15am	Substance Misuse & Exploitation	We Are With You
11.45am	Supporting those at risk of CE at TMBSS	James Pearson
12.15pm	Break for Lunch	
12.45pm	Supporting those at risk of CSE	Branch Project
1.15pm	Case Study	Donna Richards
2.00pm	Q&A and Close	Clare Jervis

To book your place on the event, please email the Exploitation & Missing Co-ordinator: amy.amber@shropshire.gov.uk



To find out more about the national campaign, please visit: www.stop-cse.org/national-child-exploitation-awareness-day

STOPCE
 AWARENESS DAY 18TH MARCH



Update from We Are With You

from Sonya Jones, We Are With You Shropshire Team Manager

The team at We Are With You Shropshire are as busy as ever - especially in the Shrewsbury and Oswestry areas. The team are currently supporting 56 young people, the majority of which are Cannabis users, although we are also working with young people who use MDMA and Cocaine on a regular basis. Alcohol use is a consistent feature but many of the young people we are working with do not want to make changes to their alcohol use as they do not see this as a drug. As I wrote about this in the Autumn issue of the TREES Newsletter, I will not explore the issue of alcohol in this edition other than to request for professionals to please consider alcohol use when completing Exploitation Risk Assessments or Smarter Screening Tools. We are seeing statements that a young person "is not a drug user" only to find that alcohol is referenced later within the Risk Assessment, eg. drinking with friends.

We also have alarming concerns that children may be experimenting with Crack Cocaine and Heroin, we are currently working with partners in order to formulate a Multi-Agency response to this situation. Concerns for exploited children should always consider this as a key significant risk, as when children are exposed to adult Class A drug use (which may include intravenous) it very quickly becomes the norm so puts them at a greater risk of "copy cat behaviours". If any partners have concerns please contact me directly to discuss this further.

Currently the team have capacity to accept new referrals, as we do not have a waiting list at this present time. Allocations are weekly so there is a relevantly quick response to requests for support, either via the SPOC number on 01743 294700 or by completing a Smarter Screening Tool. Smarter is now used to request a Meet and Greet Service for young people who are reluctant to accept support. Partners are asked to complete Smarter at the earliest opportunity possible, as this is the most proven successful way to engage with young people who are experiencing difficulties with substances.

I have recently had the privilege of speaking at a Round Table Event titled Cannabis & British Modern Slavery: How to protect children from the harms of exploitation. This was a national event, and the 200 available spaces were booked out within a matter of days, as there is such an interest in the subject. Sonya spoke about our work in Shropshire, from delivering a service to young substance users who are victims of exploitation since we first started, to a focus on the link to Cannabis and Exploitation in 2016. Sonya also spoke about her recommendations to a Cross-Parliamentary Group, calling for a Child Criminal stand-alone strategy.

Fellow speakers at the event included:

- * Kaya Kowalski from Voltface: Drugs on social media, how exploiters use social media platforms to expand their businesses
- * Dr Grace Robinson from Black Box Research and Consultancy: What is County Lines (as a business model) and her work as a Criminal Expert Witness in Child Criminal Exploitation

To contact Sonya directly, please email: sonya.jones@wearewithyou.org.uk

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:



Substance Misuse: the Shropshire YJS Offer

from Lucia Malin, Shropshire YJS Team Manager

West Mercia Youth Justice Services provides an in-house substance misuse service for young people, which is offered throughout Shropshire, Telford, Hereford and Worcester by four officers. In particular within Shropshire, the Substance misuse provision also incorporates a sexual health element as often the links between Substance misuse and Sexual health, are overlooked.

The Substance misuse provision offered by Shropshire YJS differs in that all community based Substance misuse services are consent (voluntary) based and therefore if the young person doesn't want a service; they don't have to engage. As Shropshire Substance misuse officers are also Youth Justice Officers, statutory interventions can be offered to ensure that the young people are involved in some form of Substance misuse intervention or bespoke programme of work. The service is confidential, except when there is a need for information sharing, risk management, safety planning or concerns pertaining to welfare and health.

The process starts with case managers within the YJS identifying a Substance misuse need through initial assessment, police intelligence or self-disclosure, whereby a referral internally to the Substance misuse officers in Shropshire is then made – this will generate an initial Substance misuse screening assessment. In most cases, the referral behaviour (e.g. use of cannabis) is often much more complex, with poly drug use, use of class A substances or controlled drugs, sexual health needs, and diversity or complex health and well-being needs.

This then generates a specific bespoke care plan which prioritises areas of education and need, in agreement with the young person this care plan and wider Substance misuse assessment is then fed into our YJS ASSET+ Risk assessment, wider WMYJS intervention plans, children's services, police intelligence, risk management plans. The links between Substance misuse and Child Exploitation are often obvious but complex – i.e. the lines between dealing, running, using substances all blur significantly, and often the young person's own personal Substance use is recognised as a key driver in behaviour in the YJS in Shropshire for those children who engage in anti-social behaviour or commit drugs related offences.

Shropshire Substance misuse provision feeds multiple aspects of Child Exploitation information sharing as described above, tailored intervention sessions and bespoke programmes and education- ensuring that the young person is receiving vital information including generic drug education, harm reduction, emotional/wellbeing advice, motivational interviewing and support. Children open to the YJS substance misuse YJO's also receive more bespoke services like C-Card and condom distribution (and safe sex advice) and even in-house STI testing.

If the young person consents, their information also helps the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System (NDTMS, formerly part of NHS Public Health) who, aside from collecting Substance misuse information, have recently started to collect specific data sets on young people being involved in county lines, gangs, violent offending, domestic violence, mental health – which all help steer national strategy and local commissioning of services vital to support the children we work with.

For further information regarding any provisions delivered by Shropshire YJS, please visit the website at www.westmerciayouthjustice.org.uk or contact:

* Lucia Malin, Shropshire YJS Team Manager
Email: lucia.malin@westmercia.police.uk Phone: 01743 453770

* George Davies, Substance Misuse Youth Justice Officer
Email: george.davies@westmercia.police.uk

THE BRANCH PROJECT

#MyInternetRight

WMRSASC authors Laura Kuegler (Branch Plus worker), Gavin Stafford (MISVA) and Carrie O'Keefe (Branch Team Lead) have created the first edition of the #MyInternetRight resource pack. This resource was funded through BCC Children in Need.



#MyInternetRight is a specialist educational resource that empowers everyone to use the internet safely, with a focus on raising awareness of TA-SE (Technically Assisted Sexual Exploitation) The resource can be used to support people who are at risk of or who have been affected by online/technology-aided sexual abuse. It's suitable for anyone from the age of 10 upwards, with no upper age limit. The WMRSASC Branch team have completed #MyInternetRight accredited practitioner training in TA-SE, this was delivered by WMRSASC's Purple Leaf Team and has been accredited by the Open College Network. All practitioners now have a resource pack to complement their skills whilst supporting children and young people. The Branch team will raise awareness of #MyInternetRight on Safer Internet Day on 8th February 2022.

The training course will be available soon for external professionals who foresee the value of the #MyInternetRight resource to complement their work. Enquiries about the training and resource should be directed to enquires@purpleleaf.com for the attention of Kerrie Best / Hannah Cooper.

Other updates from Branch

- The Branch team acknowledge concerns from other professionals currently in regard to the links between criminal exploitation and substance use to CSE - and continue to strive to find early indications of CE and continue to work with relevant agencies to prevent and disrupt whilst supporting young people. The Branch Project delivery model includes Empower Cope and Recover, through individual face-to-face sessions or through other methods preferred by the young person, such as Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp and telephone calls.
- The Branch Project are supporting the KNIFE ANGEL awareness of violence event at Worcester Cathedral throughout March. The Branch Project will have a display at the Cathedral and Branch Workers will be available to meet members of the public.
- A QR code can now be used to access the Branch website directly, where you can read about services and referral information.



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**



Useful Links

Shropshire Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Tool

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

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

Reporting Intelligence

Guidance on suitable methods on reporting intelligence.

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

Shropshire Child Exploitation Directory

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>