



# TREES Newsletter

Together Reducing and Ending Exploitation in Shropshire

Issue 7 • Spring Summer 2022

## Welcome

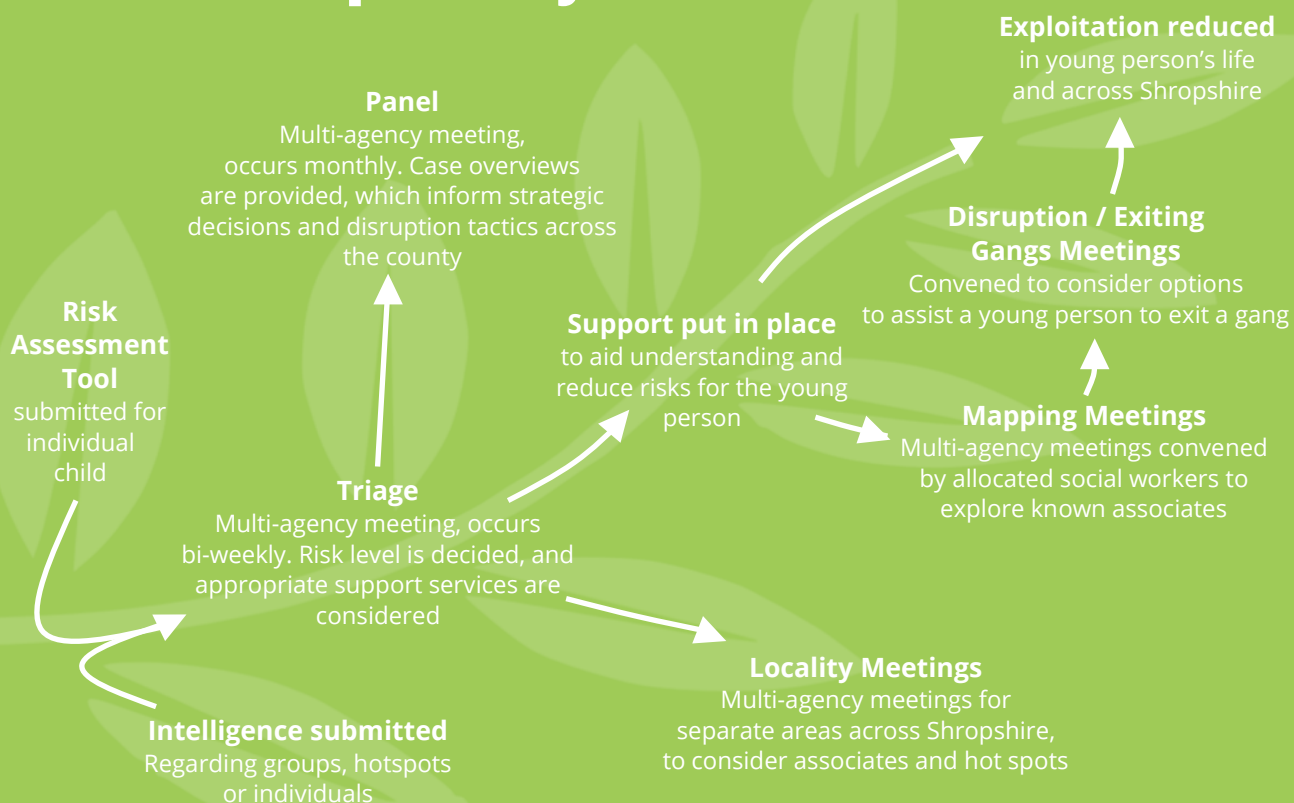
A warm welcome to all of our partner agencies to latest edition of our TREES newsletter; I hope you all had a restful Easter break. It's been a very busy few months within CE Triage where we have seen a high volume of new referrals - this is very encouraging so thank you for sending these in. Our TREES team continues to grow; we now have 3 Family Support Workers in post and have appointed a Substance Misuse Advisor who will be joining our team shortly which is very exciting. We also held a National CE Awareness Day recently, this consisted of a day of online seminars and was really well-attended, many thanks to our partner agencies who contributed and to those who attended.

I'd also like to thank The Marches School for recently arranging performances of 'Chelsea's Story' - a powerful production highlighting the issue of child sexual exploitation. The events have now taken place but you can find out more about the production at: [www.alteregocrativesolutions.co.uk/chelseas-story](http://www.alteregocrativesolutions.co.uk/chelseas-story)

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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.**

In this issue we'd like to raise your awareness regarding some of the push/pull factors that we have identified as key themes in the past few months - this includes children's mental health and the impact of peer pressure which have been identified as two of the key indicators that a child in Shropshire may be being exploited. As well as concerns regarding friendships, relationships or association with controlling individuals or groups and changes in emotional wellbeing, we also continue to see children going missing which is often unreported by parents, as well as concerning use of the internet, social media and/or mobile phones.

We have noted an increase in the number of new referrals compared to 12 months ago where we saw 74 compared to 94 referrals this year; this is testament to all of our partner agencies who are clearly identifying the risks associated with exploitation and responding to these concerns using the SSCP pathway. Males continue to make up the largest number of referrals coming through with 58% compared to 42% females, which is similar to last year.

We continue to see children linked to cocaine (using or distributing) which appears to be a theme across the whole of Shropshire; alcohol has also been identified as a key theme this quarter as well as children using cannabis. We continue to see drugs as being the main concern for over half of the children discussed in triage in the past few months; with a number who have a drug debt which places them at greater risk. There is evidence that one high risk young person accrued a drug debt of approximately £2000 following a recent arrest, where police found Class A drugs and other paraphernalia.

We have noticed that a number of children who have been discussed within triage are struggling with their mental health and low mood, some of which have self-harmed or taken an overdose. The impact of COVID-19 has contributed to this, as for a number of young people their own means of connection to the outside world has been social media which has increased their vulnerability - impacting on both their mental health and risks regarding CE.

Peer pressure has also been identified as a key indicator, with concerns of online abuse and patterns of controlling and coercive behaviour.

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independent resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour. Coercive behaviour is a continuing act or a pattern of acts of assault, threat, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim. - Home Office, Understanding and responding to the exploitation of adults: Leaders' Briefing (2019)

We also continue to see a continuing theme of children being linked to violence and anti-social behaviour, including many reportedly being in possession of offensive weapons, particularly knives.

## 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 and Mount Pleasant shops all remain a concern. Matalan car park has also been raised, as well as The Exchange hotel, where adult associates of concern have been residing.
- **Other areas in the county**  
Jubilee Park in Whitchurch remains a concern for drug use and potential CCE. Albrighton has also been raised as an area where Class A drugs are being supplied.



## 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 associates (please include names), 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](mailto: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](http://www.fearless.org)**

## All Together Now: Inclusion not exclusion

### Supporting all young people to succeed in school

The Commission on Young Lives has published a report looking at school exclusion and its links to exploitation and other adverse outcomes. The report summarises current data and research around schools exclusions, including: there has been a gradual rise in the number of permanent exclusions from schools in England; a disproportionate number of Black children are not attending or are excluded from school; and the majority of children who have been cautioned or sentenced for an offence have received a suspension from school. Recommendations include: a new national team of regional development advisors to work with schools, local authorities and health agencies to support the implementation of inclusive schools in every area; and a new requirement for every school to publish their inclusive 'education for all' strategy and report annually on any children who have been excluded or moved from the school roll. To read the report, please visit:

**<https://thecommissiononyounglives.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/COYL-Education-report-FINAL-APR-29-2022.pdf>**

To get in touch with Shropshire's Education Access Service team to discuss working together to prevent an exclusion, please email: **[educationaccessservice@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:educationaccessservice@shropshire.gov.uk)**

Updates from

# THE BRANCH PROJECT

## **Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) new data evidenced that child sexual exploitation reports are soaring in the wake of the pandemic**

In 2021 the IWF actioned 182,281 URLs containing images or videos of “self-generated” material. This is a 374% increase on pre-pandemic levels. In 2019, the IWF took action to remove 38,424 URLs. Child sexual abuse images generated in this way now account for nearly three quarters (72%) of all the content the IWF works to remove online.

Young girls are at particular risk. Ten years ago (in 2011), they accounted for 60% of the children seen in child sexual abuse images. That has now risen to 97%.

In 2021, children aged 11-13 years old feature most prominently in these images, but the IWF has also removed 27,000 instances in the 7-10 age range in the past year – making self-generated imagery of children in this age group the fastest growing type of material seen by the IWF’s hotline.

IWF Communications Director Emma Hardy said: “We have investigated more reports in the past year than the entire first 15 years we were in operation.

“Whilst we have got better at locating this content through our ability to proactively search and invest in technology, we remain extremely concerned about emerging harms, and have witnessed an explosion of self-generated images, live streaming and the sheer proliferation of images hosted in Europe.

“We are supportive of the EU’s plans to bring forward new legislation to address this abhorrent crime and we hope that it includes a clearer strategy to prevent the creation of this imagery and improve the situation with Europe’s hosting issues.

In 2020, 86% of all known child sexual abuse material discovered online by the IWF was hosted in Europe. Europol’s recent serious organised threat assessment also supported the growing problem regarding the increases of child sexual abuse material online. It stated: “There has been a continuous increase in activities related to the sexual abuse of children over recent years. Child Sexual Exploitation targets the most vulnerable in our society.” The threat assessment goes on to highlight grooming and live streaming as key threat issues which need to be addressed.

The report also highlights that it remains a crime that is highly under reported and many victims remain unidentified.

**To read the full report, please visit: <https://annualreport2021.iwf.org.uk>**

## The Branch Project supporting children impacted by Technically Assisted-Child Sexual Exploitation (TA-CSE)

Branch data revealed that over half of our referrals 64.4% of children are impacted by TA-CSE.

### What are we doing to tackle this?

WMRSASC developed TA-CSE specialist educational resource #MyInternetRight which is an essential resource for the Branch Project Worker to facilitate education and awareness in relation to online safety. The sessions aim to empower young people with knowledge of the potential risks associated to online activity and how building their resilience can enable them to actively enjoy the internet, gaming, and mobile phone communications. The TA-CSE specialist support offers 12 individual sessions to include 1 introduction session, 10 educational sessions and 1 evaluation session. The topics include:

Session 1: Who are you?

Session 6: What are the impacts of online exploitation

Session 2: What is your online identity?

Session 7: What is consent?

Session 3: Who are the others?

Session 8: How are we protected?

Session 4: What is online exploitation?

Session 9: How can we be empowered?

Session 5: How does online exploitation happen?

Session 10: How does the internet benefit you?

## The Mental Health Foundations UK's Mental Health Awareness Week on 9th—15th May: Loneliness



The Branch project recognises that feelings of loneliness and isolation can increase vulnerabilities to child exploitation. Therefore, The Branch Project are contributing to the Mental Health Foundation UK's awareness theme of "Loneliness" by supporting young people to access resources and tools to build on their resilience and improve wellbeing thus reducing risks.

"Loneliness can be something that passes, and we see many children who use our services move through these difficult periods. However, for some children, loneliness can lead to mental health issues and mean they struggle alone to cope with other challenges in their lives. In the most serious cases it can leave them more susceptible to grooming by sexual predators or criminal gangs" - [www.childrensociety.org.uk](http://www.childrensociety.org.uk)



To make a referral for TA-CSE or other CSE support including early intervention support please visit the WMRSASC website: [www.wmrsasc.org.uk/referrals](http://www.wmrsasc.org.uk/referrals) or scan the QR code.



## Education programme for 10-18s

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

The programme includes a one-hour session for parents and professionals to increase awareness of sexual abuse and exploitation, knowledge about Purple Leaf and other services within WMRSASC. More in-depth CPD and training options for professionals are also available. Purple Leaf also provides advice, risk assessment and interventions for children and young people (aged 5-18) who have exhibited, or are at risk of exhibiting harmful or problematic sexual behaviour (HSB & PSB).

## Sibling Sexual Abuse Project

Purple Leaf is part of a national project to support victims and survivors of recent and historic sibling sexual abuse. This project was led by Rape Crisis England & Wales (RCEW), in partnership with two universities and two rape crisis centres. The two-year project is the largest Government funded piece of work on sibling sexual abuse to date in the UK. It is also the first England and Wales wide project on sibling sexual abuse. It is funded by the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice and will conclude in March 2022. Purple leaf, in collaboration with the University of Birmingham, led on the child and young person aspects of the project.

### Development of an Assessment Tool

A specific assessment tool has been developed which enables professionals to:

1. Identify whether a child or young person (CYP) is a survivor of sibling sexual abuse (SSA); has experienced sexually inappropriate or problematic behaviour from a sibling or/and behaved towards a sibling in a way that is sexually inappropriate or problematic; or have exhibited sexually abusive behaviours towards another sibling.
2. Have support in their approach to risk management, support, and intervention with the CYP.
3. Identify any additional needs or support for the wider family of the CYP and refer them to the appropriate agency.
4. Identify and escalate any safeguarding concerns.

### How we can support

1. Advice and guidance
2. Referrals and Assessments for children and young people following SSA
3. Information for professionals, carers and children and young people
4. Assessment for children and young people
5. Good practice guidance and training regarding sibling sexual abuse.

Purple Leaf are offering Sibling sexual Abuse assessment tool training session free to professionals to enable to understand more about SSA and how to utilise the assessment tool. This free half day training session will take place on Zoom on 16th May 2022, 09.30am – 12.30pm.

**For further information or booking enquires please visit [www.purpleleaf.org.uk](http://www.purpleleaf.org.uk) or contact us on [enquiries@purpleleaf.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@purpleleaf.org.uk) or 01905 677444.**

**Purple Leaf is a trading name of West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (WMRSASC). WMRSASC has over 30 years' experience of delivering frontline support to survivors of sexual violence and abuse, and provides a range of services including advocacy, therapy, online and a helpline service.**

# Child Exploitation Consultation Sessions

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## 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](mailto:amy.amber@shropshire.gov.uk)**

**THE  
BRANCH  
PROJECT**



# Useful Links

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

## Other organisations

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)

Purple Leaf - [www.purpleleaf.org.uk](http://www.purpleleaf.org.uk)

Climb - [www.childrenssociety.org.uk/climb](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/climb)

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

Support for parents: SPACE - [www.bespaceaware.co.uk](http://www.bespaceaware.co.uk) PACE - <https://paceuk.info>

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

**If you would like to be added to the newsletter mailing list, please contact [amy.amber@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:amy.amber@shropshire.gov.uk)**