

TREES Newsletter

Together Reducing & Ending Exploitation in Shropshire



Issue 10 • Spring 2023

Welcome

...to the latest edition of the TREES newsletter.

Overall, we have seen a significant increase in the number of referrals for Q4 2023 compared to 2022 suggesting that the CE pathway is well understood and utilised particularly by schools who are our highest referrers. We can see similar figures this quarter for the number of males and females who have been discussed within CE triage which continues to evidence that we are seeing more males than females; this seems to have been a consistent pattern for this quarter.

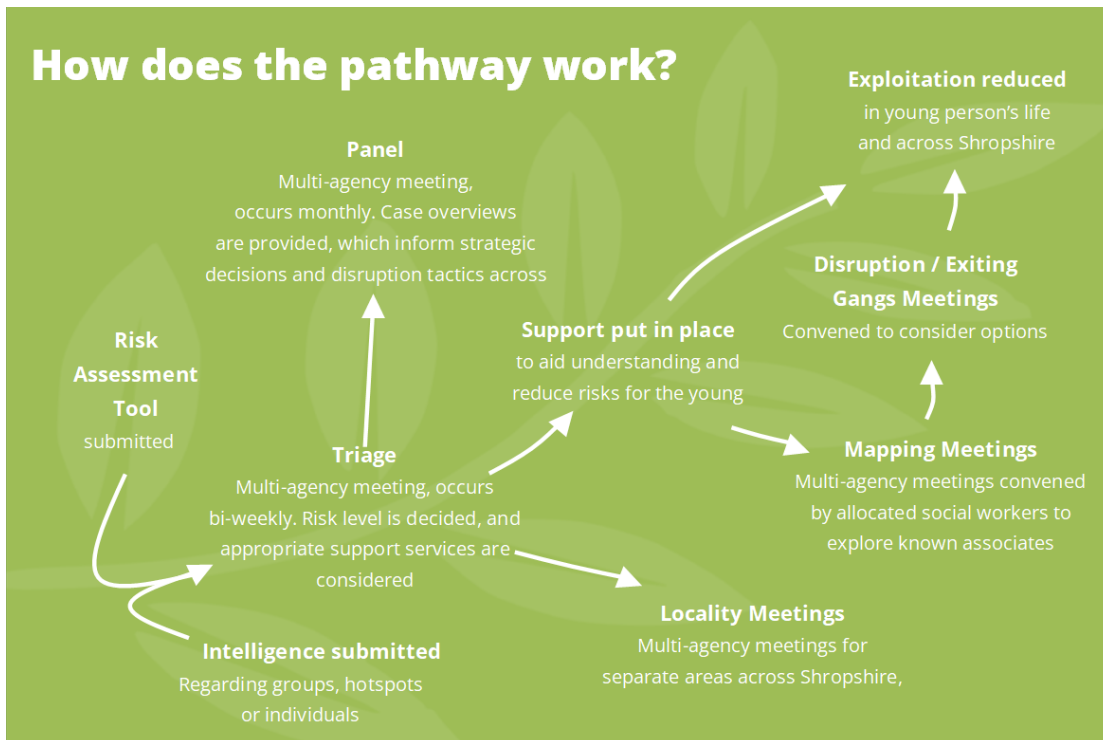
This quarter we have noted a number of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) presenting as push factors within triage with many young people experiencing hidden harm—having been exposed to parental mental health, substance misuse and domestic abuse. This is an area we will be closely examining to see if there are identified links and learning that we can be sharing across with our partner agencies.

To address localised concerns—we are hosting an event at Market Drayton Grove School 16/05/2023 4-7pm which further details can be found below in this newsletter.

Clare Jervis, CE & Missing Operational Lead and Team Manager of the TREES Hub



How does the pathway work?



Try the new quick links to get the help you need!



Current patterns and emerging themes

Update from Clare Jervis, CE & Missing Operational Lead

One of the most noticeable differences this quarter compared to 2022 is the number of children who have been assessed as high risk 17% compared to 7% - this is likely linked to high number of young people whom we have identified within the Ellesmere area who all linked to known/young adults of concern. The threat of violence is used as a way of coercing the young people to committing crime.

Lot of intel is coming through (thank you!), as well as wider concerns in how we can provide enhanced intervention within the school. A trend noted is that a lot of young people are not necessarily out in the street—but gathering within people’s houses. Whilst much of the intelligence appears to be localised to Ellesmere – we are beginning to pick up links between Ellesmere, Oswestry & Wrexham area, with concerns around some of our young people moving into a ‘dual role’ of both perpetrator as well as victim.

Additionally, we have also picked up links between Whitchurch, Shrewsbury and Market Drayton this quarter—with predominantly female perpetrators being identified for not only Criminal exploitation concerns, but also sexual exploitation of children. A number of disruption options have been considered for these adults, including sexual risk orders.

One of the key patterns we have seen this quarter are the links between exploitation and anti-social behaviour county wide, with more evidence of peer-on-peer harm, violence & intimidation being used. Young people are carrying around knives with some concerns regarding the threats to use acid. Information suggesting drug debt and bondage continue to raise concerns with that one of our high-risk young people has a cocaine price list & plan to ‘bash’ it with baby teething powder — adulterating the product and increasing profitability. This seems to be an option that is being used as a way of paying back debt quickly.

Online harm has remained an ongoing concern within triage this quarter for many of our young people; mainly females who share how they have felt pressured into sending naked photos of themselves online. Typically Snapchat and Omegle are usually the two ways young people have been targeted. Information suggests that photos have sometimes been shared for money in exchange for illicit drugs.

Hot Spots of concern

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
Town Centre, Quarry, Lilleshall Lodge, Comet Drive, KFC and Darwin Centre, Albert’s Shed, The Square (town centre), Swimming pool car park, Harlescott and Sundorne (rivalry)
- Other areas
Wilkos’s Market Drayton, McDonalds Whitchurch, Jubilee Park Whitchurch, BP Garage Beatrice Street Oswestry, The Mere Ellesmere



Reporting Intelligence



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

If you have information about any 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, 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). Please provide names if you are aware of them, and as much detail as possible—in particular children and young people who may already be known to children's services or the police.

The below methods can also be used for reporting concerns:

- 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).
- Report under the [“Tell Us About”](#) section on the West Mercia Police website or phone 101.
- Anonymously to Crimestoppers online at <https://crimestoppers-uk.org> or by calling 0800 555111.
- 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
- If you are a professional, please email the information directly to the Shropshire CE Team at: CE-TeamShropshire@westmercia.police.uk (please note that this inbox is only monitored on weekdays between 8am – 4pm) or call the team on 01743 237413.

Please 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.

What is classed as intelligence?

Both information and intelligence are welcome, here is a useful summary to describe each:

Information: Something that is learned or provided about something or someone. Information is defined as knowledge gained through experience or study; facts or knowledge provided or learned; knowledge of specific and timely events or situations, news. Information can relate to all forms of processed data and can include intelligence.

Intelligence: The analytics (interpretation of meaningful patterns) of information gathered from many sources. This is information that has been compiled, analysed, and/or disseminated to anticipate, prevent, or monitor criminal activity. It is information that has been subject to a defined evaluation and risk assessment process in order to assist with police decision making. This is to supply robust, verifiable information which can be evaluated, assessed for risk and then acted upon.

Child Exploitation Awareness Event - Market Drayton

This event is to raise awareness around exploitation to the local community, parents young people and residents. There are various agencies and services attending the event to raise awareness about their service and the support that can be offered to young people and their families who are impacted by exploitation.

The police will also be in attendance to meet the local community and share how the community can raise any concerns in a safe and appropriate manner.

We will also have a presentation from our Substance Misuse Advisor George Davies who will provide some information regarding substances young people are using, what these look like and what the impact is.

This will be hosted at the
Grove Secondary School, Market Drayton, TF9 1HF
4pm—7pm, Tuesday 16th May 2023.

The school are also providing refreshments. All welcome—we hope to see you there! Spread the word to your colleagues and friends to show support around this ever growing issue.

If you are a service who thinks they could contribute to this event and would like a table to raise awareness about your service then please contact Donna Richards from the TREES team at donna.richards@shropshire.gov.uk for more information.



Staying green this spring

Update from George Davies, Young Person's Substance Misuse Advisor

During this season Shropshire's localised substance misuse trends have been cannabis, vaping, alcohol, ketamine, cocaine, xanax, aerosols, as well as notably a number of YPs enquiring about psychedelic substances, such as 2C-B, LSD, Mushrooms and DMT. Plugging has also been noted during this period, as well as the normalisation of poly-drug use amongst young people.

North Shropshire continues to bear the brunt of an influx of substance misuse.

Psychedelics are something that are often revered amongst young people, not usually as starter substances but rather experimental or experienced use—with young people believing the reputation of a higher quality and drug-experience. With You report also report enquiries regarding these.

You may have read in the news that there is incoming tighter guidance and legislation around Nitrous oxide (Noz, n2o, balloons, smart whips). This is currently under discussion although this seemingly comes from a ASB/littering angle, rather than harm reduction/psychoeducation.

Cannabis continues to be very popular and a staple YP's substance misuse with maintained links into CCE. Over the last 20 years, one of the main components in cannabis, THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol – the part of cannabis which gets users high, stoned, euphoric, spaced, can cause paranoia and psychosis if used enough) has exponentially taken over as the main active ingredient, overshadowing CBD (cannabidiol) which *now conflicted* research showed it used to keep the worst effects of THC in check. This means for young people - the cannabis they access is much, much stronger than it historically was; and has been deliberately grown that way for profit.

Cannabis is bought and sold in strains now, typically by the gram. This represents the variety of cannabis plants, usually a blend of sativa/indica—which can produce a mixture of alternative effects; higher highs, more 'chill', or a better quality smoke, or more psychoactive effects. 'Calli' is usually expensive, better quality, whereby 'shake' is the leftovers and is generally considered poor quality and cheap.

Poly and Hash has also been noted as much stronger forms and expensive strains being used at the moment, and even THC oil in a disposable vape has been noted. As with most things, young users report typically more expensive – 'better' cannabis. Increasingly novelty cannabis is becoming popular, with dyed buds featuring speckles of blue or purple.

A pattern to note is an increase in the college population reporting dangerous levels of experimentation or consistent drug misuse with no previous intervention from substance misuse services. This population has seem reluctant to accessing services. There is also a normalisation of cocaine use, especially amongst market town users and young people. Very little harm education and harm reduction is being followed through with users not realising the impact of this substance on their bodies.

Latest strains/slang young people have noted for cannabis are 'Animal minz', 'Platinum jelly', 'Jaffa cookies', 'Poly/hash', 'green', 'Stardog', 'Calli', 'Haze' (lemon haze, purple haze) 'Gelato', 'Cookies', 'Wedding Cake', 'Skittles', 'super silver', 'Mac 1', 'kosher dog', 'ruthless', 'shake'.

Cocaine recent slang - 'Petrol'.



Xanax has been popular for a number of years and often isn't the chemical 'Alprazolam' but usually something else. Often used in conjunction with other substances (poly drug use) it can produce sedative-like effects depending on dosage, method used and interaction with other substances. They typically look like a larger white 'bar' tablet, often with XANAX printed on it. They produce similar effects to other strong benzodiazepines – drowsy, 'chilled', slurred speech/vision when taken in quantity, can be very addictive.

DMT (dimethyltryptamine) is a powerful psychedelic drug that belongs to the tryptamine family. It is found naturally in some plants and animals and can also be synthesized in a laboratory. DMT is most commonly known for its intense and short-lived effects when ingested through smoking, injecting, or inhaling. The effects usually last for 30-45 minutes, but the experience can feel like hours due to the profound alteration of perception and time. DMT is considered a Class A substance in the UK, meaning it is illegal to possess, use, or distribute it. It is a rare substance for young people to access let alone know about.



2C-B (4-bromo-2,5-dimethoxyphenethylamine) is a synthetic psychedelic drug that is used for its hallucinogenic properties. The effects generally include visual and auditory hallucinations, changes in perception of time, heightened sensory awareness, euphoria, and sometimes even spiritual experiences. The drug is often described as having a "mild" psychedelic effect compared to other drugs such as LSD or psilocybin mushrooms. Orally in pill or powder form, and the effects can last for 4-6 hours. It is not considered to be physically addictive, but it can be psychologically addictive. Risks associated with 2C-B use, including anxiety, paranoia, and delusions. Sometimes sold as "pink cocaine". It is a Class A in the UK.

Selling vapes—the voice of a young person

With the increase of vaping amongst young people, a new and very lucrative market has emerged. These are the words of a young person.

“Everyone is either doing it, or are thinking about doing it - selling or buying vapes. You buy them in them in bulk, it's easy, you get 30-50 crate of Elf or E-luxe bars to your door. You can make absolute *bread* from it. Dark web or plenty of places on the internet sell them - no one checks.

A whole crate can cost as low as £5 but usually it works out about £1.50 a vape. You sell them for £4. It's so easy. Everyone wants them. I could shift 2 crates in 2 weeks. The 8k, 10k, lost marys and crystal bars sell so easy. No ones cares if they're real or not. No one cares if they have nicotene in, but most do.

The fakes ones are nasty as hell but you can't tell until you've used it for a bit. The batteries explode, the juice is crusty and they're made so badly made but no one cares. The flavour, colours and shapes are what kids want. They are want a vape that no one else has.

It's like selling drugs, but its low risk and high reward. Some schools get employees (other children) to graft. They get to keep a couple vapes as payment but sell the rest. Most the time it's kids, getting kids, to sell and buy.

Thing is though its so competitive. If your vape business dies you've got a problem as you've got loads of numbers asking you for stuff. I can totally get why people would then move onto selling weed.

The other issue is if you are known for selling vapes, you're a target. People know you have cash and a load of re-sellable vapes so you gotta be careful.”



SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE TO SAY 'NO' TO KNIFE CRIME

Anyone can get in touch

Our team work with young people aged between 10-18 who we believe could be exposed to knife crime and the harm associated with it.

We will strive to educate and support each referred young person whilst tackling knife-related crime in order to protect our communities from harm.

This voluntary programme is completely free. By getting in touch, you could help keep a young person safe from harm and assist in preventing the criminalisation associated to it.

STEERCLEAR

WORKING TOGETHER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Please contact our team if you suspect a young person is involved in knife-related crime:

steerclearshropshire@westmercia.pnn.police.uk

It's important to check in
about the mental health of
those we care for.
That includes you.

Find out more at
www.hubofhope.co.uk

Mental health and wellbeing | Shropshire Council





The Work of We Are With You

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

We Are With You is a Public Health Commissioned Service working across Shropshire. As a specialist confidential drug and alcohol service for young people we are commissioned to support them to make positive changes.

The work we deliver is Tier 3 which I will hope to explain a little more about in this blog.

Tier 3 work can only be delivered by specialist teams such as ourselves and is overseen by the Care Quality Commission. The team carry out specialist work requiring a threshold of expertise and competence that is capable of comprehensive assessment and formulation of an overall care plan. Risk assessments and care plan reviews are completed every 12 weeks.

For many children and young people who misuse substances they have multiple other vulnerabilities in their lives such as exploitation. Our assessment focuses on outcomes across all domains of functioning, education, offending, mental health, family dynamics; it is not simply just about drug and alcohol outcomes.

As a service that is providing structured treatment for drugs and alcohol it is a requirement that we submit our Data to the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System (NDTMS) monthly.

This Data helps to contribute to National Statistics about Substance Misuse Treatment assisting reports by the Office for Health Improvement & Disparities. The team have highly developed skills and knowledge concerning child and adolescent mental health, child development, trauma as well as crucially drugs and alcohol, delivering a spectrum of interventions within a structured programme of delivery.

As a specialist service we support young people to understand the effects of substance use and the harm it can cause to them and the people around them. We are a consent driven, child centred service with a clear pathway into treatment via our Smarter Screening Tool

We Are With You appreciate that talking to young people about drugs and alcohol can be difficult for some professionals but it is such a valuable conversation to have in order to assist in the completion a the Smarter Screening Tool.

As a national charity we have access to other specialist knowledge and have consulted with numerous practitioners on how best to support with this.



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



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The Work of We Are With You

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

Here are some Do's and Don'ts

- Do focus on the young person, not just on the drug/alcohol
- Do try to use open questions which will enable the young person to talk and explore ideas
- Do be positive. Giving warnings such as 'that is very dangerous' may backfire by making 'that' sound exciting and glamorous. Highlighting positive images of health and promoting self esteem may be more productive
- Do check your facts (there is a glossary attached to Smarter). Ensure any information you give is accurate
- Do try to keep it informal
- Do accept the limits of what you can hope to achieve. Many young people will not want to immediately make changes whatever you say or do but agree to revisit at another time
- Don't overreact or panic. Don't assume that anything drastic has to be said or done in the course of the conversation but agree to revisit at another time
- Don't try to talk in-depth to a young person who may be intoxicated but revisit at another time
- Don't lose sight of what you aimed to achieve when you began
- Don't be judgmental. Attitudes regarding drugs and alcohol vary enormously; don't assume young people will share your point of view
- Don't try to use slang terms or jargon you are not completely familiar with
- Don't make blanket generalisations, moralise or sensationalise

The Smarter Screening Tool can be found below, please complete as early as possible when a young person discloses drug and alcohol use as the sooner we can arrange support the better the outcomes will be for the young person.

If you have concerns re CE and Substance Use please book a slot on the CE Consultation sessions, information is included in this Newsletter.

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>





**WE DON'T
BUY CRIME**



**West Mercia
POLICE**

Raising awareness of exploitation and vulnerability

FREE training funded by John Campion, Police & Crime Commissioner

Free training sessions are available to anyone who requires a raising awareness of vulnerability and exploitation. The sessions are 2 hours long and are interactive with the use of Slido, and are hosted either face-to-face or online via Zoom or MS Teams. The course is certificated and enhances safeguarding training, and is free to access - any number of sessions can be booked.

On completion of this course you will be able to:

- Identify the vulnerability factors and adverse childhood experiences, understanding the grooming cycle used to draw those into exploitation
- Explain what the various forms of modern day slavery are and how the NRM can support those identified as being exploited
- Recognise the signs, symptoms and indicators of exploitation for adults and children
- Understand how it impacts on a young person and on adults
- Know how to respond, record and report concerns

If you are interested in this free training offer, please email: trainersWDBC@westmercia.police.uk

Other info/updates

We have now officially secured another year to be able to deliver our across West Mercia with the Project end date now being April 2024. We hope to have the go ahead in place for the parenting and under 10s work within the next few weeks—so will have more to update following this for our partner agencies!

Nadia Ayub, Service Manager Climb/Steer Clear

For further information or booking enquiries please visit www.purpleleaf.org.uk or contact us on enquiries@purpleleaf.org.uk or 01905 677444.

To make a referral to The Branch Project, please visit: www.wmrsasc.org.uk/referrals

The Children's Society **Climb**

Purple Leaf

**THE
BRANCH
PROJECT**

The importance of Early Intervention in reducing exploitation.

Early intervention is key to preventing and reducing the risks of exploitation for young people and communities. This prevents issues from becoming worse later down the line. Spotting the early signs of exploitation and acting on them at the earliest opportunity can help—putting interventions in place that can equip young people with personal strengths and skills that will benefit them as they move into and through adolescence into adult life.

In Shropshire, there are a number of agencies that are able to offer early intervention and prevention. When professionals think of Early Help, they often associate this with the Targeted Early Help (TEH) teams in Shropshire Council, but there are many early intervention services that can be accessed to work with children, young people, and families before considering referring to TEH.

Quite often earlier intervention by specialist services can reduce the risks children face—helping build resilience. Saying a child's risk are "too low" for them to receive a service is no excuse for not offering and seeking help. Using terms such as "it won't meet threshold", or "they won't engage" are barriers for young people to access services they need.

We are always working to improve and learn in Shropshire, but occasionally we still see young people where early opportunities for intervention have been missed, with evidence that the problem and risks have now worsened, and in most cases, earlier intervention may have prevented the risks from escalating.

So, what are the early signs and what services can be accessed?

Below is a list of common vulnerability factors we regularly see in Child Exploitation risk assessments for both criminal and sexual exploitation;

Individual factors	Family	Community
Educational difficulties, attendance issues, internal and external exclusions.	Poor parent child relationships	Substance misuse in the community
Social and emotional difficulties	Poor mental health	Lack of resources, things to do and places to go
Poor mental health	Economic and employment pressures	Levels of crime, exploitation and ASB in the community
Social isolation/ social exclusion	Substance misuse	Levels of economic hardship in the community
Identity issues	Domestic abuse	Exclusion from education
Substance misuse- including use of vapes. Access to substances with no means to fund them.	Availability of protection, warmth and emotional support from an adult carer or parent.	Exclusion from community resources Poor access to services.
Unmonitored access to social media and internet	Lack of supervision/ Neglect	Peer on peer abuse

In addition to these factors, knowing your local area is important. For instance, being aware of where exploitation is happening or has previously happened in a community can inform responses to risks for young people. There may already be potential groups, places, and individuals that pose a risk. Having the knowledge to identify children and young people at an earlier stage means intervention could be in place at the very earliest signs - such as a young person associating with a certain group, frequenting an area of risk, or exhibiting patterns of behaviour previously seen in other exploited young people.

In addition to support available in schools through pastoral departments, counsellors, and school nurses there are a range of external services that are available.

Branch — Working with young people who are at risk of or have been victims of sexual exploitation, this includes online grooming and sharing of personal images.

Climb — Working with young people at risk of Criminal Exploitation.

We Are With You — Will work with young people to overcome substance misuse.

Shropshire Councils Youth Support—services run Empower Her, Below the Belt, aimed at vulnerable groups of young people.

Shropshire's Parenting team —can help parents who are wanting support and run Understanding your Child/Teen courses for parents and teenagers.

Shropshire Child Exploitation Consultations — available the first Tuesday of every month where professionals are on hand to offer advice and support regarding all CCE & CSE and substance misuse queries (Page 12).

All these services are available and should be considered or consulted at the earliest opportunity. Information on access to these services is available via the [Shropshire Child Exploitation Directory](#) and in this newsletter. One strength the above services have is, along with Early Help, police, and Children's Services—we work together to share information and identify patterns to provide a joined-up response.

As a final thought, exploitation is a challenging and complex issue that we need to work together to combat. Working in isolation will not reduce the risks presented to young people in our communities. I believe we have strong well-informed services in Shropshire who will respond, advise and work to overcome barriers to engagement; and for these reasons it is our collective responsibility to provide that support at the earliest opportunity to prevent more complex issues downstream.

My role is the Child Exploitation Lead for Early Help at Shropshire Council. I collaborate with professionals and agencies to offer advice and guidance to Early Help teams and partners who have concerns for children at risk of exploitation. I encourage you to contact me directly to discuss any concerns you may have about exploitation, but I can also offer advice on completing exploitation risk assessment forms. My email is stafford.mason@shropshire.gov.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 and substance misuse queries:

- Clare Jervis, Exploitation & Missing Operational Lead
- George Davies, Young Persons Substance Misuse Advisor
- Stafford Mason, Exploitation Lead for 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 george.r.davies@shropshire.gov.uk

**THE
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Useful Links

Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Tool

To be completed if you have concerns about a particular young person (parental consent required):

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

Reporting Intelligence

Professionals are welcome to email non-urgent information directly to the police CE Team at:

CETeamShropshire@westmercia.police.uk For full guidance on Intelligence Reporting please visit:

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

Child Exploitation Leaflets

A leaflet has been produced to provide an overview of CE, and Shropshire's CE Pathway for parents & carers, there is also a similar leaflet available for local communities:

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/24227/ce-in-shropshire-leaflet-for-parents-carers.pdf>

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/24226/ce-in-shropshire-leaflet-for-local-communities.pdf>

Child Exploitation Directory

Designed to outline the support available to children and young people in Shropshire who are victims of, or at risk of CE, as well as their families and the professionals who support them:

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/21754/ce-directory.pdf>

Smarter Screening Tool

To be completed if you have concerns regarding a young person's use of substances:

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/media/21573/with-you-smarter-screening-tool-vnov21.doc>

Partner Organisations

Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership - www.safeguardingshropshireschildren.org.uk

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