



# Child Exploitation in Shropshire

How to recognise signs of exploitation  
in your local community and report  
concerns



Shropshire  
Council

# What is Exploitation?

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Are you concerned about changes in your child's behaviour? Have you noticed that they may be feeling under pressure from influences from outside your family home? Realising that your child could be being exploited can be distressing, but help and support is available.

Exploitation is a form of abuse, it occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child, young person or adult into any activity that results in an advantage for the perpetrator. Specific types of Exploitation include **Sexual Exploitation**, **Criminal Exploitation**, and **Financial Exploitation**.

## Who does it affect?

Exploitation can happen to any young person from any background, in any part of the country - including Shropshire. The young person often isn't aware that they are a victim, as exploiters are very clever in the way they manipulate the young person into trusting them.

Between April 2020 - April 2021, Shropshire Children's Services received **361 referrals for young people believed to have been either exploited, targeted or vulnerable**. These numbers continue to rise.

## What are the signs?

- New friendship groups, who may be older in age
- Engaging in sexual activity, including exchanging indecent photos
- Missing episodes, when you don't know their whereabouts
- Receiving gifts & rewards, including drugs, alcohol, food & clothing
- Increased secretiveness, particularly around phone use
- Disengagement from school, hobbies & family
- Use of drugs or alcohol, perhaps without the means to afford this
- A decline in mental health, possibly becoming more aggressive
- Possession of a weapon, and/or committing low level crimes

## What can I do as a member of the community?

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- ☑ Contact the police if you witness a young person using any form of drugs or alcohol, or if you witness them being pressured into something (contact details overleaf)
- ☑ Listen out for names mentioned by the young person, as this will be useful information if you need to share concerns with Children's Services or the police
- ☑ Try and identify whether the young person's parents are aware of their whereabouts - if they aren't, this is classed as a missing episode which needs to be reported to the police
- ☑ Listen calmly if a young person confides in you
- ☑ If you know the young person's full name, share your concerns with Children's Services
- ☑ If the concerns relate to licensable premises or activities such as alcohol, gambling or taxis, please feel free to contact Shropshire Council's Licensing Team on 0345 678 9046
- ☑ Take a look at our CE Directory to increase your awareness around the support available:

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/24221/ce-directory.pdf>

# Report concerns about a child

Shropshire's TREES (Together Reducing & Ending Exploitation in Shropshire) Team are based within Children's Services. We are committed to identifying young people who are at risk of exploitation, and supporting professionals and families to reduce these risks. It is recognised that these risks are out in the community, rather than within the family home. This is what is known as **Contextual Safeguarding**.

We can offer social care support to families where appropriate, or we can signpost to another support service such as a substance misuse service, sexual abuse support service, Early Help or diversionary activities - with the aim of disrupting exploitation and reducing the risks going forward.

**Call 0345 678 9021 or 0345 678 9040 if out of office hours**

[www.shropshire.gov.uk/childrens-social-care-and-health](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/childrens-social-care-and-health)

# Report concerns about potential exploitation in your community

Information about perpetrators and locations of concern is crucial to help us build up a picture of Child Exploitation in Shropshire, and allows West Mercia Police and Children's Services to work together to safeguard children and make our communities a safer place to live.

**If anyone is at risk of immediate harm:** Call 999

**To share non-urgent information:** Call 101 or visit the "Tell Us About" section on [www.westmercia.police.uk](http://www.westmercia.police.uk)

**To report information anonymously:** Call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or visit [www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org)



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