



# Child Exploitation in Shropshire

A guide for care providers



Shropshire  
Council



# What is exploitation?

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Are you concerned about changes in a child's behaviour in your care? Have you noticed that they may be feeling under pressure from influences from outside the home? Understanding that the child could be being exploited can be distressing, complex and 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.

## What are the signs?

- New friendship groups, who may be older in age
- Engaging in sexual activity, including exchanging indecent images
- Missing episodes, when you don't know their whereabouts or the child will not disclose where they've been.
- Receiving gifts & rewards, including drugs, alcohol, food & clothing
- Increased secretiveness, particularly around phone use
- Disengagement from school, hobbies & family
- Behavioural concerns in the care placement
- 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 carers & providers do to help?

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The child's home will be the first place when changes become more apparent. Children who are either SEND, in care, fostered, adopted or in supported accommodation are at **greater risk of exploitation**. Suggestions on how to mitigate some of the risks could include;

- ⇒ Discuss differences between healthy and unhealthy friendships and relationships
- ⇒ Stay alert to any changes in behaviour which may indicate that they are feeling under pressure
- ⇒ Carefully monitor any episodes of staying out late or not returning home - call the police to report your child missing if you do not know where they are (see details overleaf)
- ⇒ Be aware of who they are spending time with and encourage them to keep in touch by texting you when they are out in the community
- ⇒ Talk openly to your child about keeping safe and listen calmly if they confide in you
- ⇒ Regularly check the young person's possessions for drugs and any unexplained money or gifts
- ⇒ Install online safety features and apps on their devices
- ⇒ Check in with parents of their friends
- ⇒ Be cautious of any older friends or friendships where there appears to be a power imbalance
- ⇒ Check in with school or college to see if they have noticed any changes in behaviour
- ⇒ Raise any concerns with school or college staff

This is not an exhaustive list—however early intervention is key to reducing the risk of exploitation and harm. There is a lot of support available from Shropshire Council to support children who are even placed out-of-area within Shropshire.

## Language Matters

Being mindful of the language we use to describe a child or their behaviour is very important. Blaming children and using terms such as "prostituting themselves" "making poor choices" or "putting themselves at risk" puts the responsibility at the feet of children, rather than the perpetrators of exploitation. More information can be found [here](#).

**Please see overleaf for more services that can support you and the children in your care.**



## Report concerns about a young person

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 home. This is what is known as **Contextual Safeguarding**.

We can offer social care support to carers where appropriate, or we can signpost to another support service such as a substance misuse service, sexual abuse support service,

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

We are supported by Shropshire's Safeguarding Community Partnership of which can be found here;

[Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership](#)

## Come have a chat!

If you have exploitation concerns (online safety included) - we have consultation sessions open to anyone who wants additional support.

Half-hours slots are available every Tuesday 2pm –4pm, exploitation specialists will be available to support, signpost and guide on process, risks or whatever else is needed.

To book a slot, email the team at; [ss-trees@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:ss-trees@shropshire.gov.uk)

## 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)

## Access latest trends, online support and training

There is a huge amount of online information can be found by going to the TREES website;

[Child exploitation | Shropshire Council](#)

We also distribute a quarterly newsletter which can be accessed here;

[TREES newsletters | Shropshire Council](#)



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