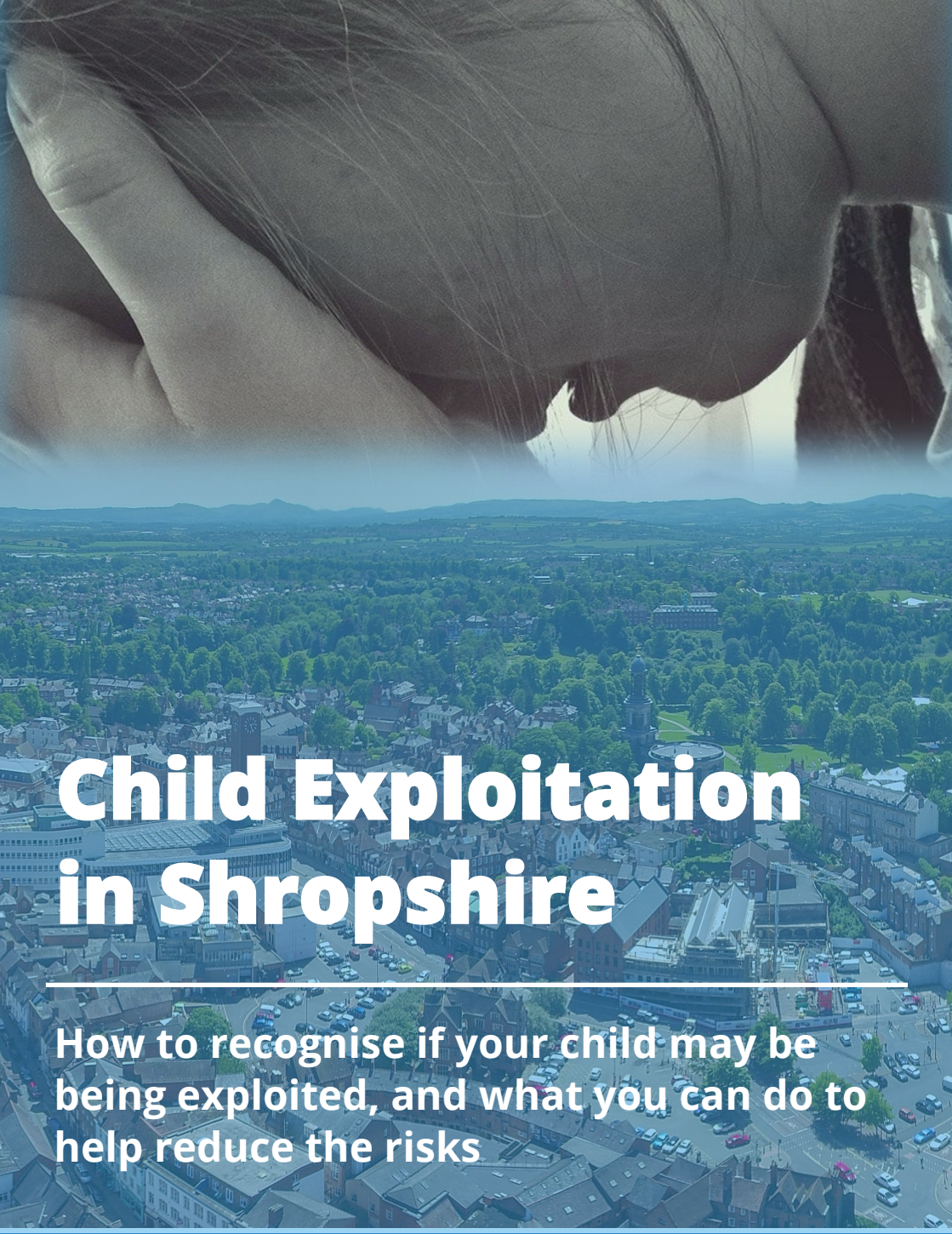


Child Exploitation in Shropshire

How to recognise if your child may be being exploited, and what you can do to help reduce the risks

Shropshire Council

What is Exploitation?

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.

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
- Spending less time at home and distancing from previous friends
- Receiving gifts & rewards
- Increased secretiveness
- Disengagement from school & hobbies
- 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
- Committing low level crimes

What can I do as a parent or carer?

- ☑ 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
- ☑ 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
- ☑ Report them missing if you do not know where they are
- ☑ 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
- ☑ 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
- ☑ Share your concerns with school staff or Children's Services
- ☑ Take a look at our CE Directory to find out about other support available:

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

Report concerns about a child

Shropshire's TREES (Together Reducing & Ending Exploitation in Shropshire) Hub 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

Report concerns about potential exploitation in your community

Intelligence 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

To report information anonymously: Call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or visit www.crimestoppers-uk.org