













BRANCH PROJECT

withyou



Welcome to the Winter edition of the TREES Newsletter 2024—2025

Welcome to the latest edition of the TREES Newsletter. We hope you are well rested and enjoyed some well deserved rest over the festive season.

Exploitation and 'grooming gangs' have been a very controversial issue in the last few weeks—in Shropshire we have had little evidence to support larger organised groups such as those being reported in the media and in other local authorities.

However, we conduct regular intensive mapping and disruption meetings, reviews of individual young people, and work directly with those most vulnerable to ensure that any first signs are always thoroughly investigated. We remain invested in the recently announced central Government reviews and will work closely with any future recommendations.

We note that referrals into CE triage have picked up in the last 3 months which is positive that the pathway wasn't losing traction.

Shropshire Children's Services remains committed to providing an exceptional service to young people, and encourage use of our preventative services such as Early Help, CLIMB and Branch to access exploitation support.

The Child Exploitation risk assessment continues to function as a central referral for multiple services, saving you time and getting a prompt response for young people.

Current patterns and emerging themes

Update from Clare Jervis, CE & Missing Operational Lead

During this quarter—total referrals received are 44% female and 56% male. Referrals have picked up during this period compared to the previous quarter which is positive.

There has been a concerning rise in knife related incidents in this period which we would encourage our partners to access services such as Steer Clear for preventative support. Equally, ensuring any incidents or concerns are reported to the Police is critical.

Out of 43 children, 29 of these who were previously medium risk have reduced to low—evidencing the importance and effectiveness of direct intervention with young people.

Children who are NEET (Not in education, training or employment) as well as those who are home-educated continues a worrying risk of being marginalised with less professional 'eyes on' - this is explored later in the newsletter.

In November, specific individuals were identified as perpetrators, including a 20-year-old male involved in drug-related activities and a 39-year-old male arrested for providing drugs and attempting to seduce a 14-year-old female—indicating a clear vulnerability females experience. Male CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation) is reported to be less prevalent, but experience has taught us it is also less reported, more normalised and 'shameful' for young males to report.

Online grooming remains as much as a problem as ever, but equally education and support online has never been so robust. Ensuring children's devices and communications are monitored, moderating web content through family controls, restricting websites and simply reducing time on phones (e.g. no phones in their bedrooms or before sleep) really minimise the risk of this.

TREES and Early Help are due to offer intensive CE training through Leap into Learning which will be available in early 2025—so please keep an eye!

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, Grange, Abbey Foregate, English Bridge, Meole Brace, Ditherington, Quarry,

Other areas

Market Drayton, Bridgnorth, Whitchurch, Oswestry, Gobowen Railway, Jubilee Park Whitchurch, buildings near Tesco in Ellesmere, Tern Hill, Wem, Market Drayton Town Park and centre, Craven Arms, Birch Playing Fields Broseley, Cricket Pitch Ellesmere, Skate park and near canal by Grove fields Market Drayton.



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 <u>"Tell Us About" section on the West Mercia Police website</u> 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: <u>CETeamShropshire@westmercia.police.uk</u> (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 <u>and</u> 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.

Police Updates



When it comes to Child Exploitation, West Mercia Police have a complex role of ensuring crime and offending behaviour are met with justice—relevant to the circumstances of the young people we manage.

We recently submitted a case to the CPS (Crown Prosecution Service) in regards to a 15 year old male (at the time of arrest) who was HIGH risk exploited— but critically there was a Conclusive Grounds NRM (National Referral Mechanism) indicating that he was a child victim of modern slavery.

The offences in question were very serious, including possession with intent to supply, significant seizures of large quantities of drugs, money, phones and clear links to County Lines. Normally, these offences would have had indicated a high chance of receiving a custodial or equivalent sentence at Court.

However, the CPS agreed that the these charges, although clearly prosecutable, would not be in the public's interest and agreed with the assessment that this young person had been exploited to deal drugs, and therefore will not be proceeding to Court.

This young person is due to turn 18 very soon, starting with a 'clean slate' and given the best possible opportunity to start adulthood.

- DS Jonathon Statham, Child Exploitation Team



To the right are suspected to be THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol) synthesised oil—marketed as a e-liquid and able to be used in rechargeable, legal vapes (Although the oil itself is a Class B if confirmed) - seized from a young adult in Telford.

Drug Expert Witness Update

West Mercia Police continue to remain at the very edge of newly emerging substances—noting a seizure of significant amount from a Albanian Crime gang in Market Drayton. To give realism to what we worry about with child exploitation, many young people will be asked to 'run' (deal) these types of substances in their local areas.



Purple Leaf & **Branch**



Early Intervention and Prevention Services (Includes Purple Leaf and Branch Project) provide a number of funded programmes of support and intervention for Children, young people and families who are affected by Sexual Harassment, Sexual Violence, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and/or sexualised Behaviours.

We have a range of pathways that can be accessed this includes:

Purple Leaf Psychosocial Education Programme

Education and information designed to; increase young people's awareness of sexual abuse and exploitation, know how to identify uncomfortable feelings and know where to go for help and support. This can be provided or

Branch Project

This is a programme of non-criminal justice advocacy, psychosocial education and practical support for y young person at risk of/or who has experienced CSE.

Technology Assisted CSE (#My Internet Rights)

- This is a programme for children and young people who are at risk or experiencing CSE online. The aim of the programm
- Provide children and young people with knowledge and skills to empowering them to safely use the internet
- To enable them to make informed decisions when online,
- To seek help if they are concerned about online interactions or relationships.
- To reducing the risk of becoming involved in uncomfortable or difficult situations or relationships

Dual Education Programme

This is a programme of psychosocial education and support for children and young people who have experienced sexual harm or abuse and have also displayed inappropriate or problematic sexualised behaviours.

Parent and carer support

We also offer support for parents and carers of children and young people impacted by CSA, CSE and/ or are displaying sexualised behaviour.

Other Services

Sexualised Behaviour service

Early Intervention also provides advice, risk and needs assessments (Including specialist AIM3 assessments) and interventions for children and young people who have exhibited Problematic and Harmful sexualised behaviours. (Costing can be provided for this services)

Training

Purple Leaf provides accredited and non-accredited training and awareness raising sessions to professionals working in the sexual violence sector or aligned fields. This includes course such;

- Responding to a Disclosure of Sexual Violence
- Emotional and Societal responses to Rape and Sexual Violence
- Introduction to Harmful Sexualised Behaviours
- Sexualised Behaviours and Child on Child Abuse in Schools
- Technology Assisted Child Sexual Exploitation
- Sibling Sexual Abuse
- Introduction to Intersectionality

For further information, advice or to make a referral please: Call - 01905 677444

Email Enquiries@purpleleaf.org.uk or hannah.cooper@wmrsasc.org.uk

Website: https://www.wmrsasc.org.uk

Referrals: https://www.dpmscloud.com/external/referralformorgwestmerciarc

Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Tool

The latest risk assessment has been released for a couple of months now—thank you everyone's efforts in completing this and generally feedback has been that it enables much better, comprehensive and accurate assessment of a young person's exploitation risk.

The form can be used to refer to our partner agencies (and consent for a Social Worker assessment if applicable) so please ensure that the boxes are ticked at the end of the form authorising the services to contact them. Some delay is being caused by referrers not ticking these —remember the form is there to save you time and get the best outcomes for young people!

The latest copy can be found here: Exploitation tools and pathways







Shropshire Child Ex Assessmer

NOTE: If completing multiple re-referrals or reviews, pleatext throughout for clarity.

Before and during completion of this Child Exploitation R

- Shropshire Child Exploitation Initial Assessment
- Appropriate Language Childrens Society Guida
- Child exploitation | Shropshire Council

Child's forename:	Child
DOB: Ethnicity:	Addr
	Geno
Choose an item.	Gen
Disability:	Туре
School/College:	NHS
Is the child a looked after child?	Who

Name of professional completing Child Agen Exploitation Risk Assessment:

Accessing Support

In order to ensure a cod/young person is accessing the right support at the right time, and to avoid repetitive process. For practitioners, it has been agreed with services that this risk assessment will be accepted at a referral to <u>Branch Project</u>, <u>Climb</u>, <u>With You</u>, and/or <u>Compass</u> for a Social Work Assessment of Social Work assessment will be accepted as a social Work assessment of Social Work asse

- ☐ Branch
- □ CLIME
- □ We Are With You (Young person can consent to this without parental permission)
- ☐ Children Social Care for S.17 Social Work Assessment (SWA)

Action following assessment

- Exploitation Triage is held twice weekly and consists of a range of practitioners, this risk
 assessment will be discussed and triage will determine the final risk level based on all
 available information and will update you about this and any actions/recommendations
 made
- Discuss and agree with the child and parent:
 - the completed assessment and gain consent to share it.
 - any interventions and support for the child or parents/carers
- Send the Child Exploitation Risk Assessment to Compass by secure email (compass.referrals@shropshire.gov.uk). It will be forwarded to the Child Exploitation and Missing Coordinator in Compass and allocated for discussion at Child Exploitation Triage.
- Where parental consent has not been sought or agreed to and there is not clear
 evidence that the child is being exploited or is at risk of significant harm, the risk
 assessment cannot be discussed at Child Exploitation Triage.
- Reporting a Crime: If you have documented a crime that has taken place within the CE Risk Assessment, please ensure this matter is reported via 101 or online reporting www.westmercia.police.uk and provide the police reference number here:

New Exploitation Leaflet for Care Providers

TREES have a new leaflet for care providers — please feel free to distribute to any placement you feel would benefit from this.

Copies of all our leaflets can be found here; <u>How can we support children</u> who might be being exploited? | Shropshire Council





Education Access Update

Every year the Education Access Service offers guidance to colleagues regarding the legal leaving date for all Year 11 pupils who attend Shropshire schools.

The **legal definition** of the school leaving age in England is the last Friday in June for a young person who is studying in their final year of statutory education, that they will have reached or by reaching the age of 16 by the 31 August of that year.

We have been made aware of situations where Year 11 pupils are being recognised as NEET (the definition of a NEET being a young people not in education, employment, or training, who are aged 16 to 24 years).

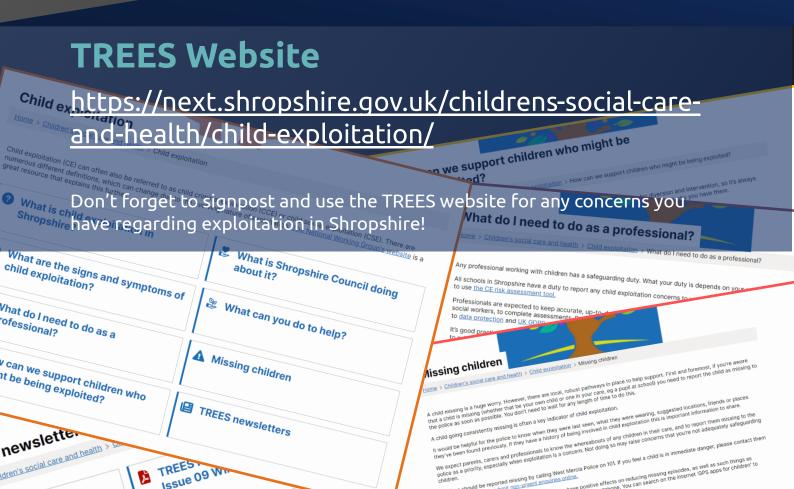
Please note this is not correct for any young person who is still of statutory school age until the last Friday of June if they meet the criteria above. Up to this point—if a young person is not engaging in school, the Local authority holds legal powers, if without a good reason, attendance at school or otherwise is formally recorded.

If you would further clarification or guidance please contact Jo Smith, EAS Team leader – jo.smith@shropshire.gov.uk

Where there is the potential for a pupil to be permanently excluded, we recommend that you request a LA MAM (Local Authority Multi-agency meeting) that is currently chaired by Jane Parsons, LA's Access to Education and Safeguarding Officer. You can request this by emailing Eas@shropshire.gov.uk

Reduced Timetable protocol—please note that a reduced timetable should not be used if you are aware of any risk indicators related to Child Exploitation, nor solely to manage behaviour. In these instances please speak to your Education Welfare Officer and or contact our Inclusion team who can assist and guide you further. The policy relating to this is as below;

https://beta.shropshirelg.net/media/qrkc5ksb/shropshire-reduced-timetable-protocol-september-2022.docx









Are unhealthy relationships and misogyny a concern in your school or community?

West Mercia Women's Aid, The RightPath and Everyone's Invited have partnered to deliver "The Young Person's Prevention Project", an education and community programme running across West Mercia to tackle misogyny and stereotypes.

Who is the programme for?

The programme is available to all young people across West Mercia. The RightPath and Everyone's Invited will be running awareness raising sessions and workshops in Schools, while West Mercia Women's Aid will offer community based support, including but not limited to; youth groups, those not in employment, education or training (NEET), those who are home-schooled, looked after children and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

What does the programme include?

In the community

Mentoring either via one to one support or group sessions will be offered for those less likely to access support through mainstream education. One to one support and group support typically includes 6-8 sessions but can be adapted to meet individual needs. These interventions can be used both with those who are at risk of harm and those who are at risk of causing harm.

Support workers build connections using a trauma informed approach to explore their understanding of domestic abuse, healthy relationships, gender based abuse and its impact.

In schools

- Interactive talks to whole year groups on sexual wellbeing and healthy relationships, creating a space
 that speaks to young people in a language of their generation. Using real-life testimonies and pop
 culture references to make conversations relatable. An empathetic, non-judgmental approach
 ensures every young person feels seen and connected.
- More intensive support via 'Unspoken Truth'; small group sessions designed to teach young people
 how to think, not what to think, promoting reflection and honesty around topics such as domestic
 abuse, gender stereotypes, objectification, harmful sexual behaviour and healthy relationships. They
 enable development of core values essential to harbouring healthy relationships now and in the
 future.
- Training sessions equipping staff with the insights and tools needed for a whole-school approach to understanding healthy relationships. These sessions help empower staff to support the messages given to students, to have sensitive discussions and seek solutions.

Further information and how to book

To be part of this programme, or to find out more please contact <u>prevention@wmwa.org.uk</u> Please note places are limited.









Increase in alcohol use among young people in Shropshire Written by Sonya Jones—Service Manager We Are With You

The team at With You have seen a sharp rise in referrals for young people with Alcohol as the main drug of choice. Like wise colleagues in our local NHS Trust are seeing a rise in young people presenting at Emergency Departments who are considerably unwell due to alcohol consumption.

On the 18th November I spoke at an International Alcohol Conference. My talk focused on child alcohol abuse and child criminal exploitation by county lines drug gangs.

It was a great opportunity to highlight the work of With You in Shropshire as I discussed why young people drink alcohol and explored in detail the many reasons for this. Things such as curiosity, a need to fit in, to have fun, to copy adults are the predominant factors but I also explored some of the more concerning reasons young people drink alcohol such as to feel good, to relax and to reduce stress. The most high risk groups are young people who fall into the "concerning reasons" category as they are drinking to self-regulate emotions which we refer to as Self Medicating.

Drinking alcohol can damage a child's health, being a regular drinker from an early age can affect the normal development of vital organs and functions, including the brain, liver, kidneys and can actually cause hormone imbalance. Beginning to drink before the age of 14 is also associated with increased health risks, including-related injuries, involvement in violence, self harm, suicidal ideation and attempts.

The team at With You work with young people who fit into these groups, it is this group of children that regularly binge drink and are more vulnerable to developing a problem with alcohol as adults.

Early identification is crucial before regular harmful use of alcohol develops into harmful patterns, if you have any concerns about a young person's drinking please complete a Smarter Screening Tool or if you have submitted an Exploitation Risk Assessment please tick the With You box as it will automatically trigger a referral for support.

As professionals it's important to have conversations about alcohol with the young people we work with but this is often missed due to alcohol being a socially acceptable drug. Professionals frequently record that the young person is not a substance user but vapes and drinks alcohol. This highlights that alcohol is not recognised as a harmful substance by many.

We know teenage years can be tough and young people may be turning to alcohol in a misguided attempt to cope with a variety of problems such as stress, boredom, the pressure of school work, not fitting in, problems at home, or mental health issues such as anxiety, childhood trauma, ADHD or depression. Since alcohol is a depressive, using it to self medicate will only make problems worse

If a child is regularly drinking especially on their own or drinking during the day it could be they're struggling to cope with a serious underlying issue. As stated previously, early identification is crucial in order to get the young person the support they need as soon as possible.



Please reach out to the team at With You if you have any concerns about a young person who is using alcohol as the team are always happy to help in any way by sharing our knowledge and expertise.

The Children's Society





Climb is an early intervention service for children and young people living in West Mercia. It helps to build their confidence and resilience and recognise things that might be a risk to them.

Climb runs fun group work sessions in schools, designed to educate children to make safe choices in their community and online. We also support children on a one-to-one basis.

We aim to help children to:

- understand healthy and unhealthy relationships
- build a positive sense of themselves
- feel confident in managing their emotions (for example, with anger or anxiety) and their behaviour at school
- · understand risks in the community
- understand how to ask for help and who to ask for help if they need it
- join in with fun activities that can help them to meet other children their own age and to build their self-esteem.



Let's keep young people safe from exploitation.

CLIMB is here to prevent young people from being drawn into criminal exploitation and other forms of criminal activity.

We work across West Mercia supporting 10 to 17 year olds at risk of exploitation.

We provide one to one support sessions and diversionary activities to divert young people from exploitation and criminal activity.

For more information or to make a referral to our under-10s project, please visit **childrenssociety.org.uk/climb** or get in touch at **climb@childrenssociety.org.uk**.

If you would like more information or would like to refer a young person to Climb, please visit childrenssociety.org.uk/climb or email climb@childrenssociety.org.uk



childrenssociety.org.uk

The Children's Society

Steer Clear

Together, we can help young people say 'no' to knife crime.



Sometimes, young people can feel they have no option but to carry a weapon if they live somewhere that they don't feel safe.

At Steer Clear, we want to try and change that. We work with young people aged 10 to 18 across West Mercia who are

at risk of being exposed to or involved in knife crime and help them to find alternative solutions.

We focus on education and support, aiming to tackle knife-related crime and create safer communities for everyone.

We offer group sessions for young people and their carers, as well as targeted one-to-one support for young people. We help improve their understanding of knife crime and work with schools, police, family services, activity providers, and others to build communities where every child can be hopeful about their future.

The service is free of charge, and anyone can make a referral. If you're concerned about a young person, get in touch today. You could help keep them safe from harm – today and tomorrow

For more information or to make a referral, contact us at steer.clear@childrenssociety.org.uk.

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BRIGHTSTAR PROGRAMMES

Our mission is to Empower a brighter future!

Through our programmes we specialise in working with young people to thrive, using the combination of boxing, community and education. Here are some of our programmes that can support:

FUTURES

Our Futures programme offers alternative education for young people struggling in traditional settings, providing specialised support to help them achieve their potential. Each group includes a teacher, youth worker, and boxing coach, combining education, qualifications, mentoring, and boxing. Schools must refer students to this programme, which is available at venues across the West Midlands.



BOXING CLUB

We now have venues in Shifnal, Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton where we offer evening boxing sessions. We offer sessions for people of all ages and there is no need to complete a referral form.

Its £6 a session or £35 a month. The timetable is available on our social media and website.



MAKE SPORT WORK

We have partnered with Shrewsbury Town in the Community, Shropshire Cricket Board, and Embrace PE to offer a fully funded programme for individuals aged 16+ who are not in education, employment, or training. This 6-week programme combines qualifications, sport, and mentoring, running one full day per week to build confidence and prepare participants for employment. It's available at various locations across Shropshire, and participants need to be referred into the programme.



BELIEVE

Believe is a 12-week programme for young people aged 8-16, combining boxing and mentoring. Based in Shifnal, participants learn about control, emotions, thoughts, relationships, role models, and triggers, while also working towards their boxing awards. The programme runs on Tuesday evenings from 4-5:30 PM, with 12 places available and three staff members per session. The cost is £150 per participant, and referrals are required.



COUNTERPUNCH

Counterpunch is a mental health support programme for young people aged 11-16 and is based in our Shrewsbury site. This programme combines boxing and mentoring and is every Tuesday 5:30-6:30. This programme is £4 per session and there is no booking required.



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 weekly consultations every Tuesday 2pm – 4pm.

The following professionals will be on hand to offer advice and support regarding all CCE, CSE and substance misuse queries:

- Donna Richards, Senior Social Worker, TREES Team
- George Davies, Young Persons Substance Misuse Advisor, TREES Team
- Stafford Mason, CE Lead for Early Help
- Jo Smith, Education Access Service
- Bob Powell, West Mercia Police
- + Any professional, service or provision can be invited for consultation

To book a 30 minute timeslot, please email the TREES Team at ss-trees@shropshire.gov.uk





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

TREES Website

Full of information, advice and guidance—the website also sets out what we are doing to prevent child exploitation;

Child exploitation | Shropshire Council

Child Exploitation Leaflets & Child Exploitation Directory

All leaflets related to child exploitation can be found on our website, as well as the CE Directory which outlines the support available to children and young people in Shropshire, including the parents, families and carers who support them;

How can we support children who might be being exploited? I Shropshire Council

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

West Mercia Police - www.westmercia.police.uk

West Mercia Youth Justice Service - www.westmerciayouthjustice.org.uk

We Are With You - www.wearewithyou.org.uk/services/shropshire

Branch Project - www.wmrsasc.org.uk/the-branch-project

Purple Leaf - www.purpleleaf.org.uk

Climb - www.childrenssociety.org.uk/climb

NWG - www.nwgnetwork.org

For support or advice, or to be added to the mailing list for this newsletter, please contact george.r.davies@shropshire.gov.uk or Magdalena.Glonek@shropshire.gov.uk

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