

Slough Borough Council

Report to:	Cabinet
Date:	21 July 2025
Subject:	Slough Youth Justice Plan 25-26
Lead Member:	Councillor Puja Bedi – Lead Member for Children and Lifelong Learning
Chief Officer:	Sue Butcher, Executive Director Children’s Services Chief Executive Slough Children First (SCF)
Contact Officer:	Donna Briggs, Head of Adolescent Support (SCF) Ben Short, Director of Operations (SCF)
Ward(s):	All
Key Decision:	NO – decision reserved to Full Council
Exempt:	NO
Decision Subject To Call In:	NO – decision reserved to Full Council
Appendices:	A - Slough Youth Justice Plan 25-26 B - Equality Impact Assessment

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 Local authority partnerships have a statutory duty under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to submit an annual youth justice plan relating to the provision of youth justice services in the local area. Youth justice plans must be signed off by Full Council, however if approval has not been given by 30 June, the plan can be submitted with approval of the Slough Youth Justice Management Board Chair with confirmation of full sign off submitted at a later date.
- 1.2 It is the responsibility of the Slough Youth Justice Management Board to oversee the delivery of the annual Youth Justice Plan, and it is a requirement that the annual plan be completed in line with a mandated template.
- 1.3 The annual plan for 25/26 has been produced in collaboration with children and families, partners and our workforce. This has built upon previous plans; reflected on the outcome of the inspection undertaken in 24/25; and built in the ambition and progress achieved through our comprehensive improvement plan. The plan sets four ambitious but realistic priorities for the forthcoming year.
 - Addressing disproportionality
 - Strengthening victim engagement
 - Fostering co-production
 - Early intervention supporting prevention and diversion

2. Recommendations:

Cabinet is asked to recommend to Full Council:

- 2.1. Approval of the Youth Justice Plan 2025/26.

3. Commissioner Review

This report is outside the scope for pre-publication commissioner review; please check the [Commissioners' instruction 5 to CLT to sign off papers](#) for further details.

4. Report and background

- 4.1. The Youth Justice Plan is a key document in the Council's policy framework. Article 4 of the Council's Constitution confirms the statutory requirement for the Youth Justice Plan to be approved by Full Council. Local authority partnerships have a statutory duty to submit a youth justice plan relating to their provision of youth justice services. Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the youth justice partnership's responsibilities in producing the plan. This requires each local authority, in consultation with partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual youth justice plan, setting out the youth justice services are to be provided and funded, how they will operate and what functions will be carried out. The youth justice service has completed the plan in line with the mandated YJB structure. The plan demonstrates the delivery of the services functions and methods for achieving this in line with the grant requirement. The plan presents an updated analysis of youth justice service provision, our performance and arrangements for the delivery of services in the 25/26 year.

Key achievements and Headlines 24/25

- 4.2. The youth justice service is delivered by Slough Children First. Key achievements during the 24/25 year includes a strengthened strategic approach led by our Youth Justice Management Board with clear and high expectations set by the Board Chair as recognised during our HMIP Inspection. This is helping to drive improvements across the partnership to work towards improved outcomes and futures for the children supported by the partnership. Despite the outcome of the HMIP Inspection positive outcomes for children have been seen in the past 12 months, which includes a lower number and percentage of First Time Entrants into the Youth Justice System in comparison to other national and regional Youth Justice Services. Work with partners around prevention and diversion are key strengths in Slough which have an impact on preventing our children entering the Youth Justice System.
- 4.3. There has been a strengthening of the participation of children with more progress to be made towards fully embedding feedback and involvement of our children to influence service practice and development. This includes a deep dive into stop and search data through the Youth Justice Management Board led Disproportionality task and finish group in direct response to children's feedback.
- 4.4. There has been an overall reduction in violence against the person in reported crimes in the Slough area over the past 2 years, which is also reflected by a 16% overall decrease in children open to the Youth Justice Service for violence against the person. However, this remains the most prevalent reason for children being

known to the service (36% in 24-25), thus requiring a continued focus in the next year.

Priorities for 25/26

4.5. The draft plan proposes the following agreed strategic statement for the Youth Justice Service:

Children at risk of or involved in the Youth Justice System (YJS) deserve individualised support, informed by shared intelligence and a framework of consistency and resilience. Through diversion and prevention, we strengthen positive outcomes while reducing involvement in the Criminal Justice System.

We recognise that children in the YJS are vulnerable and must be safeguarded, respected, and understood within the context of their lived experiences. Equally, we acknowledge the impact of youth crime on victims and commit to restorative and reparative approaches that promote healing and accountability.

Through collaboration with education, agencies, and partners, we address neurodiverse needs, health inequalities, and social injustices—ensuring children receive the right support while victims are heard, validated, and empowered.

4.6. The proposed four strategic priorities are:

1. Addressing disproportionality

To understand the context behind the disproportionality experienced by children involved in the criminal justice system and specifically those with whom we work. We will work with partners to review, challenge and analyse systems decision making, practice and processes where these are identified to lead to disparity. This is a national priority for the Youth Justice Board as it is a national picture.

2. Strengthening victim engagement

Improving links between Victim support and Case Managers to provide supportive and restorative opportunities which are centred on the victim's voice.

3. Fostering co-production

We will further strengthen and improve our response to our children following their feedback and participation through social media and e-newsletters to include regular 'you said, we did' updates and pre-planned focussed co-production events.

4. Early intervention supporting prevention and diversion

We will continue to focus on building our partnership work with the community and voluntary sector to support our work in preventing and diverting our children away from crime and the criminal justice system

5. Options considered.

- 5.1. Completion and submission of this plan is a statutory duty under s40 Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In particular, the Council is under a duty, after consultation with the relevant persons and bodies, to formulate and implement for each year, the youth justice plan. This is required to set out (a) how youth justice services in the area are to be provided and funded; and (b) how the youth offending team so established is to be composed and funded, how it operates, and what functions it is to carry out.

6. Background

- 6.1. Local authority partnerships have a statutory duty to submit a youth justice plan relating to their provision of youth justice services (YJSs), Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the youth justice partnership's responsibilities in producing a plan. It states that it is the duty of each local authority, in consultation with the partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual youth justice plan, setting out how YJSs in their area are to be provided and funded, how they will operate, and what functions will be carried out.
- 6.2. The plan should address the functions assigned to a YJS, including how services will prevent offending behaviour and reduce reoffending.
- 6.3. Guidance on formulating plans states that the board, led by the Chair, should take a lead for planning and that this should include:
 - (a) reflection, looking back and learning, considering current performance, identify the needs of children in the justice system, considering key risks, issues and challenges, involving children, their families and carers and consulting with staff and volunteers.
 - (b) engaging the wider strategic partnership, considering the regional and national context and wider strategic plans.
 - (c) the plan should be available and accessible to local leaders and the local community.
- 6.4. There is an expectation that alongside local issues, national priority areas are covered. These include considering children from a range of backgrounds who are currently over-represented in the youth justice system. If there is a lack of data on these groups, this should be explicitly acknowledged. How policing in the area is supported and contributing to national practice should be set out in the plan. There should be a focus on prevention and diversion, alongside education. Restorative approaches and the needs of victims should be considered. Consideration should be given to strategic links to wider partnership arrangements and learnings from past serious incidents, child exploitation and contextual safeguarding. A whole family approach is encouraged.

Implications of the Recommendation

7. Financial implications

Grant funding from YJB may be withheld/withdrawn if the plan is not submitted in line with the Crime and Disorder Act and grant requirements. The delivery of the plan must be contained within the budget and resources allocated by the Council.

The running of the Youth Justice Service is report to all Youth Justice Management Boards.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1. Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on each local authority, after consultation with relevant persons, to formulate and implement for each year a youth justice plan setting out how youth justice services in their area are to be provided and Page 11 funded and how the youth offending team are to be composed and funded, how they are to operate and what functions they are to carry out.
- 8.2. The youth justice plan is part of the statutory policy framework, and its adoption is reserved to Full Council. Whilst services related to youth justice have been contracted out to SCF, the duty to formulate and implement a plan has not and this remains the duty of the Council. National guidance makes clear that the management board should take the lead for formulating the plan and the process should include reflection and planning, engagement with wider partnership.
- 8.3. Youth Justice Plans are expected to be submitted to the Youth Justice Board by 30 June each year and must be signed off by Full Council. The guidance states if sign off by Full Council is not possible within this timescale, the plan can be submitted with the approval of the Board Chair with confirmation of full sign off at a later date. There is no evidence that the Council has approved the annual youth justice plan in recent years which is now being rectified.

9. Risk management implications

If not agreed, there will be a public impression and likely concern from Statutory bodies for Youth Justice (YJB and HMIP) that the Slough Youth Justice Service is not supported fully by the Local Authority to undertake its duties and is unable to make the required improvements.

10. Environmental implications

None identified

11. Equality implications

- 11.1. The Equality Act 2010 applies to this plan in that the plan is targeted at ensuring certain ethnic groups and those groups who are not experiencing the same level of outcomes as others are being taken into consideration.
- 11.2. The plan contains analysis on diversity, including over-representation of certain demographics in the criminal justice system generally, seeking to address this through the priority focus on disproportionality.

12. Corporate Parenting Implications

- 12.1. The Plan reflects the needs of all vulnerable children, some of whom will be care experienced children receiving help and support from the YJS. Children in care are often over-presented in the criminal justice system. The Youth Justice Service is located with children in our care and care experienced services enabling join up to support prevention and diversion.

- 12.2. Care experienced children are often overrepresented in the criminal justice system. This cohort of children are being actively supported not only by the YJS but also the wider partnership.
- 12.3. As with care experienced children, high levels of children open to the YJS have had/are subject to social care involvement and/or have Special Educational Needs Disabilities.

4. Background Papers

None