

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee
Date:	21 st July 2026
Subject:	Youth Justice Service Improvement Plan Progress
Lead Member:	Cllr Puja Bedi
Chief Officer:	Debbie Jones
Contact Officer:	Donna Briggs
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	No
Appendices	Appendix A – YJS Improvement Plan March 2026

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report sets out the progress made in relation to Slough Youth Justice Service's Improvement Plan following an Inadequate Inspection outcome in January 2025.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee:
 - 2.1.1. Provide recommendations for progressing actions
 - 2.1.2. Comment on the details and content of the plan

3. Report

3.1. Introduction

Slough Youth Justice Service (YJS) works with children aged 10 to 17 years old at risk of or involved in offending behaviour. The establishment of a Youth Justice Service (YJS) is a statutory requirement under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Key partners form part of the multi-disciplinary team including Police, Probation, Education, Health and Children Social Care. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP), is the independent body overseeing youth justice and probation services in England and Wales.

Following an inadequate inspection outcome published in January 2025, the service has been on an improvement journey, with an initial improvement plan shared as scrutiny in July 2025. Under the National YJB oversight arrangements, Slough remains in Quadrant 3 which focusses on services where improvement is required. The improvement plan has since been revised and updated in March 2026 with the YJB Oversight Manager to reflect the updated position. Oversight of progress against the Improvement Plan is reviewed monthly by the National YJB as part of Quadrant 3 monitoring arrangements.

3.2. Background

Following an Inspection by HMIP in September of 2024, Slough Youth Justice Service received an overall grading of Inadequate. Inspectors found that whilst staff, managers, and board members were dedicated to providing quality services to children and young people, significant barriers hindered their ability to deliver necessary interventions to support desistance and protect the public.

HMIP made ten recommendations for improvement;

Slough Youth Justice Service must:

- ensure that quality assurance arrangements, oversight of practice and supervision arrangements consistently support the development of staff and volunteers
- ensure assessment activity identifies children's desistance needs and always considers how best to keep the child and the community safe
- ensure planning activity is comprehensive and that it aligns effectively with activity undertaken by other services, including activity to keep children and other people safe
- ensure staff consistently liaise with all relevant services and understand the role of partnership agencies
- provide sufficient resources, knowledge and focus on services for victims, including the use of restorative justice.

Slough Youth Justice Management Board should:

- ensure that the YJS is both sufficiently resourced and structured to facilitate the delivery of high-quality interventions for complex children and the victims of crime
- review the local implementation of the out-of-court disposal scheme to provide clarity about the scheme and the service offer, to ensure that there is a consistent decision-making and a suitable offer of help and support for children
- review the training offer for staff, volunteers and partners to provide knowledge and skills that are specific to youth justice work
- increase the knowledge and understanding of youth justice work and responsibilities at strategic and operational level

National Probation Service should:

- ensure there is effective information-sharing with the YJS to support public protection and the safety of victims

3.3. Main findings / report

Progress against the improvement plan has been variable over the past 18 months, with some areas of positive progress but overall an absence of sufficient pace. However, there has been an increase in momentum over the past 5 months in particular following appropriate staffing resources being made available to the service. Progress remains fragile and the service is scrutinized closely by the YJB. Our next HMIP Inspection is due in the Autumn and hence the need to accelerate improvement.

Areas of progress;

- Recruitment to a Victim Support Co-ordinator to deliver support to victims of offences committed by our children and refreshed Victim Policy in line with new HMIP framework
- Recruitment to a Volunteers co-ordinator which has led to 3 cohorts of volunteers being trained, ensuring children receive timely and well supported referral order panels to reduce future likelihood of offending
- Recruitment to a Reparation Worker to develop the opportunities for our children to give back to their communities and repair harm caused by their offending behaviour. The work with partners to provide reparation for children has been significantly enhanced and recently led to an employment opportunity for one of our children.
- Interim Team Manager posts have provided necessary capacity to move forward with improvements, which have impacted improvements in compliance and practice
- A dedicated child friendly space for children open to the service which is enabling better engagement in sessions, including speech and language assessments
- Access to Youth Justice specific training for staff including Restorative Justice, Good Lives Model, Silver Bullet -Assessment, Risk Management, Safety Planning and desistance, AIM 3 (sexually harmful behaviours) Assessment, Contextual Safeguarding and Exploitation, working with GRT communities, Domestic Abuse, MAPPA.
- Introduction of thematic internal practice development sessions focussing on areas identified through QA including intervention planning, victims and Speech and Language and more recently, understanding out of court disposals.
- Improved data access for service to ensure oversight and performance monitoring
- Improved accuracy of data and reporting on KPI's to YJB and accessible reporting to local YJMB under constant review and development, with reporting by exception and focus on themes, including victims and disproportionality
- Wider opportunities for capturing the voice of children and families through end of order feedback and participation sessions. Feedback from children has led to a meeting with SBC's CEx, DCS and Councillors, a dedicated children's space has been created to house a safe child centred space for those children. We hope to develop this through the Arts Work Project beginning in June.
- Increased interaction between the YJS and the YJMB through spotlight reporting, open days, staff attendance and participation at Board meetings, one to one's with HoS and open invites to YJS management team meetings
- Introduction of monthly deep dive audits, thematic dip sampling and moderation to improve line of sight and learning
- Improved multi-agency relationships between practitioners and partners, most notably with community safety, probation and children's social care.
- Increased management capacity by development of Service Manager position, alongside 2 Team Managers posts in restructure

Areas for further development

- Internal Quality Assurance processes need to be fully embedded to ensure consistent and timely audits and learning at a rate that will provide assurance of current practice standards. Our current audit activity has demonstrated improvement in timeliness and quality of assessment but plans for children are not to a sufficient standard, with planning for impact and safety of victims requiring specific focus
- Development of Multi-Agency auditing process to support partnership learning and systemic improvements that support outcomes for children – first audit booked on 21st July 2026
- Further development of the YJMB to ensure Members are able to provide robust support and challenge to service, whilst advocating for children within their own areas of the partnership
- The robustness of our JDMP process and decision-making needs further review, following the introduction of a Thames Valley-wide protocol. We have seen an increase in FTE's which suggests a lack of alternatives to court are being agreed at key decision points.
- Probation – Regionally probation is not fulfilling their full commitment to a seconded probation officer. The current work around is that we have an allocated officer who is our single point of contact. This officer also attends our monthly Safety and wellbeing (High Risk meetings) and is able to give advice on MAPPA referrals.
- A support offer for victims is in place but requires development, particularly in relation to gaining consent and having clear pathways to support. We want to explore how we can broaden our current multi-agency approach to children known to us for offending behaviour to children who become known to us as victims.

3.4. Detail/elaboration of what you are seeking from the committee

We are asking the committee to acknowledge the progress made in improvements to the service whilst remaining sighted on the areas yet to improve.

4. Implications

Financial implications

The 26/27 budget for the Youth Justice Service includes an element from the Ministry of Justice through a Youth Justice grant and core budget from Slough Children First. The purpose of the grant is to deliver the statutory requirements of the YJS, achieving improved outcomes and support for children to reduce first time entrants and reoffending. The service cost is within the approved budget for 26/27. The YJS will continue to be part-funded through additional grants including from the Youth Justice Board, and to further complement its activities, funding for Op Deter and Turnaround programme have been confirmed into 26/27.

Legal implications

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth justice and probation services in England and Wales.

HM Chief Inspector of Probation's responsibilities are set out in section 7 of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000, as amended by the Offender Management Act 2007 section 12(3)(a). This requires the Chief Inspector to inspect (section 1) and report to the Secretary of State (section 3) on the arrangements for the provision of probation services. Under section 7(6) of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000, HM Chief Inspector of Probation also inspects and reports on youth justice services (YJS), established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 section 39, and bodies acting on their behalf.

There is a statutory requirement for the Youth Justice Service and Youth Justice Management Board to respond to an Inadequate Inspection outcome through the submission of an improvement plan within the required timescale as set out by HMIP.

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

Equalities implications

The Equality Act 2010 applies to this report in that the work of the YJS is targeted and ensuring certain ethnic groups and those groups who are not experiencing the same level of outcomes as others are being taken into consideration.

We recognise that many children known to the YJS have experienced wider adversity. A significant proportion have had previous involvement with social care and/or present with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). As part of our commitment to inclusion and equity, we are strengthening screening, workforce training, and integrated planning to ensure the needs of these children are better identified and met across the partnership.

Slough YJS reviews disproportionality data as a matter of everyday practice, reporting to the YJMB on any over-representation of children within the Youth Justice system. Our Improvement Plan identifies the need to address this through a focussed partnership action plan.

Corporate Parenting Implications

Under the statutory duty of corporate parenting, all local authority partners have a shared responsibility to act as any responsible parent would for children in our care and those with care experience. This duty extends to ensuring care experienced children are safeguarded, supported, and offered meaningful opportunities to thrive, including within and beyond the Youth Justice System.

The Youth Justice Service is rooted in the understanding that care experienced children are consistently overrepresented in the criminal justice system, both nationally and locally. In Slough, between April 2025 and March 2026, care experienced children accounted for approximately 9.6% of the Youth Justice Service caseload

Key areas of improvement in the service offer and development which will help us to meet our Corporate Parenting responsibilities include;

- Focus on post-16 alternative provision, education, employment and training opportunities
- Ensuring Resettlement Policy and Procedures are effective in meeting the needs of children who may require Local Authority care

Risk management implications

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Prev	Curr	Mitigation	Update
The YJS has received an 'Inadequate' outcome from HMIP following the inspection of the service in September 2024. There were a number of areas of improvement required, and a particular focus around Public Protection responsibilities. Under the new HMIP Framework, Victims is a separate domain and the focus on Public Protection responsibilities is greater.	3 – Work has progressed in a number of areas of required improvement and continues to build momentum.	4 - High level of work required to improve standards and practice	16	12	Improvement Plan is in place with action being taken to improve standards and practice and has been revised as of March 2026	YJB raised concerns about the pace of improvement in 2 key areas – QA and YJMB development HoS holding regular meetings with management team to drive actions forward, SCF improvement team supporting with HMIP prep and improvements are being seen in practice through auditing

Environmental implications

None identified