

## Slough Borough Council

**Report To:** Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee (CISC)

**Date:** 12 February 2025

**Subject:** Launching a Task and Finish Group to scrutinise the support and provision for young adults Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)

**Chief Officer:** **Sue Butcher,** Chief Executive of Slough Children First and Executive Director of People (Children), Director of Children's Services.

**Contact Officers:** **Neil Hoskinson:** Associate Director for Education and Inclusion  
**Cherie Sears:** Head of Virtual School

**Ward(s):** All

**Exempt:** No

**Appendices:** **Appendix A:** Draft Scope: ‘

### 1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report recommends launching the committee's next Task and Finish Group immediately, as per the committee's forward plan. Appendix A sets out the draft scope. The topic is '**Scrutiny of the support and provision for young adults Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)**' This contributes towards the council's improvement & recovery with respect to SEND and being linked to the council's corporate plan and to the Business Plan and monitoring of Slough Children First (SCF).

#### Recommendations:

- a. **That a Task and Finish Group be launched as per the draft scope at Appendix A, by formal appointment of its Chair and, if possible, its membership.**

#### Commissioner Review

**DfE Commissioner:** I endorse the proposal and can see the Council fulfilling its statutory obligations to monitor this important group of young people.

## 2. Report

- 2.1 In accordance with this committee's work programme, refreshed by the committee on 17 December 2024, this paper proposes to launch a 'Task and Finish Group' on the topic of 'Scrutiny of the support and provision for young adults Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)'. It should be noted that the Task and Finish Group will have implications for the work of the People (Children) directorate which provides educational support services including support for children with special educational needs and disabilities. (SEND), SCF Business planning and monitoring as well as Corporate Parenting and young adults in care.
- 2.2 This topic was originally recommended for the CISC forward plan at its development workshops in May 2024 and approved at the July 30 2024 meeting of CISC.
- 2.3 The Slough Children First Business and Improvement Plan 23-26 was approved by Cabinet on 18 September 2023 and sets out the shared vision between Slough Children First and Slough Borough Council where every child will be '**Happy, Safe & Loved, Thriving**'.
- 2.4 [Slough Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2023-27](#) sets out 3 Strategic Priorities, the first of which is that Slough is:

### **A borough for children and young people to thrive, by:**

- providing quality services for vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and
  - Improving outcomes for disadvantaged children and young people.
- 2.5 Whilst Slough compares favourably with regard to 16–17-year-olds in education, this conceals underlying concerns such as the grades being achieved (Fig 1), the situation for care leavers (Fig 2.) and those SEND and EHC supported (Fig. 3.)
  - 2.6 This Task and Finish Group will explore the NEETS provision in Slough, and the role of SBC and key provider and support stakeholders to better understand the challenges and opportunities they face in supporting those in each cohort of school leavers, that are NEET between 16-18 (and in some cases 25) years old. **Figures 1-3** illustrate some of the current challenges: These are expected to be the focus of the Task and Finish group.
  - 2.7 The work to support those young adults that are NEET involves finding those whose progression, since leaving school, has not been known, and for those found to be NEET, together with known members of the cohort that are also NEET, to find the right solutions for each individual that will give them qualifications and/or skills and/or employment, that will provide each with a foundation for their future as they embark upon adulthood and become productive and active members of society.
  - 2.8 The risk in failing to adequately support those leaving school that are NEET, is that they miss out on successfully transitioning from school to work or study, dropping out of new economic and social frameworks and networks that are important to both a thriving, creative and cohesive community and to the wellbeing of the individuals concerned. For those in care, or with special educational needs or a EHC plan the potential impact of missing out on support at this important time will be compounded.

- 2.9 If the committee wishes to commission this group to commence now, it must elect one of the councillors, from its 'pool of chairs', to lead the work. The most important criterion for this choice is: "which councillor is most enthusiastically interested in the subject matter?" Experience has shown that this is by far the greatest determinant of a Task and Finish group's success.
- 2.10 Ideally, the committee would also agree membership of the Task and Finish group at this meeting. There must be a minimum of three to proceed. These do not have to be CISC Members – Task and Finish members may be drawn from any councillor except members of the Cabinet. Again, enthusiasm should be the strongest criterion for inclusion in the group, however it is also desirable to ensure a degree of political proportionality i.e. members of at least two Groups being on the Task and Finish group.
- 2.11 If Group Leaders have provided the Chair with any suggested volunteers from outside the committee, the Chair will announce their names in the meeting.
- 2.12 The constitution allows for Task and Finish Groups to run for a maximum of 4 months but the Task and Finish group can determine its own timescales within that if it wishes to conclude more quickly – subject only to the availability of officer and member resource to support a faster exercise. Extension beyond 4 months is possible with the approval of the chair of the parent committee.

Figure 1. Education post-16

93.8% of 16-17 year olds in Slough are in Education or Training (SE: 91.1%, Eng: 92.3%).

However, Slough is achieving lower grades (fewer average points per entry) at A level or equivalent than the England average.

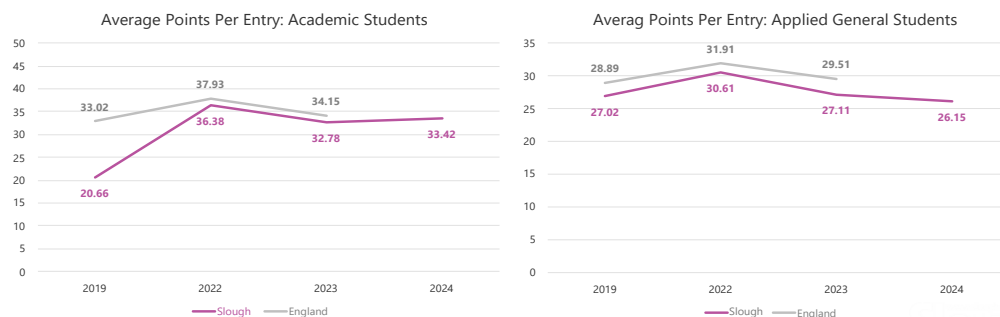


Figure 2. Care leavers in EET

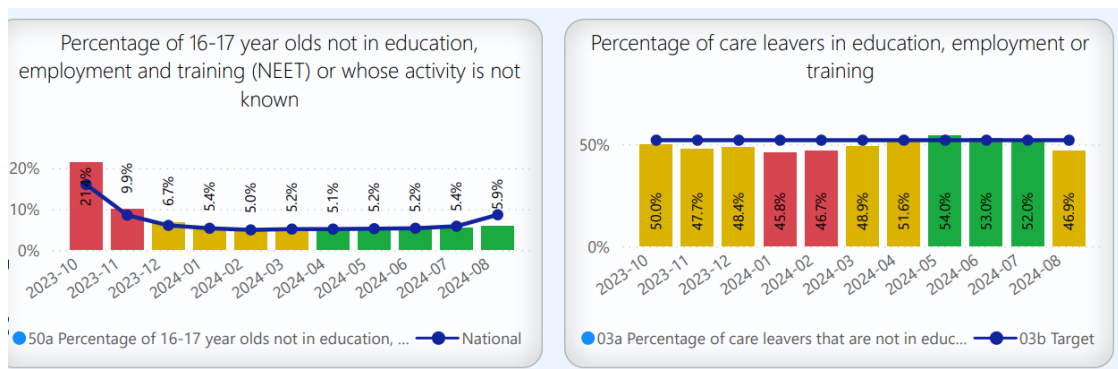


Figure 3: Regional comparison of 16-17 year olds receiving SEN support or with an EHC plan

		Slough	S. East.	England
NEET	% of 16-17 year olds w. <b>SEN support</b> not participating in education, employment or training (2022/23)	13.0%	10.8%	9.3%
NEET	% of 16-17 year olds w. <b>EHC plan</b> not participating in education, employment or training (2022/23)	11.6%	12.5%	10.1%

### 3. Implications of the Recommendations

#### *Financial implications*

- 3.1 This is not a decision-making report so there are no direct financial implications. Where further work is required to respond to the issues identified, any recommendations from CISC will be made to the Cabinet by Childrens services/SCF where relevant.

#### *Legal implications*

- 3.2 The Local Government Act 2000 introduced a new political management system for local councils in England and Wales, requiring them to have a separate ‘executive’ in the form of a leader, or elected mayor, and cabinet. To provide a counterweight for this, the Act also introduced the concept of ‘overview and scrutiny’ – sometimes referred to simply as ‘scrutiny’ – whereby every council with an executive management structure is required to have an overview and scrutiny committee. This enables the rest of the council to scrutinise the executive by investigating their decisions and policies, and issuing reports and recommendations where any shortcomings are identified.

#### *Risk management implications*

- 3.3 Overview and Scrutiny, commonly referred to as Scrutiny, is a statutory function and is currently subject to government direction in Slough. It is important that topics selected by the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee clearly contribute to the overall improvement drivers for the council, in order to demonstrate that the conditions of the government intervention are being met.

#### *Equality implications*

- 3.4 There are no specific equalities implications arising at this stage, however it is intended that the work will identify gaps in NEETS provision for all backgrounds and so ultimately should improve equalities outcomes. A detailed assessment will be done if necessary on the T&F group’s final recommendations.

#### *Corporate Parenting Implications*

- 3.5 Some NEETS 16-25 year olds may be children who are looked after by Slough Borough Council or are care experienced young people. This means that members have a specific statutory responsibility towards them as corporate parents. This Task and Finish Group may indeed focus on specific groups of young people including young people in care. Members of the group should be aware the likelihood of these children and young people being members of these groups and should not

seek to identify them without their age-appropriate permission or from an adult with parental responsibility for a specific child. However, any suggestions improved provision for looked after children and young people and care experienced young people would be welcomed.

#### **4. Appendices**

**Appendix A:** Draft Scope for Scrutiny of the support and provision for young adults  
Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) Slough SEst England