

# Young Slough

A peer-led strategic needs assessment

APRIL 2026



# Foreword



**Together As One (TAO)**, previously known as Aik Saath, was established as a peer-led response to gang violence in Slough over 25 years ago. Throughout our history, participation has been at the heart of what we do. While TAO has a long and proven track record of listening to young people to design, deliver, and evaluate projects, we have been less consistent at involving young people in the wider strategic direction of our town. This is an obvious oversight, especially as successive censuses have shown that Slough has one of the most youthful populations in the UK.

Young Slough represents the involvement of young people in identifying the challenges they and our town face and in sharing their visions for a brighter future. Within these pages, we present the priorities of a generation and their views on the direction our town should take.

Thank you to Slough Children First and Slough Borough Council for believing in this work and to Rocket Science for helping bring it to fruition. We look forward to working with partners to turn these recommendations into action and to building a brighter future for Slough on the strong foundations laid by the exceptional work of these young people.

**Rob Deeks** MSc, MBE  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
Together As One

# Foreword

When I saw the opportunity to be part of this research, I knew it was a chance to be involved in something meaningful and potentially transformative for my town. I've often heard friends and family speak about their frustration with the lack of change in our community. At times, it can feel like no one is really listening. Being part of this project and helping to amplify young people's voices made me feel grateful and proud.



Through this work, I was able to speak with other young people about the challenges they face in Slough while also being part of something bigger. It showed that young people care deeply about where they live, that we have ideas, and that our experiences and perspectives truly matter. Some of the stories shared weren't easy to say or to hear, but every conversation reinforced why this work matters. The honesty, courage, and insight of those who took part made it clear just how powerful young voices can be.

Young Slough is just the beginning. Now that these experiences and ideas have been gathered, they cannot be ignored. Slough is our home. It's where we go to school, build friendships, and grow up. It's a place full of diversity, creativity, and determination. Being part of this project reminded me that young people are not just the future, we are also the present. We live this reality every day and we care deeply about making it better. I'm proud to have played a small part in something that could help create real change and I'm hopeful about what comes next.

**Dilpreet Bal**  
*Young Researcher*



CREDITS  
Design: TL Palmer  
Photography: Matthew Fleming

# Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>1, 2</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction and background</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Thematic findings (Overview)</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Our spaces</b>	<b>12</b>
Our creative spaces	12
Our safety	13
Our green spaces	15
Our fun spaces	16
Our affordability	17
Our cultural sensitivity	18
Our high streets	18
Our transport	19
Our inclusion	20
<b>Our health</b>	<b>22</b>
Our mental health	22
Our physical health	24
<b>Our community</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Our futures</b>	<b>28</b>
Our finances	28
Our employment	29
<b>Our education</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Our homes</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Our digital lives</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Calls to action</b>	<b>38</b>

# Executive summary

## Brief and approach

Rocket Science was commissioned by Together As One and Slough Children First to conduct a peer-led strategic needs assessment with local young people. This approach is valuable because it centres the voices and lived experiences of young people themselves in identifying the challenges they face and shaping the support they need. There are many reasons why a peer-to-peer approach matters - but perhaps most importantly, it results in more relevant, inclusive, and responsive services that truly reflect the needs of Slough's diverse youth population.

The needs analysis involved recruiting and training 26 young residents of Slough as peer researchers. Each peer researcher was asked to interview 10 of their friends about what it is like to live in the local area, and the group spoke to 191 peers in total. Additional insight was gathered through a series of stakeholder interviews with individuals from Slough Borough Council, Thames Valley Police, Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce, SEGRO (owner, developer, and manager of the Slough Trading Estate), schools and colleges, and youth workers.

Each young person the peer researchers spoke to leads a unique life, but many shared common challenges - particularly when navigating spaces and services in Slough, managing their physical and mental health, and coping with life at home, in school, and in employment.



Theme	Key findings
<b>SPACES</b>	Slough lacks creative and leisure spaces that cater for young adults. Between the closure of the cinema and the lack of activity offerings many young people feel Slough does not cater to their desire for recreational activity. This, paired with concerns over the safety of the town's streets and parks, have left many feeling disconnected from their peers and the wider community. These challenges are hardened by misgiving with the local transport system, meaning that not only are they unable to have fun locally, but many are also unable to easily or affordably travel out of Slough to have fun in the surrounding areas.
<b>HEALTH</b>	Young people cited a range of physical and mental health challenges. However, these challenges are further entrenched by a perceived lack of support. Appointment waiting times are a challenge across the country, and young people in Slough are victim to these too. However, there is also stigma attached to seeking or accessing support, which means many young people are going without the help they need.
<b>COMMUNITY</b>	There is an overwhelming sense that young people do not feel closely connected to their neighbourhoods or communities, driven by a lack of opportunity to connect with their peers or the wider community. Young people said the activities that were available were not broad enough, failed to cater to different groups, or were too intimidating or inaccessible to join. Young people wanted to see more inclusive and diverse community activities which bring together the whole community, alongside tailored events for specific underrepresented groups.
<b>FUTURES</b>	Interviewees reported that the lack of work experience among young people is a significant barrier to employment. This frustration is exacerbated by the fact that most entry-level jobs still require prior work experience, making it challenging for young people to enter the job market. There was a general sense that securing jobs often relies more on personal connections than qualifications and young people felt disadvantaged if they did not know someone within a company. There were calls for more transparency and fairness in the hiring process, with some suggesting that all candidates, regardless of personal connections, should be given an equal opportunity to demonstrate their skills and qualifications.
<b>EDUCATION</b>	Young people raised issues relating to educational quality, teacher competence, student behaviour, resource allocation, and access to higher education. The general sentiment toward education was mixed, with concerns raised about the disparity between grammar and non-selective schools and the accessibility of post-secondary education opportunities. Alongside this, several interviewees mentioned that the lack of local options forces them to spend significant amounts of money and time on travel, which exacerbates the challenges they face in managing their time, finances, and wellbeing.
<b>HOMES</b>	Young people have significant concerns about both the quality and availability of affordable housing in Slough. These concerns were shared about both Council-owned and privately-owned houses, and the cost of both buying and renting. Mould, leaks and broken appliances were raised, as were the impact of these on long-term discomfort and health.
<b>DIGITAL LIVES</b>	There were mixed opinions on the availability and quality of internet connections. While some young people were satisfied with public internet options, others wanted more accessible, password-free WiFi in spaces such as buses and parks. When connectivity is poor, they said it affects their ability to attend online classes, complete school assignments, or participate in work meetings.

## Recommendations

While the challenges facing young people in Slough are considerable, they are not insurmountable. Our consultation with stakeholders revealed that these issues are not isolated but are indicative of a broader systemic failure within the town. At the heart of this are three core concerns: first, a lack of joined-up, multi-agency working focused on supporting young people; second, the exclusion of young people from meaningful conversations about the issues affecting them and the support they need; and third, the impact of the wider polycrisis affecting councils across the country, which has placed immense pressure on local resources and severely limited the capacity to deliver effective support.

This peer-led needs assessment highlights the complex and interconnected challenges faced by young people in Slough. It calls for a coordinated, inclusive, and youth-empowered response across key areas:

### 1. Tackle Inequalities and Discrimination

**Challenge:** Young people experience discrimination, unequal access to services, and cultural insensitivity.

**Recommendation:** Establish a youth-led equalities strategy to address systemic disparities and promote inclusion, equity, and respect.

### 2. Improve Access to Creative and Cultural Spaces

**Challenge:** Limited and poorly promoted creative opportunities.

**Recommendation:** Use recently secured Arts Council England funding to involve young people in shaping and promoting creative provision, including partnerships and talent development.

### 3. Expand Affordable Leisure and Fun Spaces

**Challenge:** High costs and loss of local amenities like the cinema limit participation.

**Recommendation:** Co-create more affordable and youth-friendly recreational spaces and strengthen leisure partnerships.

### 4. Enhance Community Safety

**Challenge:** Concerns around knife crime and feeling unsafe in public spaces.

**Recommendation:** Engage young people in developing local safety strategies and improving public space security, especially at night.

### 5. Support Youth-Led Green Social Action

**Challenge:** Limited access to and engagement with green spaces.

**Recommendation:** Make Slough an #iwill town by empowering young people to lead environmental improvement projects that promote wellbeing and community pride.

### 6. Strengthen Health Access and Awareness

**Challenge:** Long waits and poor access to physical and mental health services.

**Recommendation:** Improve access to early support and streamline referral pathways while building young people's confidence in navigating health systems.

### 7. Build Stronger Community Connection

**Challenge:** Lack of inclusive community spaces for older youth.

**Recommendation:** Invest in multi-purpose community hubs that foster peer support, reduce isolation, and strengthen belonging.

### 8. Improve Education Support and Equity

**Challenge:** Young people struggle to access trusted support in school settings.

**Recommendation:** Train staff and integrate mental health and wellbeing resources in schools to create safe, supportive environments.

### 9. Boost Employment Pathways and Access

**Challenge:** Young people face a skills-experience trap and lack awareness of job options.

**Recommendation:** Expand local work experience, promote the public sector, and launch a centralised platform for employment and training opportunities.

# Introduction and background

## Introduction to the research

Rocket Science was commissioned by Together As One and Slough Children First (SCF) to carry out a needs analysis of young people living in Slough. Central to this work was a shared conviction across various partners that a new approach to delivering services in the town was needed - one that moved beyond consulting young people on superficial or tokenistic issues and instead engaged them meaningfully on the services that sit at the heart of their daily lives. As part of the project, Rocket Science trained young people as peer researchers, enabling them to lead conversations with their peers and present the findings to key stakeholders to drive change across Slough.

## Methodology

Between March and August 2024, 26 young people were recruited and trained as peer researchers for this research project.

Below sets out the step-by-step methodology of this research:

1. **Recruitment:** Rocket Science created a flyer with information about Rocket Science and Together As One, the background to the research, expectations of young people, and details of how to sign up. The flyer also had a link to a QR code which was linked to the sign-up sheet for young people. Over 100 young people signed up to become peer researchers, which was more than was originally anticipated. A selection process then took place through 500-word statements on why the young people wanted to become peer researchers and a total of 26 young people were selected.
2. **Training:** Four training sessions were held with the peer researchers in August 2024. The sessions were delivered by Rocket Science and covered the following:
  - a. **Day one:**
    - i. Introduction to social and peer research
    - ii. Research methodologies (e.g. qualitative vs quantitative)
    - iii. What makes a successful interview
    - iv. Research ethics
  - b. **Day two:**
    - i. Potential themes to discuss
    - ii. Co-design of research questions
    - iii. Practice interviews
    - iv. Recruitment of interviewees
    - v. Practicalities

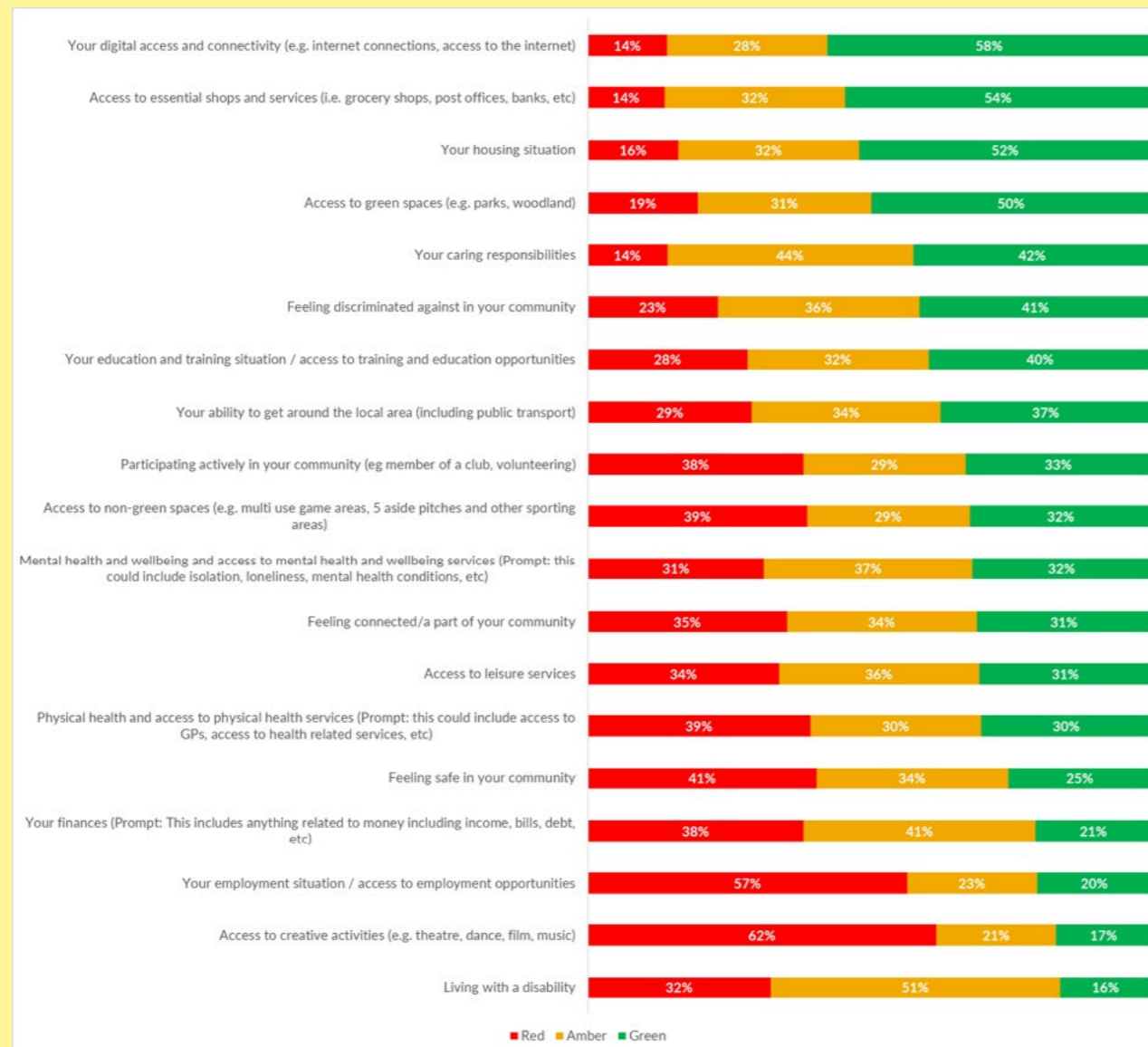
3. **Peer research:** The researchers were paid the equivalent to the London Living Wage (£13.15) to conduct up to ten 20-30 minute interviews with their peers. Interviews covered topics including living in Slough; their education/employment situation, feeling safe in their local area, their health and wellbeing and access to local services.
  - a. Peer research captured qualitative data through open text discussion boxes, and quantitative data through multiple choice and Likert scale questions.
  - b. A total of **191 interviews were completed by young people aged 11-25** and were submitted to Rocket Science for analysis by the end of September 2024.
4. **Analysis:** Thematic analysis was completed across the 191 survey responses, and the breakdown of findings by theme can be found below.
5. **Stakeholder consultation:** We spoke to 17 stakeholders, including representatives from Slough Borough Council's Community Safety and Public Health teams; youth professionals from Slough Children First, including the Early Help team; Thames Valley Police; Slough and Eton C of E Business & Enterprise College; Slough Youth Parliament; and SEGRO.
6. **Peer research reflective session:** A reflective session was held with peer researchers in December 2024 to explore the findings and produce co-designed recommendations.
7. **Reporting:** The final reporting phase took place in spring 2025. This involved Rocket Science collating findings from the varying types of research and producing conclusions and recommendations.



# Thematic findings (Overview)

## Overarching findings

The below chart shows how young people rated different themes and challenges in their day-to-day lives. The red indicates 'not going well', yellow indicates 'going okay', and green indicates 'going well'.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> - Sample sizes vary by theme as young people were also given the option to choose 'not applicable' for each.

# Our spaces

The spaces which young people move through in their daily lives are key to their experiences of living in Slough and therefore this was the topic young people most frequently wanted to talk about. Young people identified the lack of creative spaces (e.g. for dance, theatre and music) in Slough as the biggest challenge they face, but also raised important concerns relating to safety, access to leisure spaces, and access to green spaces.

All quotes below are attributed to young people unless otherwise indicated.

## Our creative spaces

Young people felt that Slough lacks adequate creative spaces and activities for people who live there, particularly young adults. While some creative activities are available (e.g. those offered at the Curve) young people felt these opportunities are limited in both **“scope”** and **“accessibility.”** Outside of the Curve, the absence of venues for dance, theatre, and music activities were frequently noted, with many calling for more community spaces and creative outlets. Interviewees indicated that there is a need for creative spaces where individuals of all ages and abilities can engage in artistic pursuits. The lack of accessible and affordable options for young people was a concern. There were also calls for additional spaces that foster creativity and skill development across a broader range of activities.

**“I'd love to see more local theatre groups, plays, and musicals.”**

**“Locations that offer access to this sort of activity are basically non-existent in Slough.”**

Several interviewees felt that while some creative opportunities exist in Slough, events were not sufficiently publicised or accessible to the general public. Young people called for better advertising of local creative activities, suggesting the use of social media and posters to reach a wider audience. Such lack of promotion has resulted in many young people being unaware of the creative events and opportunities available in the area. They recommended increasing visibility through platforms young people are familiar with to boost engagement and participation in cultural events.

**“To improve, I would like to see more noise being made about theatre performances.”**

**“More social media posts on outlets young people use would help promote events.”**

**“There is no advertisement or promotion about the creative spaces.”**

The absence of creative activities tailored to young adults in Slough was highlighted as an issue. Interviewees between the ages of 16 and 25 expressed frustration that while there were creative opportunities for younger children, there was a lack of spaces or activities designed for teenagers and young adults. This gap has left many young people feeling disconnected from their community. Some believe that providing more creative activities for young adults would enhance social interactions and

community engagement, with creative events seen as a way to meet others with shared interests. There were also suggestions for creating more affordable or free opportunities to ensure all young people can participate.

***"Once I hit 18, there isn't much... I wanted to continue playing music in Slough but couldn't find anywhere to do so."***

***A lot of the events that are accessible are targeted at children. Young people 16 - 18 don't have places to socialise.***

## Our safety

Young people shared deep concerns about crime during interviews, particularly knife crime and gang-related violence. These issues were mentioned across various areas of Slough, with many expressing heightened anxiety about being outside, especially at night. Fear of crime was a pervasive theme, with several interviewees noting that they avoid certain places or doing things at certain times of day due to the perceived threat of violence or theft.

Several interviewees reported feeling vulnerable when walking alone, citing the rising rates of knife crime and gang activity as primary reasons. This fear was particularly acute in specific areas of Slough, such as the high street and some residential neighbourhoods.

***"I feel very unsafe walking alone in Slough at night whether using public transport or near my house."***

There was reference to incidents they had heard about through social media or from others in their community, further contributing to a general atmosphere of anxiety and unease.

***"A lot of knife crime, gangs, drug dealing. Alleyways are unsafe. A lot of rubbish dumped in the alleyways and it makes the area stink."***

The call for a more visible police presence was noted as a recommendation from young people. A lack of patrolling officers was seen as an important factor contributing to young people's feelings of insecurity, with several noting that seeing police on the streets would help deter crime and provide reassurance, especially in areas known for violence or antisocial behaviour. Young people felt that more active policing would be a critical step in reducing crime; several spoke about rarely seeing police patrolling in public spaces or residential areas, which contributed to their sense of vulnerability.

***"There are barely any police—I've never seen police walking around."***

In contrast, those who did see police regularly stated that it helped them feel more secure, creating a sense of safety in their community. The consensus was that a greater police presence, especially in high-crime areas like alleyways and parks, would significantly reduce crime.

***"I feel like I always see a police car every so often, so that is reassuring to say the least."***

Concerns about safety in Slough were often magnified after dark, with many interviewees stating that they felt particularly vulnerable at night. Several mentioned they avoid the high street and other areas of Slough after sunset due to fears of encountering crime or antisocial behaviour. This sentiment was particularly strong among women, who often mentioned feeling anxious or unsafe when walking alone at night. Many expressed that they would only venture out with someone else or not at all.

***"I don't like to visit the high street after the sun has set as I feel it is scary."***

Several interviewees highlighted the need for better street lighting and increased CCTV coverage in high-risk areas such as alleyways and the high street. Increased CCTV was seen as a deterrent to criminal activity, while better lighting was suggested as a simple, effective way to make residents feel safer, particularly in areas with high rates of drug use and antisocial behaviour. Several interviewees emphasised the need for lighting improvements in poorly lit alleyways and streets.

***"More CCTV cameras in alleyways and streets would help."***

***"Better street lighting would improve safety in my community."***

Several young people expressed a desire for broader social initiatives to help improve safety in Slough. These interviewees saw community engagement, education, and providing more activities for young people as important steps toward reducing crime and fostering a sense of safety and belonging. Several interviewees mentioned that offering work opportunities, youth activities, and sports programmes could help keep people, particularly young men, away from criminal activities. There was also a call for more educational initiatives in schools to raise awareness about crime prevention and community building. Several people suggested that these social initiatives would not only reduce crime but also help strengthen community bonds and create a more connected, supportive environment in Slough.

One emerging theme is that the perception of Slough as a high-crime area is as much a driver of fear as direct experiences of crime. This view was shared by stakeholders we spoke with.

***"There is a perception of crime and violence that people have that isn't the reality, and I think that's our biggest problem. That doesn't mean there aren't issues, but when you look at violence across Slough you're more likely to be injured in your own home."***

Inspector, Thames Valley Police

To address both the perception and cause of crime, stakeholders from the Council and Police both referenced the needs for greater partnership working and the need for young people to build positive relationships with adults from community organisations and the police. Increased community policing which saw officers engage with young people informally was highlighted, as was involving young people in the conversation about what works best for them.

***“There needs to be more cops on and the streets and more time and ability to go and just be out in the community. The old-fashioned playing football together, to build relationships and show that cops are normal people. Going into schools and doing talks doesn’t achieve much.”***

Inspector, Thames Valley Police

***“I know there’s interest in making sure we have youth voice present, and we need to do more to engage with young people. People realise we need to work with young people, we just need to work out how best to do that.”***

Council stakeholder

## Our green spaces

Issues around litter and cleanliness in parks and green spaces were discussed, with young people feeling that the area is not being maintained to an acceptable standard. The impact of litter, overflowing bins, and pet waste on interviewees’ overall experience of green spaces was negative, with one mentioning that they feel it affects their mental health to see the spaces in this condition. These issues are often linked to the frequency of bin collections, with some suggesting that reverting to more frequent collections would help alleviate the problem.

***“There is quite a sizeable problem with litter in these places and also pet owners not cleaning up after their pets.”***

***“There are lots of litter and fly-tipping, dampening mental health as it is not aesthetic to look at or walk anywhere.”***

Safety concerns were frequently mentioned in relation to green spaces in Slough, particularly regarding crime and anti-social behaviour in parks. Several interviewees noted feeling unsafe due to the presence of criminal activity, inadequate lighting, and incidents of violence. Such safety concerns were seen as a major deterrent to enjoying green spaces, especially during evening hours.

***“Salt Hill Park feels unsafe because of the stabbings and deaths.”***

While Slough has several parks, many interviewees expressed a desire for more greenery and better natural spaces. Some felt that Slough’s green spaces were overshadowed by urban and industrial

areas, making it difficult to find peaceful places to connect with nature. There was also a call for more natural features, such as trees, flower beds, and scenic walking areas, to improve the aesthetic appeal of existing parks. There is a perception that adding more greenery would have positive effects on both the environment and on the mental health and wellbeing of visitors to green spaces.

***“Slough should spend more time improving its green areas and adding more greenery.”***

***“It is not only good for pollution... but also helps mental well-being.”***

The accessibility of Slough’s parks was generally seen as positive, with several interviewees noting that parks are within easy reach for most residents. However, while access to local parks is good, there were concerns about the difficulty of accessing areas such as woodlands, which often require a car to visit. This was particularly frustrating for those seeking to connect more deeply with nature.

***“Woodlands and nature are more difficult to connect with as you would have to drive around places back and forth.”***

***“Black Park is a nice place, but the drive was around 20 minutes, which was pretty inconvenient.”***

While many parks in Slough have basic amenities like playgrounds and exercise equipment, some interviewees expressed a desire for more organised activities and additional facilities. There were calls for more community events, such as fun fairs, as well as improved play areas, shaded picnic spots, and shelters to enhance the overall experience. Some interviewees felt that providing a greater variety of activities would encourage more people to use the parks.

## Our fun spaces

### Limited variety of non-green spaces

Young people highlighted the lack of accessible, indoor recreational areas. The absence of such spaces forces people to rely heavily on parks, which some find insufficient for a variety of activities such as creative activities or for certain sports, especially for older teens and young adults. Many expressed a desire for more leisure centres and dedicated spaces for activities outside of the traditional park setting. There is also frustration around the need to travel long distances for indoor activities, which adds to the feeling that Slough does not provide enough opportunities for non-park-based recreation.

***“Non-green spaces are almost non-existent in Slough; there is no place where people can go to enjoy activities other than parks.”***

***“There aren’t any game centres in Slough, so during evenings, people have to commute to other towns.”***

There was a clear desire for more innovative recreational facilities, including activity centres that offer a variety of sports and games. Interviewees frequently mentioned that they had to travel outside of Slough to find the kinds of activities they were interested in, highlighting the community's need for updated and varied leisure offerings.

**"Slough needs more modern activity centres, like an arcade or go-karting place."**

**"There aren't many game centres or activities for the youth in Slough."**

The closure of the local cinema was mentioned as a point of dissatisfaction amongst young people. Interviewees frequently mentioned the inconvenience of having to travel outside of Slough to watch films, impacting both community engagement and the local economy. A common theme was the desire to have a local cinema reinstated, which would bring people together and revitalise the high street. The need to visit neighbouring towns such as Staines, Maidenhead, or Uxbridge to access a cinema incurs additional travel costs and time for young people. This has had a particularly negative impact on younger residents and families who previously enjoyed using the cinema as a central, convenient hub for entertainment.

**"I have to go to Staines for cinema and food, which isn't nice.  
I'd like to support Slough businesses as much as I can."**

**"Our local cinema was shut down, which makes it hard for families like mine to enjoy activities locally."**

## Affordability

Many interviewees mentioned the high costs of using Slough's existing recreational facilities. From expensive football pitches to rising prices at popular venues like 'Jump In' and 'Salt Hill Activity Centre', residents noted that the cost barrier significantly limits access to activities, particularly for young people and students. Interviewees frequently called for the development of more football pitches, indoor activity centres, and sports-specific spaces. The current availability of facilities like 'Powerleague' was appreciated, but many felt there were too few options, and existing venues were often fully booked or inaccessible. Several interviewees voiced a desire for both indoor and outdoor spaces dedicated to physical activity, suggesting that these should be affordable and well-maintained to meet the community's needs.

**"I would like a cheaper option or free version of Powerleague pitches in a park rather than the school setting"**

**"Places like Jump In are getting expensive."**

**"There is only one public place to play football, and it costs money to enter."**

**"Leisure activities are too expensive, making it hard for many to participate."**

**"Discounted prices or free days for events would make a big difference for students and those on a budget."**

## Cultural sensitivity and inclusivity in leisure spaces

A notable theme in the feedback was the need for more culturally sensitive leisure services, especially for women. Interviewees pointed out that existing facilities do not provide for the diverse needs of the community. There were calls for inclusive services that take into account cultural differences, particularly in health and fitness offerings.

**"There are not enough culturally sensitive health and fitness services, particularly for women."**

**"Ladies-only swim sessions are regularly compromised by men walking in without booking."**

## Our high streets

Interviewees expressed concerns regarding the limited variety of retail options available, particularly in comparison to nearby towns. Many felt that the high street lacks essential clothing and entertainment stores, forcing them to travel for their shopping needs. There is a clear desire for more diverse retail offerings:

**"I think there is a lack of variety of shops in Slough... people usually have to order items online or shop in other towns like Uxbridge."**

**"I would like to see more stores being opened in High Street and the shopping centre becoming a more modern shopping mall."**

Concerns were raised about the availability of vital services, such as banks and post offices, which have either closed down or are too far away for convenient access.

**"The main high street post office is closed down, there aren't any nearby."**

**"I don't feel there is easy access to essential shops and services. Many of these services have closed down in the past few years."**

Many highlighted issues related to crime, anti-social behaviour, and the physical state of the high street, which detract from its appeal and discourage shoppers. Interviewees emphasised the need for improvements in both safety measures and cleanliness to make the area more inviting and secure for community members.

**"The shopping centre is very disordered... stabbings happening in broad daylight and other crimes."**

**"I think Slough Town Centre should become more developed... making Slough more friendly and suited to the younger generation."**

A common theme in the feedback was the overwhelming presence of fast-food outlets in Slough, which interviewees feel undermined the variety and healthiness of dining options available. Many expressed a desire for more diverse food choices, including healthier alternatives.

**“Too many chicken shops; not enough banks, healthy food take-out options, clothes shops.”**

**“Everywhere seems replaced by lots of takeaway/fast food places, not very healthy and not many healthy choices.”**

**“There are lots of fast-food shops which dominate the high street.”**



The reliability of public transport in Slough was a concern with multiple mentions of buses and trains being infrequent and often late. Interviewees expressed frustration with long waits for buses, particularly during peak times, and the unreliability of the service, which could result in missed connections and longer travel times. Additionally, some young people noted that buses sometimes did not stop at designated stops, exacerbating the issue of unreliability.

**“Sometimes the bus drivers don’t stop at the bus stops even though they are scheduled to stop there.”**

**“Buses are very infrequent and hard to access; they come every 40 minutes and sometimes are scheduled to come, but never do.”**

Limited bus routes in Slough have meant that passengers can be required to take multiple buses to reach their destinations. The current routes were seen as inefficient, and there were requests for more direct services to better connect various parts of the area. Several interviewees emphasised the inconvenience caused by having to transfer between multiple buses to complete relatively short journeys.

**“They take unnecessary routes and should make more direct buses.”**

**“The routes don’t always connect well, making it difficult to get to certain parts of the town without multiple transfers.”**

High transport costs impact students, young people, and those on lower incomes. Many noted that the rising prices of bus and train fares were making public transport increasingly unaffordable for regular use, especially for those needing to commute daily. Young people felt the financial strain of public transport costs and this issue was amplified for those needing multiple connections or longer commutes. Train stations, while generally viewed as more reliable were often seen as too expensive; there were calls for better bus connections to the train station and more affordable ticket options for both buses and trains.

**“Cost is unaffordable for young people, despite railcards. Daily usage to access school in London can cost hundreds per month.”**

**“Public transport is too expensive, £2 each way is still unaffordable.”**

Multiple interviewees raised the issue of inadequate discounts for students and young people, particularly when compared to cities like London. Young people expressed frustration over being charged adult fares from the age of 16, even though many were still in education and without full-time jobs. The lack of student-specific fare structures was seen as a barrier to mobility, particularly for those commuting to school or college on a regular basis. Several interviewees called for concessions or free travel options for students, similar to those available in other areas.

**“It’s already unfair to families who are struggling financially and having to pay for your child who’s just turned 16 to travel as an adult.”**

**“Public transport should be free like in London for under 16s.”**

## Our inclusion

Concerns were raised around young people’s experiences of discrimination and bullying, often related to race or religion. Many described facing hostility both in schools and in their broader communities. Some individuals spoke about having to change schools due to the intensity of the racial abuse they faced. A recurring theme was the deep impact of these discriminatory experiences on their sense of safety and belonging.

**“I have gone through some occasions where I have been discriminated against due to my religious beliefs and cultural differences.”**

**“At school, I was called racial names by various groups, and I had to move schools because of it.”**

A key issue raised by interviewees was the perception that schools were failing to adequately address bullying and discrimination. Many felt that school staff did not take complaints seriously or ignored them, especially when the incidents were not directly observed. Some felt that teachers were unwilling to act unless presented with direct evidence. It was felt that this disregard allowed bullying to persist, and young people sought stricter measures to prevent such behaviour. The lack of action from school staff left students feeling unsupported and created a sense of helplessness, in cases forcing them to escalate the issue to higher authorities or move schools altogether.

Young people supported stricter enforcement of rules and harsher punishments for those engaging in bullying or discrimination, both in schools and in the broader community. They felt that current measures were insufficient and that offenders were not being held accountable for their actions. This sentiment extended beyond schools, with some seeking more community-level enforcement to address antisocial behaviour. Interviewees believed that increasing the visibility of consequences for negative actions could help deter offenders and create a safer, more inclusive environment.

***“The school has done nothing about it and took it very lightly.”***

***“I complained to the teachers many times, and they said they didn’t believe me unless they saw it.”***

***“More support for victims, cracking down on such behaviours, and the offenders to receive actual punishment.”***

Several interviewees discussed feeling judged or stereotyped based on their appearance, religion, or ethnicity. This judgment, although not pervasive, affected how they felt about their connection to the community. Some interviewees noted receiving negative attention or “stares” in public spaces, which contributed to a sense of exclusion. These experiences reinforced a feeling that some parts of the community were not as inclusive as others. There was a recurring call for more community workshops and events to foster understanding and inclusion, with the hope that this would break down assumptions and stereotypes.

Despite concerns about judgment and discrimination, several interviewees expressed appreciation for the diversity and inclusivity of their community. Many felt that Slough’s multicultural nature helped reduce overt discrimination and fostered a sense of acceptance. Interviewees noted that, due to the wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, there was no dominant culture, which helped people coexist more harmoniously. However, some interviewees still mentioned that while the broader community was inclusive, certain subcommunities remained insular or exclusive. Nonetheless, the general sentiment was that Slough’s diversity was a strength that contributed to a positive living environment.

***“Some people just don’t like you for your religion.”***

***“I feel unwelcome and feel like I get some stares.”***

***“Slough is very diverse, so there is less racism.”***

## Our health

### Our mental health

Long waiting times for mental health services was the most discussed issue amongst interviewees who chose to discuss mental health. Young people repeatedly mentioned that getting access to mental health services in Slough could be hindered by extensive delays, which made it difficult to receive timely support. Several individuals indicated that they have had to wait several months, or even years, to be seen by mental health professionals, impacting their ability to manage mental health conditions.

***“Getting a therapist has never been easy... there’s a really long waiting list.”***

***“Not the best service as I’ve been waiting a while to get some help but it’s taking very long.”***

Another concern was the lack of adequate support for mental health in schools. Many felt that schools do not provide sufficient resources, and that the resources in place are not helpful. Several said the school environment itself contributes to worsening mental health. Other young people suggested that expanding counselling services within schools would be helpful.

Young people highlighted the importance of having approachable and trusted adults within the school system, as many felt uncomfortable discussing their mental health with the current staff members responsible for safeguarding.

Strict school rules and their impact on students’ mental health were mentioned by several interviewees. There was concern that overly strict policies, such as detentions for minor infractions or excessive pressure to adhere to rigid rules, caused unnecessary stress for students. Interviewees felt that while discipline was important, the current approach often goes too far and detracts from the overall learning experience. There was a call for schools to create a more supportive environment that balances discipline with student well-being. Longer break times, more empathetic teachers, and less punitive measures were suggested as ways to improve the school experience.

***“The schools put too much pressure on students with rules like detention for not tucking in shirts.”***

***“Safeguarding teams are run by teachers that many students would not like to approach about anything, let alone mental health concerns.”***

***“I don’t feel like I can reach out at college because the staff don’t seem supportive.”***

Several interviewees also said mental health services in Slough are also too centralised within specific institutions such as schools or clinics, leaving gaps in community-based support. Many called for the creation of more local community resources, such as mental health centres, support groups, or informal gathering spaces, where young people could seek help without needing to go through formal routes like GPs or schools. They highlighted the importance of having a **“safe space”** where individuals, particularly young people, could discuss their mental health openly without fear of judgment.

**"We need more community groups where people could go and have tea and just chat."**

**"A communal work space for free so they can relax and study... bring back the youth centres."**

These interviewees believe that informal, community-oriented spaces would provide a more approachable environment for those seeking mental health-related support. They also mentioned that these spaces would function as hubs for reducing social isolation and building positive, healthy relationships with other young people.

Stigma surrounding mental health was another frequently raised issue, with some interviewees stating that societal attitudes towards mental health made it difficult for them to seek help. They felt that this stigma was particularly prevalent among young people, who may feel judged or unsupported when they express their mental health struggles. **Increased awareness campaigns, peer support programmes, and more visible mental health services** were suggested as ways to combat the stigma and encourage young people to seek help without fear of judgment.

**"I think mental health and wellbeing in Slough isn't looked at properly, especially with teenagers becoming more depressed."**

**"Most people nowadays hold a stigma around struggling with mental health, seeing it as something less than ideal."**

Council stakeholders reflected that while programmes had been rolled out in schools in the last two years, such as the Emotion Coaching for Slough Schools project, these findings suggest they had not had their desired impact and there is a need to revisit them. Stakeholders also said the findings confirm their assumptions that lack of awareness of available support and stigma associated with seeking support are the drivers behind a lack of uptake in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

**"We've had a very low level of referrals of young people who are in a relationship, and very little from those aged between 15 and 19."**

Council stakeholder

To address the challenges council staff identified the need to include young people in strategy discussions, but that when it had been done previously it had felt tokenistic. Stakeholders said including young people and creating a more joined-up approach to prevention and early intervention would help identify where current support gaps currently lay.

**"Young people are always happy to share their view, but having youth representative sat on boards felt tokenistic and wasn't useful. They need to see the feedback and outcomes for it to be meaningful for them."**

Council stakeholder

## Our physical health

Like mental health, long wait times for dental and healthcare appointments emerged as the most common issue among interviewees who talked about physical health. Some described waiting weeks or even years for essential treatment, which had a significant impact on their health and wellbeing.

**"I waited three years for braces, when some people only have to wait a couple of months."**

**"I had to wait 2 years for surgery, and I couldn't walk at the end of it."**

Difficulties in booking GP appointments also featured prominently in the responses. The **"8am rush"** to secure an appointment was a recurring issue, and interviewees expressed frustration with long queues and limited availability. Some also reported frustration over being unable to book non-urgent appointments, and that appointments could only be booked a maximum of one week in advance.

**"They don't take appointments that far in the future, so you have to keep calling, and it's a real hassle."**

**"It can take a very long time on the phone to book the appointment, and you can only book within a week."**

Several interviewees stated that their consultations felt **"rushed, impersonal, and superficial,"** leading to dissatisfaction with the quality of care they received. There was a perception that healthcare professionals were not providing the level of care and attention that patients expect, with several interviewees describing interactions with staff as **"disengaged and unhelpful."**

**"They seem bored like they don't want to help you and are quite rude, like the receptionist."**

**"Sometimes, it feels like they are just trying to pass patients through instead of dealing with issues."**

Interviewees also pointed to the need for more healthcare infrastructure, including additional clinics and healthcare professionals, to improve access to services. Young people felt that an increase in the number of healthcare clinics, hospitals, and staff situated in the local area would help address long waiting times and improve the quality of care.

**"We need more GPs and healthcare staff, better infrastructure, and more options to contact medical professionals."**

**"There aren't enough nearby facilities, so travelling to see a doctor can be inconvenient and time-consuming."**

## Our community

A lack of community connection and limited opportunities to engage with other young people in their local area was expressed. Several felt isolated and noted that they do not have a strong sense of belonging to their neighbourhood or community due to the absence of community-driven activities or accessible social spaces. **Several interviewees highlighted the need for more community events, spaces, and activities that would help foster a sense of unity and provide opportunities for residents to interact and build relationships.**

*"I feel as if there is not enough free funded activities in my community and there should be more events held where we can connect with one another in a safe environment."*

Others echoed the sentiment that there is a lack of spaces for young people to connect, leading to a feeling of disconnection from those living around them.

*"I don't really know anybody on my street let alone my community. More community sports events like charity football matches or running races would be great."*

Overall, interviewees feel that their local area would benefit from more accessible and advertised opportunities to engage with others.

*"Events are not shared via social media significantly before the event to permit people to plan, which affects engagement and attendance."*

There was a **desire for more inclusive and diverse community activities**. Several felt that existing events were not broad enough in their appeal or scope, often failing to cater to all age groups, cultural backgrounds, or interests. A recurring suggestion was for community activities to take place in well-known public spaces, such as parks and libraries, to make these events more accessible to all members of the community. There was also a call for more youth-oriented events, as well as tailored options for young adults and other underrepresented groups. Many felt that existing activities were either aimed at children or older adults, leaving a gap for those in between.

*"I think there are not enough things to do for 18-25 year olds... sports teams, scout groups, choirs etc. are either aimed at children or middle-aged people."*

*"I would like to see more active clubs in my area, not just for boys but for girls too."*

Some interviewees cited barriers to participation in community activities, such as clubs feeling intimidating or inaccessible. For some, geographical barriers also prevent them from engaging in local opportunities, as many volunteering or social activities are located too far away or are difficult to reach without particular types of transport i.e. cars or direct bus routes.

*"Clubs feel intimidating to join."*

*"Volunteering opportunities are too far and not in an easily accessible/walkable distance."*

*"More welcoming and more local groups would help."*

Several interviewees commented on the general atmosphere in their community, noting a perceived lack of **"kindness" and "warmth"** from those around them. Some felt that interactions in their local area were **"cold" or "negative"**, which hindered their ability to feel comfortable or connected to the wider community. This issue was often described as contributing to a more antisocial environment. Others mentioned that they wish for a more open and considerate community, where people are more welcoming to one another.

*"I would just like people to be more kind and polite, and sometimes just mind their own business and not worry about what others are doing or how they look."*

*"When I leave the house, all I see is people being negative, and it doesn't feel comforting."*

Another notable theme was concern for older residents who were identified as often isolated and lacking adequate support systems. Young people expressed a desire for more targeted activities and resources for the elderly, as well as better outreach to ensure that these individuals are not left behind.

*"More and more of the elderly are struggling in our communities. I feel that the council needs to take more of a hold on this problem."*

Interviewees also called for more activities for immigrant communities, especially older immigrants who may not have family nearby.

*"Many immigrants live without family and feel quite alone. There could be more activities for older immigrant people and better advertisement of these events."*



Volunteering was seen as a positive way to contribute to the community, but interviewees believed there could be more opportunities available, particularly for younger people. Many would like to see a broader range of volunteering roles that cater to different interests and abilities, with more accessible and local opportunities. The responses suggest that making volunteering easier and more convenient could lead to greater participation, particularly from the younger generation. There also needs to be better advertising and communication of existing opportunities.

***“There should be more opportunities for young people to have more knowledge about the activities that are already running.”***

***“I know there are some opportunities such as volunteering and clubs but I don’t know how to apply to these things.”***

***“These opportunities need to be advertised more.”***

## Our futures

The rising cost of living, particularly housing and essential bills, is a significant concern for interviewees. The families of many of the interviewees are struggling to afford the increasing prices of rent, utilities, and council tax. This issue is especially pressing for those in lower-income brackets and single-parent households. The pressure from high housing costs is compounded by inflated prices in supermarkets and other essential services, with some households worrying about affording necessities such as food.

### Our finances

There is frustration over the growing burden of housing and living costs, particularly rent charged by private landlords and agencies. Some suggest that local councils should impose rent caps to ease the financial pressure on families. Others note that the rising cost of utilities, groceries, and council tax is making it increasingly hard to maintain financial stability. Many also shared anxieties about the sustainability of their current financial situations as essential costs rise, which leaves little room for non-essential expenditures.

***“Private agencies charge too much rent for housing which end up taking a large portion of our family budget.”***

***“Household bills have also gone up drastically, making the cost of living really squeezed.”***

Student interviewees reported significant financial strain, particularly regarding student loans and the cost of education. Many were concerned about the long-term impact of student debt, as well as the challenges of covering day-to-day expenses while studying. This financial pressure often leads to anxiety about their future financial stability, with some expressing concerns about being in debt for the rest of their lives.

For many students, loans are a necessary part of funding their education, but they come with the burden of long-term repayment. Student loans contribute to a sense of financial worry for young people, as they balance paying for education and daily living expenses. Students feel that there needs to be more flexibility or assistance in managing student debt, with some suggesting that the repayment process should be made easier or that more financial support should be available during their studies.

***“Student loans can be a burden for me, and the staggering amount of money can be an issue to pay off.”***

***“More financial support for students, student debt is too much.”***

Several interviewees felt that current financial support systems are insufficient, particularly for middle-income families, single-parent households, and students. The lack of adequate benefits and financial

assistance means that many individuals and families struggle to make ends meet, despite being employed or studying. Interviewees highlighted the financial struggles of middle-income earners and single-parent households who may not qualify for substantial benefits, but still face significant financial strain due to the high cost of living.

***“There is very little support for middle-income earners, especially in higher education.”***

## Our employment

Many interviewees reported that the lack of work experience among young people is a significant barrier to employment. Many young people feel trapped in a cycle of needing previous work experience to get a job, while needing an initial job opportunity to gain experience. This frustration is exacerbated by the fact that most entry-level jobs still require prior work experience, making it challenging for young people to enter the job market. There is a clear demand from young people for more opportunities that do not require prior experience. **Some suggest trial periods or part-time jobs that allow them to gain the necessary experience while balancing education.**

***“Many positions require skills or experience that I haven’t had the chance to build yet. I feel like I’m stuck in this cycle of needing experience to get a job but needing a job to gain experience. It’s frustrating.”***

***“All places require some sort of experience and being only 16 I have not got any.”***

Many interviewees spoke about the scarcity of job opportunities specifically tailored for young people. They expressed frustration over the lack of part-time jobs or entry-level roles that take into consideration their educational commitments. Limited job openings and a perceived stagnating job market in the region added to this frustration.

***“I would want to see more opportunities for students to be able to work whilst in education.”***

***“I gave this a poor rating as it has become very hard to find a job in Slough and the job market has been stagnant for a few years.”***

There was a general sense that securing jobs often relies more on personal connections than qualifications. Young people felt disadvantaged if they did not know someone within a company. Many interviewees felt that the job market is not based on merit but rather on who you know. There were calls for more transparency and fairness in the hiring process, with some suggesting that all candidates, regardless of personal connections, should be given an equal opportunity to demonstrate their skills and qualifications.

***“I know people who have jobs just because they know somebody who works there or it’s one of their parents’ friends.”***

***“If you have good connections, it’s easier to get a job.”***

Some interviewees felt that there was a lack of structured support for young job seekers. They expressed a need for better job training programs, more guidance from job centres, and career development resources specifically tailored for young people entering the workforce for the first time. There were calls for more robust support systems to help young people develop the skills and experience they need to secure employment, such as mentorship programs and networking events.

***“I would like to see more professional career support for young graduates in Slough.”***

***“There should be more resources, like job training programs specifically designed for teens to build skills and gain experience.”***

Some interviewees mentioned that balancing work with their studies was a major challenge. Employers often require long hours that do not accommodate a student’s schedule, making it difficult for young people to maintain both their education and a part-time job. Interviewees indicated that they would like to see more job opportunities that consider the needs of students, particularly jobs with flexible hours and part-time roles that allow them to gain experience while continuing their education.

***“It’s hard to find a job that will hire someone with little experience and limited availability due to school.”***

***“More part-time jobs that understand the balance we need with school would help.”***

The stakeholders we spoke to from educational institutions and SEGRO, owner of Slough Trading Estate, were unsurprised by the challenges outlined by young people. They noted that while some work is being done to provide young people with work experience and employability support, there is a lack of skills and capacity across Slough to deliver a universal offer.

***“There’s only two people trained to Level 6 [in Career Guidance] in the whole of Slough. That’s not enough to ensure everyone can access it.”***

Careers Advisor

SEGRO noted that while they have received positive feedback on their efforts to improve access to work experience - such as through sector workshops and mentoring - they recognise that more can be done. Upcoming work will include a research project to understand and map skills and apprenticeship needs. However, all the stakeholders we spoke to about employment and employability agreed that the

local offer needs to be better coordinated across different partners and more effectively advertised to young people.

**"What's the point in creating the opportunities if young people just don't know about them or understand them?"**

Education consultant

**"I'd be keen to understand the correlation between the closing down of town centre businesses and the loss of jobs. A lot of weekend jobs aren't there for young people anymore and that would give them that steppingstone to other employment."**

Development Manager, SEGRO



## Our education

Young people raised issues relating to educational quality, teacher competence, student behaviour, resource allocation, and access to higher education. The general sentiment toward education was mixed, with concerns raised about the disparity between grammar and non-selective schools and the accessibility of post-secondary education opportunities.

A significant number of participants highlighted concerns around the quality of teaching and the level of training provided to educators in Slough. Interviewees stated that while grammar schools tend to attract more skilled teachers, non-selective schools are often left with less experienced staff, leading to disparities in educational outcomes and negatively impacting students' education.

Several interviewees mentioned the need for more rigorous teacher training and inspections, with some calling for Ofsted to intervene more frequently. Others believed that improving teacher pay could help retain better talent in non-selective schools, suggesting that financial incentives could be a solution to addressing the imbalance.

**"Some schools go unchecked for so long, their teachers aren't trained and qualified to teach children."**

**"Too many good teachers go to grammar schools, regular schools are left behind."**

Issues around behaviour management and the school environment were prominent concerns among interviewees. There was a strong call for schools in Slough to implement stricter behaviour management systems to create a more conducive learning environment. Interviewees emphasised that poor behaviour often went unaddressed by teachers, resulting in classrooms where students who want to learn are frequently disrupted by those who do not. Some participants also noted that stronger enforcement of rules could improve overall academic performance and help maintain a focus on education.

**"Teachers take it lightly when students mess about; they don't see it as disruptive."**

Challenges around accessing sixth forms, universities, and post-secondary opportunities were frequently mentioned by interviewees. Many shared concerns about the limited availability of sixth-form places, forcing students to either settle for schools or colleges outside of Slough or compromise on the subjects they wish to study. This lack of availability also leads to longer commutes, adding to the overall strain on students. There was a call for more local options, including more sixth forms and universities, to help students stay within Slough for their education. Several participants also mentioned the need for more apprenticeship and work experience programmes to better prepare students for employment after school.

**"A lot of students end up not doing the subjects they want for sixth form due to a lack of spaces."**

**"We need more colleges and universities in Slough so that we can have better opportunities for careers."**

Many interviewees spoke about the divide between grammar schools and non-selective schools in Slough. Grammar schools were perceived to offer a higher standard of education, with better behaviour management and more motivated students. In contrast, non-selective schools are seen as having poorer behaviour and less qualified teachers, leading to lower educational outcomes. This disparity leads to concerns about fairness and equal access to quality education. It was felt that more should be done to bring non-selective schools up to the same standard as grammar schools.

**“Grammar schools are more likely to have good behaviour compared to non-selective schools.”**

**“Non-selective schools have poorer behaviour.”**

A lack of resources, particularly in non-selective schools, was a recurring issue. Interviewees mentioned that there are often not enough textbooks, revision materials, or after-school study groups to support students' learning. This lack of resources was perceived as a barrier to academic success, especially for students who need more support or are preparing for important exams like GCSEs and A-levels. Some interviewees noted that better resource allocation could lead to more opportunities for extracurricular activities and targeted interventions to support struggling students.

**“My school lacks key revision resources, and in some departments, there aren't enough class textbooks.”**

**“More resources are needed to help students thrive.”**

Travel was a common concern among interviewees, especially for those attending sixth forms or universities outside of Slough. Several interviewees mentioned that the lack of local options forces them to spend significant amounts of money and time on travel, which adds to their stress. Several suggested that schools and universities offer more online learning options to help ease the burden of travel. Others called for discounted travel fares for students or loyalty bonuses to help offset the financial strain.

**“I have to travel out of Slough for school because the schools in Slough don't meet my needs.”**

**“Discounted travel or loyalty bonuses for students would help ease the burden.”**

## Our homes

The most common complaint amongst interviewees who chose to discuss homes and housing was around quality of housing (particularly in council properties/social housing). Issues such as mould, leaks, and broken appliances were all mentioned. Interviewees also highlighted both health and comfort problems because of poor housing conditions.

**“[I'm] living in a council house and there is constant moulding and leaks. These issues have been persistent for over three years.”**

**“There is mould growing on the walls and ceiling, the radiators and other appliances are very rusted and old so do not work well at all.”**

Several interviewees expressed frustration over the deterioration of their homes and had concern about such issues leading to long-term discomfort and having a direct impact on quality of life, affecting their health and well-being.

**“Young children are sensitive to ill-maintained conditions from housing such as mould and damp.”**

Whether they are council tenants or private tenants, several interviewees state that, despite multiple complaints, there is a lack of will to resolve long-standing issues.

**“We would like to see the council following through with their planned actions.”**

**“These issues have been raised to the landlord and estate agency, but they haven't done much about this.”**

Multiple interviewees shared their frustration with the Council's inaction despite several complaints over some years. The general sentiment was that whilst the Council might respond initially, they rarely complete the necessary repairs or maintenance, leaving tenants in poor living conditions for extended periods. This ongoing lack of response has led to a growing sense of distrust and helplessness amongst young people, who feel unsupported and left to **'fend for themselves.'**

There was equal frustration shown for private landlords who have failed to address essential repairs or maintain properties to acceptable standards. Some interviewees described their landlords as **“neglectful”**, with landlords failing to complete repairs or take responsibility for issues that directly impact tenants' living conditions. This neglect created a feeling of powerlessness among residents.

**“The landlord just says he will fix things, but he hasn't fixed anything yet and the rent keeps increasing.”**

**“The landlord doesn't care about us. He says we have to solve our own issues.”**

The availability of affordable housing was another concern for interviewees, many of whom felt that current options did not meet the needs of low-income residents or those looking for better living conditions. Interviewees expressed frustration over the lack of affordable housing that met basic living standards, which has contributed to their housing struggles.

***"The Council and government can provide more housing opportunities (more affordably priced houses in a much better condition)."***

***"More housing programs that assist people like me in finding better living situations."***

Rent prices was another issue raised, with many reporting that rising rent prices make it difficult to live in Slough, especially considering the quality of housing available for rent. This mismatch between rent prices and housing quality has left many young people feeling trapped in housing that is not **"fit for purpose"** but unaffordable to leave.

***"The monthly rent price is extremely high, and also it is hard to find a house in a decent condition for a reasonable price."***

This cost versus availability imbalance has led to overcrowding, as several interviewees mention that they do not have the space they require for their families. There were concerns over privacy and comfort, due to the small size of some houses or the number of people sharing the space.

***"A three-person family with two teenagers of opposite sexes in a two-bedroom flat... [it is] uncomfortable and decreases their quality of living."***

***"I have to sleep on the sofa so my mum and sister can each have a bed to sleep on."***

## Our digital lives

A significant portion of interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with the reliability and speed of their internet connections. Many cited frequent outages and slow speeds, leading to major disruptions in their daily activities, such as schoolwork, gaming, and work calls.

***"Once the Wi-Fi went out for two weeks, whilst we were still paying for it."***

***"It interrupts watching [shows] and buffers for long periods, affecting my ability to enjoy leisure activities."***

While complaints about unreliable connections were common, several other interviewees expressed general satisfaction with their internet access, particularly those with faster, stable connections. These interviewees were content with how their internet service supported their daily tasks, from homework to entertainment. However, even among those who were satisfied, there were occasional remarks about minor issues, such as intermittent drops in connection speed.

Interviewees frequently brought up concerns about the availability and quality of public Wi-Fi in their area. Many felt that while public spaces such as libraries, cafes, and hospitals offer Wi-Fi, the access is often cumbersome, requiring account sign-ins or passwords. Several people suggested the need for more accessible, password-free Wi-Fi in these areas, and others mentioned gaps in coverage in places like on buses and in parks.

***"Wi-Fi should be made free in more places for people who sometimes can't afford data."***

Many interviewees were dissatisfied with the cost of internet service relative to the quality of connection they received. Several interviewees described their frustration with paying for a service that did not meet their expectations, particularly when it involved slow speeds or frequent outages.

***"£50 or more a month for internet that doesn't perform properly is absurd."***

The high costs associated with changing providers or upgrading devices also left some feeling trapped in contracts with poor service.

***"We wanted to change providers but can't because they charge exorbitant prices."***

A recurring theme in the responses was the negative impact that unreliable internet connections can have on education and work. Several interviewees highlighted how poor connectivity affected their ability to attend online classes, complete school assignments, or participate in work meetings.



## Calls to action

The peer research findings have identified a range of challenges that young people face across Slough. Below we summarise the key challenges by theme, and recommended actions to address these. However, as identified through our consultation with stakeholders, these challenges are in fact symptomatic of more in-trenched system failures. At the heart of this are three core concerns: first, a lack of joined-up, multi-agency working focused on supporting young people; second, the exclusion of young people from meaningful conversations about the issues affecting them and the support they need; and third, the impact of the wider polycrisis affecting councils across the country, which has placed immense pressure on local resources and severely limited the capacity to deliver effective support.

This peer-led needs assessment highlights the complex and interconnected challenges faced by young people in Slough. It calls for a coordinated, inclusive, and youth-empowered response across key areas:



Theme	Young People's Voices	Challenge	Aims	Outcomes	Recommendations
<b>Inequalities and Discrimination</b>	<p><i>"I have gone through some occasions where I have been discriminated against due to my religious beliefs and cultural differences."</i></p> <p><i>"It's already unfair to families who are struggling financially and having to pay for your child who's just turned 16 to travel as an adult."</i></p>	<p>Young people experience religious and racial discrimination, which is sometimes dismissed by authorities, creating feelings of being unwelcome and unsupported. They feel there is a lack of culturally sensitive help and support in Slough, particularly for women, and that the cost of public transport disproportionately affects some young people. The unequal distribution of resources and activities leads to systemic disparities in access to opportunity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build an equitable and inclusive town for young people by actively addressing discrimination, creating access to culturally sensitive and affordable services, and promoting fairness in opportunities and support systems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people in Slough feel safer, more respected, and a stronger sense of belonging within their community, knowing that discriminatory behaviours are actively challenged, and their cultural needs are understood and met by accessible services.</li> <li>Young people have more equitable access to quality education, affordable services like public transport, and culturally appropriate support systems, leading to improved overall well-being and greater opportunities for personal and academic growth.</li> </ul>	<p>Establish a youth-led initiative, empowered with resources and direct channels to Slough partnership decision-making boards, to lead the development and implementation of an equalities strategy that authentically reflects the experiences and priorities of young people in Slough.</p>

Theme	Young People's Voices	Challenge	Aims	Outcomes	Recommendations
<b>Access to Creativity</b>	<p><i>"Locations that offer access to this sort of activity are basically non-existent in Slough."</i></p> <p><i>"Once I hit 18, there isn't much... I wanted to continue playing music in Slough but couldn't find anywhere to do so."</i></p>	<p>Young people feel that Slough lacks accessible, affordable creative spaces and activities, and that existing opportunities are poorly promoted, leading to a sense of disconnection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empower young people to shape Slough's creative landscape by embedding their voices in the design of cultural programmes and ensuring that opportunities are communicated through accessible, youth-informed channels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people in Slough feel a greater sense of ownership and pride in the town's cultural life, as their ideas and identities are reflected in creative programmes that they have helped shape.</li> <li>Creative opportunities are more visible, accessible, and relevant to young people, with information shared through platforms and formats they trust and engage with, leading to increased participation and connection.</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure young people have a leading role in the delivery of Slough's Cultural Revival – a £300,000 investment in arts and creativity – by embedding their voices in programme design, communication strategies, and advocacy efforts to attract further external investment that reflects their cultural ambitions and needs.</p>

Theme	Young People's Voices	Challenge	Aims	Outcomes	Recommendations
<b>Fun Spaces- Enjoyment &amp; Recreation</b>	<p>"Our local cinema was shut down, which makes it hard for families like mine to enjoy activities locally."</p> <p>"Leisure activities are too expensive, making it hard for many to participate."</p>	<p>Young people feel that Slough lacks affordable and appealing recreational options, with limited access to enjoyable, youth-friendly spaces and activities contributing to frustration and disengagement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore and support the creation of more accessible and community-led entertainment options.</li> <li>• Increase availability and affordability of sports and leisure facilities.</li> <li>• Improve awareness and participation in accessible health and team-based physical activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people have access to a wider range of accessible and affordable options for leisure, arts, sports, and social activities within Slough, catering to different age groups and interests, reducing the need to travel outside the area.</li> <li>• More opportunities for engagement in recreational activities, including youth centres, community events, and accessible digital resources, would foster stronger social connections, reduce feelings of isolation, and contribute to improved mental and physical well-being among young people in Slough.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-design a network of inclusive, youth-friendly recreational spaces—both indoor and outdoor—through partnerships with local stakeholders, ensuring affordability, cultural sensitivity, and a variety of activities that reflect young people's interests and identities.</li> <li>• Prioritise spaces that provide alternatives to parks, especially for older teens and young adults.</li> </ul>

Theme	Young People's Voices	Challenge	Aims	Outcomes	Recommendations
<b>Feeling Safe</b>	<p>"I feel very unsafe walking alone in Slough at night whether using public transport or near my house."</p> <p>"A lot of knife crime, gangs, drug dealing. Alleyways are unsafe."</p>	<p>Young people are concerned about knife crime and gang violence, feeling unsafe in certain areas, especially at night.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a clearer understanding of young people's perceptions of safety in Slough's public spaces through their ongoing direct involvement.</li> <li>• Enhance the safety and security of public spaces, particularly during nighttime, to foster a greater sense of well-being among young people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving safety and feeling of security, which is about a programme of creating safety – driven through collaboration between local partners and young people</li> <li>• Reduce social isolation and recognise and respond to the structural inequalities, which are the root causes of 'symptoms' like knife crime and violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a youth-led safety initiative that works with local partners—including Thames Valley Police, community safety teams, and schools—to identify areas of concern, co-design interventions to reduce fear of crime, and improve trust between young people and services. Focus on visible safety measures, inclusive public spaces, and youth-informed responses to issues like criminal exploitation and harassment.</li> </ul>
<b>Promote Green Social Action</b>	<p>"Slough should spend more time improving its green areas and adding more greenery. It is not only good for pollution... but also helps mental well-being."</p> <p>"Woodlands and nature are more difficult to connect with as you would have to drive around places back and forth."</p>	<p>While green spaces exist, young people desire more natural features to improve the environment and their mental well-being.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people actively lead the enhancement and activation of Slough's green spaces through social action initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people increase their environmental awareness, cultivate a sense of agency and collective responsibility, improve their well-being,</li> <li>• Local people experience strengthened community bonds through collaborative environmental stewardship.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a youth-led environmental initiative, equipped with resources and support, to lead social action projects that diversify and enhance Slough's green spaces, positioning the town as an #will hub for youth-led environmental change.</li> </ul>

Theme	Young People's Voices	Challenge	Aims	Outcomes	Recommendations
Health	<p>"Getting a therapist has never been easy... there's a really long waiting list."</p> <p>"I had to wait 2 years for surgery, and I couldn't walk at the end of it."</p> <p>"Safeguarding teams are run by teachers that many students would not like to approach about anything, let alone mental health concerns."</p>	<p>Young people report long waiting times for both physical and mental health services, and some express a desire for more accessible, community-based mental health support, as an alternative to current NHS provision which can feel distant, delayed, or difficult to navigate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve timely access to initial health advice, support, and referral pathways for young people in Slough.</li> <li>Work with commissioners and healthcare professionals to explore and develop a more diverse mental health support offer, including the potential to leverage community-based provision through voluntary and youth sector organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people in Slough will experience faster access to appropriate health and well-being support services, both physical and mental, with reduced waiting times and more easily navigable pathways, addressing concerns about lengthy delays and inconvenient locations.</li> <li>Young people will increase awareness, confidence, and well-being in relation to their health. They will feel better equipped to understand their health needs, know how to access available support, and feel empowered to advocate for their own well-being.</li> </ul>	<p>Develop a youth-informed mental health support pathway in collaboration with local commissioners, health services, and voluntary sector organisations, expanding access to community-based, non-clinical services. Embed trusted, approachable support in both school and community settings to ensure young people can access help early, safely, and without stigma.</p>

Theme	Young People's Voices	Challenge	Aims	Outcomes	Recommendations
Community	<p>"A lot of the events that are accessible are targeted at younger people and kids between the age of 16-18 don't have places to socialise."</p> <p>"We need more community groups where people could go and have tea and just chat."</p>	<p>Young people feel a lack of community spaces hinders community spirit and opportunities to connect.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish and enhance accessible community spaces that foster social connection and engagement for and with young people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people will have access to a network of enhanced and newly established community spaces – such as youth centres, activity hubs, and accessible green areas with shelters – that serve as vibrant and welcoming social hubs.</li> <li>These spaces will provide opportunities for informal interaction, peer support, skill-building, and the development of positive relationships, directly addressing the need for places to socialize and connect.</li> <li>Young people will experience a stronger sense of belonging, community mattering, and increased social capital through their engagement with these accessible community spaces.</li> <li>Feeling connected to their peers and their local area will contribute to improved well-being, reduced feelings of isolation, and a greater sense of collective identity and investment in Slough's future.</li> </ul>	<p>This partnership should seek support from Platform Places when they welcome their new cohort of pilot projects, however this can be started without their support.</p>

Theme	Young People's Voices	Challenge	Aims	Outcomes	Recommendations
<b>Education</b>	<i>"Young people don't feel comfortable approaching teachers about their issues."</i>	Young people feel that mainstream schools do not always provide the support they need, particularly when it comes to mental health and pastoral care. Many do not feel comfortable approaching teachers with personal issues, and some feel that educational inequalities are reinforced by inconsistent access to experienced staff and trusted adults.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equip educators with the skills and understanding to effectively support young people facing various challenges.</li> <li>Increase the availability of accessible and trusted support within educational settings for young people facing difficulties.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skilled and approachable teachers and pastoral staff within schools will create a trusting environment where young people confidently seek well-being support.</li> <li>Schools will offer easily accessible, integrated well-being support, including mental health resources and clear pathways to specialist help, ensuring timely assistance for young people.</li> </ul>	Work with schools, youth services, and education leaders to improve the quality and consistency of pastoral support by embedding trusted adults and mental health provision across all educational settings. Prioritise equity by investing in training, retention, and visibility of staff who reflect the diversity of Slough's student population, and create safe, youth-led channels for feedback and challenge.

Theme	Young People's Voices	Challenge	Aims	Outcomes	Recommendations
<b>Employment</b>	<p><i>"Many positions require skills or experience that I haven't had the chance to build yet."</i></p> <p><i>"Cost is unaffordable for young people, despite railcards."</i></p>	Young people perceive a lack of flexible part-time work, with opportunities often based on connections, and limited awareness of available jobs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand opportunities for young people to pre-employment support, build confidence, gain work experience and access flexible skill development and employment within the local business sectors.</li> <li>Promote the public sector as a source of employment and work experience for young people in Slough.</li> <li>Improve the accessibility and awareness of education, training, and employment opportunities for young people in Slough through a centralized and user-friendly platform.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people will have increased access to flexible part-time work and clear pathways to skill development and employment within local businesses and the public sector, and enhancing awareness of available opportunities.</li> <li>Young people will benefit from comprehensive pre-employment support and early vocational options, building their confidence and equipping them with the skills and experience needed to successfully navigate the Slough job market.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a youth employment taskforce—bringing together local businesses, education providers, the public sector, and youth representatives—to expand access to flexible, entry-level jobs and meaningful work experience. Prioritise visibility, accessibility, and equity by developing a central platform for local opportunities, and tackle structural barriers through targeted pre-employment support and transport solutions.</li> </ul>

