



Her Majesty's  
Inspectorate of  
Probation

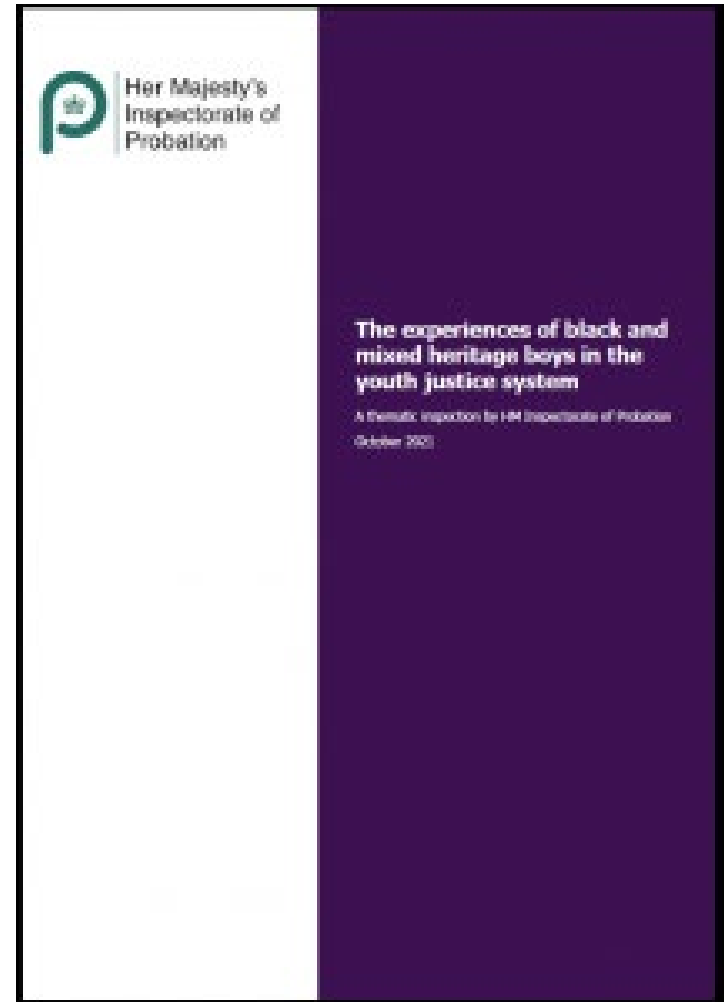
# EXPERIENCES OF BLACK AND MIXED HERITAGE BOYS IN THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM

04 NOVEMBER 2021



## The context

- Less than **1%** of 10-17 year olds are in the YJS in any one year (black or white).
- Between 2010 and 2020, the proportion of black and mixed heritage boys cautioned or sentenced increased from 10% to **21%**.
- **41%** of children in youth custody in the year ending March 2020 were black or mixed heritage.





## Methodology

- **9 fieldwork sites**
- **173 cases** reviewed
- **99 case managers** interviewed
- **45 pre-sentence reports** inspected
- **25 remand cases** assessed
- **38 boys** spoken with, including a small number of parents
- **Survey**
- **Focus groups**
- **National meetings**





## Profile of children

60%

of children in post-court cases were, or had been, **excluded** from school.

> 1/3

of the boys had been affected by **criminal exploitation**.

50%

of the boys (where recorded) had experienced **racial discrimination**.



## Profile of children

1/3

were subject to **Child in Need or Child Protection plans**, the majority were not heavily convicted.

> 1/4

of children had a **disability** (where the information had been recorded).

2x

more likely for black Caribbean and mixed white and black Caribbean children to have been **permanently excluded** from school compared to their white peers (2019-20).



## What did the boys tell us?

- Stressful and traumatic environments to grow up in
- Discrimination, stereotyping and 'adultification'
- Poor relationships with the police
- Positive relationships with YOT workers – but interventions felt 'tick box' and unchallenging

***"Sometimes I feel like it's targeted because if I was the only black person sitting in a park and you're profiled as a drug dealer... realistically, you're just in the park, trying to have your own space and just get out of the house."***



## Governance and leadership

Disproportionality is prioritised in **youth justice plans** but there has been limited action and progress.

**YOS boards** lack detailed knowledge about the needs of black and mixed heritage boys.

Most **YOS managers** are strong advocates for black and mixed heritage boys in the justice system.

Management oversight was inadequate in **over half of cases**.





## Staffing

Most staff had received unconscious bias training and race equality **training** but casework suggested this is not sufficient.

Staff **induction** and **supervision** is not sufficiently focussed on diversity.

There is a lack of black and mixed heritage male **staff and mentors** in most services.







## Partnerships and services

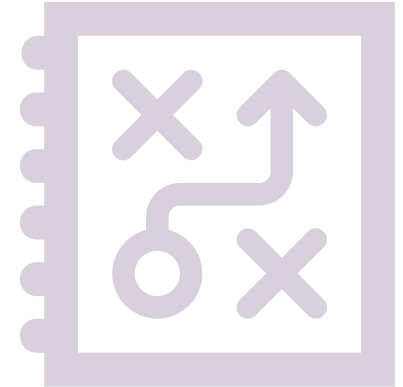
Concern about the use of **stop and search and forceful restraint** used on black and mixed heritage boys – especially in London.

Lack of specialist support available to the **parents** of black and mixed heritage boys.

**Unmet special educational needs** (SEN) and speech, language and communication (SLC) needs considered higher for this cohort.

Most youth justice services commented on **disproportionate exclusion** for black and mixed heritage boys.

In eight of 25 remand cases, accessing suitable and timely **accommodation placements** was an issue.



## Assessment, planning and delivery

In statutory cases, only **10%** of assessments explored the impact of **discrimination** and **24%** of plans took sufficient account of **diversity**.

Where needed:

- **substance misuse** was addressed in **53%** of cases.
- **mental health** was addressed in **48%** of cases
- **discrimination** was addressed in **40%** of cases
- **self-identity** was addressed in **29%** of cases.



**USER VOICE**

**“BLACK IS GUILTY  
IN THEIR EYES”**

**EXPERIENCES OF BLACK AND MIXED  
HERITAGE BOYS IN YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICES**

JUNE 2021

**WE SPOKE TO 38**

**CHILDREN ACROSS 9 YOIs**

- **User Voice is a nationwide UK charity created and run by people with lived experience of the criminal justice system.**
- We wanted to know the particular difficulties that black and mixed heritage children experience when supervised by youth offending services.
- Trained peer researchers engaged in conversation via semi structured phone interviews and recorded their responses.
- Through this consultation we were able to hear directly from black and mixed heritage boys and present their unfiltered feedback.

# USER VOICE

*“When I was first arrested, I was with my friend that is a couple years older than me and white. Despite us both being charged and arrested that day he was not on the order with me as the charges were dropped against him, he got N.F.A (no further action) and I was left to suffer the consequences alone. There’s no doubt in my mind that if he was black we both would have been in trouble. It didn’t even matter about the age difference, the system just stereotyped me as guilty because of the colour of my skin. Black is guilty in their eyes.”*

*““Yeah, yeah literally that’s what came to my mind it’s more like therapy to be fair... we were talking about things that affect me... so that was beneficial to me. It made me understand more things that I didn’t really like to think about, different aspects. I actually realise some things were kind of important that I kind of brush off but it was good to talk about it because it kind of made me see things that were beneficial.”*

## **USER VOICE PEER RESEARCHER:**

*“Do you speak about it [stop and search] at the YOS?”*

## **YOUNG PERSON 1:**

*“No, it’s not that deep.”*

## **YOUNG PERSON 2:**

*“Nah, not really, there’s no point really.”*

*“My YOS worker listens to what I have to say, which I respect because it makes our conversations meaningful. X [YOS worker] always seems to give me good advice and although I do not always see eye to eye with it, I respect the honesty and the effort he puts in to work with me...  
I’m sure, but I must admit X [YOS worker] is the one that helped see college was an option for me. I already had a job but over time X [YOS worker] slowly pushed me to pursue my interests and look into college courses.”*



## Recommendations

The Home Office should:



publish national stop and search and released under investigation statistics, broken down by age and ethnicity.

Police should (currently consulting with HMICFRS):



share local stop and search released under investigation data for children, broken down by ethnicity, with their Youth Justice Partnership Board.

Ofsted should:



ensure that schools are ambitious for all children and that there is an accurate and timely response to special educational needs.



## Recommendations

Local Authorities should:



make sure suitable accommodation placements are available for children who are facing custodial remand or being released from custody.

YOS Partnership Boards should:



have a vision and a strategy for improving outcomes for black and mixed heritage boys



have set targets for improvement in place and mechanisms to assess if outcomes are improving



contribute data from each member's individual agencies identifying areas of disproportionality.



## Recommendations

YOS managers should:



make sure that staff understand what is expected of them in their work with black and mixed heritage boys and that they are trained and supported



improve the quality of management oversight



address gaps in specialist provisions for black and mixed heritage boys.



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## Next steps

The full report is available on the HM Inspectorate of Probation website.

The report will be followed by an effective practice guide.



[www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation](http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation)

