

Improving outcomes for young black and Muslim males in the Criminal Justice System

**Summary of the interim report of the Young Review Task Group
prepared for: Chris Grayling, Secretary of State, Ministry of
Justice**

January 2014

Interim report summary

Young Review Task Group purpose

1. Established following a roundtable with key stakeholders held in March 2013, the Young Review Task Group's aim is to influence the development and delivery of new commissioning frameworks to ensure they incorporate effective measures to improve outcomes for young black and/or Muslim offenders aged 18-24. To this end, we will support and promote the development and dissemination of a range of practical and powerful recommendations for policy makers and CJS providers.
1. Our objectives are to:
 - Contribute to the commissioning design to ensure the needs of young black and/or Muslim service users are addressed effectively;
 - Provide examples of best practice in service delivery to young black and/or Muslim offenders;
 - Improve collation and understanding of the evidence relating to young black and/or Muslim men in the CJS;
 - Assist in the development of an effective shared approach that addresses the disproportionately poorer outcomes experienced by young black and/or Muslim males across the justice system.
2. The interim report on the first phase of the Task Group's work was produced at the request of Chris Grayling, Secretary of State for Justice and is informed by an intelligence gathering exercise led by the Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG), in partnership with Clinks, with representatives from the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), the private and social enterprise sector, statutory organisations, government officials and the academic community. For a list of members of the Task Group and those who have contributed to the expert groups, please see appendix 1.
3. In the autumn of 2014, we will make recommendations to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and independent providers.
4. This summary of the interim report includes a brief context for the report including current trends, existing research, and literature on identifying the needs and experiences of young black and/or Muslim men in prison and resettlement, the Task Groups guiding principles and finally our initial recommendations.

Context

2. There is an abundance of evidence demonstrating the disproportionately high numbers of black and/or Muslim people at every stage of the Criminal Justice System (CJS). For example:
 - Of 26.1% of prisoners who self identify as Black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME), black persons account for 13.1%, compared with approximately 2.9% of the over 18 population recorded in the 2011 Census;ⁱ

- Similarly Muslim prisoners account for 13.4% of the prison population compared with 4.2 % in the 2011 Census;ⁱⁱ
 - This figure has risen sharply since 2002 when Muslim prisoners were 7.7% of the prison population.ⁱⁱⁱ
3. The focus of the Young Review Task Group is on young black and/or Muslim men aged between 18 and 24^{iv}. This presents an immediate challenge as most existing data and research focuses on *all* people of BAME origin and of all ages and/or faiths. Where data is disaggregated, broad categories such as ‘mixed origin’ or Muslim are used, when neither group is culturally or ethnically homogenous.
 4. However, there is evidence that demonstrates there are critically high proportions^v of young black and/or Muslim men at all stages of the CJS and that they are reporting the least positive perceptions of prison life compared to all other groups.^{vi}
 5. There have been a number of reviews and initiatives in response to this issue. The Task Group aims to build on this learning to embed practical sustainable solutions which respond effectively to improve outcomes for the groups on which we have focused
 6. The disparities experienced by young black and/or Muslim men in the CJS are part of a complex mix of educational, employment, health and social disadvantage that have characterised many of their lives.
 7. For example, according to the Office of National Statistics (ONS), more young black men are unemployed between the ages of 16-24 years – 55% – than are employed.^{vii}
 8. Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) has noted the very high rates of social and economic deprivation among Muslims – including particularly high rates of unemployment, low income, low educational attainment and poor health.^{viii}
 9. This complexity should serve as a warning against making over-simplified assumptions about the connections between race, ethnicity and criminal justice outcomes and points to the need for a multi-agency, multi-partner approach.^{ix}

Guiding principles

10. Informed by evidence from members of the Task Group and desk research, we have identified five guiding principles for improving outcomes among young black and/or Muslim offenders:
 - **Ethnicity, faith and culture** has a key role in promoting sustained desistance from crime:
 - **Leadership from government and statutory agencies is essential** to ensure a proactive approach to diversity, inclusion and cultural competence and in the delivery of criminal justice services
 - **The experience, understanding and knowledge that resides in communities is crucial** in supporting offenders to desist in prison and ‘through the gate’.
 - **Commissioning frameworks must identify and address specific needs** associated with young black and/or Muslim men.

- **Systematic and meaningful consultation with service users** that provides evidence of the reasons for and solutions to the disproportionate numbers of young black and/or Muslim males in the CJS.

Interim recommendations

Based on our guiding principles the Young Review Task Group recommends:

- 1. Interventions to support desistance must be individualised, flexible and holistic, recognising that individuals might have specific needs or experiences as a result of their ethnicity and/or faith.**
- 2. That independent providers under Transforming Rehabilitation should examine the diversity of their staff and supply chain, and evaluate how their own policies reflect previous learning.**
- 3. A central pro-active strategy to ensure that existing learning from previous reviews of this issue is used to inform priorities in the re-configured context.**
- 4. Strategic focus on scaling up pockets of identified good-practice to build cultural competence and enable staff to mainstream equality in their work.**
- 5. That the Ministry of Justice works with the Task Group during the remainder of the Young Review to explore mechanisms for actively engaging with representatives from the BAME voluntary and community sector and others with relevant expertise, to support the development of policy and commissioning strategies that address the needs of this group.**
- 6. That in commissioning services, providers are explicitly required to include consideration of young black and/or Muslim men in their needs assessments and that monitoring mechanisms are put in place to ensure that they do so.**
- 7. Assessment of bids should ensure a credible approach to black and/or Muslim offenders. This should be made explicit to tier 1 providers, thus encouraging them to consider dedicated resources for VCSE organisations with local expertise and relevant cultural knowledge that can demonstrably meet the needs of black and Muslim offenders.**
- 8. Commissioning frameworks should ensure that organisations throughout the supply chain are able to use their expertise and influence at a strategic level. This should take place both through dialogue with Tier 1 providers regarding the design and evaluation of local services and/or with national policy makers about strategic and policy direction and commissioning strategies.**
- 9. An urgent review of rules governing the possibility of people who have offended volunteering and/or working in prisons.**

Future work programme

Between the completion of this report and the publication of the final report and recommendations, in the autumn 2014, the Task Group will:

- **Present options to the MoJ for active, practical engagement with community and voluntary sector representatives, private sector providers as well as others such as academics, to facilitate their contribution to developing policy, commissioning strategy and service delivery. We recommend that this forum is established before the end of the Review.**
- **Consider mechanisms such as consultation, training and toolkits that can be used to develop and embed cultural competence to enable staff to implement equalities and deliver effectively on diversity in their work.**
- **Build a picture of what best practice and accessible resettlement services look like for young black and/or Muslim men, bearing in mind both urban and rural contexts, and including where valid commissioning or sub-contacting of specialist services.**
- **Collect examples of community organisations and community based models of service delivery and highlight ways in which they can be further supported.**
- **Explore models of partnership that enable support for and the scaling up of community-based services and appropriate distribution of resource and risk across partners. This will include consideration of the role for community organisations to be appropriately involved in through the gate and resettlements services under current arrangements and beyond.**
- **Gather evidence directly from young black and/or Muslim male service users, show-case best practice models of involvement and advise on how such mechanisms can be built into future commissioning and delivery arrangements.**
- **Carry out a number of structured consultations and focus-groups with current and reformed offenders from this group, for example to advise on how to ensure that resettlement pathways such as housing, mental health, employment and substance misuse services are effectively catering for specific cultural needs.**

In support of these activities we will complete further stakeholder engagement and gather additional evidence via visits and focus groups in order to explore the implications of these principles for practical recommendations for government, commissioners and providers.

The full version of the report is available on request by e mailing Jessica.mullen@clinks.org

References

ⁱ NOMS. 2013. *Offender Equalities Annual Report 2012 – 2013* p.7.

ⁱⁱ NOMS 2013 *Offender Equalities Annual Report 2012 – 2013*. p.9.

ⁱⁱⁱ *ibid*

^{iv} In this report, we use the term ‘young black and/or Muslim’ to refer to men aged 18-24 who identify as black British; black African; black Caribbean; Muslim or mixed heritage/origin where it includes one or more of above.

^v Every statutory agency with whom we consulted stated that this was the case and in two instances, the numbers mean that addressing this ought to be a priority

^{vi} HMIP 2010 *Muslim Prisoners’ Experiences: a thematic review* p.8.

^{vii} Online at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/half-of-young-black-men-unemployed-7547533.html>

^{viii} HMIP 2010 *Muslim Prisoners’ Experiences: a thematic review* p.9.

^{ix} Jacobson, J., Phillips, C. and Edgar, K. 2010. ‘Double Trouble’? *Black, Asian and minority ethnic offenders’ experiences of resettlement*. London: Clinks and Prison Reform Trust. p.14.