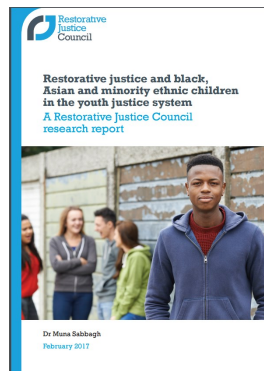


Restorative Justice and BAME young people in the Criminal Justice System

A Restorative Justice Council Research Report

The Restorative Justice Council recently launched [this important research report](#) into the use of restorative justice interventions with BAME young people.



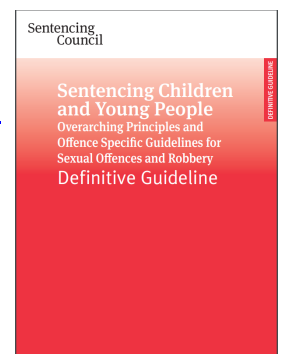
There is no data collection in relation to the offer of restorative justice interventions but the report outlines a picture where it is clear that BAME young people are not accessing these options through the youth justice system in the numbers that they should. This is due to a number of barriers especially the high number of BAME young people who plead not guilty, thereby making themselves ineligible to access a restorative justice option.

The Restorative Justice Council held a seminar with its members on the Young Review in March 2015 where Baroness Lola Young spoke and the Young Review was also represented on the Advisory Group to the research. It is clear from our discussions around BAME young people and the youth justice system that increasing access to earlier restorative justice interventions could make a contribution in diverting more BAME young people from entering the youth justice system.

New Sentencing Council guidelines for young people recognises the over-representation of BAME children and young people

The recently launched [Sentencing Council guidelines for Children and Young People](#) mark a significant step in the youth justice system

recognising the over-representation of BAME children and young people in the youth justice system, a challenge that requires urgent attention.



BAME children are also significantly over-represented amongst looked-after children and young people and are another group over-represented in the youth justice system and identified as requiring targeted actions to reverse current trends.

The guidelines state that the social and ethnic backgrounds of children and young people should be taken into account to 'avoid criminalising children unnecessarily' and are clearly intended to focus judges and magistrates on balancing the welfare needs of children and young people with the risk to the public. We were delighted to contribute to consultation events held by the Howard League last summer.

The over-representation of BAME young people and their treatment in the youth justice system was given a significant focus in the interim report from [David Lammy's Review](#) in November.

The launch of the Taylor Review, the Government's response to [his report](#) and Mr Taylor's subsequent appointment as chair of the Youth Justice Board could mark a significant turning point in the youth justice system making strategic efforts to address the challenge of ethnic disproportionality. We would welcome this.

High Down Prison/Clinks/LVSC conference gives a glimpse into how the reform prisons programme will work



Last May's Queen's Speech announced a [radical programme of prison reform](#) with more than 5000 offenders to be housed in new reform prisons by the end of the year and governors having greater autonomy in managing budgets, overseeing external service contractors and establishing their own regimes.

It was therefore extremely useful to participate in a one-day conference held jointly by HMP High Down, Clinks and London Voluntary Service Council on voluntary and community sector partnership with the prison.

High Down's Governor, Nick Pascoe, told participants that they would be signing a three-year contract with the MoJ setting out objectives, targets and frameworks for the new regime from the April 2017.

But how will the new structure ensure that ethnic minorities (usually amongst those with the poorest outcomes) benefit from the opportunities?

There were no definitive answers on this issue but Nick and his team were keen to engage and we will be having further dialogues.

The crucial point is to weave the challenge into their thinking at the outset of this potentially exciting opportunity to support innovation and new ways of doing things within our prison system.
