



Exploring the needs of young Black and Minority Ethnic offenders and the provision of targeted interventions

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Executive summary

This report, by the Institute for Criminal Policy Research, King's College London, and Nacro's Youth Crime Section, was commissioned by the YJB. It explores the needs of young Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) offenders and the provision of targeted interventions by youth offending teams (YOTs).

The focus of the study was to identify whether there are differences in needs between ethnic groups and to assess the preparedness of YOTs and establishments within the secure estate to respond to them. The key research aims were to:

- compare levels of recorded offending by White and BME young offenders
- identify the specific needs of offenders from Minority Ethnic groups
- explore the practices of YOTs and the secure estate for assessing and responding to the needs of specific Minority Ethnic groups.

To meet these aims, the study used a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods, comprising six core elements:

- a detailed literature review
- secondary analysis of the national data (Themis) held by the YJB on youth offending and the needs of BME offenders
- a national census of YOTs and secure establishments
- a case file review in 20 YOT areas to explore the characteristics of young people who come into contact with the youth justice system, their offending histories and their assessed needs
- interviews with a sample of 93 young offenders from different ethnic groups
- interviews with 25 YOT practitioners.

Key findings from analysis of 22,505 YOT case files found that:

- 4% of cases had no record of ethnicity
- the ethnicity of Mixed race offenders was poorly recorded in 12 of the 20 areas where data was analysed
- Black offenders tended to be over-represented in caseloads (in relation to their representation in the general population) while Asians tended to be under-represented

- violence against the person, theft and handling stolen goods were the most common offences in the sample
- Mixed race offenders were engaged more with YOTs and had been known to the criminal justice system for a longer period of time than White offenders¹ in 2006
- Black, Mixed race and Asian males were all more likely to be charged with robbery offences than White males; White males were more likely to be charged with criminal damage offences
- Asian females were more likely to be charged with theft and handling offences, compared to White females
- 65% of cases involving females were resolved without prosecution, compared to 44% of cases involving males
- Black and Mixed race males received a lower proportion of pre-court disposals than White males; this was also the case with Mixed race females, in comparison to White females
- a higher proportion of Black and Mixed race males received a custodial sentence than White ones, and Asian females received a smaller proportion of custodial sentences than White females; however, when the seriousness of the offence and other case characteristics were taken into account, these differences became insignificant
- *Asset* data showed that young Asian offenders tended to have the lowest needs and were least at risk of future offending; mixed race offenders had the greatest needs and displayed the greatest risk of reoffending.

Key findings from the interviews with 93 young offenders found that:

- 84% (78) of the sample had been excluded from school at some point in their schooling career, including every one of the Mixed race offenders
- the average age at first arrest was 13, with a range from nine to 17
- a quarter stated that they had offended while under YOT supervision, while just over a third of the Mixed race and Black interviewees had offended on their current order
- only 8 of 37 (22%) respondents asked, thought it was important to have other young people of the same ethnicity in their group at the YOT
- 89% (83) of all respondents were unconcerned as to whether their key worker was from their ethnic group

¹ The differences between ethnicities presented in the case file analysis section are statistically significant at the 95% level.

- two-thirds believed that BME offenders were adequately supported by their YOT
- 96% (89) of the sample believed that YOT workers treated all young offenders fairly, regardless of their ethnicity
- just over two-thirds believed that attending the YOT had helped them to reduce their offending
- Asians were the least inclined to believe the YOT had helped them to reduce their offending, which may be related to Asian offenders showing the lowest level of need, as indicated by *Asset*; Black offenders were the group most inclined to attribute any reductions in their offending to their local YOT and the interventions it provided.

Key findings from interviews with 25 YOT professionals across nine YOT areas found that:

- just under half (12) of the YOT practitioners believed that gang violence, violence against the person and drug offences were more associated with BME offenders than White ones
- 10 practitioners believed that White offenders were more likely to be arrested for vehicle crime, burglary, criminal damage and racially motivated offences than BME ones
- school exclusion and a lack of educational attainment were viewed as significant risk factors associated with BME offending
- seven YOT workers believed that their core assessment tool (*Asset*) needed to be revised to include a section covering: identity, ethnicity, religion, racial abuse and discrimination, thus allowing them to meet the needs of BME offenders more effectively
- practitioners tended, where necessary, to supplement the information they collected from *Asset* with other information, such as social service documents, educational reports and any available police information
- only two YOT areas provided specific services exclusively to BME offenders
- 17 interviewees believed that the services they offered to BME offenders were either 'quite' or 'very' effective
- only four workers believed that services offered by their YOT should be delivered differently, according to a young person's ethnicity
- while YOT professionals were not keen on providing separate services based on a young people's ethnicity, 14 still believed there were gaps in BME service provision both locally and at national level
- only 11 of the 25 interviewees believed they had been adequately trained to meet the needs of BME offenders
- the training needs identified by interviewees included training on cultural issues and on the differences between BME groups.

Conclusion

The central questions this study set out to answer were whether there was a need for BME-specific interventions and whether young offenders thought their needs would be better met through the provision of targeted interventions, aimed specifically at young BME offenders. Our research uncovered a mixed response from young people and YOT professionals on whether specific BME-focused interventions were desirable or necessary. Our conclusions focus on:

- improving ethnicity monitoring at local YOT level
- the usefulness of *Asset* to identify the needs of BME offenders
- the level of perceived need for BME-focused interventions
- providing diversity and cultural awareness training to YOT staff.

Improving ethnicity monitoring

All YOTs are required to have an action plan in place to reduce the difference between the ethnic composition of offenders and the local community. However, the ethnicity of a significant proportion of young people coming to the attention of the youth justice system during 2006/07 was still recorded as 'unknown' in many areas. To enable local YOTs and the YJB to provide up-to-date information on the ethnicity of young people passing through the system, there needs to be an improvement in recording practices across the YOT and secure establishment, especially for Mixed race young people.

To assist YOT workers to accurately record the ethnicity of all young people, it may be helpful for the YJB to publish guidelines that enable a more consistent approach to be adopted throughout the country. One suggestion could be for the YJB to implement brief training interventions in areas where an individual's ethnicity is not recorded or where there is conflicting evidence on the YOT monitoring form about their ethnicity. Encouraging accurate recording of a young person's ethnicity is imperative, both at a national and local level, if services are to be planned and delivered effectively.

The use of *Asset* to identify the needs of BME offenders

Asset is an assessment tool developed by Oxford University in 2000 on behalf of the YJB. Oxford University were asked to develop a tool and the key requirements were that it should:

- identify the key factors associated with young people's offending
- provide a prediction of reconviction
- help to identify young people who may present a risk of serious harm to others

- identify situations in which a young offender is vulnerable to being harmed
- identify issues where more in-depth assessment is required² (Baker et al, 2005:9).

Our interviews with YOT workers revealed that many found *Asset* to be a useful tool in helping them assess the needs of young people. However, one area which seven of our interviewees thought should be included on the *Asset* form was a section on identity, ethnicity, religion, racial abuse and discrimination. While *Asset* may not be the best place to include such a section, our interviews highlighted the need for a tool to assist YOT workers to identify the needs of BME offenders in a more thorough and systematic way than is currently available.

Any addition to the *Asset* form should be carried out in consultation with YOT managers and practitioners because any extra reporting requirements will undoubtedly place administrative burdens on already stretched front-line staff. While the number of interviewees suggesting such a change was small, further research and consultation should be undertaken to ascertain if this opinion is shared more widely.

BME-focused interventions

Many young people were indifferent about the ethnic composition of the groups and/or leisure activities they participated in and seemed unconcerned as to whether their case worker at the YOT shared the same ethnicity as them. Indeed, 96% of our sample believed that the YOT treated all young people fairly, regardless of their ethnicity. Young people instead tended to express a preference to be involved in group work that was interesting and be supervised by a worker whom they felt supported by.

Few YOTs provided services specifically for BME offenders and indeed many YOT professionals felt that such an approach would be less than ideal. Furthermore, many YOT professionals believed that, when assessing a young person's needs, the assessment should not focus on their ethnicity. YOT workers tended to believe that whilst a young person's ethnicity, background and culture were important, many of the issues faced by their BME offenders were also faced by their white offenders. However, there were also a number of young people and YOT professionals who thought that consideration should be given to providing BME-specific services.

² Baker, K., Jones, S., Roberts, C., and Merrington, S. (2003) *The Evaluation of the Validity and Reliability of the Youth Justice Board's Assessment for Young Offenders: Findings from the first two years of the use of Asset*. London. Youth Justice Board.

From our evidence, it would appear that the issue of providing BME-specific interventions should be decided at a local level and in consultation with both YOT practitioners and the young people accessing the YOT. This should include both BME and White young people, thus ensuring that available interventions meet the needs of all young people accessing the YOT.

Providing diversity and cultural awareness training

To equip professionals with the skills to deliver interventions to young offenders, it is important that they are provided with the necessary training. It would appear that specific area-focused diversity training needs to be developed at a local level and senior YOT managers should be encouraged to canvass staff on their training needs and whether members of the community would be able to assist in any way. Engaging local communities would also have the added benefit of bringing together local YOTs and communities.

Future directions

This report presents evidence on the needs and interventions available to young offenders, in particular young BME offenders. Our research uncovered a mixed response from young people and YOT professionals on whether specific BME-focused interventions were desirable or necessary. In carrying forward any of the recommendations within this report, we would urge collaboration at both a national and local level to decide what elements need further research and how best to implement any future policies so they complement national objectives and local need.

1 Introduction

This report explores the needs of young BME offenders and examines whether YOTs should tailor their practice and interventions according to the ethnicity of offenders under their supervision.

Research and juvenile justice statistics have documented the fact that some BME groups – particularly Black Caribbean and Black African – are over-represented in the youth justice system, while others – particularly South Asian – are under-represented. What is less understood is whether the needs of different ethnic groups differ once they enter the system and whether those delivering interventions to BME offenders have had the necessary training to deliver culturally sensitive services.

The YJB therefore commissioned this study to examine patterns of BME offending, assess whether BME offenders have specific needs and to see whether those needs are being adequately addressed by YOTs and the secure estate.

Research aims

The focus of the study was to identify whether there are differences in needs between ethnic groups and to assess how well prepared YOTs and secure establishments are to respond to them. The key research aims were to:

- compare levels of recorded offending by White and BME young offenders
- identify the specific needs of offenders from Minority Ethnic groups
- explore the practices of YOTs and the secure estate for assessing and responding to the needs of specific Minority Ethnic groups.

To meet these aims, the study focused on the following research questions:

- the extent of differences in recorded offending between BME and White groups
- whether BME offenders have specific needs
- whether YOTs and the secure estate assess the needs of BME offenders adequately
- whether YOT practitioners feel adequately equipped to assess the needs of BME offenders
- whether targeted interventions and other resources are required and available to address the needs of BME offenders.

Research methods

The study used a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods, comprising six core elements:

- a detailed literature review³
- secondary analysis of the national data (Themis) held by the YJB of youth offending and the needs of BME offenders
- a national census of YOTs and secure establishments
- a case file review in 20 YOT areas to explore the characteristics of young people who come into contact with the youth justice system, their offending histories and their assessed needs
- interviews with a sample of 93 young offenders from different ethnic groups
- interviews with 25 YOT practitioners.

Understanding youth offending and the needs of BME young people

Themis data is compiled using aggregated returns from YOTs on the offences committed by young people under their supervision.⁴ Themis provides national, regional and local breakdowns of offence type, age, sex and ethnicity (where known) and final disposals. Chapter 3 of this report presents secondary analysis of this data.

Census of YOTs and the secure estate

This stage of the research involved a national census of all YOTs and secure establishments to map the availability of interventions developed specifically for, and offered to, BME young people across the youth justice system. In the first instance we wrote to all YOTs and secure establishments (e.g. secure children's homes, secure training centres [STCs] and young offender institutions [YOIs]) in England and Wales to invite them to participate in the survey.

A short questionnaire was posted or emailed to a named individual at each establishment, who was asked to return it within a specified time. The survey aimed to provide an accurate account of the type and range of interventions delivered to young offenders, and to ascertain the extent to which any of these interventions are ethnically (or culturally) specific. The census produced 79 responses (nine out of 15 secure children's homes, three out of four STCs, four out of 18 YOIs and 63 out of 157 YOTs); an overall response rate of 41%. Due to the low response rate, the survey data has been used to supplement findings from the interviews with 25 YOT practitioners presented in Chapter 6.

³ The literature presented in Chapter 2 is not a systematic literature review.

⁴ Aggregate Themis data counts offences not offenders; it should therefore be remembered that the same young person will be counted more than once if they have committed more than one offence.

Case file review of a sample of YOT offenders

The third stage of this study involved analysis of a large sample of offenders under the supervision of YOTs to examine the specific needs of BME offenders in comparison to their White counterparts. Data collection for this strand of the work involved the interrogation of YOT data for 2006, which was extracted from case management systems. The objectives of this component of the research were to:

- determine the characteristics of young people who were engaged with local YOTs and in receipt of an intervention
- explore young people's offending histories and identify any differences in frequency and seriousness of offending (i.e. YJB gravity scores), type of disposal and length of order (where appropriate)
- identify the extent of need among offenders under the supervision of YOTs as assessed against the 12 core elements of *Asset*, and identify any difference in need across BME groups and gender.

Data on young offenders was collected from each YOT's case management system. Most used YOIS (the Youth Offending Information System) and a minority used the (functionally similar) CareWorks system. Data collected for each offender at this stage of the report included: demographic and personal characteristics, offending history and level of need, as assessed against the 12 core elements of *Asset* (together with ratings). The 12 core elements are:

- living arrangements
- family and personal relationships
- education, training and employment
- neighbourhood
- lifestyle
- substance use
- physical health
- emotional and mental health
- perception of self and others
- thinking and behaviour
- attitudes to offending
- motivation to change.

Sample selection

For the case file review, we added a further eight YOT areas to an already assembled sample⁵ of 12 YOTs. The 20 YOTs were selected to include 15 where the BME youth offending population exceeded (by some margin) the national average of 14% (based on YJB Annual Statistics 2005/06), and the remaining five were YOTs where the BME representation was close to or below that average. This selection procedure was designed to produce a spread of YOTs with considerable experience of working with BME young people, while allowing for some exploration of potential differences between these and YOTs where the throughput of BME young people was relatively lower. Within this framework, YOTs were then selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- the extent of offending by BME young people
- inclusion of YOTs that reported using BME-specific interventions
- an adequate geographic spread.

Case file review analysis

Case files were analysed at the individual level and not at the episode of contact with the YOT. A young person may have several contacts with the YOT recorded on the database over the year for several different offences, relating to several types of outcomes. The last point of entry for 2006 was chosen, as well as the most serious offence (according to the YJB gravity score) and the sentencing outcome with the most serious penalty. The resultant sample comprised 22,505 young people. All analysis was conducted in a statistical package (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel.

Qualitative interviews with young people

The final part of this study involved qualitative interviews with young people and YOT practitioners. The aims of this stage of the research were to:

- assess the needs of BME young people from their own perspective and the perspective of YOT practitioners
- describe and assess interventions delivered to BME young people
- explore the views of BME young people about the interventions they had received

⁵ Social Software data from a study being conducted by ICPR for the Economic and Social Research Council and the Equality and Human Rights Commission on the 'Differential treatment of Black and Minority Ethnic Young People in the Youth Justice System' (2010) was used to complement the eight YOTs that were sampled for the current study for the YJB, thus providing a sample of 20 YOTs to conduct detailed individual level case file analysis on.

- explore practitioners' views about the efficacy of the interventions delivered to BME young people
- explore the extent to which practitioners felt adequately equipped to assess the needs of individual BME young people and develop interventions that addressed their needs in a culturally sensitive manner.

From the 20 areas, we selected 10 to work on this component of the study and nine of these agreed to take part. Of the nine, eight were selected whose proportion of BME offenders exceeded the 14% national average of BME YOT throughput and one was selected where the proportion was below the national average. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 93 young people from the nine YOT areas over a six-month period. From each area, we interviewed 10 to 15 offenders and, where possible, selected eight young people from BME backgrounds and two from a White background.

Young people were selected from across the YOT age spectrum of 10 to 17 years, and reflected the range of court-ordered disposals, as follows:

- Referral Order
- Reparation Order
- Supervision Order
- Community Rehabilitation Order
- Community Punishment Order
- Curfew Order.

These interviews also included up to two young people in each area who were serving the community element of their Detention and Training Order (DTO).

The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes and respondents were compensated for their time with a £15 voucher. The core issues and themes that the schedule addressed included:

- perceived need
- intervention/s currently being received
- views on and participation with current intervention/s
- perceived efficacy of intervention/s
- perceived impact of intervention/s on offending behaviour
- perceived gaps in service delivery.

Qualitative interviews with practitioners

We aimed to sample three YOT practitioners from each of the nine YOTs where young offenders were interviewed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 YOT practitioners. The interviewees included practitioners and supervisors and lasted around an hour. The core themes for discussion were:

- understanding the needs of different BME offenders
- perceived difference in need between BME and White offenders

- resources available (other than *Asset*) for assisting with the assessment of BME offenders
- experience of delivering interventions to BME young people
- perception of the efficacy of interventions delivered to BME young people
- professional training available and provided.

Interviews with YOT practitioners and young people were entered onto an SPSS database and, where answers to questions were pre-coded, SPSS was used to analyse responses. Questions and responses which were open-ended were thematically coded and then analysed, again using SPSS.

2 Explaining differences and discrimination – the research evidence

The large majority of children and young people who come to the attention of the youth justice system are White. Data provided to the YJB from YOTs indicates that, during 2006/07, White defendants counted for almost 85% of total youth justice disposals⁶ (YJB, 2008a). Conversely, more than one in eight of those within the youth offending population come from a BME background, accounting in absolute terms for a substantial number of substantive outcomes⁷ each year (26,712 during 2006/07⁸).

There is considerable geographic variation, reflecting in part at least, the ethnic composition of the local resident population.⁹ For example, in the North East, less than 2% of substantive disposals involved young people from Minority Ethnic backgrounds but in London the equivalent figure was 48%.

It is frequently suggested that BME young people as a whole are over-represented within the youth justice system. In actual fact the pattern of representation differs between different ethnic groups. Asians are under-represented in the youth justice system, relative to the composition of the general 10 to 17-year-old population. However, Black and Mixed race young people are substantially over-represented, as indicated in Table 2.1. As a consequence, the aggregate representation of BME offenders within the youth offending population is broadly proportional to the composition of the general 10 to 17-year-old population.

⁶ A youth justice disposal in this context comprises pre-court measures (Reprimands and Final Warnings) and court convictions.

⁷ For a definition of 'substantive outcome', please see Annex B of the YJB's *YOT Data Recording Guidance 2009/10*, which can be downloaded at: www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/practitioners/MonitoringPerformance/DataRecordingGuidanceandCountingRules/

⁸ The ethnicity of 2.8% of those young people committing offences leading to a disposal was unknown.

⁹ The issue of geographic variation and over-representation is discussed further in Chapter 3.

Table 2.1: Representation of BME young people in the general population and in the youth justice system, 2006/07

	All BME groups (%)	Asian/Asian British (%)	Black/Black British (%)	Chinese/Other ethnic group (%)	Mixed race (%)	White (%)
10–17 general population ¹⁰	15.6	6.4	3	1	3	87
Youth justice population	12.3	3.1	5.8	0.4	3	84.8

The different pattern of representation between ethnic groups clearly requires explanation, particularly as over the past few years at least, it has been relatively consistent. The YJB has published an annual statistical breakdown of the youth justice system since 2002/03 and in each subsequent year, the relative proportion of substantive disposals attributable to Asian/Asian British and Black/Black British young people has shown considerable stability. There has been a gradual increase, over the same period, in the representation of Mixed race offenders, which may reflect a reduction in the number of those whose ethnicity has previously been recorded as ‘unknown’. Table 2.2 shows trends since 2002/03.

Table 2.2: Representation of BME young people in the youth justice system

	All BME groups (%)	Asian/Asian British (%)	Black/Black British (%)	Chinese/Other ethnic group (%)	Mixed race (%)
2002/03	11	3	6	1	1
2003/04	12	3	6	1	2
2004/05	12	3	6	1	2
2005/06	12	3	6	0.3	3
2006/07	12	3	6	0.4	3

While earlier comparable data is not available in the same form, it should be noted that there has been concern about the over-representation of certain ethnic minority groups in the youth justice system, going back at least to the 1970s (e.g. Hall et al, 1978). In 1982, 50% of those detained in Ashford Remand Centre were Black. At around the same time, the staff working in intermediate treatment projects, which provided alternatives to custody, complained that social workers and other relevant agencies appeared reluctant

¹⁰ Figures derived from Office of National Statistics census data (estimates) for 2005.

to refer Minority Ethnic young people. As a consequence, disproportionate numbers were incarcerated (see Pitts et al, 1986).

Explaining over-representation

The ethnic breakdown of the population of the youth justice system does not appear to reflect, in any straightforward manner, variations in prevalence of offending behaviour in the general population. Representation in the youth justice system is a consequence of having been processed for an offence. For a variety of reasons, figures for detected crime are not necessarily a good guide to underlying patterns of offending behaviour (Maguire, 2007). In particular, only a small proportion of young people who admit offending come into contact with the youth justice system. For example, during 2005, while 26% of young people admitted offending within the previous 12 months, just 5% reported being arrested and only 2% reported going to court (Wilson et al, 2006). It cannot therefore be assumed that the youth justice population is necessarily representative of patterns of youth criminality in the overall population of young people. For these purposes, self-reported involvement in crime is a better measure.

Graham and Bowling (1995) found that self-reported participation of White and African-Caribbean young people (aged 14 to 25 years) in offending was broadly similar. Moreover, this pattern was consistent across the range of offence types considered:

- violence
- acquisitive property offences
- 'expressive offences' such as criminal damage or arson.

Conversely, the rate of criminality among young people from an Asian background was significantly lower. Moreover, self-reported drug use by White young people was considerably above that reported by other ethnic groups.

A rather different pattern is shown by a more recent survey conducted on behalf of the YJB (MORI, 2004). This reports that Black young people (aged 11 to 16 years) were more likely than their White counterparts to admit any offending within the previous 12 months (37% against 26%). However, the findings only show self-reported offending by young people within mainstream education and the sample may accordingly be unrepresentative of those most likely to come into contact with the law. Moreover, the results are not consistent with those of the larger, and potentially more representative, *Offender Crime and Justice Survey* undertaken on behalf of the Home Office in 2003.

The latter study showed that, while self-reported offending levels were similar for White and Mixed race young people, young Asian and Black respondents 'were far less likely to commit any offence in the last year' (Sharp and Budd, 2005:11). Among those aged 16–25 years, however, self-reported offending was similar for all ethnic groups, other than the Asian sample who continued to demonstrate markedly lower involvement in law breaking behaviour (Sharp and Budd, 2005). When multivariate analysis was applied to rates of self-reported offending (to take account of other relevant factors), the study found that ethnicity was not independently predictive of offending.

In summary, existing evidence suggests that while the lower prevalence of offending among Asian/Asian British young people might account for the under-representation of that group in the figures for detected youth crime, overall patterns of delinquency are unlikely to explain the over-representation of Black/Black British young people.

The House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (2007) reviewed the over-representation of Black young people in the criminal justice system and concluded that any comprehensive account of the phenomenon (and any corresponding solutions) would inevitably be complex and multi-faceted. The Committee noted that the statistical information was both 'contradictory and disputed' (paragraph 17), but appeared to show that while the level of Black young people's offending was similar to that of other ethnic groups, patterns of offending were subject to some variation. For example, Black young people were more likely to be involved in street crime, and robbery in particular.

According to the Committee, the 'primary cause' of the over-representation of some BME groups among those processed by the criminal justice system was social exclusion (paragraph 98). Black young people are disproportionately subject to socioeconomic disadvantage that manifests itself in a myriad of ways.

For instance, young people from all ethnic backgrounds will be at greater risk of arrest if they live in disadvantaged areas because such areas are more likely to be crime hotspots. At the same time, Black/Black British young people are much more likely to be concentrated in areas classified as 'hard pressed'.¹¹ Offences such as robbery are more prevalent in poor neighbourhoods and young people at the greatest risk of involvement in street crime are those resident in households with no adult earners, where a criminal economy is in competition with legitimate forms of subsistence (Fitzgerald et al, 2003). Unemployment among Black adults is significantly higher than among their White counterparts.

The social geography of educational provision too is such that children in poorer communities are less well provided for and routes to advancement are accordingly more constrained; educational under-achievement is both a symptom and cause of disadvantage. At the same time, rates of school exclusion tend to be almost twice as high for Black children, raising questions not only about whether different 'tariffs' of punishments operate within schools but also the relevance of the national curriculum to the needs and experiences of Black young people. The relationship between lack of educational opportunities and youth crime is well established and the particular under-attainment of Black boys is a 'major cause of entry into the criminal justice system' (Home Affairs Committee, 2007: paragraph 113).

¹¹ The term 'hard pressed' is a classification from ACORN (A Classification Of Residential Neighbourhoods).

It does not follow from such findings that ethnic minority young people within the youth justice system are necessarily more likely to display risk factors associated with socio-economic disadvantage. Social exclusion might influence BME representation but that is not inconsistent with the possibility that White young people known to the youth justice system also suffer similar levels of disadvantage.

However, there is some independent evidence, derived from analysis of young people's pre-sentence reports, suggesting that previous exclusion from school and adverse family circumstances are more prevalent among Black and Mixed race young people who are the subject of court reports (Feilzer and Hood, 2004). Other studies have found that the criminal justice system operates as a gateway to mental health services more frequently for those from the Black community than it does for their White counterparts (Nacro, 2007a). Conversely, in studies conducted with adult offenders, it appears that Asian, Black and Mixed race probationers may have fewer 'crime-prone' attitudes and beliefs (Caverley et al, 2004:29).

The Home Affairs Committee also found that two other factors were relevant to over-representation, which were particularly characteristic to the Black community and have the potential to compound disadvantage. Higher rates of lone parenting – which may lead to a consequent lack of appropriate male role models – and the quality of parental discipline, were considered by the Committee to be problematic. Black children are also significantly over-represented in the care system, involvement in which is frequently recognised as a risk factor for offending.

Evidence presented to the Committee by the Boys2MEN project,¹² suggests that the Black community in Britain has begun to define itself and its culture in response to the discrimination it faces.

The consequences of social and racial exclusion are being reclassified as cultural norms and certain sections of the UK's Black community are accepting as normal, behaviour which is criminal, deviant and socially excluding....

... [T]hey 'feel' discriminated against. They 'feel' that teachers are treating them differently and they 'feel' that others get preferential treatment, they 'feel' targeted by the police, because they are Black. These powerful messages (real or perceived) impact on them emotionally and have the detrimental effect of eroding motivation and lowering aspirations ...

¹² boys2MEN is a specialist male engagement service that aims to meet the needs of boys, young men and fathers considered at risk of social exclusion.

... The barriers to social inclusion are inextricably linked to the question of British identity and belonging. Even though born here, too many Black youth do not feel a part of British society. They are identified within the media by their ethnic origin; politicians talk of 'tolerating' migrants coming to their country; they are asked to adopt a hyphenated identity (Black-British)...

... There are fewer safeguards within the Black family that can act as resilient factors against the allure of crime. Absent or uninvolved fathers, teenage mothers with no support or poor parenting skills, no religious or moral guidance, poor role models and growing up on sink estates surrounded by all the indicators of poverty and deprivation. At the heart of it—the Black factor—a lack of a Black cultural identity that provides a sense of self-esteem or self-worth that incubates them emotionally from racism and discrimination.

(Davis, 2007: paragraphs 9–17)

Finally, the Committee found evidence of significant discrimination within the criminal justice system that contributes to the over-representation of Black young people within it. The report notes that Black and Mixed race offenders who admit offending are much more likely to come into contact with the youth justice system, both as victims and offenders than their White counterparts.

At least part of the explanation for this anomaly is the impact of policing, which some commentators have argued is characterised by a 'pervasive, ongoing targeting of Black areas' (Bowling and Philips, 2002:129), deriving from an association of Black young people with criminality that Macpherson (1999) famously typified as institutional racism. Certainly, police activity plays an important role in 'recruiting' Minority Ethnic young people to the youth justice system (Webster, 2006). Black young people are almost twice as likely as their White peers to enter the criminal justice system, as a consequence of being stopped and searched by the police (Home Office Select Affairs Committee, 2007).

BME young people's experiences and perceptions of the youth justice system

Levels of victimisation among Minority Ethnic groups are higher than for the White population, particularly in relation to personal and violent crime. It is therefore not surprising that people from Black and Asian backgrounds are also more likely to be worried about crime, even when other relevant factors are taken into account (Jansson et al, 2007). Nonetheless, confidence in the criminal justice system also tends to be slightly higher among those from a BME background, with the important exception that they are less likely to be confident that suspects will be treated fairly and their rights respected (Jansson et al, 2007).

Young people from ethnic minority groups in particular appear to be wary of the police. Interviews with Black young people have suggested an 'absence of trust and confidence, and an alarming level of cynicism about the willingness of the [police] service to engage with the community to tackle problems' (Sharpe, 2006:10). As one respondent put it:

The police don't protect us and they don't care what happens. The only thing that they bother about is accusing us of doing robberies and stuff, so there is no point in telling them.

(Sharpe, 2006:10)

Similar experiences of racism and inaction by authority figures are described by young people within educational settings, the court system and the secure estate (Lovell and Wilson, 2006). The cumulative day to day perception of discriminatory treatment leads many BME young people to adopt strategies that involve them 'keeping low' for much of the time, but then 'going mad' when pressures become intolerable (Ofutu, 2006).

Nonetheless, it is also true that most young people are able to find a person in authority in whom they are able to invest trust. More often than not, such positively regarded authority figures are YOT staff (Wilson, 2006). Such findings are of particular importance because, where young people perceive unfairness or experience an absence of institutional justice, they are less likely to respond positively to intervention or to regard sanctions imposed upon them as legitimate (Hinds, 2007).

Little is known about young people's differential experience of youth justice interventions in the community according to their ethnic background. Studies of adult offenders indicate that the large majority consider that they are treated fairly but almost a quarter (22%) had little positive to say about their programme (Calverley et al, 2004).

One obvious source of concern is that agencies working in the youth justice system are largely staffed by White personnel. In 2005, just 4% of police officers, 4% of prison service staff, 4% of judges, and 7% of magistrates were from an ethnic minority background (Home Office, 2006). It is perhaps not surprising in these circumstances that many Black young people see the police and court system as inherently racist. As one put it:

I have only seen White judges. I have never seen a Black judge.

(Ofutu, 2006:43)

On the other hand, it is not true that young people interpret their negative experiences of the youth justice system in terms of straightforward racism on the part of White individuals. BME staff are also frequently regarded as dispensing differential justice to the detriment of ethnic minority young people. In ethnographic studies, Black and Asian police officers (Sharpe, 2006) and Black prison officers (Wilson, 2006) are described as being 'worse' than their White counterparts in order to 'prove' their credentials to their colleagues. The authors conclude that:

It is not enough to simply recruit more minority ethnic people into the various agencies of social control. Such recruitment has to be supplemented by a commitment to anti-oppressive practice in all its forms.

(Wilson, 2006:28)

In terms of their ethnic composition, YOTs present a rather different picture. In 2005, BME staff were over-represented within such teams, relative both to the

general population and in comparison to the young people who come to the attention of the youth justice system. BME YOT staff constitute 16% of the total complement and 23% of staff seconded to the YOT by social services departments (Home Office, 2006). It seems likely that this difference impacts upon the experiences of Minority Ethnic young people referred to YOTs and this may be a contributory factor in explaining why they appear more likely to respond positively to staff in those teams than to workers in other criminal justice agencies (Wilson, 2006).

In any event, the extent to which young people would prefer youth justice staff to share their ethnicity is unclear as research on this issue has not previously been conducted. There is, however, some limited evidence in relation to adults on probation, although the findings are not totally consistent. Research, conducted for the Home Office, found little evidence of separate provision for adult offenders from Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

However, it noted that staff involved in the delivery of the few existing programmes considered them to be effective in reducing offending among minority groups (Powis and Walmsley, 2002). It should be pointed out that the absence of relevant studies in this area meant that it was not possible to provide empirical evidence to support or refute those perceptions, while the views of programme participants were also not explored.

In a separate study that did consider the perceptions of service users, Black probationers indicated a preference for having Black staff available to talk to, on the basis that the experience of Black staff would make establishing a relationship easier. However, shared ethnicity was not on its own sufficient, and respondents regarded an understanding of racism and the impact it might have on the behaviour of members of the particular ethnic minority community to be critical (Inner London Probation Service, 1996). Later research however found that the majority (56%) of BME offenders did not consider it important that supervisors came from a Minority Ethnic background, while a further 2% were actively opposed to the idea. Just over one-third of the sample thought that there were advantages in having a Black or Asian supervisor, whom they believed would be more likely to understand them and their culture, be easier to talk to and make them feel more at ease (Calverley et al, 2004).

Asked whether offenders and supervisors should be matched for ethnicity, 43% of respondents disagreed and a further 21% were indifferent. However, those interviewed by researchers who were themselves of Minority Ethnic origin were significantly more likely to express a preference for matching, suggesting that the ethnicity of interviewers might have affected responses. It is unclear from the data whether respondents felt less inhibited in expressing their true feelings in an interview with a Minority Ethnic researcher, or whether the answers given were based on what they assumed interviewers wanted to hear.

More generally, offenders from Minority Ethnic backgrounds regarded it as important that supervising officers be sympathetic, easy to talk to and understanding of the needs of those with whom they worked. Interestingly, the ethnicity of the probation officer was not related to their perceived helpfulness or whether the offender complied with the expectations of the order (Calverley et al, 2004).

There were greater levels of agreement among offenders who had been part of a group work programme about the importance of the ethnic composition of such groups. Respondents who had experience of being the sole Minority Ethnic participant reported feelings of isolation.

Overall, two-thirds thought that group composition mattered. Of these, 87% considered that groups should be mixed, while just 8% expressed a preference for groups that were segregated by ethnicity. Earlier research also found that some Black probationers perceived separate provision as a form of discriminatory segregation and considered that their experiences were sufficiently similar to those of Whites to render separate groups unnecessary. Distinct provision also posed problems for Mixed race offenders who sometimes felt isolated, both in groups aimed at White participants and those aimed at particular Minority Ethnic identities (Tuklo Orenda Associates, 1999).

Powis and Walmsley (2002) make the point that it is important to differentiate between 'specialist' and 'separate' provision. Separate provision involves services delivered exclusively to those from a particular minority group (the content may be the same, or similar, to that provided to White offenders). By contrast, specialist provision involves programmes tailored to meet the specific perceived needs of a particular ethnic group, which might be delivered separately or in mixed groups. Specialist provision therefore does not necessarily involve separate groups or matching offenders to supervisors by ethnicity.

Addressing the needs of Minority Ethnic young people who offend

The model of effective practice deployed within the youth justice system is one of assessment-led intervention. Drawing on what has been termed the 'risk factor paradigm' (see for instance, Farrington, 2007), supervision planning should aim to ensure that the:

...level and intensity of interventions ... [are] ... tailored to the needs and risks identified in the assessment.

(YJB, 2008b)

In operational terms, YOTs are required to use *Asset*, an assessment tool developed by Oxford University on behalf of the YJB, to identify areas of 'criminogenic need' that might be addressed in the supervisory process. *Asset* was designed to combine actuarial and clinical assessment (Annison, 2005).

Asset focuses on 12 areas (or domains) that research has shown to be correlated with an increased risk of offending (Anderson et al, 2005). Each of these areas is allocated a score between zero and four, according to the strength of the association with the young person's delinquent behaviour. There is a presumption that any element scoring two or above will be addressed as part of the intervention plan (Nacro, 2007b).

There is relatively little research exploring the extent to which risk and protective factors for young people vary by ethnicity. The evidence available suggests considerable consistency across race and culture. However, with higher levels of socio-economic disadvantage among BME communities, the prevalence of factors such as low income, unsuitable accommodation and disengagement

from education is frequently higher (Anderson et al, 2005). This poses some difficulties for assessing risk because, if a factor is more commonly found within a particular community than in the general population, it will be less useful for predicting the likelihood of further offending by individuals from within that group (Hannah-Moffat and Shaw, 2001).

Nonetheless, an evaluation of *Asset* conducted on behalf of the YJB found that its 'predictive validity' over a 24-month period was not significantly lower for young people from ethnic minorities than for their White equivalents (Baker et al, 2005). However, the BME sample was relatively small and further analysis has tentatively suggested that some issues – particularly those addressed in the 'living arrangements' and 'family/personal relationships' sections of *Asset* – were not related to reconviction in ethnic minority young people.

Other differences emerged in respect of White and BME young people in the predictive strength of sections such as 'education, neighbourhood and lifestyle, which are more influenced by wider community and societal factors' (cited in Baker, 2008:27). The implication is that BME communities are more likely to exhibit the risk factors associated with these domains because of structural disadvantage. Such factors are accordingly less able to distinguish those Black and Asian young people who are more likely to reoffend than others originating from the same communities. As a consequence, when assessing young people – and those from Minority Ethnic backgrounds in particular – practitioners should use *Asset* as a mechanism that allows them to:

...take full account of social context and to begin to tease out the factors that may be the most significant in influencing anti-social or offending behaviour.

(Baker, 2008:21)

While the 'risk factor paradigm' continues to underpin conceptions of effective practice, there is an increasing recognition that contextual considerations are a vital element of work with young people in the youth justice system. The situational context in which interventions are delivered has been called the 'forgotten issue' for effective rehabilitation (Gendreau et al, 1999).

What has become known as 'the desistance literature' takes a broader focus, seeking to understand the circumstances in which most young people stop offending by their mid to late teens and how that process can best be promoted (Nacro, 2007b). Effective practice is understood as requiring a dynamic approach which does not treat young people purely as the objects of intervention but as active participants in their own rehabilitation (Raynor, 2004). Successful engagement of young people is a prerequisite of ensuring that interventions are experienced in a meaningful way. The establishment of an effective relationship is key to such engagement, since what often motivates young people to change is a sense of loyalty to their supervising officer (Rex, 1999). As McNeil (2006:133) puts it:

The role of relationships in youthful desistance is likely to be particularly significant, not least because the relational experiences of most young people involved in offending are characterised by disconnection and violation.

Promoting desistance involves, above all, motivating the young person to change and fostering the belief that change is possible (Nacro, 2005). This in turn requires the establishment of a quality relationship between the supervisor and young person, which allows a shift from instrumental compliance with intervention (i.e. the young person attends because of the constraints of the court order) to co-operation, based on an understanding that the intervention is beneficial.

Such an approach requires YOT staff to be skilled in establishing effective working relationships with young people, which typically involve:

- conveying an acceptance of the individual
- demonstrating empathy, a sense of understanding and a real interest in what happens to them
- communicating a sense of genuine concern
- listening to them and recognising their individuality
- conveying warmth and generating an atmosphere in which they feel safe and able to trust the worker (Trevithick, 2005).

As noted above, the Home Affairs Committee identified elements of culture within the Black community as potential contributors to the involvement of Black young people in offending. If that suggestion is right, it may be particularly important for practice with BME young people to focus on successful engagement. Research has suggested that some young people may internalise negative stereotypes of Black culture, with negative implications for their own self-image, particularly where there is a lack of appropriate role models (Apena, 2007). Unless the relationship between the worker and the young person is based on trust, openness and cultural awareness, it is unlikely that the intervention will be able to promote a positive sense of self in the young person.

A recent review of the research literature on engaging young people who offend concludes there is a lack of evidence as to what is effective. There is a particular dearth of understanding about what techniques are valuable in relation to engaging BME young people (and also girls), and further research is warranted in this area (Mason and Prior, 2008). However, the review does draw attention to the National Evaluation of the Children's Fund, which confirmed that children's/parents' assessments of Children's Fund projects were heavily influenced by their relationships with project staff (Evans et al, 2006). This underlines the importance of the relationship between the young person and project/intervention staff in the success of a project or intervention.

As noted above, the evidence on whether BME adult probationers would prefer supervisors who share their cultural and ethnic background is equivocal. The National Evaluation of the Children's Fund also encountered a variety of views. Some parents associated effective engagement with the cultural sensitivity of service providers and, in some cases, having a practitioner from the same cultural background was regarded as advantageous. For children and young people, the ethnicity of their worker appeared to be of less significance.

Race action planning within the youth justice system

In recognition of the extensive over-representation of certain BME groups within the youth justice system, in 2004 the YJB initiated an audit and planning process to the effect that from April 2005:

All YOTs should have an action plan in place to ensure that any difference between the ethnic composition of offenders in all pre-court and post-court disposals and the ethnic composition of the local community is reduced year on year.

The process was also intended to improve confidence in the local youth justice system among BME individuals and communities, and to increase the confidence of staff within the YOTs to work with young people from different backgrounds.

An analysis of race action plans for 2005 was conducted on behalf of the YJB and was based on returns from 72% of YOTs (Giller and Brierley, 2006). The report noted a considerable variation in the Minority Ethnic 10 to 17-year-old population from one YOT area to another, which inevitably impacted on the nature of local planning. So while just over a third of YOTs who responded to the survey noted an over-representation of Black/Black British young people in the local youth justice system, almost half reported that the numbers of BME young people committing offences were too small to allow significant conclusions about disproportionality to be drawn from the quantitative data. An equivalent proportion concluded that there was a need for further local research to establish whether the representation of BME groups in the offending population was proportional or not.

In terms of variation in patterns of offending, this analysis found that YOTs were most likely to draw attention to the over-representation of Black/Black British young people among those processed for robbery. However, the second most common response noted higher levels of breach of statutory orders for Black and Mixed race young people. Indeed, as a consequence of their analysis, 10 YOTs, committed themselves to a review of their breach and enforcement procedures (Giller and Brierley, 2006).

The development of policy on this issue was perhaps less advanced than might have been anticipated. Although YJB guidance from 2001 required that YOTs should have a 'written equal opportunity policy, strategy and implementation plan to deliver equal opportunity obligations' (YJB, 2001: paragraph 3.7), almost a third of YOT areas that responded committed to developing a race equality policy as part of their action planning for the future. This included a relatively small number of YOT areas with higher BME youth populations.

Despite the fact that ethnic minority staff are not under-represented within YOTs, recruitment and retention was still regarded as an important concern within a significant minority of race action plans. Analysis found that almost one in three YOTs intended to review their advertising policy, while smaller proportions wished to consider options for 'positive recruitment action' or improve mentoring and support facilities for BME staff.

In terms of planning to address issues identified in local audits, by far the most common response (63% of returns) indicated an intention to conduct further detailed research. However, only five YOTs indicated that this would include

tracking recidivism to assess the extent to which reoffending was related to ethnicity.

A third of areas committed themselves to the development or refinement of programmes to ensure that the needs of BME young people were adequately met. However, there was little consistency in terms of what this might mean in practice; two YOTs reported that they would establish self-development groups for BME young people, two referred to the development of robbery reduction programmes, four to substance misuse interventions and the same number to violent offender programmes.

The most frequent response (from seven YOTs) was a generic commitment to develop group work. Interestingly, the second most popular response was to initiate programmes for racially aggravated offenders. A substantial minority of race action plans indicated that they would review services to ensure they were relevant and accessible to BME young people, while a similar proportion intended to introduce user satisfaction measures, geared to service users from an ethnic minority background (Giller and Brierley, 2006).

From the range of response described, it is not clear that YOT action planning demonstrates a clearly articulated understanding of the difference between separate and 'specialist' services for Minority Ethnic young people, of the sort advocated by Powis and Walmsley (2002).

National standards and breach were a concern for many areas. One in five YOTs committed themselves to improving monitoring in relation to compliance, attendance and completion rates. Others referred to the importance of monitoring outcomes through different elements of service provision, such as prevention activities, court reports and offending behaviour programmes.

One of the most significant areas where there was a perceived need for service development was in relation to engagement with local BME organisations and communities. Well over half of YOTs considered that it was important for them to develop or enhance their links with ethnic minority groups outside of the youth justice system. In particular, many YOTs noted that they did not currently have a strategy for systematically developing links with such networks and that there were no members of staff for whom this was a specific responsibility (Giller and Brierley, 2006).

The Audit Commission (2004) has developed a five point classification system against which local agencies can be categorised in terms of their progress in addressing race equality. The five key points are:

- resisting
- intending
- starting
- developing
- achieving.

The analysis of race audit action plans submitted concludes that most YOTs can be regarded as 'starting' or 'developing' (Giller and Brierley, 2006).

At the current time, it is not clear to what extent race action planning has improved the ability of the youth justice system to meet the needs of the BME young people involved in it. Figures cited earlier in this report, however, indicate that there has been no reduction in the over-representation of BME young people within the youth justice system in the years since the planning process started (April 2005). There is therefore little tangible evidence to date that race action planning has had a substantial impact in relation to its primary purpose, although it may well have contributed to other positive outcomes.

3 Patterns of BME representation in the youth justice system at national and local level

YOTs are required to submit quarterly returns to the YJB, providing a breakdown of local disposals, both pre-court and at conviction, in a prescribed form. The aggregated data allows for a more detailed analysis of patterns of BME representation within the youth justice system than is possible from criminal statistics and other published sources. This chapter presents findings from our secondary analysis of the national and local data.

Progress through the youth justice system and patterns of offending

While it is widely accepted that Minority Ethnic young people are over-represented among those coming to the attention of the youth justice system, it is important to be clear that different patterns of representation do not just apply at the point of entry to the system. The difference in representation of Black and Mixed race young people to other ethnic groups is also replicated within the youth justice system.

Taken as a whole, BME young people are more likely than their White counterparts to be prosecuted, while they also represent a higher proportion of those subject to community orders (as opposed to first-tier penalties).¹³

As indicated in Table 3.1 below, the extent of over-representation varies from one ethnic group to another at different stages of the system, just as they do at the point of entry. This pattern is similar to that observed by earlier researchers, based on data collected in 2001 and early 2002 (Feilzer and Hood, 2004) and indicates there has been no significant change in the interim period.

¹³ Community sentences are those reserved for offending that is 'serious enough' to warrant such a penalty. At the time of writing, these comprise: Action Plan Orders, Attendance Centre Orders, Supervision Orders, Exclusion Orders, Curfew Orders, Community Rehabilitation Orders, Community Punishment Orders, Community Punishment and Rehabilitation Orders and Drug Treatment and Testing Orders. First-tier penalties are available for offending below that level of seriousness and comprise fines, discharges, Reparation Orders and Referral Orders.

Table 3.1: Representation of young people by ethnicity at different stages of the youth justice system, 2006/07

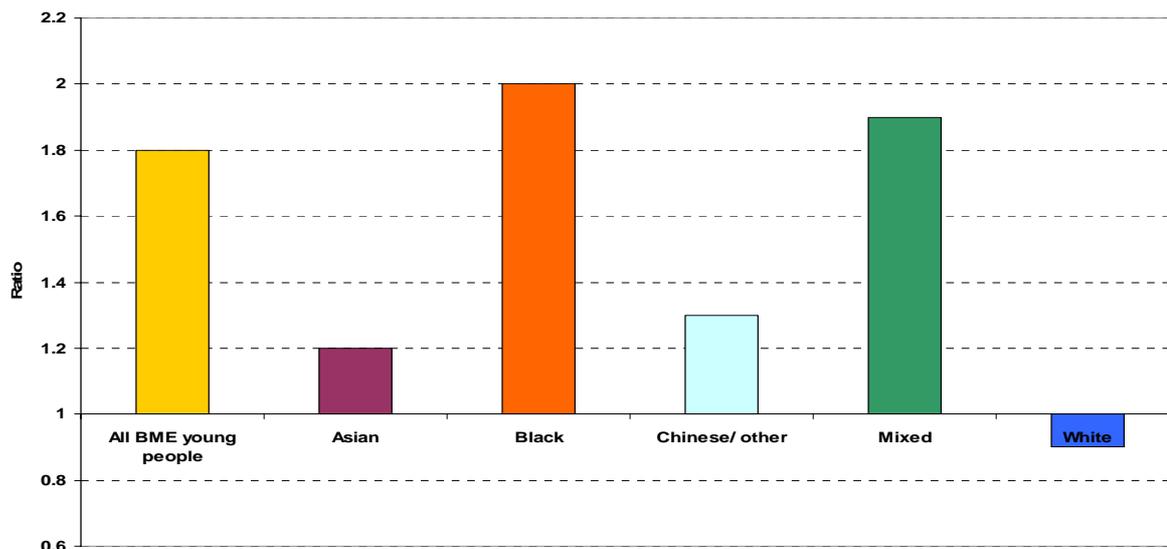
	Youth justice population	Court population	Community penalties
Asian/Asian British	3.1%	3%	2.6%
Black/Black British	5.8%	7%	7.5%
Chinese/Other ethnicity	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%
Mixed race	3%	3.9%	4.8%
All BME groups	12.4%	14.3%	15.2%
All BME groups (n)	26,712	17,132	6,041

It is among the custodial population that BME over-representation is most marked. During 2006/07, Black young people constituted slightly less than 13% of all young people who received a custodial sentence.

Figure 3.1 shows the relationship for each of the ethnic groups between system entry and custody, expressed as a ratio. A score of one would indicate that the proportions at both stages were the same; in other words, that there is no over or under-representation. A score lower than one demonstrates under-representation in custodial disposals, relative to the composition of the youth justice population as a whole. Conversely, a score above one is indicative of over-representation among those given sentences of detention.

This demonstrates that BME young people as a whole are significantly over-represented among those sent to custody, though this is due largely to the numbers Black/Black British and Mixed race young people. Black/Black British young people are nearly 2.25 times more likely to be sentenced to custody than their White counterparts. White young people are less likely to receive a custodial penalty than any other ethnic group.

Figure 3.1: Ratio of the youth justice population to custodial sentences for different ethnic groups, 2006/07

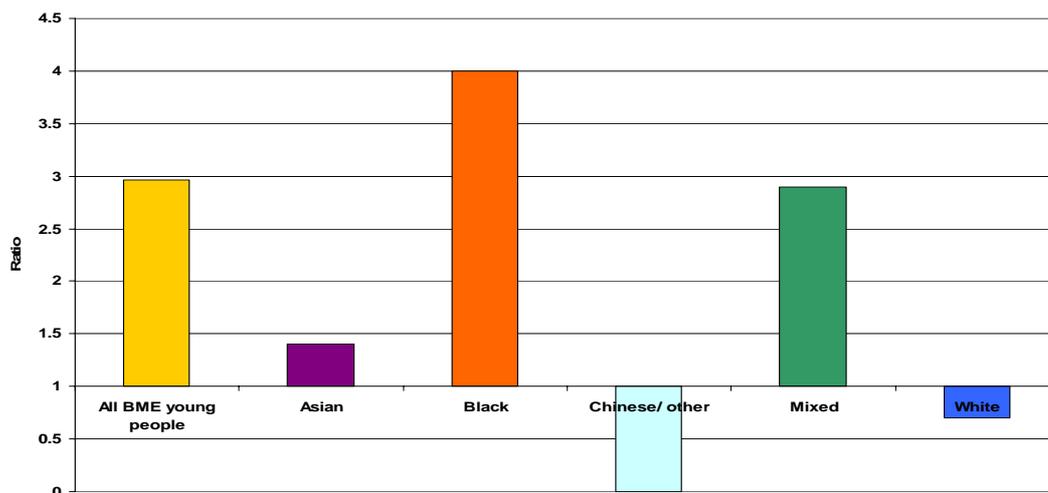


Where long-term detention (custodial sentences of two years or longer¹⁴) alone is considered, the same general patterns persist but are significantly more pronounced, as indicated in Figure 3.2. BME young people are almost three times as likely to be sentenced to a long-term period of custody than anticipated given the composition of the youth offending population. For Black young people, the risk of a custodial sentence of two years or longer, is four times what might be expected.

Chinese/Other young people are least likely to receive such a sentence but, given that this group constitutes less than 0.5% of the total youth offending population, this finding may well be an artefact of the low numbers involved. During 2006/07, not a single young person of Chinese/Other ethnicity was sentenced under these provisions.

¹⁴ Long-term detention comprises orders made under sections 90/01 of the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000 and sentences for public protection under section 226 and 228 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003. Such sentences can only be made in the Crown Court and, in most cases, exceed the two year maximum available in the youth court.

Figure 3.2: Ratio of the youth justice population to sentences of long-term detention for different ethnic groups 2006/07



In the context of this report, this pattern *within* the criminal justice process is important because YOT service provision is largely delivered within the confines of the youth justice system. An understanding of the factors contributing to higher levels of over-representation, as disposals become increasingly interventionist, might help to identify areas that YOT service provision should address. It can also highlight any areas where disproportionate outcomes can be exacerbated within the operation of the youth justice system itself.

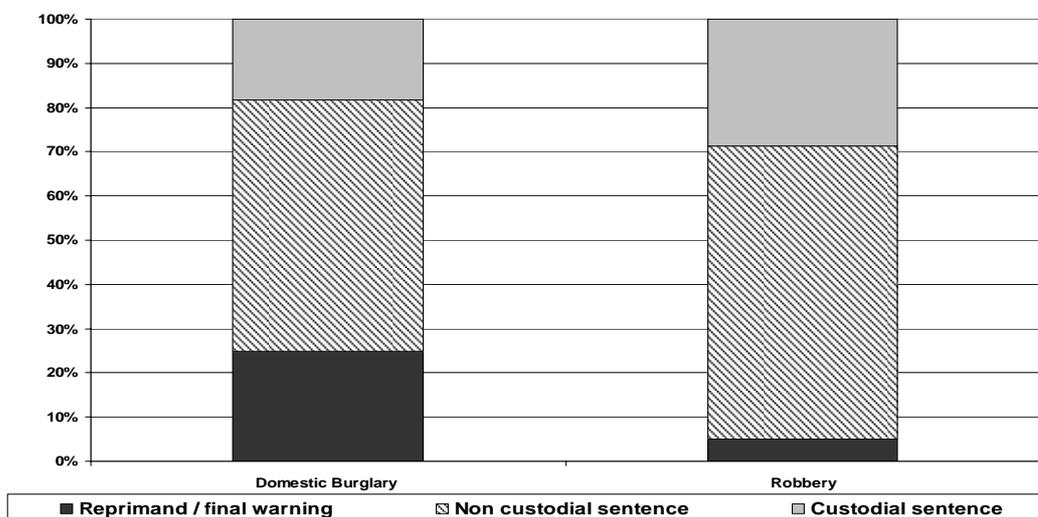
No doubt the effects of social exclusion, as noted earlier in this report, continue to play a critical role. However, as the Home Affairs Committee argued, while there is no convincing evidence that young people from ethnic minorities are more likely to offend than their White counterparts, the profile of offending by different ethnic groups appears to show some marked variation. Moreover, to the extent that ‘BME offences’ are disproportionately those that tend to be regarded as more serious, this profile will inevitably go some way to explain why BME young people are over-represented among those who go to court, and those who receive higher level court orders, confirming the findings of previous research (Feilzer and Hood, 2004).

For current purposes, the most important difference in terms of offence profile is that, while during 2006/07, BME young people committed just over 12% of all offending which led to a substantive disposal, they were responsible for almost half of all robberies, with Black young people alone responsible for more than one in four such offences.

Some care needs to be taken with these figures. Firstly, the offence for which young people are dealt with depends to an extent on police discretion in relation to the charge laid. It is possible, in at least some instances, that a Black young person might be charged with robbery for behaviour that would be designated as theft in the case of a White counterpart. Secondly, it is clear that the disproportionality in relation to robbery is balanced in part by the fact that BME young people are less likely than Whites to come to the attention of the youth justice system for other types of serious offending, such as domestic burglary. Thirdly, the offence of robbery itself encompasses a broad range of behaviours with varying degrees of seriousness.

Nonetheless, measured by the criminal justice response, it is apparent that residential burglary is regarded by the police and the courts as the lesser of the two offence types. During 2006/07, young people committing robbery were almost five times more likely to be prosecuted than those apprehended for residential burglary. They were also nearly twice as likely to receive a custodial sentence, as shown in Figure 3.3 below.

Figure 3.3: Disposal type imposed for offences of domestic burglary and robbery, 2006/07



Such figures do not preclude the possibility of less favourable outcomes for young people from BME backgrounds in comparison to those for White young people who are processed for robberies of equivalent gravity. They do, however, provide grounds for thinking that the distribution of offence type by ethnic group explains at least some of the differential treatment at the point of disposal. One recent study of custodial outcomes in a single YOT area suggested that, once offence seriousness and previous criminal history are taken into account, BME young people, although over-represented among the custodial sample, were not subject to less favourable treatment at the point of disposal. Sentence length was also largely a function of case gravity (Nacro, 2007c).

However, this explanation is no more than a partial one. Until recently, studies on discrimination within the youth justice system were relatively few and dated. Research published by the YJB in 2004 goes some way to filling the gap by providing a systematic analysis of decisions taken at each stage of the youth justice process, controlling for relevant factors, such as offence type, previous criminal record and social characteristics (Feilzer and Hood, 2004). The study found that Mixed race young people, particularly girls, were more likely to be prosecuted than similarly placed White young people. Other evidence of discriminatory outcomes was also evident, in particular:

- a greater likelihood of Black and Asian males being remanded to the secure estate
- a greater use of more restrictive community penalties for Asian and Mixed race males

- a tendency for Asian males to be sentenced to custody more frequently than expected, given their offending profile and other relevant characteristics
- a much higher probability that Black males would receive a sentence of long-term detention at the Crown Court.

The study did not attempt to investigate why such differential outcomes occur. However, the authors note that pre-sentence reports prepared by YOT staff were characterised by a greater likelihood of making proposals for custody and more restrictive community penalties in cases involving BME young people.

While the differences were not statistically significant for Black males, they were significant for Mixed race males. Such findings mirror those of a previous review conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (2000). That earlier study found that reports written on Black adults were more likely to propose custody, were frequently of a lower quality than those prepared on White defendants and, on occasion, were expressed in a manner that tended to reinforce racial stereotyping.

It is clear too that even where there are no discernible differences in the quality of reports on BME and White young people, there is nonetheless a potential for indirect discrimination (Nacro, 2007c). For instance, it appears to be common practice for reports to argue that continued denial of an offence is indicative of a lack of remorse. Such practice is problematic in that a young person cannot consistently deny involvement in a particular episode and simultaneously appear penitent.

At the same time, there is evidence that the issue of remorse carries significant weight with sentencers and can impact on ultimate disposal, particularly in borderline cases where custody is a consideration (Tombs and Jagger, 2006). The potential for indirect discrimination arises because BME young people are more likely to deny an offence; in such circumstances, equivalent treatment of all young people can generate differential outcomes (Nacro, 2007c).

Indicators of positive engagement

As noted earlier, there is currently a relative lack of evidence as to what is effective in terms of successful engagement of young people who offend, itself a vital element of work with those who come to the attention of the youth justice system. For BME young people (and girls) there is a markedly smaller research base on which to draw than for the general youth offending population.

Nonetheless, while direct evidence is lacking, there are a number of indicators that might shed some light on the capacity of YOTs to develop effective relationships with young people from Minority Ethnic backgrounds. For instance, levels of compliance might provide something of a gauge of the extent to which young people are successfully engaged.

YJB data suggests that breach of a statutory order constitutes a lower proportion of all offences leading to a substantive disposal for Asian than for White young people. As illustrated by Table 3.2, breach rates were slightly higher for Black young people and considerably higher for Mixed race young people. The latter finding might warrant further investigation, particularly in light

of some of the findings in relation to Mixed race young people discussed in the next chapter.

Table 3.2: Breach of statutory order as a proportion of all offences leading to a substantive disposal, 2006/07

	Asian/Asian British (%)	Black/Black British (%)	Chinese/Other ethnic group (%)	Mixed race (%)	White (%)
Breach rate	3	6	6	8	6

Rates of reoffending might also offer an indication of the extent to which YOT interventions are effective and young people successfully engaged. For those sentenced in 2006, 12-month rates for reoffending leading to a conviction were substantially higher for Black young people (46%) than their White equivalents (39%). Conversely, Asians were substantially less likely to be reconvicted, with a recorded recidivism rate of 28% (Ministry of Justice, 2008).

Of course, these differences may be explicable in large part by factors other than ethnicity and each of the actual reoffending rates were very close to those predicted, once other relevant factors were taken into account. In other words, Black young people within the sample had a much higher risk of getting into trouble than the Asian or White young people in the sample. Accordingly, youth justice intervention appears to have had, at best, a modest impact on reoffending across each of the ethnic groups.

A further potential indicator of engagement is the extent to which different ethnic groups are subject to what are sometimes known as ‘adult-type disposals’. These are Community Rehabilitation Orders, Community Punishment Orders and Community Punishment and Rehabilitation Orders. Such orders involve reduced levels of contact, since national standards require that young people subject to them are seen once a week, as opposed to twice-weekly meetings for Supervision Orders and other ‘youth community orders’ (YJB, 2004).

The time available for engagement is correspondingly reduced for the former group of interventions. Furthermore, in the case of Community Punishment Orders, YOT staff have no involvement with a young person once the court case is completed since, in most areas, the national probation service supervises such disposals. As shown in Table 3.3, some Minority Ethnic groups are slightly more likely to be subject to adult-type disposals than their White counterparts.

Table 3.3: ‘Adult-type’ orders as a proportion of all court disposals, 2006/07

	Asian/Asian British (%)	Black/Black British (%)	Chinese/Other ethnic group (%)	Mixed race (%)	White (%)
Adult-type orders	8	8	6	7	7

The reason for this difference is not immediately clear. Age at disposal might play a role, since the penalties concerned are only available to young people above the age of 16. YJB data does not, however, allow a breakdown of

disposals by age and ethnicity, and so does not allow that hypothesis to be tested. Further data in this regard is presented in Chapter 4 of this report.

Alternatively, it might reflect YOT practitioners' or courts' perceptions that young people from particular ethnic groups are more mature for their age than their White counterparts, or that they require reduced levels of supervisory intervention. Given the higher levels of reoffending for Black and Mixed race offenders noted above and the findings discussed later in this report, if such perceptions did influence outcomes in this manner, they would appear to be misguided.

The influence of other – as yet unidentified – elements of discrimination on the part of YOT staff or courts also cannot be ruled out. In any event, this finding is of some concern since earlier research has established a significant correlation between higher use of adult-type orders and increased rates of custody (Bateman and Stanley, 2002), and this may go some way to explaining BME over-representation among the population of the secure estate for children and young people.

BME youth populations at a local level

As noted earlier in this chapter, patterns of representation within the youth justice system vary by ethnic group. An analysis of data returns for 2006/07 confirms that there is also comparable geographical variation from one area to another, both in the ethnic make-up of the general population and the extent to which those young people entering the youth justice system are reflective of that local population.

To take the former first, while BME young people account for 16% of the total 10 to 17-year-old population across England and Wales, the proportion in individual YOT areas ranges from more than 72% in Newham to less than 1% in Merthyr Tydfil. As a consequence, the familiarity of YOT staff with the issues arising from working with BME populations inevitably varies significantly from area to area and it is not unreasonable to suppose that Minority Ethnic young people's experience as service users might, in turn, be mediated by such a level of variation. In this context, it seems unlikely that a single approach to working with ethnic minority young people will be readily applicable in all areas.

Within that overall range, it is clear that BME young people are heavily concentrated in particular geographical areas. Following an earlier analysis conducted for the YJB (Giller and Brierley, 2006), YOTs can be allocated to one of five bands, according to the proportion of the local population aged 10 to 17-years-old from a BME background.

As shown in Table 3.4 below, one in five YOTs has a local estimated BME population of 30% or over. In aggregate, this amounts to 30 YOT areas and

accounts for almost half of the 10 to 17-year-old Minority Ethnic population across the whole of England and Wales. All but five YOTs within this band are in London. Indeed, almost 40% of the entire Minority Ethnic youth population resides within the capital city. Conversely, 69 YOTs – almost 40% of the total – have a BME population of less than 5%.¹⁵

Table 3.4: Breakdown of YOT areas by level of 10 to 17-year-old BME population

Banding	Total number of YOTs in band	Percentage of all YOTs	Average BME population for YOTs within band
Band A (BME young people account for 30% or over of 10–17 population)	30	19	46
Band B (BME young people account for 20–29% of 10–17 population)	11	7	25
Band C (BME young people account for 10–19% of 10–17 population)	25	16	14
Band D (BME young people account for 5–9% of 10–17 population)	29	19	7
Band E (BME young people account for 0–4% of 10–17 population)	69	39	3

Geographical variation in over-representation of BME young people

It was noted in a previous chapter that, in recent years, there has been a reduction in the number of young people entering the youth justice system whose ethnicity is recorded as ‘not known’. All YOTs have been required (since April 2005) to have an action plan in place to reduce the difference in ethnic composition of young people subject to youth justice disposals and that of the general population. Therefore, while there appears to have been progress, it is still a matter of some concern that the ethnicity of a significant proportion of the young people who entered the system during 2006/07 was still recorded in this manner in many areas.

¹⁵ Figures derived from Office of National Statistics census data (estimates) for 2005.

While 19% (30) of YOT areas were able to provide a definite classification for ethnicity of all young people entering the system, a further 14% (22) reported ethnicity being 'not known' in 5% or more of all cases. In seven areas, the ethnicity of more than one in 10 young people receiving a disposal was not identified. This lack of data clearly has implications for any analysis of over-representation and this shortcoming should be borne in mind when interpreting the results.

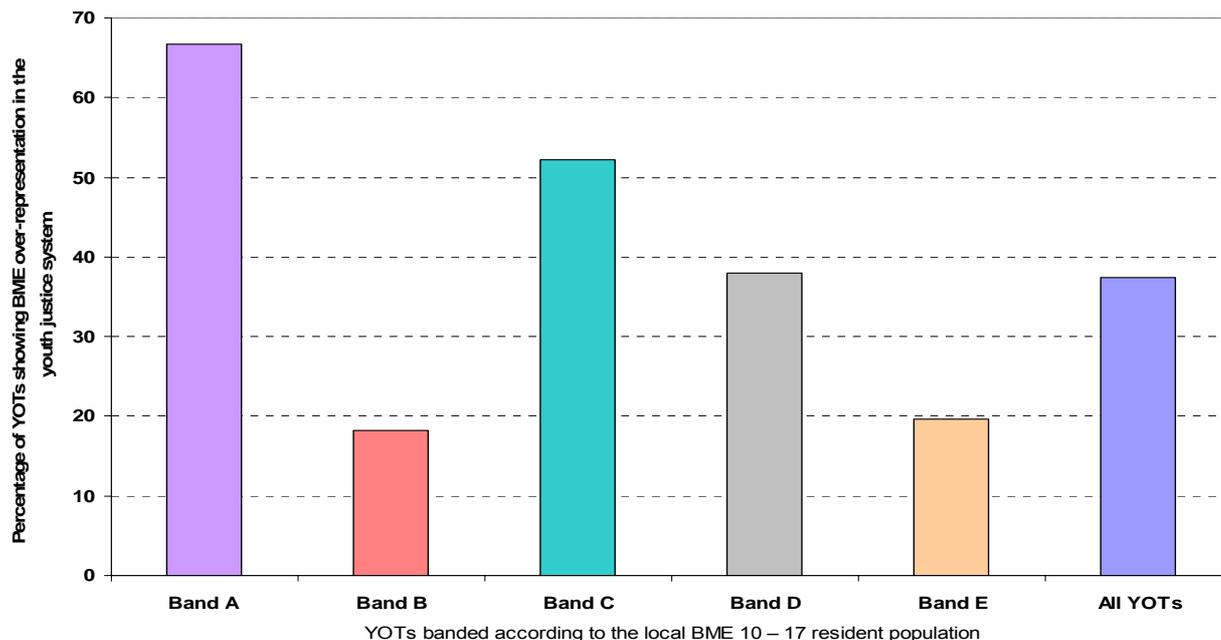
It was noted in the previous chapter that the representation of BME young people within the youth offending population across the whole of England and Wales is broadly proportional to the composition of the general 10 to 17-year-old population. It is therefore unsurprising that BME young people are not over-represented in the youth justice population in every YOT area.

Statistical returns to the YJB for 2006/07 show that Minority Ethnic young people were under-represented in the youth justice system in almost two-thirds of YOT areas. However, the extent of the variation between individual areas is quite stark. In one area, with a relatively low BME general population, the proportion of Minority Ethnic young people receiving a substantive youth justice disposal was five times what might be expected, given the composition of the local population. At the other end of the scale, in an area where the general youth population is also heavily White, there was no BME representation at all in the local youth justice system.

In general terms, in areas where there is a relatively high Minority Ethnic resident 10 to 17-year-old population, there is also more likely to be an over-representation of such young people in the youth justice system. There is in other words, a strong correlation between the level of disproportionality and the relative size of the BME local population.

As shown in Figure 3.4 below, while two-thirds of YOTs in Band A (those with a resident 10 to 17-year-old BME population of 30% or above) exhibited some level of over-representation among those who come to the attention of the youth justice system, the equivalent proportion for Band E (with a resident BME population of less than 5%) was less than one-fifth. It should also be noted that Band B is the only one not to fit this general pattern.

Figure 3.4: Percentage of YOTs showing some level of over-representation within the youth justice system, 2006/07

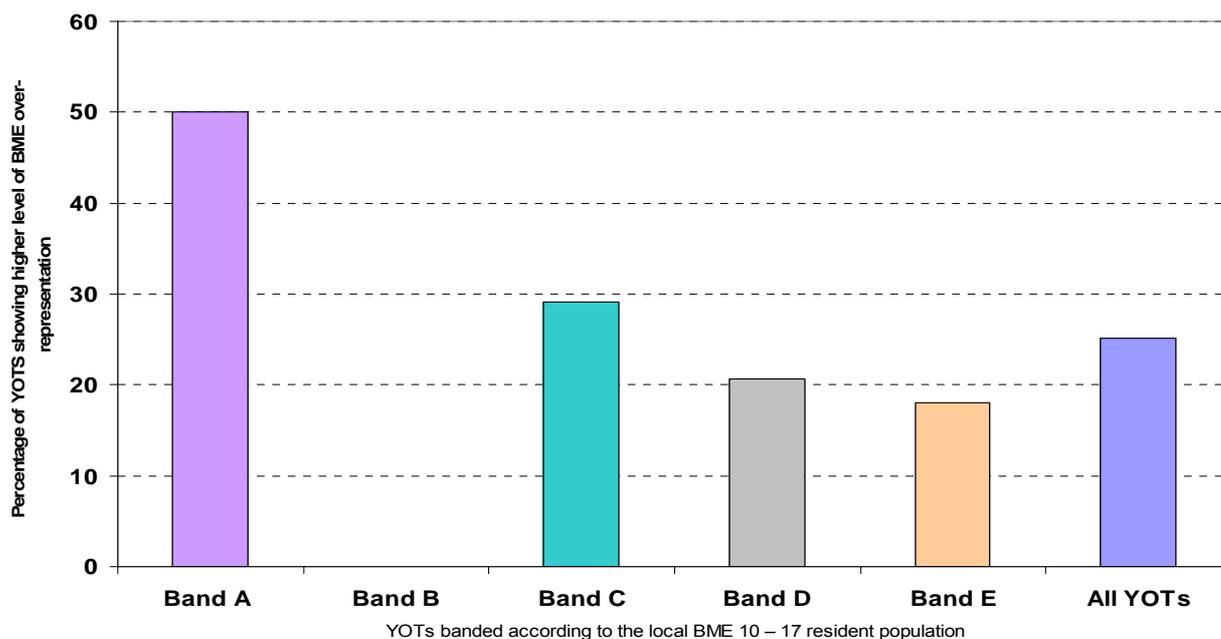


Of course, some differences between the composition of the general population and the youth justice system are inevitable. However, the same general pattern persists when analysis is restricted to the YOT areas where BME over-representation is 10% or more, compared to the composition of the local 10 to 17-year-old population.

Figure 3.5 below shows that YOTs with relatively high concentrations of BME populations are also more likely to be characterised by higher (above 10%) levels of over-representation. For instance, half of Band A YOTs showed over-representation at that higher level. This finding is particularly striking given that, in areas with a small BME population, high levels of over-representation (in percentage terms) might be generated by a relatively low number of BME young people entering the youth justice system.

It should be acknowledged that Band B YOTs again appear to represent an exception to this general pattern, since none within that Band showed over-representation at the higher level. This is largely a consequence of the fact that such YOTs were considerably less likely to demonstrate any over-representation, as noted in the previous paragraph.

Figure 3.5: Percentage of YOTs showing BME over-representation within the youth justice system of 10% or more



It is not immediately clear why YOTs in areas with a relatively high BME youth population are more likely to display greater levels of disproportionality within the criminal justice system. As noted previously, the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (2007) concluded that social exclusion was the ‘primary cause’ of the over-representation of Black young people among those processed by the criminal justice system.

It may be that be that the social and economic factors that give rise to social exclusion are more prevalent in areas where there are greater concentrations of ethnic minority populations. Cultural factors, particular to the Black community, might also be more likely to develop and play a greater role, where those communities form a larger proportion of the whole local population.

The final factor identified by the Home Affairs Committee as contributing to a comprehensive explanation of over-representation was the existence of a variety of forms of discrimination in the youth justice system itself. In the current context, practices with the greatest explanatory potential might be discriminatory use of police stop and search or discriminatory police decision-making in relation to charge. Further research would be required to establish whether such discriminatory practices are also more prevalent in areas with higher ethnic minority resident youth populations and, if so, what might account for that fact.

It was suggested in the previous chapter of this report that, across England and Wales, the introduction of race action planning appears to have had a limited impact in relation to its primary purpose. Between 2005/06 and 2006/07, 61% of all YOT areas saw a rise in the representation of ethnic minority young people among the youth offending population. More significantly, 84% of YOTs where there was already some over-representation recorded a further increase in that representation. This pattern was broadly similar across all the five bands, as indicated in Table 3.5 below.

Table 3.5: YOT areas where there is BME over-representation, recording an increase in that over-representation between 2005/06 and 2006/07

BAND	Proportion of YOTs recording an increase in BME representation (%)
Band A	80
Band B	100
Band C	83
Band D	73
Band E	100
All YOTs	84

The size of this increase was modest in most areas and below 3% for more than two-thirds of YOTs where there was a rise in over-representation. Increases above that level were, for the most part, restricted to Band A, where 64% (11) of the YOT areas displaying BME over-representation recorded a rise of more than 3%. A further 35% (6) Band A areas saw an increase of over 5%. Although the number of areas involved is small, this finding might add some weight to the suggestion that higher concentrations of BME youth resident populations might be associated with increased over-representation among the youth offending population.

Over-representation by ethnic background at local level

As previously noted, Asian/Asian British young people as a whole are under-represented in the youth justice system across England and Wales, while Black/Black British young people are heavily over-represented. In that context, it is unsurprising that, where YOT areas display BME over-representation, the disproportion within the youth offending population is predominantly in relation to Black/Black British and Mixed race young people. It follows therefore that the analysis in the previous sections applies largely to those two groups.

Table 3.6 breaks down the 39 YOT areas where BME over-representation is 10% or more above the expected level, given the composition of the local 10 to 17-year-old population. This table also shows which ethnic groups are over-represented in each case. In over half of these areas, both Black/Black British and Mixed race young people were over-represented in the youth justice system during 2006/07. A further 18% of areas showed over-representation for Black/Black British young people only.

Conversely, Asian/Asian British and Chinese/Other young people were only over-represented in areas where the representation of Mixed race or Black young people was also disproportionately high. As noted earlier, previous research has highlighted that recording practice for the category of mixed parentage may be inconsistent between YOTs and this should be taken into account in interpreting the findings (Feilzer and Hood, 2004).

Table 3.6: YOT areas with higher levels of BME over-representation by ethnic groups over-represented

Ethnic group/s over-represented	No. of YOTs
Black/Black British and Mixed race	20
Black/Black British only	7
Black/Black British and Chinese/Other	4
Black/Black British, Chinese/Other and Mixed race	2
Mixed race only	2
Asian/Asian British, Black/Black British and Mixed race	2
Asian/Asian British and Black/Black British	2
Asian/Asian British only	0
Chinese/Other only	0
Asian/Asian British and Chinese/Other	0
Asian/Asian British and Mixed race	0
Mixed race and Chinese/Other	0
Asian/Asian British, Black/Black British and Chinese/Other	0
Asian/Asian British, Black/Black British, Chinese/Other and Mixed race	0
Total	39

Characteristics of YOT areas displaying a high level of BME over-representation

Against the background of considerable variation in the extent of BME over-representation, it is instructive to compare YOT areas at each end of the spectrum. As might be expected, given the breakdown of over-representation by ethnic group shown in Table 3.6, the 10 areas with the highest levels of over-representation are characterised predominantly by the over-representation of Black/Black British and Mixed race young people.

All but two areas exhibit disproportionate representation among both of those ethnic groups, while each of the areas shows over-representation of at least one of them.

In those 10 areas, the proportion of ethnic minority young people among the offending population is, on average, 98% higher than would be anticipated given the composition of the local population. By contrast, in the 10 YOT areas where BME under-representation is most marked, the equivalent proportion is 15% below what would be expected.

Consistent with findings outlined earlier in this section, all of the YOT areas with low BME representation are in Band E, indicating that they are characterised by the lowest levels of Minority Ethnic resident populations. By contrast, three of the YOTs areas in the group showing highest levels of over-representation are in Band A, and have among the highest levels of BME 10 to 17-year-old general populations. One obvious difference between the groups of YOTs is therefore in relation to the broader ethnic composition of the general 10 to 17-year-old population, though there are also other features that serve to distinguish them.

As Table 3.7 below indicates, during 2006/07, there were also differences in the pattern of offending between YOT areas that exhibited the highest levels of BME over-representation and those displaying the greatest level of under-representation.

It was noted earlier in the report that while BME young people were responsible for more than four times the proportion of robbery offences leading to a substantive disposal, that would be anticipated given the composition of the youth offending population. Against that national figure, it is not surprising that there is also a tendency for areas with higher levels of BME over-representation to be characterised by well above average levels of robbery. If BME young people are more likely than White young people to commit robbery, one would anticipate that where the youth offending population contains a higher number of young people from Minority Ethnic backgrounds, this would be reflected in the distribution of offending.

Drug-related offending was also almost twice as common, in relative terms, in areas displaying high levels of BME over-representation. Again this is broadly reflective of the national picture, since in 2006/07 BME young people across England and Wales were almost twice as likely as their White counterparts to receive a youth justice disposal for such offences. Conversely, public order offences appear to have been more frequent where ethnic minority young people are under-represented. Burglary and offences of violence against the person in both types of area were close to the national average.

Table 3.7: Selected offence types, as a proportion of all offences leading to substantive disposal by YOTs, showing BME over-representation and under-representation

	YOTs with highest level of BME over-representation (%)	YOTs with greatest level of BME under-representation (%)	England and Wales (%)
Robbery	5	1	2
Drug-related	6	3	4
Burglary	4	4	5
Violence against the person	19	17	19
Public order	7	11	8

A further distinction between the two groups of YOTs identified above relates to the proportionate use of custody for young people of Minority Ethnic origin. One would naturally anticipate that, in any area where BME young people are over-represented among the offending population, this would be reflected in a disproportionate use of custodial sentencing for that group. However, in areas of highest over-representation, the risk of incarceration for BME young people appears to be considerably greater than would be expected; conversely, in areas of under-representation, that equivalent risk is considerably reduced, as indicated in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8: BME representation in the general population, the offending population and custodial disposals by YOT, 2006/07

YOT type	10–17 population (%)	Offending population (%)	Custodial disposals (%)
BME over-representation	17	28	31
BME under-representation	3	0.4	0.2

While the numbers involved are too small to draw any definitive conclusions, the analysis would appear to suggest that:

- the chances of a young person from a Minority Ethnic background being given a custodial sentence are higher if he or she is sentenced in an area where minority groups are already over-represented in the youth justice system, even allowing for that representation
- such areas are in turn characterised by resident 10 to 17-year-old populations with a proportionately larger BME composition.

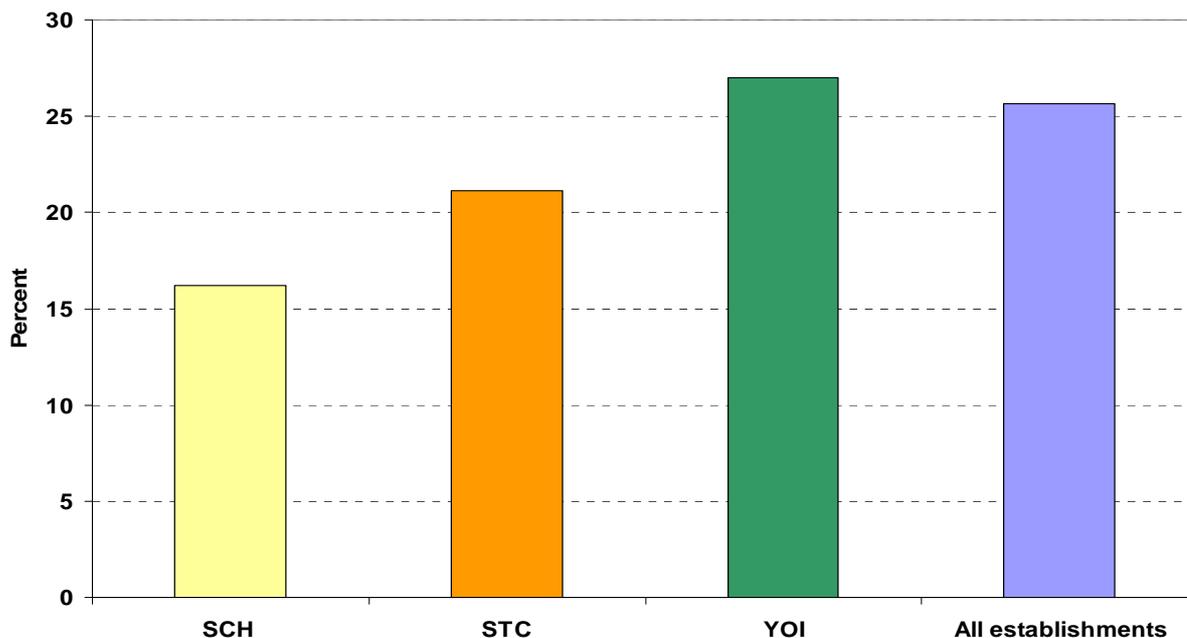
As noted above, it may be that young people living in such areas are more likely to experience social exclusion, though it is not immediately clear why that should be associated with an increased likelihood of a custodial outcome for Minority Ethnic young people in particular. The higher incidence of robbery offences in such areas might also be a contributory factor.

BME representation within the secure estate for children and young people

Inevitably, given that BME young people are significantly more likely to receive a custodial sentence than their White counterparts, they are over-represented in the secure estate population, accounting for just over one in four of those detained at any one time. However, there are also differences in representation between the different types of custodial establishments.

As shown in Figure 3.6 below, Minority Ethnic young people are more likely to be placed in YOIs than either secure children’s homes or STCs, compared with their White peers.

Figure 3.6: BME young people as a proportion of the secure estate by different establishment type, March 2007



The explanation of this pattern is not immediately obvious. One possible influence is age, since younger children are given priority allocation to secure children's homes and STCs, while boys below the age of 15 years and girls below the age of 17 years are not placed in YOIs. There is no obvious reason for supposing that the age profile of Minority Ethnic young people in the youth justice system should be any different to that of White young people. Moreover, YJB data cannot be disaggregated on the basis of age and ethnicity to determine whether there is such a difference.

However, findings outlined in the following chapter suggest that a higher proportion of BME young people known to YOTs are 16 to 17 years of age, while Mixed race young people in particular tend to have longer 'careers' within the youth justice system than their White counterparts. It is not clear why differences in terms of age and length of contact with the criminal justice system of this nature should occur, and further investigation of this issue is accordingly warranted.

A further possibility relates to perceived vulnerability, since males above the age of 15 years and females over 17 years may be placed outside of YOIs if they are considered vulnerable. By the same time token, where young people in secure children's homes or STCs cross the relevant age threshold, there is a presumption that they will be transferred to prison service accommodation unless they are close to the end of their sentence or are assessed as being vulnerable.

In the event that young people from Minority Ethnic groups were less likely to be considered vulnerable, one would therefore anticipate a tendency for those groups to be over-represented in YOIs. However, at the current time there is no evidence either to support or refute the possibility that assessments of vulnerability vary according to ethnicity. Further research would be required to determine whether perceptions of vulnerability do influence distribution of BME young people within the secure estate.

In any event, this differential pattern of placement within the secure estate is a matter of concern, given that YOIs operate with considerably lower staff-to-child ratios, frequently have access to fewer specialist resources and are less suitable for young people who display any form of vulnerability (Nacro, 2003). As a consequence, it would appear that BME young people subject to custodial remands and sentences are at greater risk of not having their social, educational, health and criminogenic needs met within the secure estate than their White counterparts. The implications for staff working with young people in detention are obviously considerable.

4 Young people, their offending histories and assessed needs – a case file review of YOT offenders

This chapter presents findings on the characteristics and needs of young people engaged with 20 YOTs across England and Wales in 2006, with a specific focus on the BME population. Findings are presented on:

- sampling and analysis
- offending levels (aggregate, frequency and seriousness) among young people and the types of disposal
- the extent of need among YOT offenders, as assessed against the 12 core elements of *Asset* and the differences in need across BME groups and gender.

Selecting a unit of analysis

A single young person may have several decisions recorded on a YOT's database, which may relate to the same or different offences (which can be grouped into cases). The complete population for the 20 areas in 2006 resulted in a database of 47,500 decisions, covering fewer offences, still fewer cases, and even fewer individuals – as some people come into contact with YOTs several times in the course of a year. We analysed the data at the individual level to enable comparisons of individuals from different ethnic groups. Where people appeared several times in the database, we selected information relating to their most recent case.

Information on each person was extracted from the YOIS/CareWorks system by first grouping decision into cases.¹⁶ Within each case, we selected the most serious offence (according to the YJB gravity score) and the sentencing outcome with the most serious penalty. We also recorded whether the case included any breach proceedings. Having grouped decision points into cases, the most recent case in 2006 for each young person was chosen as the main unit of analysis. The resultant sample comprised 22,505 young people.¹⁷

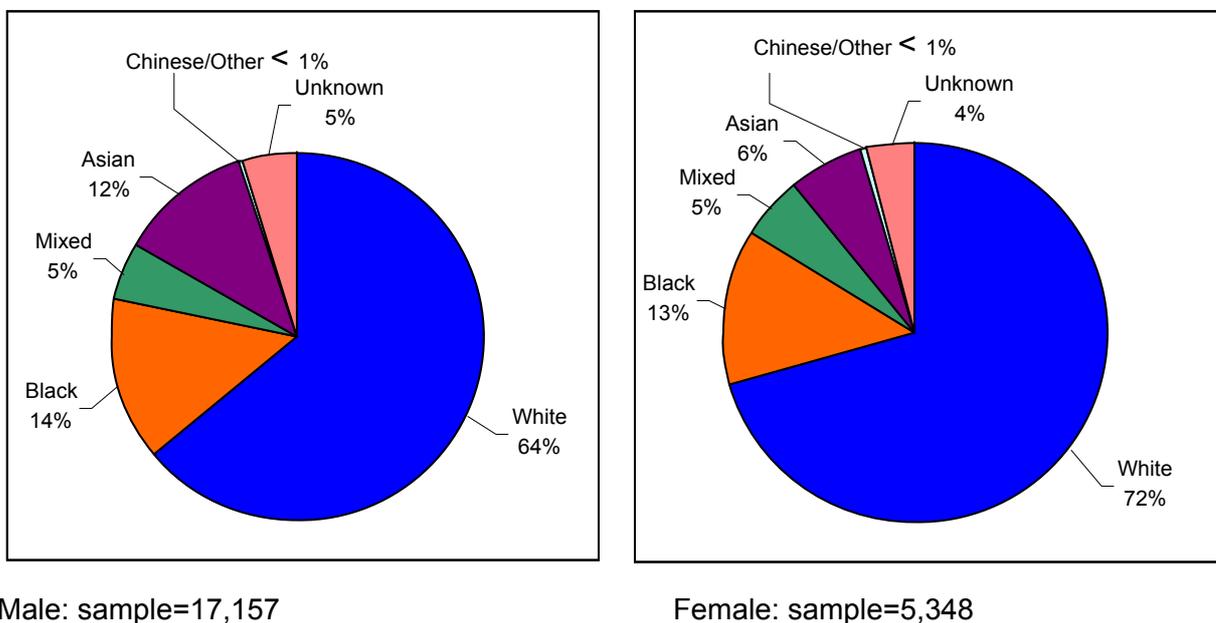
¹⁶ A case was defined as one or more sentencing options relating to the same individual and made on the same date.

¹⁷ Fifteen cases of young people recorded as aged 0–9 and above 20 were excluded from the analysis, as were five cases of unknown gender.

Sample composition

Seventy-six percent of the sample were male, the majority of which were White, while White females comprised an even higher proportion of the remainder. Chinese/Other groups made up less than 1% of the total sample.¹⁸ Overall, ethnicity was not recorded for 4% of cases. Some YOTs recorded ethnicity less completely than others; two had over 20% of missing data, accounting for 43% of all 'unknown' cases. The profiles of Mixed race males and females were broadly similar, with half of all Mixed race offenders recorded as mixed White and Black Caribbean. Over a third had an unrecorded or 'unknown' ethnic background and the remainder were White and Asian (9%) and White and Black African (5%). A discrepancy was seen in 12 areas on how Mixed race young people were recorded, and therefore a small amount of caution should be exercised when examining these figures throughout the report.¹⁹ Figure 4.1 presents the ethnicity and gender of our sample.

Figure 4.1: Ethnicity and gender of young people in the sample



¹⁸ While data has been presented on the Chinese/Other group, statistical tests for significance were not undertaken due to the small sample size.

¹⁹ For 12 areas, two variables recorded ethnicity, one which classified a greater proportion of young people as Mixed race and one which tended to classify the same young people as either Black or White. The number of young people involved equated to 1% of the sample. For the purposes of our analysis, we selected the variable which classified less young people as Mixed race. This variable was selected to be compatible with the remaining areas. However, caution should be exercised when examining the data provided on Mixed race offenders as there appears to be no standard method for accurately recording the ethnicity of Mixed race offenders within the youth justice system.

Ethnicity, sex and age

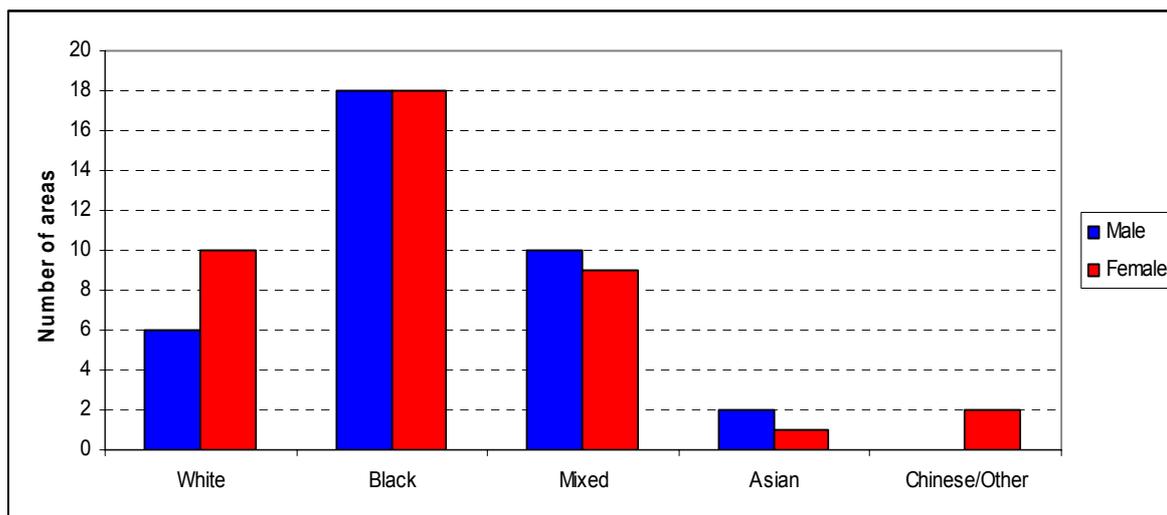
Females had a younger age profile than males, peaking at 15 in comparison with the YJB cut-off of 17 for males.²⁰ Five percent of those in the total sample were aged 18 or 19.

Examining the age profile by ethnicity, more Asian (50%) and Black (48%) offenders were aged 16–17 than White and Mixed race offenders (44%). The same patterns emerged for both males and females. Severer sentencing penalties can be given to young people aged over 15, which may contribute to the differences in sentences among ethnic groups (see Table A1 of Appendix A).

Ethnicity and area

When comparing the relevant 10 to 17-year-old population for 19 of the sample areas,²¹ Chinese/Other and Asian young offenders were more likely to be under-represented compared to the general population, while young Black people were more likely to be over-represented. Figure 4.2 charts the number of areas by ethnicity and gender in which the proportion of the ethnic group in the sample was higher than in the local population. (See Appendix A, Tables A2 and A3, for area breakdowns).

Figure 4.2: The number of areas by ethnicity and gender where the ethnic group in the sample was higher than the local population of 10 to 17-year-olds



Offending levels and disposals

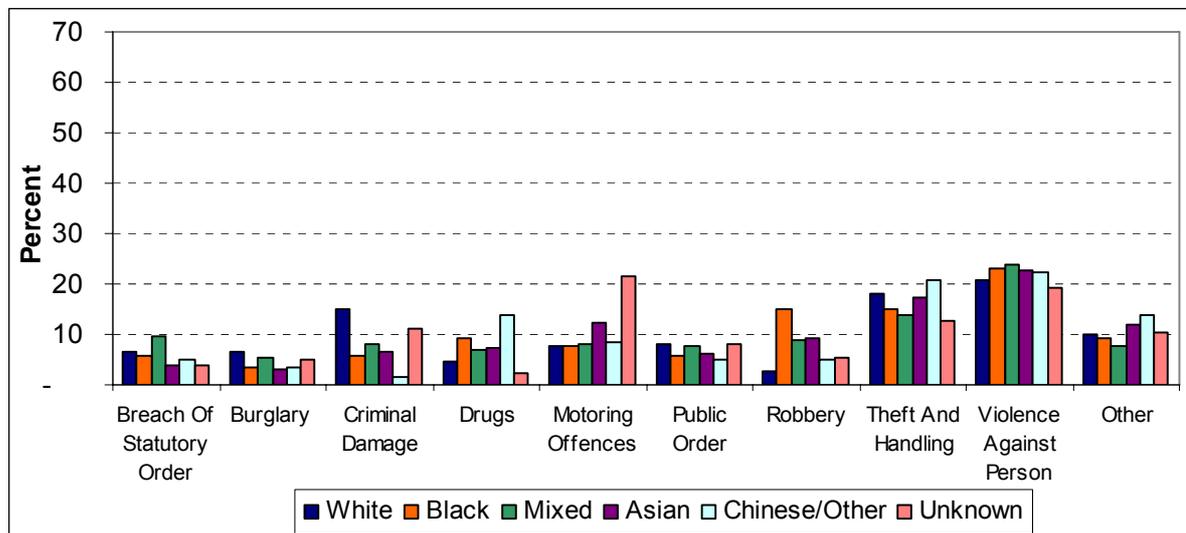
Violence against the person was the most common offence for which males were charged, regardless of ethnicity. Figure 4.3 below presents the offending patterns for each ethnic group.

²⁰ Similar to findings presented in the 2005 Offending Crime and Justice Survey.

²¹ For one area the number of ethnic young people in the population could not be provided.

The proportion of Black and Mixed race males being charged with violence against the person was higher than that of White males. Black, Mixed race, Asian and 'unknown' young males all had a higher proportion of robbery offences than White males, while White males had a higher proportion of criminal damage offences compared to other groups. These differences were statistically significant²² (see Table A4 of Appendix A).

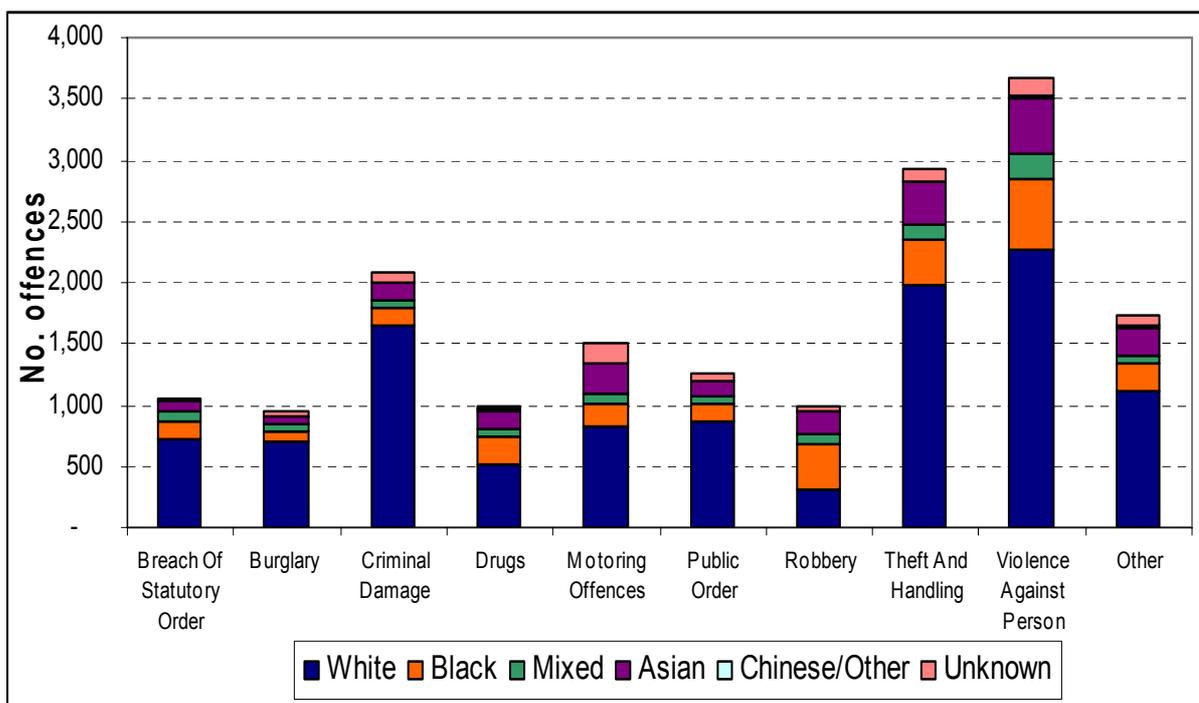
Figure 4.3: Profile of male ethnic offences



Comparing the volume of crimes committed, White males were charged with the largest number for all offences, with the exception of robbery. Black males were charged with the most robbery offences (37%) followed by White (32%) and Asian males (19%). Black males were also charged with the second largest proportion of drug offences (23%). Figure 4.4 presents the volume of male offences by ethnicity (also see Table A5 of Appendix A).

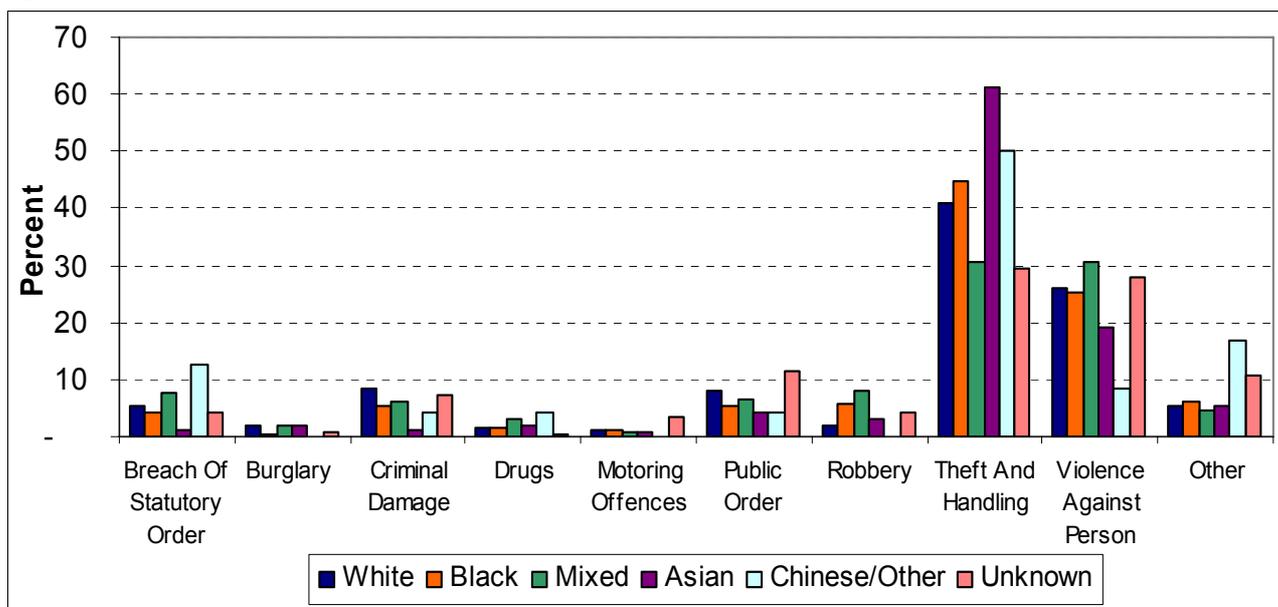
²² In this report, statistically significant results are reported to indicate that a difference has been established between units of interest, e.g. Black compared to White. All results presented as statistically significant are significant at the 95% level, which means that the finding has a 95% or more chance of being true i.e. if you were to collect 100 samples and conduct a similar analysis, 95 of the samples would produce a similar result.

Figure 4.4: Volume of offences (total =17,157)



Females were most commonly charged with theft and handling of stolen goods, with Asian females having a higher proportion of these offences compared to White females, who in turn had a higher proportion than Mixed race and unknown ethnicity females. These differences were statistically significant (see Table A4 of Appendix A). For a breakdown of offences committed by females, see Figure 4.5 below and Table A6 of Appendix A.

Figure 4.5: Profile of female offences



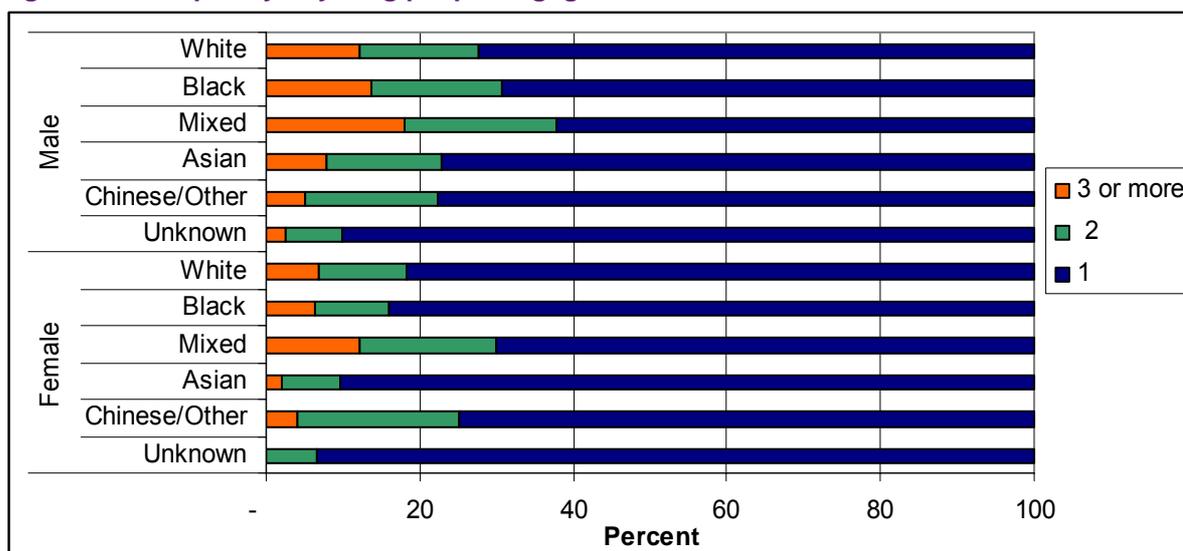
Frequency and duration

In 2006, Mixed race offenders came into contact²³ with their local YOT more frequently than White ones (see Figure 4.6 below). The proportion of Mixed race young males who were engaged with their YOT only once in 2006 was 10% lower than for White males. The proportion of Mixed race females who came into contact with their YOT only once was 12% lower than for White females. These differences were statistically significant.

Black males were also significantly less likely to appear only once compared to White males. Both Asian males and females were significantly more likely than their White counterparts to be engaged only once and significantly less likely to be engaged two, three or more times.

²³ Measured by the number of separate cases recorded in the YOIS/CareWorks system in 2006.

Figure 4.6: Frequency of young people engaged with YOTs



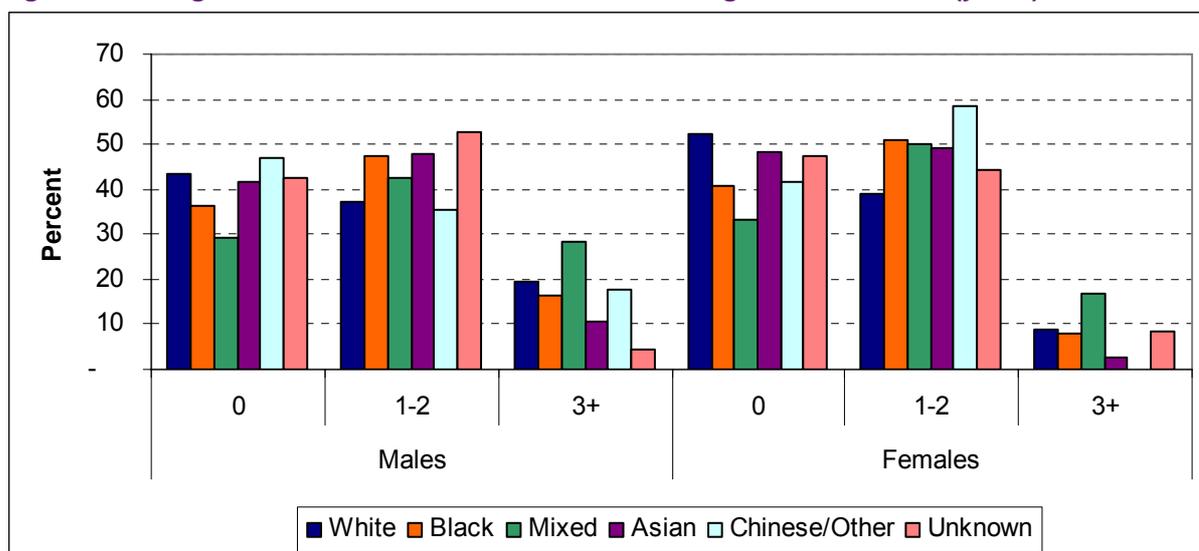
Not only were Mixed race offenders engaged more frequently with their YOT in 2006 but they had also been within the criminal justice system for a longer period compared to White offenders. Figure 4.7 represents the length of time between age at current offence and age at first Reprimand for eight of the areas in the sample.^{24,25}

Mixed race males were significantly more likely than White males to have been known within the criminal justice system for three or more years. Asian males and females were significantly less likely than Whites to have been known for three years or more. No significant differences were found between Black males and females, when compared to their White counterparts.

²⁴ Data on age at first Reprimand was missing from 12 areas.

²⁵ Duration was calculated in years due to the recording of ages in years. The analysis would be more robust if months had been calculated as opposed to years because a change of age within a year currently counts as one year, when it is possible that the change of age happened in a few months.

Figure 4.7: Length of time between current offence and age first cautioned (years)



Seriousness of offence

The offence gravity score is a scale which indicates the seriousness of an offence a young person has been charged with on a scale of 1–8 (with 8 being the most serious of offences, such as murder). Both Black males and females had a higher mean offence score than their White counterparts (significant at the 95% level). This is explained in part by the higher proportion of Black young people committing the offence of robbery.

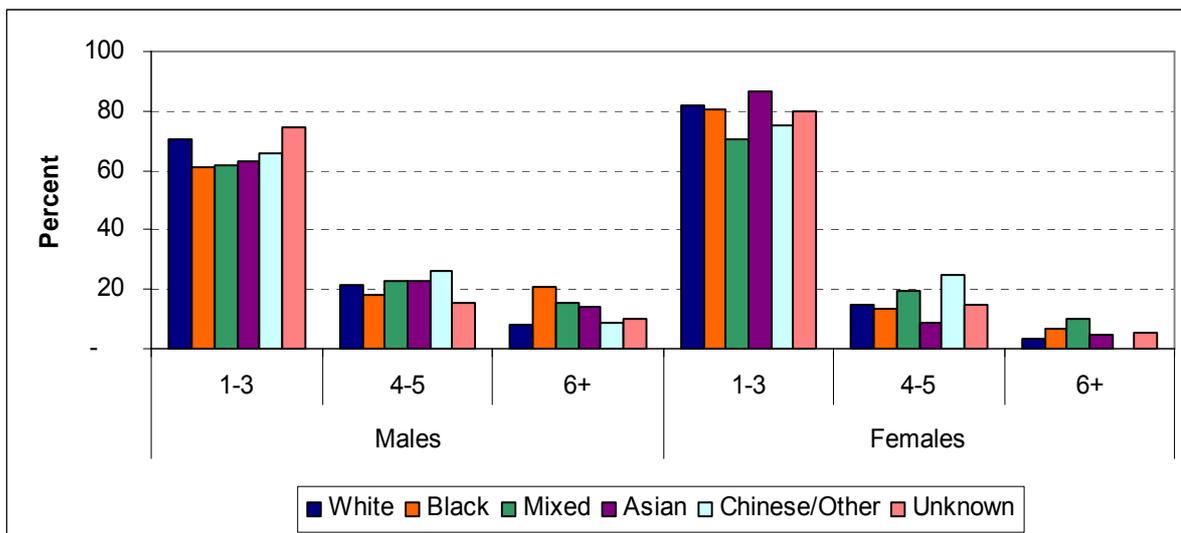
Black males also had a significantly higher mean score than Asian males. Mixed and Asian males also had statistically significant higher mean scores than White males. Only Mixed race females had a statistically significant higher mean score than White females. Table 4.1 below highlights these findings.

Table 4.1: Mean offence gravity score by ethnicity and gender

	White	Black	Mixed	Asian	Chinese/Other	Unknown
Males	3.18	3.62	3.48	3.46	3.31	3.05
Females	3.07	3.20	3.35	3.16	3.13	3.09

Overall, males tended to have higher mean offence scores than females (significant at the 95% level), with the proportion of females committing offences greater than a score of 6 lower than equivalent males of the same ethnicity. Figure 4.8 charts the proportion of males and females by ethnicity that had offence scores of 1–3, 4–5 and 6–8.

Figure 4.8: Offence gravity score by ethnicity and gender



Disposals

Overall, 49% of the sample received a police reprimand or final warning, with 65% of female cases resolved without prosecution compared to 44% of male cases (see Tables A8 and A9 of Appendix A).

Black and Mixed race groups and those with unknown ethnicity were less likely than White offenders to receive a pre-court disposal. There was a difference of 11 percentage points between Black and White males, and a substantial 21 percentage point difference between Mixed race and White males receiving pre-court disposals. These differences were statistically significant.

Similarly to males, Mixed race females were statistically less likely than White females to receive a pre-court disposal. However, no statistically significant differences were found between Black and White females. Asian females were statistically more likely to receive a pre-court disposal than White females, with an 11 percentage point difference compared to White females.

Table 4.2: Proportion of young people receiving a pre-court disposal by ethnicity

Pre-court	White	Black	Mixed	Asian	Chinese/ Other	Unknown	Total
Males (Percent)							
Informal Warning	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Police Reprimand	66	67	58*	72*	71	83*	67
Final Warning	34	33	40*	28*	29	16*	32
Fixed Penalty Notice	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number in sample	5270	861	245	925	21	199	7521
Proportion of all cases dealt with at pre-court stage	49	38*	28*	48	37	26*	45
Females (Percent)							
Informal Warning	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Police Reprimand	76	76	70	81	76	87*	77
Final Warning	24	23	30	19	24	13*	23
Fixed Penalty Notice	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number in sample	2527	461	108	270	17	102	3485
Proportion of all cases dealt with at pre-court stage	68	66	41*	79*	71	50*	66

* Indicates a significant difference (at the 95% level) when compared to White young people

NB: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Court

Table 4.3 below shows the types of disposals received by young people at court. For males, the significant differences between ethnic groups at the sentencing stage were:

- Black males were more likely than White males to have their case acquitted/dismitted/withdrawn or receive a custodial sentence
- Black males were less likely to receive a referral order, a first tier penalty or a supplementary order²⁶ than White males

²⁶ Supplementary orders comprise of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and costs.

- Mixed race males were more likely than White males to receive a community sentence, custodial sentence or supervision order, and less likely to receive a referral order or first tier penalty
- Asian males were more likely than White males to have their case acquitted/dismissed/withdrawn and less likely than White males to receive a community sentence or a supervision order.

There were fewer significant differences between BME females compared to White females:

- Mixed race females were more likely to receive a community sentence and less likely than White females to receive a referral order
- Asian females were less likely than White females to receive a custodial sentence.

Table 4.3: Proportion of young people receiving a court disposal by ethnicity

Court	White	Black	Mixed	Asian	Chinese/ Other	Unknown	Total
Males (%)							
Acquitted/Dismissed/ Withdrawn	13	17*	15	15*	6	25*	14
Referral Order	23	19*	17*	24	22	17*	22
First Tier Penalties	21	16*	16*	22	25	32*	21
Community Sentence	25	27	30*	21*	25	16*	25
Custody	9	13*	12*	10	14	3*	9
Supplementary Order	3	2	3	4	6	4	3
Other	6	5	6	5	3	3*	6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number in sample	5427	1404	631	994	36	560	9052
Females (%)							
Acquitted/Dismissed/ Withdrawn	12	16	13	15	14	26*	14
Referral Order	31	29	21*	33	14	30	30
First Tier Penalties	17	13	15	17	0	18	16
Community Sentence	26	28	35*	25	29	15*	27
Custody	4	6	5	0*	14	1*	4
Supplementary Order	3	3	3	6	0	3	3
Other	7	4	8	4	29	7	6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number in sample	1188	239	155	72	7	102	1763

* Indicates a significant difference (at the 95% level) when compared to White young people.

Both the literature review and this analysis has established that there are statistically significant differences in the outcomes that young people of different ethnic backgrounds receive, both at the police stage and at the court stage.

Multivariate regression analysis to examine the likelihood of receiving a custodial sentence was undertaken for 12 areas of the sample.²⁷ Having accounted for a number of variables thought to influence the award of custodial sentences, such as offence seriousness, type of offence, previous custodial sentences and time on remand,²⁸ no statistically significant differences were found when comparing BME and White young people.

In other words, the differential representation of different groups in the system can be explained, on the face of it, by factors other than ethnicity. For a more detailed discussion on explaining ethnic differences in the youth justice system, see Feilzer and Hood (2004) and May et al. (2010).²⁹ However, the fact remains that Black and Mixed race offenders are over-represented in the youth justice system. The further possibility remains that the factors which 'wash out' ethnicity as a predictor may themselves be associated with ethnicity in ways not captured by this analysis. For further discussion on this point, see Bowling and Phillips *Racism, Crime and Justice* (2002).

Extent of need

This section examines *Asset* data³⁰ to assess differences in the needs of young people by examining the risk of reoffending.

From our reduced sample of 18,809 individuals, 38% had *Asset* information recorded.^{31,32} However, *Asset* scores were available for over 70% of all referral orders, community sentences and custodial sentences. (see Table A10 of Appendix A).

Males comprised 82% of the *Asset* sample, which is similar to the proportion of males who received a court disposal (84%). The ethnic profile was also similar in the *Asset* sample composition to court disposals, except for unknown ethnic

²⁷ The full sample of areas was not used to conduct multivariate regression analysis, as for only 12 areas was data available on remand, court plea and if the young person was a persistent offender. There was also an inconsistency between the recordings of the number of previous convictions in the 12 area sample, compared to the rest of the sample.

²⁸ Following the models conducted by Feilzer and Hood 2004, the model also included: charged with any breaches, age, sentenced in crown court, number of previous convictions, number of unique offences charged within a case, plea at court, whether the young person was classed as a persistent offender and area.

²⁹ Following the Feilzer and Hood 2004 study, ICPR have completed work for the Economic and Social Research Council and the Equality and Human Rights Commission on the 'Differential treatment of BME young people in the youth justice system' (forthcoming).

³⁰ See Chapter 2 for further details on *Asset*.

³¹ While the complete sample was 22,505 individuals, two areas did not provide *Asset* data, reducing the sample to 18,809.

³² The last *Asset* completed for the individual relating to the most recent offence in 2006 was chosen.

groups, which comprised 6% of court disposals but were less than 1% in the *Asset* sample.

Information used for assessment

In completing *Asset*, YOT workers should record details of the varying types of information used to complete this assessment. It should be noted that over 20 types of information sources can be recorded on YOIS/CareWorks. However, on average, only four types of information were used to complete the *Asset* assessment, with no significant differences found between ethnicities for males and females. 10% of all *Asset* information did not record the information sources used.

Three sources of information that can be used in a young person's assessment were examined. These were: family/carer information, to explore family involvement; police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) information, to explore statutory information; and victim information, to explore the impact of victim statements on *Asset* data. Statistically significant results are presented below, and the percentage of each information source which was used is shown by ethnicity in Table 4.4.

Less family/care information was completed for Black males than for males from other ethnic groups (Black males also had the highest proportion of cases where only one parent provided information³³).

More police information was provided for Asian males than for males from other groups. White males also had more police information completed compared to Black males. Asian and White females had a higher proportion of police information than Black and Mixed race females.

More CPS information was provided for Black males compared to White and Asian males, with more CPS information for Mixed race males than White males. Black females had a higher proportion of CPS information compared to White females.

No significant differences between ethnic groups were found for information collected from victims.

³³ Based on 17 areas.

Table 4.4: Percentage of information provided as part of assessment

		Family/carer information (%)	Police information (%)	CPS information (%)	Victim information (%)
Males	White	54	39	50	10
	Black	45*	26*	62*	8
	Mixed race	54	33	57*	10
	Asian	55	46*	51	8
	Average	53	37	52	9
Females	White	51	44	44	9
	Black	40	23*	57*	6
	Mixed race	42	27*	58	15
	Asian	53	50	38	10
	Average	50	40	46	9

* Indicates a significant difference (at the 95% level) when compared to White young people.

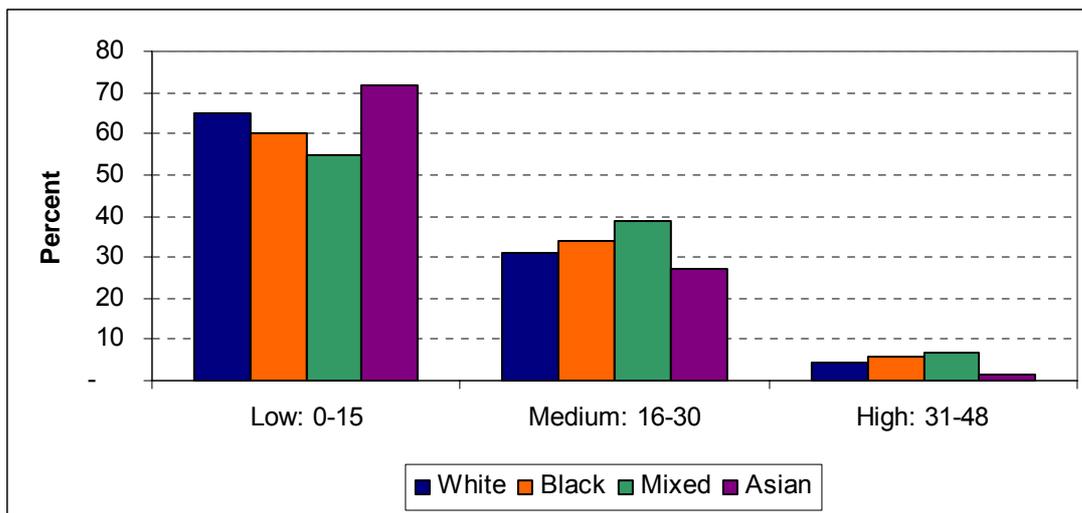
Total dynamic risk scores

Of the 6,796 individuals with *Asset* data, 96% had complete data across all 12 of the dynamic risk factors used to assess likelihood of reoffending. As described in Chapter 3, practitioners rate across the 12 factor scores. A zero is recorded if the YOT worker believes there is no likelihood of further offending, while a score of four will be recorded if there is a strong likelihood of further offending. A high score will mean that a young offender is considered at greater risk of reoffending and therefore in need of more intensive YOT intervention.

In its 2007 consultation paper *Youth Justice: the Scaled Approach*, the YJB created three categories of *Asset* scores³⁴ and only a small proportion of scores are classed as 'high'. Asians had a smaller proportion of 'high' need when compared to all other groups, while Mixed race offenders had a higher proportion of 'high' need compared to White ones. These differences were statistically significant.

³⁴ In September 2008, *Asset* was updated to include four additional 'static' scores: current offence, age at first reprimand/caution/final warning, age at first conviction and number of previous convictions, to enable improved assessment of likelihood of reconviction. These scores were not included in this analysis.

Figure 4.9: Total dynamic scores for all young people



Proportions of low to high scores were similar for males and females, with no statistically significant differences. Table A11 in Appendix A presents dynamic risk factor ratings for males and females by ethnicity.

Individual risk factors

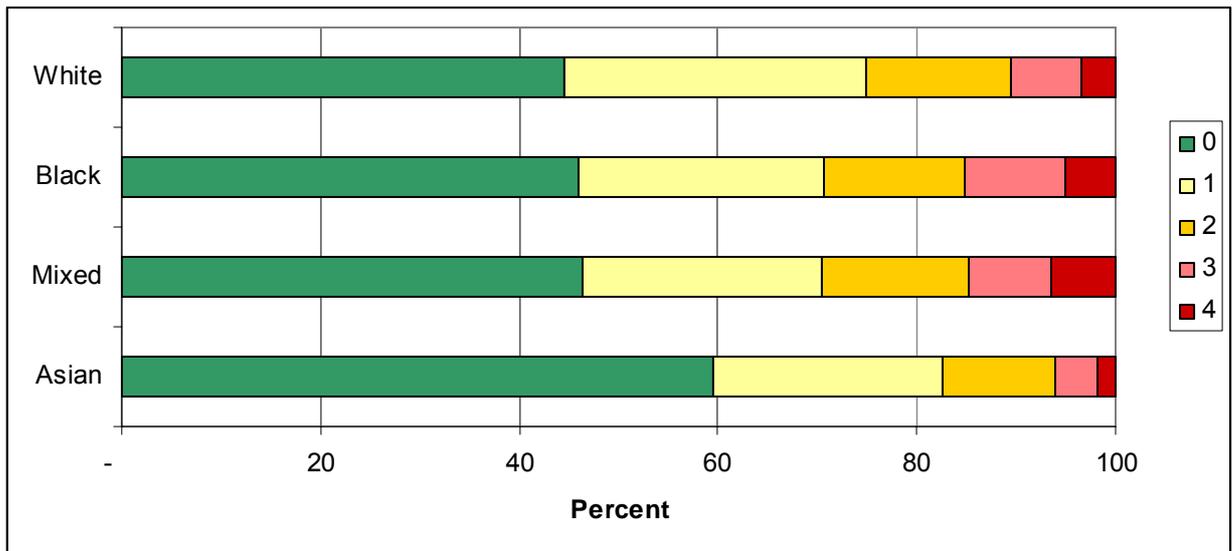
The needs of young people and the risk factors they are assessed against in the *Asset* tool are presented below. Scores of two or higher indicate that the YOT should be providing a service for that need. The 12 factors are:

- living arrangements
- family and personal relationships
- education, training and employment
- neighbourhood
- lifestyle
- substance use
- physical health
- emotional and mental health
- perceptions of self and others
- thinking and behaviour
- attitudes to offending
- motivation to change.

Living arrangements

From the data it would appear that Asians had the most stable living arrangements and Mixed race offenders the least. These differences were statistically significant. Figure 4.10 shows the differing scores.

Figure 4.10: Scores for living arrangement factor by ethnicity

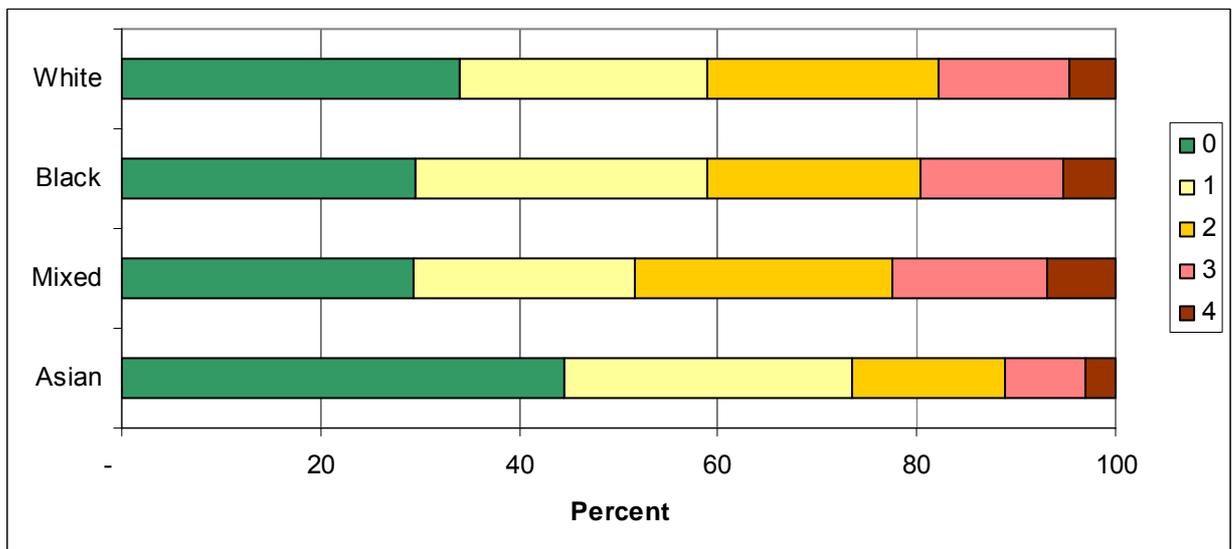


Family and personal relationships

This factor records exposure to incidents such as abuse or bereavement. The majority of Mixed race offenders scored two or higher for this factor, a score at which most YOTs would initiate an intervention. This is also an indication that, for these young people, their family and personal relationships may lead to a higher risk of reoffending.

Again, Asian offenders tended to have the highest proportion of zero scores with differences between White, Black and Mixed race young people being statistically significant. Figure 4.11 highlights the differences in scores between young people for their family and personal relationships.

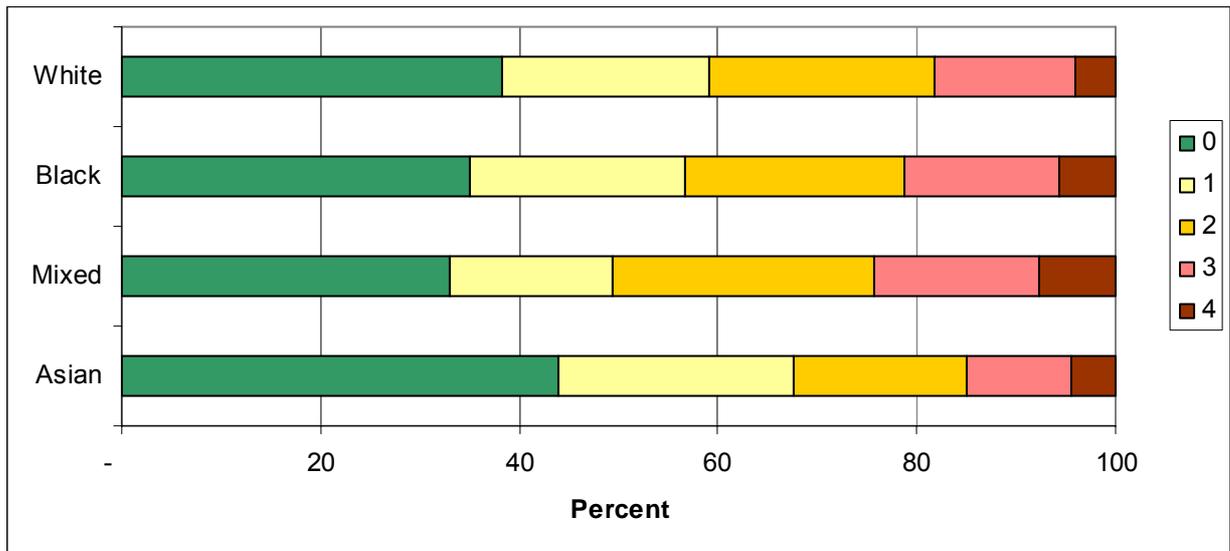
Figure 4.11: Scores for family and personal relationship factor



Education, training and employment

This section of the *Asset* form records details about education, training and/or employment. White offenders had the smallest proportion of scores rated four, and Mixed race offenders the highest. The difference between Mixed race and White offenders was statistically significant (see Figure 4.12).

Figure 4.12: Scores for education, training and employment factor

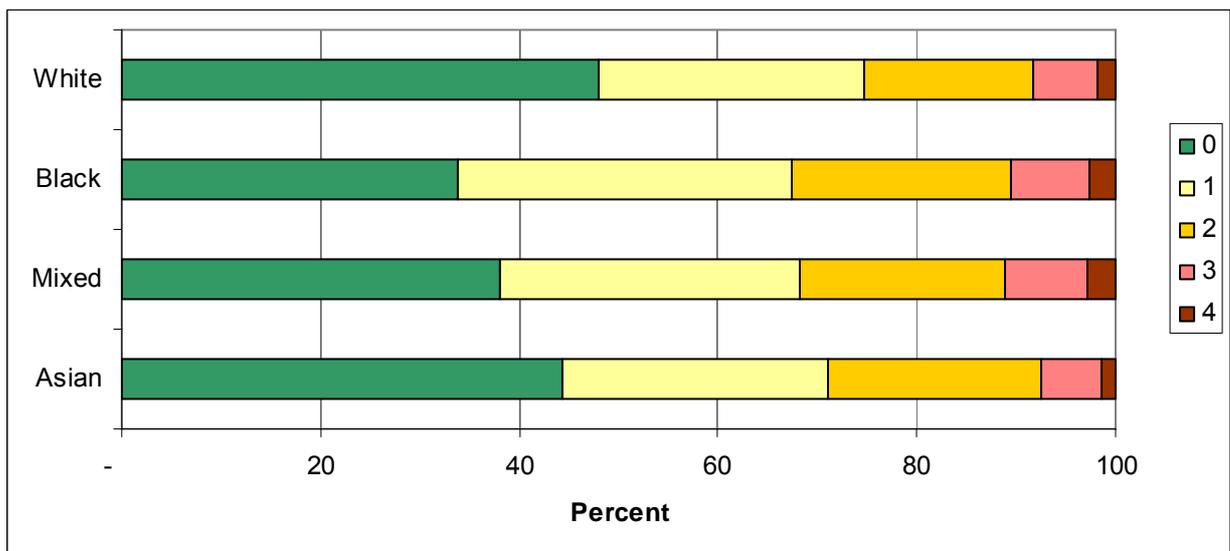


Neighbourhood

The neighbourhood factor reflects risks presented by factors such as lack of local amenities, the presence of drug dealing or racial tensions. This factor has fewer closed questions than the previous factors and relies instead on the compiler’s judgement. Most young people, regardless of their ethnicity, scored less than two for this factor.

As shown in Figure 4.13, White young people had the largest proportion of scores lower than two (scores of zero were significantly higher than those of Black and Mixed race young people).

Figure 4.13: Scores for neighbourhood factor



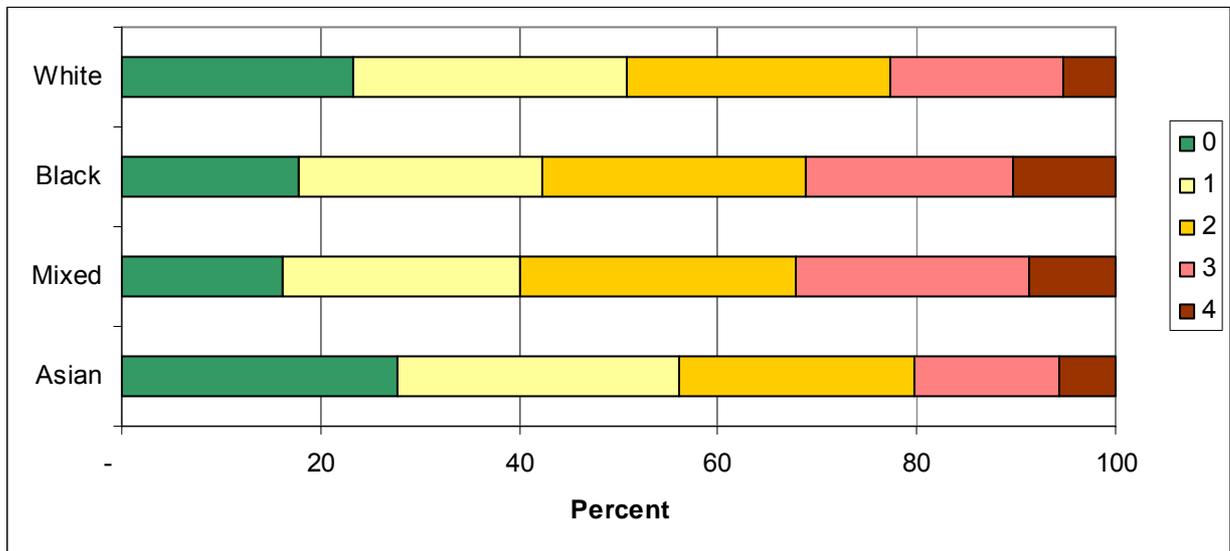
Lifestyle

The lifestyle factor assesses a young person’s relationship with their peers and tries to assess whether certain associations may be causing them to offend or

become involved in criminal activity. In essence this factor attempts to measure whether a young person is using their spare time for 'reckless activity'.

Black young people had the highest proportion of scores rated four, though the difference between Black and Mixed race young people for scores of four was not found to be statistically significant. However, Black young people scored significantly higher than White and Asian young people (Figure 4.14).

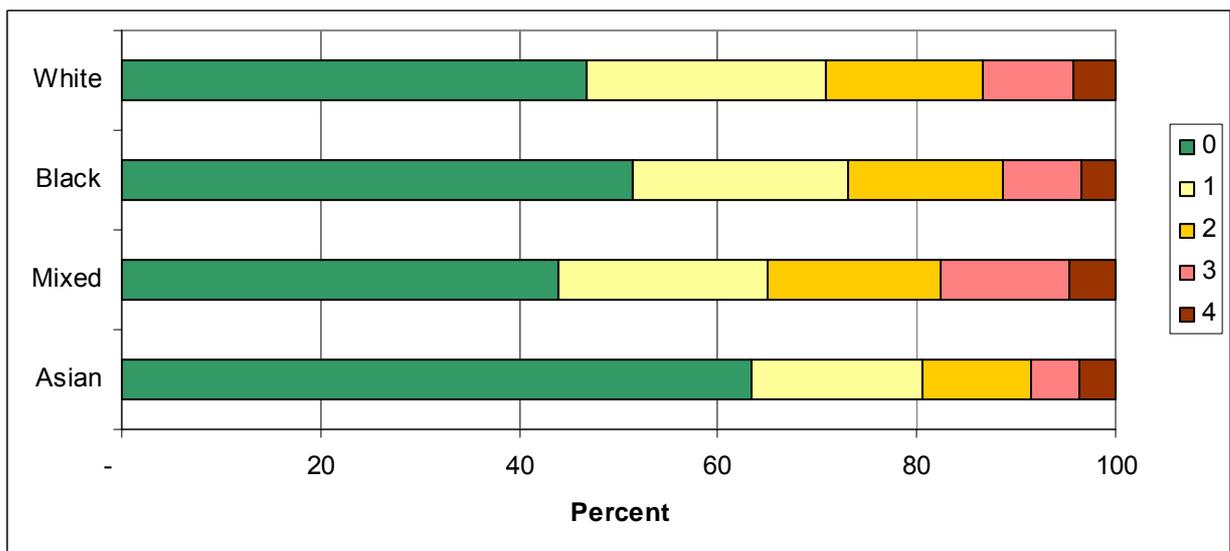
Figure 4.14: Scores for lifestyle factor



Substance use

The substance use factor assesses the frequency, duration and dependency of a young person’s illicit drug use. Mixed race offenders had the highest proportion of scores greater than two, while young Asian offenders had the lowest (Figure 4.15).

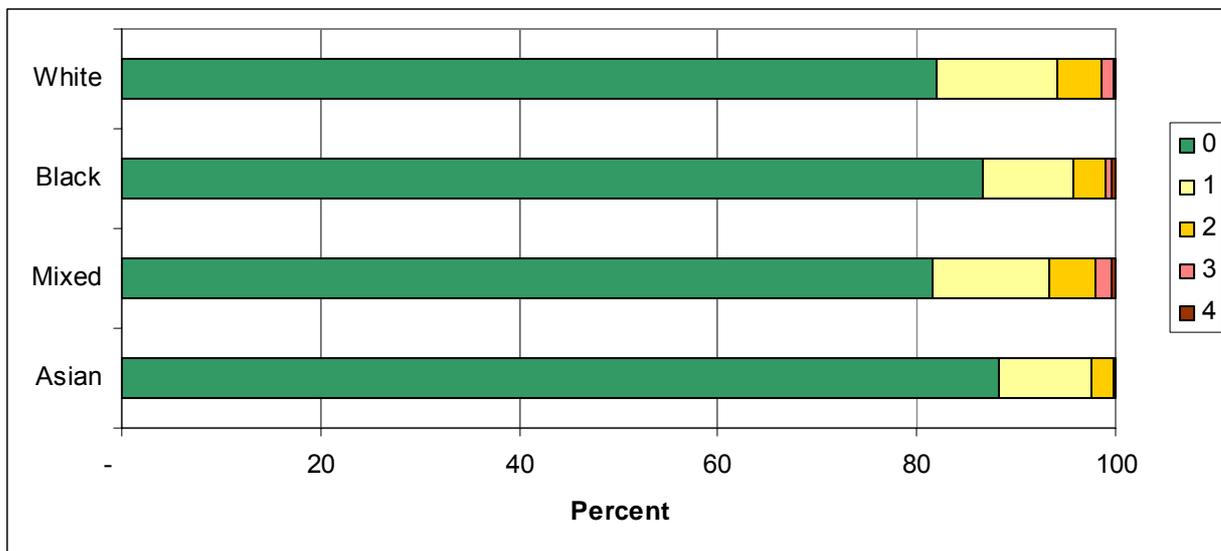
Figure 4.15: Scores for substance use factor



Physical health

This factor assesses young people’s physical health and their access to health services. The vast majority of young people showed little need in terms of physical health, as shown in Figure 4.16.

Figure 4.16: Scores for physical health factor

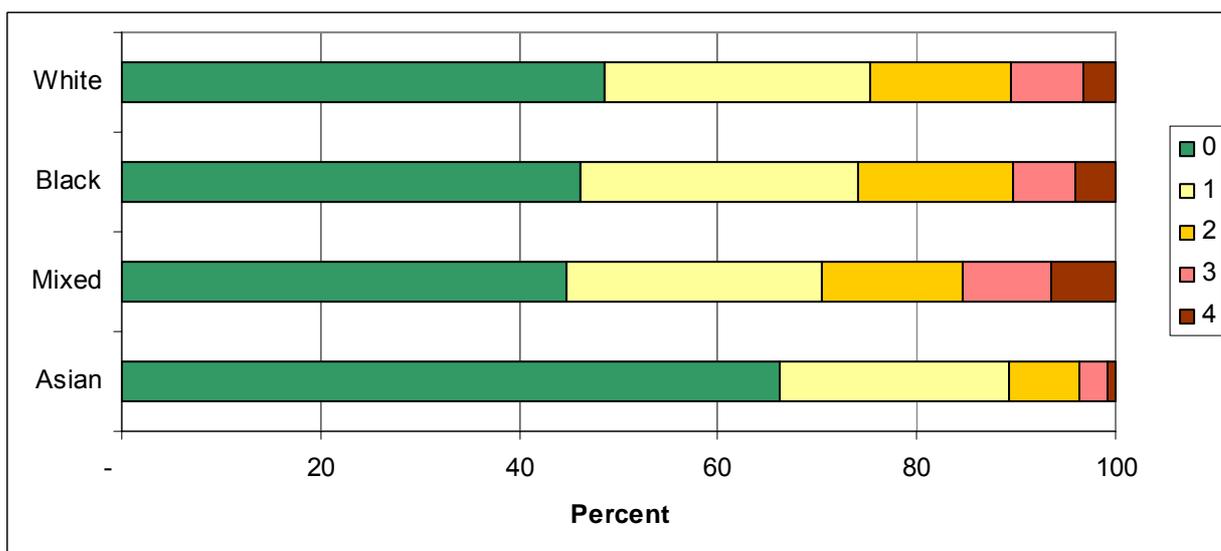


Emotional and mental health

The emotional and mental health factor reflects whether a young person is engaged with mental health services or has had mental health problems, such as depression or anxiety. In general, the majority of young people showed few emotional and mental health needs.

Asian offenders had the greatest proportion of low scores for this factor and were statistically significantly higher for zero scores, and lower for all scores over two than all other ethnic groups (Figure 4.17).

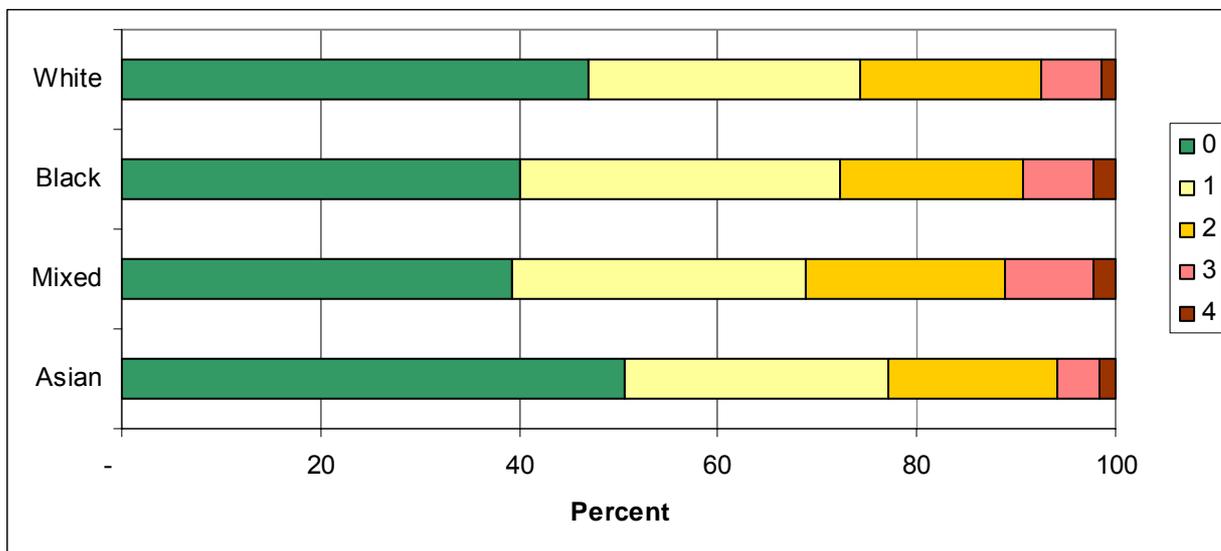
Figure 4.17: Scores for emotional and mental health factor



Perception of self and others

The perception of self and others factor reflects how young people view themselves in terms of their self-esteem and attitudes towards themselves and others. As illustrated in Figure 4.18, White and Asian offenders showed similar proportions of risk/need.

Figure 4.18: Scores for perception of self and others factor

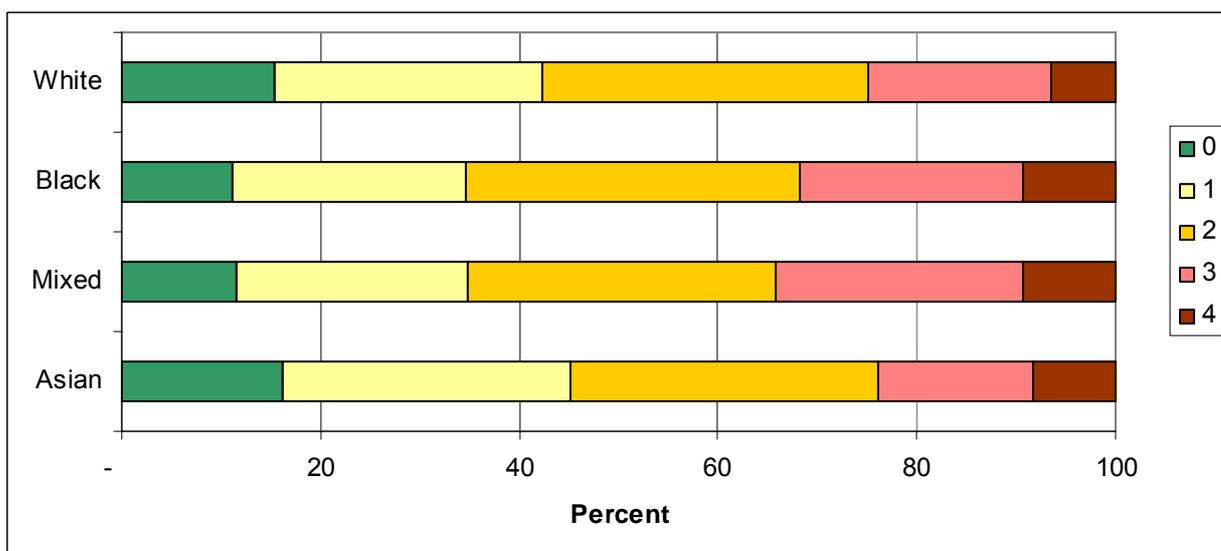


Thinking and behaviour

The thinking and behaviour factor refers to ‘understanding of consequences’ and the way offenders use aggression and other undesirable behaviour.

This factor recorded the lowest proportion of zero and one scores across all ethnic groups and, like the lifestyle factor, indicates a high proportion of young people in need of an intervention. Black and Mixed race offenders had the highest proportion of scores greater than two (Figure 4.19).

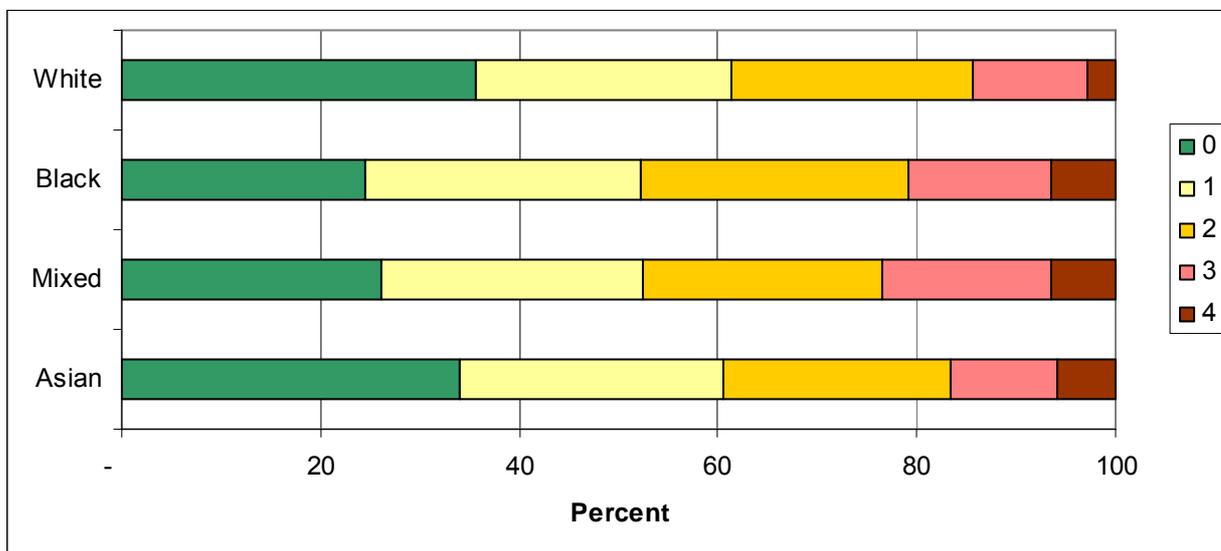
Figure 4.19: Scores for thinking and behaviour factor



Attitude to offending

The attitude to offending factor records a young person's attitude towards their offending and its effect on others. White offenders had the lowest proportion of scores of four compared with all other ethnic groups, and this was a statistically significant difference. Black offenders had similar patterns of need to Mixed race offenders (Figure 4.20).

Figure 4.20: Scores for attitude to offending

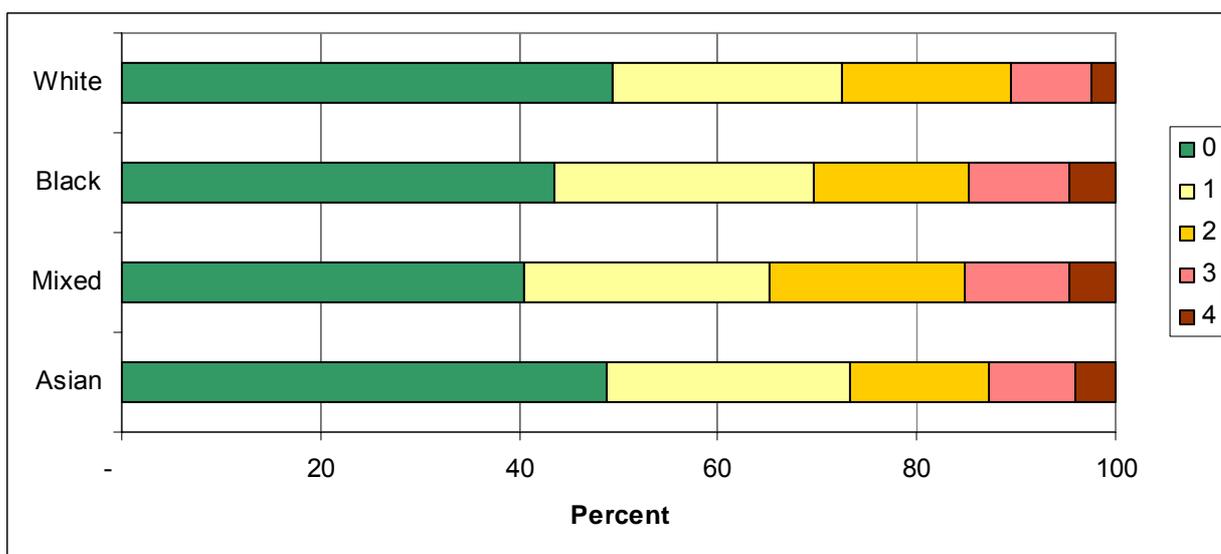


Motivation to change

The final dynamic risk factor scores reflect how willing a young person appears to be to change their behaviour.

Young Asian and White offenders had similar proportions for each score, while Mixed race offenders showed the least propensity to change (even though across all factors they tended to indicate the highest risk of reoffending), with the highest proportion of scores greater than two (Figure 4.21).

Figure 4.21: Scores for motivation to change factor



In summary

Asset information provides evidence that there are particular differences in need between young people from different ethnic minorities. A recurring theme throughout was that Mixed race young people tended to have the highest need for intervention (scores greater than two), closely followed by Black young people. Young Asian offenders tended to have the lowest scores for each risk factor, which may indicate that there are other unknown factors which contribute to their offending.

For 10 of the 12 risk factors, the majority of young people (regardless of ethnicity) had scores of less than two, indicating no need for a YOT intervention. However, for the 'thinking and behaviour' and 'lifestyle' factors, the majority of young people scored over two. These risk factors measure the young person's understanding of consequences and the influence of their peer groups. The scores for these two factors indicate that YOT staff perceive these two factors to be the most associated with the risk of reoffending.

Overall, the patterns seen in the risk of reoffending for each ethnicity are similar to the representation of BME young people in the criminal justice system. Black and Mixed race young people tended to be over-represented in the criminal justice system, while Asian young people tended to be under-represented. Similarly, young Black and Mixed race young people tended to have the highest risk of reoffending while Asian young people had the lowest risk.

5 Young peoples' views

This chapter presents findings from the interviews with 93 young offenders. We describe their demographics and background and then look at their own perceptions of their need. We also examine whether BME offenders see a need for interventions specifically designed for their ethnic group. Finally we explore the views of all these young offenders on the impact of the YOT interventions.

The sample profile

In total, we interviewed 93 young offenders from nine YOT areas over a six-month period. We interviewed between 10 and 15 offenders in each YOT, aiming to select at least eight BME offenders and at least two White ones. Those interviewed were selected from across the YOT age spectrum and reflected the range of court-ordered disposals. In each group of interviewees, we also included up to two young people serving the community element of their DTO.

Eighty-six percent of the sample were male and the average age at interview was 16 (ages ranged from 12 to 18). At the time of the interview, 81 young people lived with their parents or other relatives, seven lived either in a children's home or with foster parents, four lived with friends, or on their own and one was homeless. Table 5.1 provides a breakdown by age and ethnicity.

Table 5.1: The ethnicity and gender of respondents

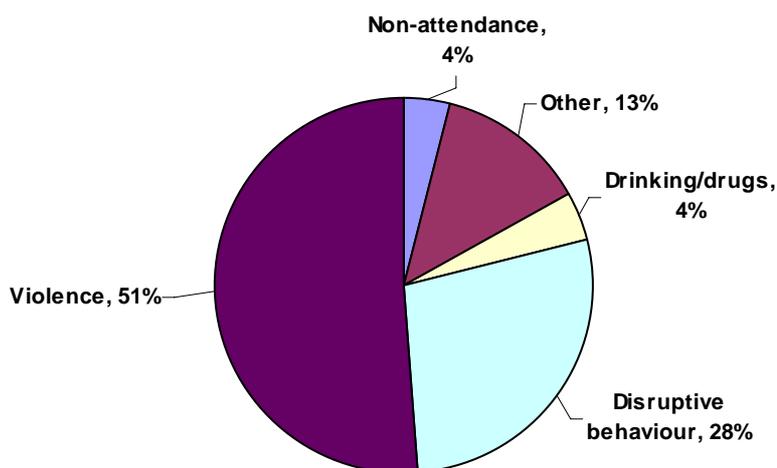
Ethnicity	Male	Female	Total
White British	9	4	13
White European	1	0	1
White Irish	0	2	2
Other White background	3	0	3
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	9	5	14
Mixed White and Black African	2	0	2
Other mixed background	1	0	1
Indian	1	0	1
Bangladeshi	12	0	12
Pakistani	7	0	7
Black Caribbean	20	2	22
Black African	8	0	8
Other Black background	7	0	7
Total	80	13	93

Schooling

Ninety-one interviewees answered the question about their current training or occupational status, and of these, 57 were at school or college, 17 were employed or on a training course and 17 were unemployed. Thirty-seven interviewees had left school with no qualifications, while 84% had been excluded from school at some point (43 had fixed-term exclusions and 35 had been permanently excluded).

All of the Mixed race interviewees had been permanently excluded, as had all but six Black and all but five White and Asian interviewees. Figure 5.1 shows the reasons for exclusion.

Figure 5.1: Reasons for exclusion from school (sample=93)



Policing

The average age at first arrest was 13, with ages ranging from nine³⁵ to 17. These arrests were for a variety of offences, from shoplifting to robbery and burglary (Table 5.2).

³⁵ The age of criminal responsibility is 10 in the UK, though those under this age may have given the police a false date of birth when first arrested or not given correct details.

Table 5.2: Offences first arrested for by broad ethnic category³⁶

Offence	White (%)	Black (%)	Asian (%)	Mixed race (%)	Total (%)
Burglary	10	0	9	4	5
Robbery	5	24	13	4	13
Criminal damage	45	3	4	21	15
Drug offences	5	8	9	0	6
Actual Bodily Harm /Grievous Bodily Harm	10	14	22	29	18
Shoplifting, theft	10	16	0	21	13
Offensive weapon	5	14	13	13	12
Fraud, deception, handling	10	5	4	0	5
Other	0	16	26	8	13
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100
Total (n)	20	37	23	24	104

Current court order

All but one of the 93 young people we interviewed were on a current order with the YOT, with some interviewees on more than one order. Table 5.3 shows the current order/s by ethnicity.

³⁶ Percentages are used in this table so that comparisons across the different ethnicities can be made more easily. It should, however, be remembered that in all categories the numbers are under 100.

Table 5.3: Current YOT orders

Order	White (%)	Black (%)	Asian (%)	Mixed race (%)	Total (%)
Supervision Order	33	17	22	50	27
Referral Order	19	39	11	28	26
Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme	5	22	37	0	19
Reparation Order	14	2	11	6	7
Not known	14	5	11	0	7
On license	5	10	4	0	6
Action Plan Order	5	0	0	0	1
Police bail with YOT intervention	0	2	4	6	3
Community punishment order	5	0	0	11	3
Not on an order	0	2	0	0	1
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100
Total (n)	21	41	27	18	107

We asked interviewees if they had offended while attending the YOT and a quarter of them confirmed that they had. Of these, five believed it was because of the friends they associated with or the area they lived in, four said they had offended while under the influence of alcohol or drugs and three attributed their criminal behaviour to boredom or the fun they derived from offending. The remainder believed they offended because they failed to listen to their YOT worker or parent/carer, were 'picked on' by the police, were angry for some reason or due to necessity.

Just over a third of the Mixed race and Black interviewees had offended while on their current order. Only two White offenders and four of the Asian offenders disclosed they had offended while on their current order. The following are some of the reasons given by young people for why they had offended while under the supervision of the YOT:

[I offended because] I got really angry about lots of stuff, my girl was pissing me off, lots of stuff, stuff to do with my family, my future, education, what's going to happen next.

[Male, aged 17, Mixed White and Black Caribbean]

You get bored and stuff and just do it [offend].

[Male, aged 16, Black British]

[I offend] just with drugs, I don't do no robberies anymore and I've stopped fighting.

[Male, aged 16, British Bangladeshi]

We also asked those young people who had not offended why they thought they hadn't and how they had managed to stay out of trouble. Table 5.4 presents the results.

Table 5.4: Young people's thoughts on why they had stayed out of trouble

Why/how stayed out of trouble	Total
Changed behaviour/own circumstances	28
Don't want to go back to prison/YOT	28
New goals in life – want to go to college/training course/get a job	7
Tag/curfew/working with YOT helped me stop offending	7
No longer see friends I was offending with	4
Better at committing crime	1
Other	5
Total	80

The following quotes are indicative of why young people thought they hadn't been in trouble since attending the YOT on their current order:

Court and everything is such a long process, I don't want to put my mum through the struggle again.

[Male, aged 15, Mixed White and Black Caribbean]

I now mix with long and known friends, I go to the park, I play football, I hang around with the right people.

[Male, aged 14, Black British]

Cause I just want to get my GCSEs and get a job. I missed my younger brother when I went inside [prison] he was three when I went in he's five now.

[Female, aged 15, Mixed White and Black Caribbean]

When I came to the YOT I had problems with peer pressure, my anger. I want to do my sports and getting on with my life and my education.

[Male, aged 16, British Pakistani]

Cause I don't want to go to prison again. It's shit and it's boring.

[Male, aged 15, White]

The only reason I went off track was because I split up with my bird and had some wiz [amphetamine] and met up with old pals. I just don't want to be in trouble no more otherwise the only place I'm going is the 'pen' [prison]. I know loads of people who've been to prison and shit and I don't want to go the way they are going.

[Male, aged 14, Mixed White and Black Caribbean]

Since June 2008 I've not offended. The YOT people have helped. Monday to Friday. With ISSP there's no time to play with friends, then I'm on a curfew. The YOT has helped to change me.

[Male, aged 16, Black British]

Young people's perception of their need

We wanted to ascertain if young people had been involved in the decision-making process around the interventions or activities they subsequently engaged with during their time at the YOT.

Of the 93 young people, 39% discussed with their key worker what they wanted to achieve and what they wanted assistance or help with while at the YOT. Twenty-three young people said that they wanted help with returning to education or finding a suitable training course, six wanted to sign up for an anger management course and three wanted specific assistance with substance misuse problems. The remainder wanted help around family relationships, accommodation problems or their general offending behaviour. The following quotes illustrate the types of help young people discussed with their key worker prior to starting their orders:

I wanted help getting into training, which they've done, and to build my CV up.

[Male, aged 16, British Bangladeshi]

I wanted help with housing as my mum had kicked me out. I wanted help getting into college and help getting me and my mum to speak to one another. [YOT worker's name] has done loads for me and is always helping me.

[Female, aged 18, White]

I wanted help controlling my anger because when people piss me off I can flip. I want to control things a bit more.

[Male, aged 14, Mixed White and Black Caribbean]

I asked if they could help me get into college and get a job. They've got me into college. They are still helping me look for a job at the moment.

[Female, aged 16, Mixed White and Black Caribbean]

Interventions currently being received

We asked all young people in the sample what activities, groups or supervision they undertook while attending the YOT and whether these interventions met their needs. Table 5.5 outlines these activities.

Table 5.5: Activities and programmes engaged in at the YOT

Activity	White	Black	Asian	Mixed race
Sign on at front desk	12	35	5	10
Meet with supervisor	12	27	13	7
One-to-one sessions	19	35	20	16
Group work	5	21	8	3
Leisure activities	2	6	4	0
Total	50	124	50	36

No interviewee disclosed that they only signed on at the front desk and all either undertook one-to-one sessions, group work or both as part of their order. Of the 93 young people we spoke to, 90 attended one-to-one sessions with their YOT worker and 37 took part in some form of group work. Both one-to-one sessions and group work largely involved raising awareness about the effects of offending and how to prevent reoffending. Alongside general group discussions, young people also addressed their offending through the medium of 'role play', general group mentoring and watching videos/DVDs about the impact and consequences of offending.

Forty-four young people mentioned specific discussions that their one-to-one sessions covered. Of these, 16 young people disclosed that their sessions included work on addressing their substance misuse; 16 discussed reparation, 22 had discussions on housing and family issues, 12 discussed anger management issues, five mentioned knife crime, four mentioned gun crime and two mentioned issues relating to gang crime. Fourteen young people also discussed with their YOT worker the possibilities for future education, training and employment opportunities.

The following quotes illustrate the types of work young people engaged in while visiting their YOT:

Most recently I've been on a Reparation Order which involves going out and painting fences. The [YOT] workers also come to us and talk about problems. Sometimes we do it in a group, often on our own.

[Female, aged 18, White Irish]

We [YOT workers and young person] talk about how I'm getting on, school work and getting into activity programmes. We also talk about what knife crime is, drugs and information on why I shouldn't do drugs.

[Male, aged 15, Black British]

At my one-to-one sessions I sit down and talk about knife crime, seriousness of knife crime, theft and mugging people, and the seriousness of different convictions. In the group work we go on trips to look at prisoners work.

[Male, aged 16, Black British]

As part of my Reparation Order I come here and make bird tables and bird boxes. I do this at my one-to-one or group work sessions. I don't know what happens with the finished work though. I don't meet with my YOT officer either.

[Male, aged 14, Mixed White and Black Caribbean]

I talk [with the YOT worker] about how not to commit crime. We go to activities such as ice-skating, bowling and the cinema. We go to where the robbery group is based and talk about robbery offences. In the group work we discuss offending behaviour with other young people and a supervisor. Once a week I do a one-to-one session and talk about how to get a job and training courses.

[Male, aged 16, British Pakistani]

We asked young people if they had been involved in any or part of the decision about what they did while attending their YOT. Of the 90 young people who answered this question, 42 stated that they were asked at their initial assessment for their input into what they wanted to achieve while at the YOT and if there was anything in particular they wanted help with.

Sixteen answered that they were not assessed and weren't asked about what they wanted to do, 11 stated they were on a structured programme and had no input into what they did and seven stated that, while they had no initial input, they were allowed to express a preference about activities undertaken (especially if they did not want to engage in what was being offered). The remainder were assessed but had no idea about what they wanted to do while at the YOT. Table 5.6 presents these findings by ethnicity.

Table 5.6: Young people's input into activity programmes at the YOT

Input into assessment	White	Black	Asian	Mixed race	Total
Asked for input at assessment	8	23	5	6	42
Not assessed	2	8	4	2	16
On structured order, no input	2	1	4	4	11
Assessed but no preference given	4	4	3	3	14
No initial input but able to express a preference during sessions	3	0	2	2	7
Total	19	36	18	17	90

N.B. Three cases were missing data

The importance of ethnicity for BME offenders

Thirty-two of the 37 young people who engaged in group work discussed the ethnic composition of the groups they were in. Of the 32, 27 described their group as a mixture of ethnic groups and five stated that their group was comprised only of the same ethnicity as themselves. Interestingly, the two YOT areas where young people mainly shared the same ethnicity as others in their group were both ethnically diverse areas.

Young people were also asked if they thought the ethnic composition of the group they attended was important. Only eight of them thought it was important to have other young people of the same ethnicity in their group. No White or Asian interviewees thought that having people in their group of the same ethnicity was important. Three young people thought the importance of the ethnic composition depended on the group. Below, young people offer their thoughts on the ethnic composition of the groups they attended:

If you're the only one [of a particular ethnicity] you feel funny, the odd one out.

[Male, aged 17, Black British]

It doesn't matter who's in your group. It's not only Black people who are bad. You've got Mixed race, Turkish, Asian, some Asian people rob

20 phones a day. That's old news [the view about same ethnicity groups] of about two years ago.

[Male, aged 16, Black British]

Colour is not an issue to me. If people are in the same situation they should be able to understand each other, irrelevant of colour.

[Male, aged 18, Black British]

I would have felt awkward if it had of just been me with a group of White kids.

[Male, aged 16, Mixed White and Black Columbian]

I would prefer to have a mix, I don't want it to be all Black girls in the group and I don't want to be the only Black girl.

[Female, aged 16, Black British]

It's important to have a mixture as everybody has different views.

[Male, aged 18, other Black background]

Young people were asked about whether their key worker/s at the YOT shared the same ethnicity as them and whether it was important to them that they did. Forty-one percent of young people shared the same ethnicity as their key worker, while just over half (52%) didn't. The remainder didn't know if they did (4%) or shared the same ethnicity with some of their workers but not all (2%).

When asked if they had a preference as to whether their key worker was the same ethnicity as them, 89% of young people stated that they had no preference. None of our young White or Asian interviewees said that they preferred their worker to be the same ethnicity as them.

He's just a worker, he's there. I don't really get close to him to care.

[Male, aged 17, British Pakistani]

I was brought up in multicultural areas so I learnt that everyone is different but the same at the same time. I give everyone a chance.

[Male, aged 17, White]

It doesn't matter. I come to my thing and then go. I don't come to muck around, they're [YOT workers] not my friends.

[Male, aged 18, British Bangladeshi]

I prefer to talk to a White person as I've been brought up by mum who is White. I still see my dad's family who are Black. I think some Black people can be rude to you. I've had social workers who've been Black and been quite rude.

[Female, aged 15, Mixed White and Black Caribbean]

It's just a colour, it does not matter.

[Female, aged 13, Mixed White and Black Caribbean]

I just feel comfortable with a worker of the same ethnicity.

[Male, aged 15, Black British]

It [the ethnicity of workers] just doesn't bother me. It doesn't matter what colour they are as long as they do their job.

[Male, aged 17, Black British]

We asked 67 young people if they thought their YOT provided services that adequately supported the needs of BME young people. Of these, seven were White, 36 were Black, 13 were Asian and 11 were Mixed race.

Just over two-thirds believed that young people from BME backgrounds were adequately supported by their YOT, although 13 young people did not think this was the case and nine young people were either unsure or had not thought about it. All of those who thought the support provided to young BME offenders was inadequate were from BME groups and all from YOTs in the South of England. The following quotes illustrate the views of young people about the support provided to young BME offenders:

I see Black and Asian people come in here and they are helped in exactly the same way as I've been helped.

[Male, aged 16, White]

It's their job to look after all people – Black, White and skinny.

[Male, aged 15, Black British]

They don't hear me – they look at everyone the same.

[Male, aged 17, Black British]

They don't group us out, we're all one person. They don't treat us differently.

[Female, aged 15, Mixed White and Black Caribbean]

An overwhelming 96% of the sample of young people believed that the YOT treated all young people fairly regardless of their ethnicity. Only four young people believed young people were treated differently according to their ethnicity.

Of the 74 young BME people we interviewed, 50 answered the question about whether they thought their YOT adequately supported and met their personal needs. Forty-four of the 50 thought that the YOT provided the support they needed. Four young BME people who didn't believe that their needs were supported expanded on why they thought this was the case; the first based his answer on the fact that he was still offending, the second believed that if the YOT did support all his needs it would be classed as being racist, the third believed all his needs were being met by other services and the fourth did not expand on why he thought his needs were not being met.

Below are comments from young BME interviewees about the support they received from their local YOT:

They [YOT] offer you lots of help – it just depends on if you want to accept it.

[Male, aged 16, British Pakistani]

They [YOT] help us [young BME offenders] through our life and our issues.

[Male, aged 15, Black British]

They [YOT] will help anyone – it doesn't matter what colour you are.

[Male, aged 17, British Pakistani]

They [YOT] just do the same with all colours, it doesn't matter what colour you are.

[Female, aged 16, Mixed White and Black Caribbean]

They [YOT] give us exactly the same treatment as a White person. They give everyone's needs the proper attention.

[Male, aged 14, Mixed White and Black Caribbean]

I don't really know, it's all the same to me. Everyone's treated the same. I wouldn't want to be treated any different.

[Male, aged 17, Mixed White and Black Caribbean]

The effect of YOT interventions

If young people are dissatisfied with the interventions they receive or feel that they do not meet their needs, it is likely they will be less inclined to attend and/or engage with the process in a positive manner. As part of the questionnaire, we were interested in eliciting the views of young people about the interventions and assistance they received to understand if the services provided by the YOT met their needs.

After being asked if they had kept all of their appointments while on their current order, 17 young people said they hadn't. All but two of these were male and all but three were young BME offenders. The number of appointments missed in the month preceding the interview ranged from one to five. After being asked what action their YOT officer took when they missed an appointment, seven young people were either breached or threatened with being breached, nine claimed that their YOT officer had taken no action and one didn't answer the question.

We also asked this group why they had missed appointments; six had missed appointments due to illness, three stated they couldn't be bothered to turn up, four had forgotten about appointments and two stated that there had been a misunderstanding between themselves and the worker about their appointment.³⁷

³⁷ Two young people declined to answer the question.

We asked all 93 young people if they enjoyed attending the YOT. Thirty-seven percent stated that they did, 47% said that they didn't and the remainder stated that they didn't have a choice about their attendance. This last group weren't sure whether they liked attending the YOT or swayed between liking and disliking their time at the YOT. Quotes below illustrate young people's views on their local YOT and the services it provided:

It's good to have someone to talk to. I don't really talk to my family or anyone else. They give me good advice, I take on board everything.

[Male, aged 17, White]

The way they help people stop committing crime is good. You can come here and talk about your problems and why you commit crime. I don't think nothin' bad about this place.

[Male, aged 16, White]

It's a chance to speak my mind [attending the YOT], to get my problems off my chest.

[Male, aged 18, Black British]

I've got better things to do, but if I don't come here though I'll get in more trouble.

[Male, aged 15, White]

I have to speak to her [YOT worker]. I'm not being rude or nothin' but there's nothing I like about it. If I had the choice I wouldn't come.

[Male, aged 14, Mixed White and Black Caribbean]

Finally, we asked all young people if they thought attending the YOT had helped them to reduce their offending. Just over two-thirds (72% of the 90 who answered this question) thought it had. Just under 10% were unsure and the remainder stated that attending the YOT had made no difference to their offending behaviour.

Asians were the least inclined to believe the YOT had helped them to reduce their offending, while Black offenders were most inclined to attribute any reductions in their offending to their local YOT and the interventions it provided. Table 5.7 outlines young people's thoughts on what had helped them to stay out of trouble.

Table 5.7: Young people's thoughts on the factors associated with staying out of trouble

Factors associated with staying out of trouble	Frequency
YOT made me think/see right from wrong	19
YOT helped in numerous ways	10
Just me. I'm the only one who can help me	9
YOT helped me stay on track/off the street	9
Prison/fear of prison helped me stay out of trouble	8
Being at school/college/training/job helped me stop offending	7
YOT keeps me busy	5
Realised I don't want to come back	4
Been shown it's my time I'm wasting	3
YOT work has bored me into not wanting to offend again	2
Tag/curfew has helped, not the YOT	2
I'm looking at the positives in my life	1
Don't know, sitting in a room talking wont help	1
Crime is spontaneous	1
Victim awareness made me think	1
YOT helped me to not get arrested every day	1
Knife/gun video helped	1
Better family relationships helped	1
YOT has kept me calmer	1
Total	86

In summary

We interviewed 93 young people from nine YOT areas, of which 86% were male and the average age at the time of interview was 16. Thirty-seven of the sample were Black, 20 were Asian, 19 were White and 17 were Mixed race. The average age at first arrest was 13.

Of the 93 young people, 39% were involved in initial discussions with their key worker about what they wanted to achieve and what they wanted assistance or help with while at the YOT. During their time at their local YOT, all young people either undertook one-to-one sessions, group work or both as part of their order. Only eight young people thought it was important to have others of the same ethnicity in their group work, though none of the White or Asian interviewees thought this was important. Three young people did, however, think that the importance of the ethnic composition depended on the group. Eighty-nine percent of young people stated that they had no preference as to whether or not their key worker shared their ethnicity. None of the White or Asian interviewees said that they preferred their worker to be of the same ethnicity as them.

Just over three-quarters of the sample thought that the YOT had helped them to reduce their offending. Young Asian offenders were the least inclined to believe the YOT had helped them to reduce their offending, while young Black

offenders were the most inclined to attribute any reductions in their offending to their local YOT and the interventions it provided.

6 The views of YOT professionals and census respondents

We interviewed 25 YOT practitioners across nine YOT areas to examine whether they felt adequately equipped to assess the needs of BME young offenders, whether they used other resources (besides *Asset*) to assist in the assessment and whether targeted interventions or other resources are available to address identified needs.

This chapter examines these questions and the interview responses, starting with practitioners' perceptions about the differences in offending between young BME and White offenders. The interview data has been supplemented with data from the census of the 79 YOTs and secure establishments. Table 6.1 outlines the areas of expertise of our 25 interviewees.

Table 6.1: Interviewees' professional status

Job title	Number
YOT officer	8
Manager	8
Senior practitioner	5
Court manager	1
Court officer	1
Deputy team manager	1
Education, training and employment team leader	1
Total	25

Perceived differences in offending patterns of young White and BME offenders

In deciding whether interventions need to be tailored to meet the needs of particular groups of young people, it is important that YOT practitioners have an understanding of offending patterns and whether there are differences between, for example, young BME and White offenders or young male and female offenders.

To ascertain the views of YOT practitioners about offending patterns, we asked them whether there were any particular patterns of offending within their caseload between the different ethnic groups of young people they had contact with. Twelve YOT practitioners believed that gang violence, violence against the person and drug offences were more often associated with their BME offenders than their White offenders. Seven interviewees thought that the offences committed by young BME offenders tended to be more serious than their White counterparts and nine saw no particular differences in the offending of young White and BME offenders. One interviewee stated that the difference lay in the fact that the courts treated young BME people differently when sentencing for the same offence as a young White person.

In comparison, 10 interviewees believed that young White offenders were more likely to be arrested by the police for vehicle crimes, burglaries, criminal damage and racially motivated offending than young BME offenders. Two interviewees thought that White young people committed more alcohol-related crimes than their BME counterparts, while only one interviewee thought that gang-related offending was a particular problem for young White offenders. Table 6.2 presents the reasons given by YOT professionals for the differences in offending between young BME and White offenders.

Table 6.2: Explanation for differences in offending between White and BME young people

Explanations for differences in offending	Number of respondents (sample=17)
No differences in offending patterns	6
Gang culture different	4
Cultural differences	2
Perceptions of BME by others	4
Peer group pressures different	3
BME young people more impulsive than young White people	1
Total	20

NB: The total is larger than the number of respondents due to multiple answers being provided

Risk factors associated with young people's offending

Interviewees were asked what common risk factors were associated with BME young people's offending; Table 6.3 below outlines their answers. Interestingly, although when interviewed, no young Black and very few Asian or Mixed race offenders wanted assistance with substance misuse problems, six YOT professionals thought that drug use was a risk factor associated with young BME offending.

Table 6.3: Risk factors associated with BME offending

Risk factors	Number of respondents (sample=25)
School exclusion/lack of educational attainment	17
Peer group pressure/gang involvement	12
Poor parenting/single parenting	12
Drug use	6
Poor housing	5
Lack of good role models	2
Perceived lack of prospects/future	2
Unemployment	2
Can't answer	2
Police stereotypes	1
Total	61

NB: The total is larger than the number of respondents due to multiple answers being provided

Assessing the needs of BME offenders

During the course of the interview, we asked YOT professionals if they thought the needs of BME offenders differed to those of their White counterparts, how they assessed these needs and if their assessment of BME offenders differed to that of White offenders.

Of the 22 who answered the question, 12 professionals said that the needs of all their offenders were generally similar, though four interviewees thought the needs of their BME offenders were greater due to cultural and religious needs. Three interviewees thought that the needs of BME offenders were compounded if their parents were unable to help them or unwilling to engage with the YOT to help them, and three interviewees thought that their offenders' problems were exacerbated due to others labelling them. Below are interviewees' thoughts on the needs of their offenders and how these needs affected their assessment:

We have to look at them individually; their needs are the same though.

Not massively different [their needs]. BME young people get labelled more by the police and education services. Their risk factors are hard to deal with from an earlier stage. They share many of the same risk factors but it is more apparent for some BME young people.

I expect there are [differences in need] because living in a minority group makes living difficult.

The assessment is just different; we need to be aware of diversity. It's easier to engage Black youth. We need to be aware of different experiences at school and exclusion.

I assess from experience, I might be asking more questions in a certain area. It's the same for Mixed [race offenders] I have no preconceptions.

Same as assessment needs of any child [sic], I use Asset.

When practitioners do assessments they are very conscious of a young person's heritage. They make their assessment based on what the young person and family/carer are telling them. It is based on individual need rather than ethnicity.

When assessing offenders, all YOT professionals followed *Asset* or *Onset*. However, to ascertain if BME offenders had any specific needs that are not necessarily covered by *Asset*, workers tended to deviate from the form to gain this information.

Six interviewees stated that, depending on the young person, they may ask specific questions regarding (for example) their religious or cultural needs. Other workers said that they often discussed a young person's family background, while others asked if there were any issues around racism they wanted to discuss. The quotes below illustrate the types of issues that workers tended to discuss with their BME offenders, outside of the formal assessment:

I don't do anything particularly different. Only in that I will ask if there are any religious festivals I need to be aware of. I will ask some of the Asian lads whether they go to mosque or not.

I don't do anything specifically different. I have to be aware that the needs of BME young people might be greater.

I still use Asset. I also have a Black casework forum where we process questions which look at practice and seeing how people take into account ethnicity and diversity when assessing young people.

First I ask if they experience racism and if they have a view on culture, diversity and racism, and if they want to do something about it I will refer them to some cultural project outside the YOT. This will be specific for BME young people and will deal with identity, who we are, racism etc. If they want something more basic, I'll look into it on a personal capacity as the YOT doesn't provide these services.

Assessing the needs of BME offenders – the views of census respondents

Similar to findings from the interviews, the needs of the individual were of more importance than ethnic differences when assessing the needs of offenders. All YOIs, STCs and the vast majority of YOTs agreed that the needs of young people varied from individual to individual. Few YOTs believed that BME needs were different to those of White young people.

The idea that assessments should be based on the young person as an individual rather than a sum of their ethnicity was further reinforced by the fact that only two establishments reported that BME needs were assessed differently from White young people (one YOT and one secure children's home). One of these establishments reported that staff were to "keep in mind cultural issues" while the other establishment reported that "issues regarding a young person's ethnicity may inform their interventions, e.g. they may have suffered racial abuse".

Four establishments reported that while they do not assess BME needs differently, there are certain circumstances, such as immigration issues or the need for an interpreter, where a young person's ethnicity will obviously be taken into account.

The majority of agencies (81%) do not have a separate written policy on the assessment of, or working with, BME young people.

Asset – the views of census respondents

As part of the questionnaire, we asked respondents for their thoughts on the efficacy of *Asset* in assessing the needs of BME offenders. Five respondents believed that, as an assessment tool, *Asset* met their needs but added that it was only as good as the practitioner filling it in. Seven respondents thought that *Asset* needed to include sections on identity, ethnicity, religion, racial abuse and discrimination if it is to meet the needs of BME offenders. Four respondents thought that *Asset* needed to be reviewed in its entirety if it was to adequately assess all offenders' needs and the remaining professionals interviewed didn't answer the question. The following quotes illustrate practitioners' views:

Asset is suitable because it's colour-blind, it's about how it's recorded.

Asset as a framework of assessment is very good, it gives people guidance on what to assess.

If you're doing it right, you get the information you need. It does need more focus on culture though; maybe asking young people how they would define their ethnicity or culture.

We also asked respondents if they used any other assessment tool besides *Asset* to help them identify the needs of their offenders and found that, if necessary, professionals tended to supplement information collected via *Asset* with other public sector information.

Assessment tools – the views of census respondents

The census survey found that all YOTs, STCs and secure children's homes reported using *Asset* to assess a young person's needs, while two out of the four YOIs also used *Asset*. Secure establishments were more likely to also use other assessment tools to complement *Asset* (15 out of 16), whereas only 21 of the 63 YOTs reported using other sources of information to complement data collected from *Asset*. Two YOIs reported using the induction process for assessing young people and one YOI reported using e*Asset*.³⁸

Secure children's homes and STCs reported using a wide range of other assessment tools, mainly informal assessments and in-house assessment tools. The YOTs that used additional assessment tools tended to use *Onset* (13 of 21) in addition to *Asset*. In general, other assessment tools were used to provide additional data that was unavailable from *Asset*, which helped more clearly identify a young person's need/risk. As one respondent noted:

Every assessment carried out by the centre provides a detailed analysis of a trainee's individual needs and the intervention required. Fundamentally, Asset provides a more general overview of the trainee.

Overall, the majority of establishments reported that *Asset* was either 'quite' or 'very useful' (75 out of 77). Forty-nine establishments also reported that *Asset* was as useful for assessing the needs of BME young people as it was for White young people, as the following quote illustrates:

A systematic and analytical use of Asset and Onset, plus the use of the other recording undertaken by the Crime Management System, should focus on the need of that young person within whatever community they belong. There is the opportunity to record any and all diversity issues.

However, a number of establishments reported that *Asset* was less than useful for assessing the needs of young BME clients (15 YOTs, three secure children's

³⁸ At the time of writing, e*Asset* is expected to be implemented across the secure estate in March 2009. It is intended that the new system will allow for 'seamless sharing' of information.

homes, and one YOI). Criticism of Asset focused on its inability to usefully assess young BME clients' needs, compared to White young people. A number of responses (30 establishments) commented that Asset was unable to identify the cultural needs of BME young people, as the following criticisms note:

A concern about Asset is that it can be quite Eurocentric. Although as an assessment tool it can direct the practitioner to concentrate on certain elements and areas, it also leaves out many areas and is therefore felt at times to not fully take into account the wide ranging cultures that young people come from.

Asset fails to recognise the different influences on young people from different cultural backgrounds and does not emphasise the differences between cultures in general.

A further issue raised among 20 establishments was that information collected from Asset was variable according to who completed it, so it was important to remember this when devising or implementing new interventions, as the following quote illustrates:

Asset is a tool, the worker must bring an appropriate level of knowledge, understanding and skill to the process of using the tool to help elicit and aggregate the information necessary to make a comprehensive assessment for all the young people coming through the service.

Service provision for BME offenders

When deciding on whether to provide specific interventions to meet the needs of BME offenders, it is particularly important to understand whether particular services are needed and whether they will be of value to the offenders they are aimed at. We asked all YOT professionals a range of questions about any specific services or interventions they provided to BME offenders and the rationale behind providing those services.

Although eight of the nine areas we selected had a higher than average representation of BME offenders, only two of them provided specific services for BME offenders, although one YOT worker interviewed was unsure if such services were provided in their area. Below are comments from three YOT workers describing the interventions specifically aimed at BME offenders:

We have a group for young Black males, which looks at images of Black men and how they end up in the criminal justice system. In lots of the groups the majority are Black men so the issues are dealt with anyway.

We have Black leadership awards, a gang and prevention team, we have a 12-week programme for young Black men about their self-esteem and cultural issues. We want to equip them to become leaders in their communities, we specifically look at issues faced by young Black boys in society, equipping them with the tools to face these problems, it gives them information on the achievements of Black people.

We offer a project called U-turn Project. It is offered to dual heritage young people, encouraging those who don't attend school. It's like a mentoring scheme. Substance misusers can also access it through RAPT project. However, we have to pay U-turn if they make a referral and currently we can't afford to use the service. We also don't have a parenting programme for users that don't have English as their first language at the moment. We did consider having a group for dual heritage people, and are looking into it. We want it to have a real impact not just be tokenistic.

We asked YOT workers about the rationale behind deciding what services, programmes or interventions to provide to BME offenders. The majority of interviewees (18 from 25) stated that services were based on an individual's perceived need or risk. Other criteria for deciding this included an examination of a young person's offending rate and the availability of services at that particular time.

Professionals were also asked if they adapted any of their services to be more culturally sensitive, for example, by adapting an existing programme to incorporate – to some degree – the cultural values of the target group. Nine YOT workers stated that the issue of diversity is always discussed within team meetings and every endeavour is made to be sensitive to, and meet the needs of, all offenders.

Other workers specifically mentioned appointing interpreters when necessary, always using non-oppressive language and using Black role models during interventions. Seven workers, however, stated that adaptations were rarely made to any of the programmes or interventions provided by their YOT. Quotes below illustrate workers' views on adapting their existing programmes:

From Prevent Project the staff reflect the ethnic breakdown of clients; they have an understanding of culture. We have discussions as a team about the needs of BME young people. We try to get successful Black businessmen and footballers in for our workshop on identity.

I hope we don't alter our programmes. We are a crime reduction agency, we're here to reduce crime and protect the public, we are not here for the welfare of young people.

No we don't adapt programmes, everyone receives the standard interventions.

I haven't had the need to adapt any of our programmes. I would do if I needed to. We adapt any work to address an individual child's problems.

YOT professionals were asked how effective they found the services they provided to young BME offenders. Seventeen of the 25 interviewed believed that the services they offered to BME offenders were either 'quite' or 'very' effective. Five felt that the services they offered to BME offenders were not particularly effective, while the remainder were either unsure or didn't answer this question. The following quotes illustrate workers' interpretations about the effectiveness of the services they offer to BME offenders:

Our service is effective but it relies on the young person being there.

It's more about being culturally aware, not about having different services.

There are some good resources but each programme needs trained staff, the work is not as intensively done as it needs to be, due to time and resource problems.

Programmes are individually determined. It depends on the staff and the readiness of young people, engagement is the key. We've got some way to go in terms of delivery, and resources still need to be tied up.

Providing interventions: the views of census respondents

Twenty-three establishments (18 YOTs, one STC, three secure children's homes, one YOI) reported that they provided services designed to meet the needs of BME young people. These services tended to focus on two core areas; providing interventions to reduce offending committed by particular BME groups and providing interventions which focused on improving a young person's self-esteem and identity. These services are illustrated by two of the respondents below:

Turnaround is a robbery group work programme which targets young people convicted of robbery offences. The profile for this is convicted Black males. Programme content encompasses being a Black male within the criminal justice system. The group work programme specifically targets young people known to be involved and/or at risk of group offending behaviour i.e. gangs.

[We provide] Revolutionary social education, which is a programme covering a range of units including identity and roots, pre-colonial African history, substance misuse, racism and anti-racism, leadership and conflict and change. One of the modules: racism and anti-racism; Black history month activities and the Black leadership programme is run in conjunction with the Black Police Association, this is a 12-week programme aimed at young Black males on a community sentence.

When asked whether YOT services should be delivered differently according to a person's ethnicity, only five workers agreed (of 21 who answered the question). Of the remainder, 13 disagreed and three were unsure.

Below workers outline why their thoughts on this subject:

It would help [to deliver interventions differently]; we can have general programmes but for some young people there needs to be something more specific/tailored. If in the assessment the worker feels that culture is effecting [sic] offending then need to address that specific need.

[Interventions should be delivered differently] in a way, but that's about being culturally sensitive, it has to be realistic. An example would be if you were talking about peer pressure, it might be that peer pressure is different amongst different groups and it's important to be sensitive to that.

It depends on the reason for their offending, not just the colour of their skin.

Workers need to be sensitive to it [ethnicity]. There are many different ethnic groups. We should encourage young people to be dealt with as one group, there is no need to dilute programmes into several ways of delivery.

When asked if they thought offenders should be matched to staff according to their ethnicity, seven workers thought it would be unsuccessful in responding to the needs of their offenders. However, 13 workers thought that, in some instances, it may prove to be a positive experience and four workers thought it should be offered as an option.

It shouldn't be an automatic process. If it is identified as a need or will help a particular young person then OK, but only if it makes the intervention more effective. We [YOT workers] have to be able to work with the difference [in ethnicities].

Young people will see a mix of staff anyway. It's a bad idea and not practical, it reinforces the idea that race is the most over-riding part of someone's identity.

It could be difficult for us to recruit. We don't have any Asian staff and few Black staff. I also wonder whether it would make people feel targeted.

It [matching staff and offenders] doesn't make a difference, you just have to care about young people.

Matching staff to young people based on ethnicity – the views of census respondents

In contrast, material from the census found that all YOIs and STCs (and the majority of YOTs and secure children's homes) did not have a policy on matching staff to young people, based on their ethnicity (65 of 72 respondents). The reason cited by the majority of respondents was the low number of BME staff or BME young offenders, which would render such a policy difficult to implement, as the following quote illustrates:

In this region we do not have the diversity of population from which to recruit staff from all ethnic minorities, even though this is positively encouraged and, when possible, we welcome staff from diverse backgrounds.

Policies on matching staff and clients on the basis of ethnicity were viewed critically by some respondents, as illustrated by the following quotation:

I don't understand that rationale. I don't match boys with male workers. All our staff are skilled at engaging with young people.

Thirty-eight establishments reported that there were risks involved in matching staff to young people based purely on ethnicity. The main reason, cited by 17 respondents, was that it created segregation among staff and put undue pressure on BME staff to be 'experts' on the needs of BME young people, when the reality is that the BME profile is a very diverse one. These respondents felt that it was more important to focus on the skills and qualifications of all staff, as the following quotes illustrate:

There is a risk of perpetuating/encouraging separatism; we should be modelling diversity and inclusiveness. Other [non-BME staff] staff may become de-skilled.

There are obvious risks to automatically matching staff and young people. Not every member of a particular group is necessarily an 'expert' in their own cultural field! Staff who are adequately trained can be equipped to work outside of their own ethnic group.

Of the other respondents, 16 commented that matching clients and staff was generally based on the young person's risk/need, not their ethnicity. However, a number of establishments did confirm that if a young person wished to be matched to a member of staff based on ethnicity, they would endeavour to meet their needs, as highlighted by the following respondent:

Although staff are not deliberately matched on the basis of ethnicity, if BME young people request a particular key worker we would try to meet the need. We work from the standpoint that not all BME young people wish to follow their own culture; we try to prevent stereotyping in all cases.

Identifying challenges

We asked all interviewees about the advantages and disadvantages of providing specific interventions and/or programmes to young BME offenders. Table 6.4 illustrates YOT professionals' responses to the question.

Table 6.4: Advantages and disadvantages in providing specific interventions based on ethnicity

Disadvantages of BME-specific interventions and separate services	Advantage	Disadvantage
Can segregate/discriminate		15
Can stereotype young people		1
Exaggerates differences		2
Means different opportunities		1
Debilitating for resources		1
Advantages of BME-specific interventions and separate services		
Able to provide appropriate services	4	
May help young people to feel more comfortable	3	
Highlights positives of BME culture	1	
Can create cultural empathy	2	
Approach can be tailored to fit needs	1	

Overall, similar to findings from the census, YOT professionals believed that more problems would be created by providing separate services than providing generic services that appreciated the different individual needs of all young people.

While YOT professionals were not keen on providing separate services based on young people's ethnicity, 14 still believed there were gaps in BME service provision both locally and at the national level. Particular gaps identified by our interviewees included:

- providing alternative education programmes
- providing better support for parents of BME offenders
- developing programmes on Black identity
- providing better BME female services
- providing easier access to interpreters.

Following on from this, our interviewees then identified some of the problems they had encountered while engaging with young BME offenders. These included:

- problems engaging with parents
- problems due to language barriers
- the need to breach a relatively high proportion of South Asians
- not understanding their culture or background
- being unable to identify with their lives
- having no appropriate services to refer them to
- having no best practice knowledge in the field of delivering services to BME offenders.

Some of these problems are outlined below by YOT professionals:

One of the difficulties is being able to carry out an objective and accurate assessment if we have no knowledge of the culture or background of the young person.

If young people don't want to engage for a cultural reason, we need to understand that culture and breach that gap.

Getting the assessment right is a challenge and asking the right questions rather than assuming. It is challenging to draw on issues of race, one-to-one supervision can be challenging because staff are not comfortable asking certain questions.

Referring to social services is a big challenge as they hardly engage and don't really work well with BME young people. I'm always battling with them as they don't acknowledge the needs of young people and are irresponsible to certain issues, for example, domestic violence. It's worse for BME people because of stereotypes.

Training and support

Finally, we asked the 25 YOT workers to discuss the training and support they had received and whether they felt adequately equipped to assess the needs of BME offenders and provide the services essential to help them reduce their

offending behaviour. Respondents' views were mixed on whether they had been adequately trained to deal the issues faced by BME offenders and be able to run groups in a way that met their needs.

Eleven staff believed they were adequately trained, although seven did not feel this was the case. The remainder were undecided or felt that they had been adequately trained in some areas but not others. The following quotes illustrate respondents' thoughts on whether they felt adequately trained to meet the needs of the BME offenders accessing their service:

There's a lot of training here about working with Bangladeshi families but we need a broader understanding of issues and not assume things.

No [I don't feel adequately trained]. I think we should be trained to ascertain information in a sensitive way. Many workers feel uncomfortable about asking these questions. We need to try to improve workers' confidence to get past that and develop awareness of tying into other services where needed.

Yes [I feel adequately trained]. But there's never enough training, we can always improve and update our knowledge.

Following on from this, we asked our interviewees what training they had received to assist them in their work with BME offenders. Ten respondents said they had received either diversity training or standard YJB training since they had been in their post. The general consensus from YOT staff was that it would be beneficial for future training to include cultural issues (mentioned by 10 respondents) and training on the differences between BME groups (mentioned by nine respondents).

Other suggestions included:

- developing training in collaboration with community members
- training on BME issues at a worker's induction
- Asset training on BME issues.

Quotes below are illustrative of the types of training staff thought would be beneficial to their work with BME offenders:

It would be good to have an understanding of cultures; simple things such as food, music, influence of home country, a sympathy for young people's struggle with police and their education.

We need reminders to challenge our practice after a while, especially when new ethnic groups come into area. As long as it is relevant and sensitivity delivered.

We need more value and diversity workshops, for example, 'why have value and diversity?', 'know how to work with clients' and others.

We need to get local people in and not necessarily use big training companies; we need to tailor our training to local need. If you think, the biggest source of information is through the families themselves.

Training: the views of census respondents

The census found that most institutions (the secure children's homes, STCs and YOIs) provide some form of training to assess and respond to the needs of BME young people. However, the findings show that seven out of 52 YOTs do not provide specific diversity training to staff members. One explanation for this is illustrated in the following quote:

There seems to be some irony implicit in the question, given the political pressure to integrate diversity issues in mainstream training.

There was no uniform practice across the board. The range of training received by staff included: non-specified training, one-day training, induction training and general diversity awareness training, with some offered regular courses.

Most establishments (43) felt that their staff were adequately equipped to assess the needs of BME young people. Twenty of these stated this was because their staff had received diversity training, while 12 stated that this was due to good communication, both within establishments and in links with external agencies. The following quote is indicative of many of these establishments:

The staff group is reflective of the local community and is well-placed to engage effectively and understand the importance of ethnic-specific interventions, as well as appropriate use of generic interventions. Through team meeting discussions, training and ongoing peer and managerial support, I believe that staff within the YOT are adequately equipped to assess the needs of all young people.

However, similarly to the interviewed YOT professionals, not all establishments felt their staff were adequately equipped to assess the needs of young BME people (25 YOTs, one STC, three secure children's homes and one YOI). The main reason for this, given by 12 of these establishments, was lack of training. The following quote illustrates this sentiment:

...the assessment of needs is a different issue to the assessment of risk and requires a cultural awareness that I'm not sure everyone has. Diversity training has been undertaken but there was an over-emphasis on African-Caribbean young people and wider issues were not covered.

In summary

We interviewed 25 YOT practitioners across nine YOT areas. Twelve of these believed that gang violence, violence against the person and drug offences were more often associated with their BME offenders than their White offenders. Seven interviewees also thought that the offences committed by young BME offenders tended to be more serious than their White counterparts.

Twelve interviewees said that the needs of all their offenders were generally similar, although four interviewees thought that the needs of their BME offenders were greater, due to cultural and religious needs. Three interviewees thought that the needs of BME offenders were compounded if their parents were unable to help them or unwilling to engage with the YOT in order to help

them. Three interviewees also thought that problems experienced by their BME clients were exacerbated due to others labelling them.

When assessing offenders, all YOT professionals used *Asset* or *Onset*. However, to ascertain if BME offenders had any specific needs not necessarily covered by *Asset*, workers tended to deviate from the form to gain this information.

The majority of YOT workers stated that the services they provided were based on an individual's perceived need or risk, though other criteria also included an examination of a young person's offending rate and the availability of services at that particular time. Only two YOT areas in our sample provided specific services to BME offenders.

While five staff felt that the services they offered to BME offenders were not particularly effective, 17 believed the services they offered were either 'quite' or 'very' effective. Only four workers believed that the services offered by their YOT should be delivered differently, according to a person's ethnicity.

Overall, YOT professionals believed that more problems would be created by providing separate services for young BME clients than providing generic services that appreciated the different individual needs of all young people in the programme/group.

7 Conclusions and recommendations

This report, by the Institute for Criminal Policy Research, King's College London, and Nacro's Youth Crime Section, was commissioned by the YJB for England and Wales. It has explored the needs of young BME offenders and the provision of targeted interventions. This chapter summarises our key findings and outlines some key recommendations coming from the research.

Findings

Case file sample findings

Key findings from analysis of the sample of 22,505 YOT case files found that:

- 4% of offenders had no recorded ethnicity
- the ethnicity of Mixed race offenders was poorly recorded in 12 of the 20 areas where data was analysed; this equated to 1% of our sample offenders having unreliable ethnicity data recorded on them
- Black young people tended to be over-represented on YOIS/CareWorks in comparison to the population, while Asians tended to be under-represented
- Mixed race offenders were engaged with YOTs and had been known to the criminal justice system for a longer period of time in 2006 than any other ethnic group
- violence against the person, theft and handling stolen goods were the most common offences males and females were charged with
- Black, Mixed race, Asian and 'unknown' young males were all more likely to be charged with robbery offences than White males; White males were more likely to be charged with criminal damage offences
- Asian females were more likely to be charged with theft and handling compared to White females
- 65% of cases involving young women were resolved without prosecution compared to 44% of cases involving young men
- a lower proportion of Black and Mixed race males received pre-court disposals compared to White males. Mixed race females also received a lower proportion of pre-court disposals than White females

- a higher proportion of Black and Mixed race males received custodial sentences than White ones, and Asian females received a smaller proportion of custodial sentences than White females; however, when the seriousness of the offence and other case characteristics were taken into account, these differences became insignificant³⁹
- analysis of *Asset* data found that young Asian offenders tended to have the lowest need for a YOT intervention and displayed the lowest risk factor of future offending; Mixed race offenders were found to have the greatest need for a YOT intervention and displayed the greatest risk of reoffending.

Findings from interviews with young people

Key findings from interviews with 93 young people found that:

- 84% (78) of young people had been excluded from school at some point in their schooling career, including all of the Mixed race interviewees
- the average age at first arrest was 13, with ages ranging from nine to 17
- a quarter of young people stated that they had offended while attending the YOT; just over a third of the Mixed race and Black interviewees had offended while on their current order
- only eight young people thought it was important to have other young people of the same ethnicity in their group at the YOT
- 89% of young people stated that they were unconcerned as to whether or not their key worker shared the same ethnicity as them
- two-thirds believed that BME young people were adequately supported by their YOT
- 96% of the sample believed that YOT workers treated all young people fairly, regardless of their ethnicity
- just over two-thirds thought attending the YOT had helped them to reduce their offending
- Asians were the least inclined to believe the YOT had helped them to reduce their offending, while Black offenders were the group most inclined to attribute any reductions in their offending to their local YOT and the interventions it provided.

Findings from interviews with YOT professionals

Key findings from interviews with 25 YOT professionals found that:

³⁹ For further discussion on the outcomes of disposals that BME offenders receive, see May et al. (2010).

- just under half of YOT practitioners believed that gang violence, violence against the person and drug offences were more often associated with their BME offenders than White offenders
- 10 professionals believed that White offenders were more likely to be arrested for vehicle crimes, burglaries, criminal damage and racially motivated offending than BME ones
- school exclusion and a lack of educational attainment were viewed as significant risk factors associated with BME offending
- a number of YOT workers believed that *Asset* needs to be revised to include a section on identity, ethnicity, religion, racial abuse and discrimination if it is to meet the needs of BME offenders; where necessary, professionals tended to supplement the information they collected from *Asset* with other public sector information
- only two YOTs provided specific services to BME offenders
- 17 interviewees believed that the services they offered to BME offenders were either 'quite' or 'very' effective
- only four workers believed that services offered by their YOT should be delivered differently, according to a person's ethnicity
- while YOT professionals were not keen on providing separate services based on a young people's ethnicity, 14 still believed there were gaps in BME service provision, both locally and at national level
- only 11 staff believed they had been adequately trained to meet the needs of BME offenders
- staff thought it would be beneficial to have future training on cultural issues and on the differences between BME groups.

Recommendations

One of the central questions this study set out to answer was whether there was a need for BME-specific interventions and whether BME young offenders thought their needs would be better met through targeted interventions aimed specifically at them. Our research uncovered a mixed response from both young people and YOT professionals on whether specific BME-focused interventions were desirable or necessary. Our conclusions focus on making improvements in: ethnicity monitoring at local YOT level, the usefulness of *Asset* in identifying the needs of BME offenders and the efficacy of BME-focused interventions. Diversity and cultural awareness training should also be provided to YOT staff.

Improving ethnicity monitoring

In Chapters 2 and 3, we reported that there has been a decrease in the number of young people entering the youth justice system with their ethnicity recorded as 'not known'. However, despite all YOTs being required (since April 2005) to have an action plan in place to reduce the difference between the ethnic composition of YOTs and the general population, the ethnicity of a significant

proportion of those entering the youth justice system during 2006/07 was still recorded as 'not known' in many areas.

Our case file review identified 1,000 young people (4% of the sample) whose ethnicity was unknown. Furthermore, for 12 areas, two classifications of ethnicity were provided. In these areas, over 100 young people were identified as Mixed race in one classification and as either Black or White in the other classification (1% of the sample).

To enable local YOTs and the YJB to provide up-to-date information on the ethnicity of young people passing through the youth justice system, it would appear that there is a need to improve ethnicity recording practices across YOTs and the secure estate, in particular for Mixed race young people. If the youth justice system is to respond appropriately to the needs of all young people, it is essential that it has the correct data with which to do this.

To assist YOT workers to accurately record the ethnicity of all young people, it may be helpful for the YJB to publish guidelines to enable a more consistent approach to be adopted throughout the country. One suggestion could be for the YJB to conduct brief training sessions in areas where a young person's ethnicity is not always recorded or where there is conflicting evidence on the YOT monitoring form about their ethnicity. Encouraging accurate recording of a young person's ethnicity is an imperative, both at a national and local level, if services are to be planned and delivered effectively.

The use of *Asset* to identify the needs of BME offenders

Asset is an assessment tool developed by Oxford University in 2000 on behalf of the YJB. Oxford University was asked to develop a tool, the key requirements of which were that it should:

- identify the key factors associated with young people's offending
- provide a prediction of reconviction
- help to identify young people who may present a risk of serious harm to others
- identify situations in which a young offender is vulnerable to being harmed and
- identify issues where more in-depth assessment is required (Baker et al., 2003:9).

Our interviews with YOT workers highlighted that many found *Asset* to be a useful tool when helping them to assess the needs of young people. However, one area which a number of our interviewees thought should be included on the *Asset* form was a section on identity, ethnicity, religion, racial abuse and discrimination. While *Asset* may not be the best place to include such a section, our interviews highlighted the need for a tool to assist YOT workers to identify the needs of BME offenders in a more thorough and systematic way than is available at present.

Any addition to the *Asset* form should be carried out in consultation with YOT managers and practitioners because any extra reporting requirements will undoubtedly place administrative burdens on already stretched front-line staff.

In this report, the number of interviewees suggesting such a change was small. Therefore, in order to ascertain if this opinion is shared more widely, further research/consultations should be undertaken.

BME-focused interventions

Many young people were indifferent about the ethnic composition of the groups and/or leisure activities they participated in, and seemed unconcerned as to whether their YOT case worker shared the same ethnicity as them. Young people instead tended to express a preference to be involved in group work that was interesting and be supervised by a worker whom they felt supported by.

Few YOTs provided services specifically for BME offenders but, in any case, many YOT professionals viewed this approach as less than ideal. Many believed that when assessing a young person's need, the assessment should not focus on their ethnicity. YOT workers tended to believe that while a young person's ethnicity, background and culture were important, many of the issues faced by their BME offenders were also faced by their White offenders (for example, exclusion from school, peer group pressure and family issues).

However, there were also a number of young people and YOT professionals who thought that consideration should be given to providing BME-specific services. From our evidence, it would appear that the issue of providing BME-specific interventions should be decided at a local level and in consultation with YOT practitioners and the young people accessing the YOT. This should be both the BME and White young people, thus ensuring that the available interventions meet the needs of all young people.

Providing diversity and cultural awareness training

To equip professionals with the necessary skills to deliver interventions to young offenders, it is important that they are provided with the necessary training. Only 10 of the professionals we interviewed had received any diversity training since they had been in post and most agreed that they were in need of updating their skills. A number of interviewees mentioned that they would benefit from additional training sessions aimed at exploring different cultural issues and differences between BME groups.

Interviewees also thought that training developed in collaboration with local community members would also be beneficial. Again, it would appear that training of this nature needs to be developed at a local level and senior YOT managers should be encouraged to canvass their staff on what their training needs are, and whether members of the community would be able to assist in any way. Engaging local communities would also have the added benefit of bringing together local YOTs and communities.

Future directions

This report has presented evidence on the needs and interventions available to young offenders, in particular young BME offenders. Our research uncovered a mixed response from both young people and YOT professionals on whether specific BME-focused interventions were desirable or necessary.

In carrying forward any of the recommendations within this report, we would urge that collaboration is undertaken at both a national and a local level to

decide on what elements need further research and how best to implement any future policies so they complement both national objectives and local need.

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Appendix A: Tables of sample, offending histories and need

Table A1: Age, ethnicity and gender

Age	Male (%)							Female (%)						
	White	Black	Mixed	Asian	Chinese/ Other	Unkn wn	Total	White	Black	Mixed	Asian	Chinese/ Other	Unkn own	Total
10	1	0	0	1	-	1	1	0	0	1	0	4	2	0
11	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	0	2	-	2	2
12	5	4	4	3	12	4	4	6	5	3	5	-	3	5
13	8	6	7	7	3	6	8	12	9	11	8	13	8	11
14	13	12	12	13	12	10	13	18	15	20	16	29	17	18
15	19	19	21	19	19	18	19	23	25	23	20	8	23	23
16	23	23	24	24	22	22	23	21	21	21	25	8	18	21
17	24	27	22	26	24	30	25	15	19	18	21	33	21	17
18	5	6	7	5	5	6	5	2	5	3	3	4	6	3
19	0	1	1	0	-	1	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	10,965	2,437	913	1,995	58	789	17,157	3,773	720	271	345	24	215	5,348

NB: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Table A2: The Office of National Statistics estimated 10 to 17-year-old male population 2006 compared with male sample

Area	White (%)		Black (%)		Mixed (%)		Asian (%)		Chinese/Other (%)		Unknown (%)	
	Population	N	Population	N	Population	N	Population	N	Population	N	Population	N
A	68	73	1	3	3	2	27	22	1	0	-	-
B	86	79	3	9	5	6	4	2	1	0	-	3
C	47	28	29	54	7	8	13	6	3	1	-	4
D	81	56	2	5	5	3	11	4	1	0	-	31
E	47	20	34	70	10	2	7	2	3	1	-	5
F	59	62	8	10	6	7	25	16	1	1	-	4
G	29	31	23	28	6	11	40	25	3	1	-	4
H	77	63	1	2	3	2	19	9	0	-	-	24
I	29	27	6	9	4	6	58	57	3	0	-	0
J	86	79	2	9	4	3	7	3	1	0	-	5
K	66	48	14	30	8	17	10	4	2	1	-	2
L	70	67	5	18	7	5	17	7	1	0	-	3
M	85	90	6	6	3	2	4	2	2	-	-	-
N	87	81	2	4	4	6	7	9	1	0	-	0
O	56	68	5	7	5	8	33	16	1	0	-	0
P	-	95	-	1	-	1	-	3	-	0	-	-
Q	93	93	1	2	2	2	3	2	1	0	-	2
R	59	54	7	17	6	7	27	17	1	0	-	4
S	76	71	5	7	7	6	10	15	2	0	-	1
T	54	73	4	11	5	7	35	3	1	0	-	6
All areas (exclude P)	69	63	6	14	5	5	18	12	1	0		5
England	86		3		3		6		1			

NB: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Table A3: The Office of National Statistics estimated 10 to 17-year-old female population 2006 compared with female sample

Area	White (%)		Black (%)		Mixed (%)		Asian (%)		Chinese/Other (%)		Unknown (%)	
	Population	N	Population	N	Population	N	Population	N	Population	N	Population	N
A	68	84	1	4	3	2	27	10	1	-	-	-
B	87	80	3	7	5	8	4	2	1	0	-	2
C	48	32	29	52	8	10	13	3	3	-	-	3
D	81	72	2	7	5	4	11	2	1	-	-	14
E	44	27	37	64	10	2	6	2	3	1	-	4
F	60	62	8	14	6	10	24	9	1	0	-	4
G	27	33	24	28	6	17	40	17	3	-	-	4
H	77	67	1	2	3	4	19	4	0	-	-	24
I	28	46	6	10	4	7	60	36		1	-	-
J	86	78	2	9	4	3	7	3	1	1	-	5
K	65	50	15	30	8	15	10	3	2	1	-	-
L	71	71	5	19	7	1	16	6	1	1	-	2
M	84	88	7	7	4	1	4	1	1	3	-	-
N	87	86	2	5	3	3	7	4	1	0	-	1
O	54	66	6	4	5	9	35	21	1	-	-	1
P	-	97	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
Q	93	93	1	2	2	1	3	1	1	0	-	2
R	59	60	7	20	7	7	27	9	1	1	-	3
S	77	69	5	12	7	6	10	11	1	1	-	1
T	55	71	4	14	5	3	35	2	1	-	-	9
All areas (exclude P)	69	70	7	14	5	5	18	7	1	0	-	4
England	86		3		3		6		1		-	

Table A4: Ethnic offence profile

Offence	Male (%)						Female (%)					
	White	Black	Mixed	Asian	Chinese/ Other	Unknown	White	Black	Mixed	Asian	Chinese/ Other	Unknown
Arson	1	0	-	0	-	0	0	0	-	-	-	1
Breach of Bail	0	1	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	-	-
Breach of Conditional Discharge	0	0	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-
Breach of Statutory Order	7	6	10**	4*	5	4*	5	4	8	1*	13	4
Burglary	6	3*	5	3*	3	5	2	0*	2	2	-	1
Criminal Damage	15	6*	8*	6*	2*	11*	8	5*	6	1*	4	7
Death or Injury By Dangerous Driving	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Drugs	5	9**	7**	7**	14**	2*	2	2	3	2	4	0
Fraud And Forgery	1	1	0*	1	2	2**	1	3**	0	1	4	3
Motoring Offences	8	8	8	12**	9	22**	1	1	1	1	-	3
Other	3	3	2	3	9	5**	2	3	2	3	8	5
Public Order	8	6*	8	6*	5	8	8	5*	7	4	4	12
Racially Aggravated	1	0	1	1	-	1	1	0	1	1	4	0
Robbery	3	15**	9**	9**	5	6**	2	6**	8**	3	-	4
Sexual Offences	1	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	0	0	-	-

Theft and Handling Stolen Goods	18	15*	14*	17	21	13*	41	45	31*	61**	50	29*
Vehicle Theft/ Unauthorised Taking	4	2*	3	5**	3	3*	1	0*	1	1	-	1
Violence Against Person	21	23**	24**	23	22	19	26	25	31	19*	8	28
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	10965	2437	913	1995	58	789	3773	720	271	345	24	215

NB: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

*Indicates the figure is significantly lower for the ethnic group when compared to Whites of the same gender

**Indicates the figure is significantly higher for the ethnic group when compared to Whites of the same gender

NB significant tests were not conducted for the Chinese/Other ethnic group due to insufficient sample size

Table A5: Male offences by ethnicity

	White (%)	Black (%)	Mixed (%)	Asian (%)	Chinese/Other (%)	Unknown (%)	Total (%)	N
Breach Of Statutory Order	68	13	8	7	0	3	100	1,054
Burglary	75	9	5	7	0	4	100	943
Criminal Damage	79	7	4	6	0	4	100	2,080
Drugs	53	23	6	15	1	2	100	985
Motoring Offences	55	13	5	16	0	11	100	1,507
Public Order	69	11	5	9	0	5	100	1,267
Robbery	32	37	8	19	0	4	100	986
Theft and Handling	68	12	4	12	0	3	100	2,929
Violence Against Person	62	15	6	12	0	4	100	3,676
Other	64	13	4	14	0	5	100	1,730
Total	64	14	5	12	0	5	100	17,157

NB: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Table A6: Female offences by ethnicity

	White	Black	Mixed	Asian	Chinese/Other	Unknown	Total	N
Breach of Statutory Order	75	11	8	1	1	3	100	269
Burglary	81	4	6	7	-	2	100	84
Criminal Damage	80	10	4	1	0	4	100	388
Drugs	70	12	9	7	1	1	100	89
Motoring Offences	71	11	3	5	-	11	100	65
Public Order	75	10	5	4	0	6	100	396
Robbery	44	28	15	7	-	6	100	149
Theft and Handling	69	14	4	9	1	3	100	2,230
Violence Against Person	71	13	6	5	0	4	100	1,368
Other	67	15	4	6	1	7	100	310
Total	71	13	5	6	0	4	100	5,348

NB: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Table A7: Offence gravity score by ethnicity and gender

Offence Gravity Score	Male							Female						
	White	Black	Mixed	Asian	Chinese/ Other	Unknown	Total	White	Black	Mixed	Asian	Chinese/ Other	Unknown	Total
1	1	1	1	0	2	2	1	2	1	0	1	4	2	1
2	30	23	26	26	21	40	29	16	13	15	7	8	20	15
3	39	37	35	37	43	32	38	64	67	56	79	63	57	64
4	18	14	20	17	22	13	17	14	12	19	8	21	13	13
5	4	4	3	6	3	3	4	1	1	1	1	4	2	1
6	7	19	14	13	9	9	10	4	7	10	5	0	5	4
7	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	10,894	2,414	905	1,979	58	783	17,033	3,756	718	270	342	24	213	5,323

NB: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Table A8: Male disposals by ethnicity

Disposal	White (%)	Black (%)	Mixed (%)	Asian (%)	Chinese/ Other (%)	Unknown (%)	Total (%)
Informal Warning	0.2	0.1	0.3	-	-	0.1	0.2
Police Reprimand	32	24	16	33	26	21	29
Final Warning	16	12	11	13	10	4	14
Fixed Penalty Notice	0.0	-	-	-	-	0.3	0.0
Acquitted/Dismissed/Withdrawn	6	10	11	8	3	17	8
Referral Order	12	11	12	12	14	12	12
First Tier Penalties	10	9	11	11	16	23	11
Community Sentence	13	16	21	10	16	11	13
Custody	4	7	8	5	9	2	5
Supplementary Order	1	1	2	2	3	3	2
Other	3	3	4	2	2	2	3
Result unknown	2	7	4	4	2	4	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	10,965	2,437	913	1,995	58	789	17,157

NB: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Table A9: Female disposals by ethnicity

Disposal	White (%)	Black (%)	Mixed (%)	Asian (%)	Chinese/ Other (%)	Unknown (%)	Total (%)
Informal Warning	0.1	0.4	-	-	-	-	0.1
Police Reprimand	51	49	28	63	54	41	50
Final Warning	16	15	12	15	17	6	15
Fixed Penalty Notice	-	0.1	-	-	-	-	0.0
Acquitted/Dismissed/Withdrawn	4	5	7	3	4	13	4
Referral Order	10	10	12	7	4	14	10
First Tier Penalties	5	4	9	3	-	8	5
Community Sentence	8	9	20	5	8	7	9
Custody	1	2	3	-	4	0	1
Supplementary Order	1	1	2	1	-	1	1
Other	2	1	4	1	8	3	2
Result Unknown	2	3	3	1	-	5	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	3,773	720	271	345	24	215	5,348

NB: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Table A10: Amount of Asset data available by final disposal

	No Asset provided		Asset provided	
	Count	%	Count	%
Informal Warning	21	68	10	32
Police Reprimand	6,168	98	118	2
Final Warning	1,679	64	950	36
Fixed Penalty Notice	3	50	3	50
Acquitted/Discontinued/Withdrawn	732	62	447	38
Referral Order	522	23	1,776	77
First Tier Penalties	973	56	770	44
Community Sentences All Ages	509	25	1,517	75
Custody	117	18	544	82
Supplementary Order	37	42	51	58
Other	134	24	426	76
Result Unknown	398	68	184	32
Total	11,293	62	6,796	38

NB: 1) Based on 18 areas. 2) Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Table A11: Total dynamic scores by ethnicity and gender

	White	Black	Mixed	Asian	Total
Males					
0–15	65	60	56	71	64
16–30	31	34	38	28	32
31–48	4	6	7	1	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Number in sample	3697	690	365	546	5298
Females					
0–15	65	63	51	78	65
16–30	30	32	44	20	30
31–48	5	5	6	2	5
Total	100	100	100	100	100
N	907	129	85	55	1176

NB: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding