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|  |  C:\Users\steve collett\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCacheContent.Word\RFSTLogo03.png***Developing interventions for young Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) offenders******Identifying practice principles from Toronto, Canada***  A Rhodes Foundation Scholarship (2014)

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**Wayne Wright & Patrick Williams**

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**Background**

The year **2013**, marked the 20th anniversary of the murder of Stephen Lawrence in London. The publication of the Macpherson report in **1999** marked the closure of the official inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence and the failures of the Metropolitan Police and the wider Criminal Justice system (CJS). A central finding to emerge from Macpherson’s report was the identification of institutionalised racism against the key agencies of the criminal justice system. A simple appraisal of the most recent criminal justice statistics attests to continuity in levels of over representation for Black people throughout the Criminal Justice System1. In **2001**, the Home Office and the National Probation Service, embarked upon a pathfinder programme to identify and develop specific group work interventions for Black and Minority Ethnic offenders supervised by the probation service2. The ‘What Works for Black and Asian offenders’’ initiative was driven by an acknowledgement and acceptance of the effects of institutional racism throughout the agencies of the criminal justice system.3 A key outcome of the Home Office pathfinder initiative was the identification and acknowledgement of differential treatment throughout the CJS. From increased levels of stop and search4, the court sentencing of BME people5, the reduced quality of pre-sentenced reports produced for Black and Asian people which in turn increases the likelihood of more punitive sentencing6. Further, there was evidence that BME offenders were more likely to receive more punitive (and onerous) community disposals. Finally, the endpoint of the criminal justice system highlights the extent of this overrepresentation where BME people make up approximately 26% of the prison population as compared to approximately one in ten of the generic population.7

Despite the above acknowledgement, there are currently no interventions designed to respond to the specific or particular needs of Black people under the supervision of the Probation Service. Indeed this is particularly concerning in light of recent evidence, which suggests that the experiences of young Black and Asian people who encounter the criminal justice system have arguably worsened. The **Young Review** published in December 2014 offers a sobering reminder of the ongoing processes of criminalisation, which results in the differential treatment of young Black men in particular.8 Further, research points toward the emergence of practice interventions based upon risks (of harm) such as the ‘gang’, radicalisation and serious youth violence. Within this report, it is our view that interventions which prioritise ‘risk’ above the social, personal and structural needs of young BME

1 Throughout this report, the term **Black** will refer to all people of African, Caribbean, Asian and other descents who have a common experience of racism and discrimination. At times Black may be used interchangeably with **Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic** (BAME). It is noteworthy that in the Canadian context the term ‘**racialised’** people refers to people of colour.

2 Home Office Research Reference Group: Black and Asian offenders on Probation.

3 Macpherson (2001); Durrance, P and Williams, P (2003): Williams, P. (2005) ; Powis, B. and Walmsley, R (2001); Calverley et al (2003)

4 Ministry of Justice (2010) Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System 2010, London: Ministry of Justice.

5 Hood, R., S. Shute, F. Seemungal (2003). Ethnic minorities in the criminal courts: Perceptions of fairness and equality of treatment, London: Lord Chancellor’s Department

Hood (original study)

6 Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation (2001) *Towards Race Equality*. London: HMIP. HMIP (2004) *Towards Race Equality* (follow-up). London: HMIP.

Hudson, B. and G. Bramhall (2005). Assessing the ‘Other’ Constructions of ‘Asianness’ in Risk Assessments by Probation Officers, Oxford: British Journal of Criminology.

7 Ministry of Justice (2010) Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System 2010, London: Ministry of Justice.

8 Young, L. (2014) A review into improving outcomes for young black and Muslim men in the criminal justice system. London: Barrow Cadbury Trust. [http://www.youngreview.org/sites/default/files/clinks\_young-](http://www.youngreview.org/sites/default/files/clinks_young-review_report_dec2014.pdf) [review\_report\_dec2014.pdf](http://www.youngreview.org/sites/default/files/clinks_young-review_report_dec2014.pdf)

offenders serve to further stigmatise and marginalise BME people by reinforcing the labels that probation practice has traditionally sought to alleviate.

Crucially, it is important to consider the predominance of explanations for differential treatment and disproportionality of young BME men within the Criminal Justice System.

1. Young BME men perpetrate offences at a higher rate than their white counterparts and therefore their over-representation reflects the higher incidence of crime?
2. The CJS as a process criminalises particular individuals and groups. Within this case, policing practice and the professional discretion of CJ practitioners treats young BME offenders differently to their white counterparts. As such, overrepresentation and disproportionality is indicative of prejudice, discrimination and racism(s).
3. The CJS is ineffective at responding to the personal, social and/or criminogenic needs of young BME people. ‘One size does not fit all’ and so dominant CJ approaches and interventions derive from an individualistic, Eurocentric viewpoint, which disadvantages and further stigmatises BME people who are subject to CJ interventions.

Taken individually, the above explanations only offer a partial view of the problems associated with over-representation within the CJS. However, it is our contention that despite the limitations with the above explanations, they all point toward a need for the development and implementation of alternative approaches, responses and interventions for young BME people who come into contact with the Criminal Justice System.

The central aim of the NPS/CRC is to facilitate the rehabilitation of offenders by responding to the particular personal, social and criminogenic needs of all offenders. It is our contention that there is now an urgent need to develop and implement specific interventions that respond to the hitherto ill- considered, yet pertinent needs of BME people subjected to CJ intervention and practice.

## A reflection on Probation approaches to interventions for BME groups

Within the probation service there has been a strong and growing commitment to equality and diversity, and addressing overrepresentation of BME people within the CJS. It should however be noted that overrepresentation is something that the Probation Service can only marginally influence. What the Probation Service can influence is the offer that BME individuals receive that will recognise difference, and meet their specific needs and promote the skills of the individual.

The literature suggests that the combined impact of social and economic disadvantage, racial discrimination and historical exploitation will contribute to a negative self-image within BME groups ultimately impacting on their own images of self-worth (Alexio, 1977). Salkind (2004) asserts that for an individual to develop and realise their potential there needs to be a sense of self-pride and a set of personal goals for that individual to strive towards. Unless these are in place or fostered we should not expect to see any desistence from crime.

The notion of empowerment is not new within the probation service. Empowerment models are based around supporting the individual in creating a positive identity for themselves, nurturing a greater sense of self-worth, which will support a move away from crime and offending behaviour. These approaches were enshrined within an anti-oppression and anti-discriminatory framework and

value base, which informed probation and social work practice in the 1970s. At this time it was thought that the offender was a ‘product of social inequality and oppression’9 acknowledging the social and structural basis of crime. Therefore, interventions were necessary as a response to ‘the oppression of women, Black people and other oppressed groups’ by challenging institutional, structural and social oppression.10 It is noteworthy that the ideas of empowerment have been met with ambivalence within probation services as the basis of the approach centralises structural inequality as a key driver of offending behaviour rather than one derived from an individualistic, psychosocial model.

Between 2000 and 2004, Greater Manchester Probation Service adopted the use of empowerment approaches in the delivery of the ‘Think First for Black and Asian offenders’ programme. The model incorporated the use of four ‘self-development’ sessions with the aim to ‘assist group members to identify the impact of racism upon their life experiences, including offending behaviour.’ Early findings from the pilot of the programme pointed toward increased rates of engagement and compliance for those offenders who engaged in empowerment based models when compared to those BME offenders subject to generic programmes. Despite these and other indicators of success, the Home Office pathfinder initiative came to an abrupt end in 2004. This has resulted in no specific group work provision accredited for use with Black and Asian offenders within the Greater Manchester (and now Cheshire) area. However we are aware of pockets of practice that seek to respond to the particular needs of young Black offenders such as the ‘Yes You Can’ programme delivered through the Intensive Alternative to Custody (IAC) project in Manchester as part of an Intensive Community Order (ICO).

The Yes You Can (YYC) programme is a bespoke four-session group work intervention. Drawing particularly upon empowerment and desistance informed approaches Yes You Can, adopts multi- method, interactive and collaborative techniques to nurture within the individual a more positive, pro-social attitude that will assist the acknowledgement, development and application of realistic strategies for change. Key to the delivery of the workshop and the model adopted was the utilisation of community-based resources to develop, foster and nurture emerging feelings of self- worth, and hopefulness. The sessions were delivered within a group work setting at the start of a ‘journey’ that the young person would take utilising the skills and services of community based organisations to support a process of change.

It is clear that locally (within CGM CRC) there is not only a need for interventions specific for the needs of BME individuals but that there already has been work undertaken in that area that can be developed to incorporate new learning within the changing landscape of Probation delivered services. From our visit to Canada, it became evident that the similarities in terms of the needs of BME individuals the response of the CJ system to those needs has to date fallen short.

9 Thompson, N. (2012) Anti Discriminatory Practice. London: Palgrave.

10 ibid

# Introduction

Our study was concerned with exploring the question of **‘what principles should inform probation interventions to better respond to the needs of BME people under supervision’**. It is within this context that we embarked upon a study trip to Toronto, Canada.

Our findings were informed by a ten-day study trip to Toronto, Canada to observe a number of innovative projects currently delivered for young African Canadian people. From the start, we were able to established contact with academics from the University of Toronto who were working on the subject of the criminalisation of racialised people and who advocate for the development of offender interventions that respond to the needs of BME people on probation. In addition, it is noteworthy to acknowledge the significant contribution of North American and Canadian academics to the ‘What Works?’ initiative that informed the UK effective practice initiative. Through our initial scoping exercise, we found a number of interventions, which claim to respond to the cultural needs of this group. In particular, we identified a suite of interventions delivered through the African Canadian Legal Clinic (ACLC) located in Toronto, Ontario and particularly, the Youth Justice Education Programme (YJEP). Briefly, the YJEP is a youth led initiative targeted at African Canadian youth who live in poorer communities. The goal of YJEP is to assist young people by providing them with educational opportunities using culturally relevant and anti-oppressive approaches. Significantly, the programme signals a holistic, wraparound approach to responding to the needs of African Canadian young people through the delivery of an intensive, community-based intervention.

The central aims of this study were as follows.

* To explore the potential of interventions informed by empowerment approaches (programmes designed to build the capacity of the individual through the inclusion of historical and cultural awareness strategies) in Toronto, Canada. And how such approaches may contribute to the development of BME specific interventions in England and Wales.
* To appraise the current probation structures within England and Wales to consider the drivers and priorities that would support the implementation of such programmes.
* To identify principles to inform the development of practice interventions in England and Wales.

# Methods

Given the exploratory nature of this project we adopted a qualitative designed to support our research aims. It is important to reiterate that this study was concerned with the identifying principles that we deemed important in supporting a shift toward a non-offending, pro-social identity. In addition, interventions were required to focus upon the needs of racialised groups and in particular young Black African Canadian people. The research study was organised into the following stages.

**Stage one**: Site visits were undertaken with five organisations, which enabled us to consider the organisations aims and objectives, development and examination of programme materials and documentation. All materials and documentation was subject to analysis as a means to highlight principles that informed practice intervention. Further site visits allowed an in-depth understanding of the organisations included as part of this study. Much of this work was undertaken prior to a more in-depth consideration of the programmes and was informed by analysis of organisational websites. This stage was also designed to enable us to develop a clear understanding of the organisation, some of the central principles that informed their practice and as basis from which to undertake in-depth interviews with project managers, programme designers, programme deliverers.

Sites visited

* Canadian Training Institute (2 participants)
* Ontario Correctional Services (7 participants)
* Ontario Correctional Services, probation (6 participants)
* Redemption Reintegrative Services (1 participant)
* CAMH (4 participants)
* African Canadian Legal Clinic (2 participants)
* University of Toronto (2 participants)

**Stage Two**: Involved undertaking in-depth one-to-one and group interviews with those organisations and institutions to explore a number of crucial research questions and areas.

* What are the needs of African Canadian young people?
* What were the personal, social and structural factors that may contribute to offending behaviour for African Canadian young people?
* What approaches inform the design and development of programme interventions for young African Canadian people?
* What has been the impact of these programmes?

# Findings

The following section was informed by data gathered through the fieldwork phase of our study trip. Taken together, we met with approximately 25 individuals from six organisations/institutions. Interviewees represented a sample of the organisations delivering correctional services to young people throughout Toronto, this afforded our study a representative view of the problems, challenges and responses to criminal justice for racialised groups.

The following will firstly provide a summary of the main organisations involved in this study and will then be followed by analysis of the interviews and discussions undertaken with organisation representatives.

## African Caribbean Legal Clinic (ACLC) Case Study

This was the key organisation that informed our visit to Toronto. The African Canadian Justice Program (ACJP) is a culturally specific service for low risk African Canadian adults in conflict with the law, funded by the Ministry of the Attorney General and administered by the African Canadian Legal Clinic (ACLC). The vision of this program is to provide African Canadians with culturally relevant educational programs and referral services. The ACJP will foster opportunities for positive development, growth, and change from a culturally consistent perspective. The ACJP is one facet of the ACLC’s mandate to serve the African Canadian Community and assist individual African Canadians to reach their full potential. The over-arching goal of program services is to reduce and prevent future offending amongst African Canadian adult offenders through the use of culturally appropriate, evidenced based practices.

**Youth Justice Education Programme**

The Youth Justice Education Program (YJEP) is a three–year youth led initiative that was developed with African Canadian youth from the 13 ‘priority neighbourhoods’. These youth form a committee whose purpose is to develop a training module that will address the application of existing anti-racism, equity and inclusion policies within agencies and institutions that serve African Canadian youth. The ultimate goal of YJEP is to assist and empower youth by providing them with education using culturally relevant, holistic and anti- oppressive approaches. This initiative was developed to be delivered over three key phases

Phase 1- Education and Training

To hire youth as Youth Justice Workers, from the ‘priority neighbourhoods’ who will receive education and training using an African-centred, anti-oppression and anti-racism framework to build their capacity and understanding as it relates to cultural self-awareness, legal rights, advocacy and other relevant life skills.

Phase 2 – Module Development

The youth leaders and Youth Justice Workers will work to develop a training module which addresses the cultural awareness and emotional considerations necessary to effectively support and service youth who are or have been involved with the criminal justice system.

Phase 3 – Facilitation and Institutionalization

Youth will utilize the frontline training module to conduct outreach and facilitate training within mainstream organizations, transfer payment agencies, school boards, City of Toronto (Parks, Forestry and Recreation) and the Toronto Community Housing Corporation.

**Canadian Training Institute (Breaking the Cycle)**

During the 1970's, there was a general move toward de-institutionalization which created many small, community-based residential programs for clients in corrections, mental health, physically disabled, domestic violence, etc. While this brought clients closer to the community, there was a general lack of training for staff and volunteers in these programs. Beginning with volunteers in the corrections community, CTI founders sought to address this problem through the establishment of a national voluntary agency that could provide training for and support networking among community based residential programs. CTI continues to make significant contributions in this and other areas of crime prevention and intervention by enhancing the effectiveness of services delivered by criminal justice and related human service agencies, as well as in the provision of crisis intervention and trauma support to individuals and communities.

Breaking the Cycle is concerned with helping young people avoid getting involved in ‘gangs’ or getting out of ‘gangs’ if they are already involved. Participants include males and females, ages 15 – 30, who are or have been involved in a youth gang and are currently unemployed or not attending school. They are committed to participating in the Project, and to honouring cooperative group norms and agreements. The Leadership and Support Project begins with a two-week training program, followed by one-to-one case management sessions over the course of an additional week. These follow-up sessions are an essential part of the Program, providing support in terms of meaningful educational and job training opportunities, securing placement in an internship program, and in practicing non-violent conflict resolution with peers, parents, and employers. Participants receive training pay — minimum wage for each hour worked.

**Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)**

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) is Canada's largest mental health and addiction teaching hospital, as well as one of the world's leading research centres in the area of addiction and mental health. CAMH combines clinical care, research, education, policy development and health promotion to help transform the lives of people affected by mental health and addiction issues. The specific intervention of interest was the Substance Abuse Program for African Canadian and Caribbean Youth (SAPACCY). It was reported that African Canadian people may present with similar problems as the generic caseload but may also have problems related to their experience of discrimination. Hence, SAPACCY provides support and counselling to Black youth and their families who are dealing with problem substance use. Our programs include:

*Individual Therapy* - one on one therapy assist youth in reducing harm, moving toward recovery and making the best choices for themselves and their family.

*Group Therapy* - offer separate group therapy for youth and their parents.

*Early Intervention and Prevention* - we work with community groups across Toronto to teach them about the effects of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs on our bodies, our lives and our communities.

## Ministry of Community Safety and Corrections Services (CSCS)

There are a variety of programs and services available to inmates and offenders who are remanded or sentenced in correctional facilities, or who are under community supervision through Probation and Parole. Correctional programming is designed to assist offenders to correct or change behaviour related to their offending in order to hold them responsible for their behaviour and promote public safety.

Corrections offers four main types of programming intended to affect positive inmate and offender change:

*Life Skills programs* address a variety of healthy living needs in short, often single session programs. Life Skills are available at most institutions and many Probation and Parole offices and are delivered by ministry staff, contract agencies and/or volunteers.

*Rehabilitative programs* by design address criminal behaviour and factors that can contribute to re-offending. There are several levels of rehabilitative programs for each of the five areas above that respond to the inmate/offender’s level of risk, motivation, legal status and individual characteristics.

*Education and literacy programs e*ducational opportunities are available to inmates and offenders through a variety of partnerships that include but are not limited to, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Provincial Schools Authority, community colleges and school boards and community literacy organizations. Educational programs are delivered by teachers, continuing education instructors, literacy instructors and Ministry volunteer literacy tutors.

*Work programs* are intended to provide practical skills in a real life environment in order to assist inmates to prepare for return to the community. All Institutions provide “Work Programs” such as kitchen work, laundry, cleaning, grounds, etc. Some institutions provide “Industry Programs” such as auto/small engine, Cook chill, woodworking/carpentry, licence plate manufacturing, metal fabrication, textiles, etc. In addition to programs, in corrections also provide a variety of services to inmates to meet a range of basic needs including medical care, counselling, psychiatric, spiritual and religious care, recreation, crisis intervention, etc. Volunteers play an important role in providing various services as well.

**Redemption Reintegrative Services (RRS)**

Redemption and Reintegration Services (RRS) grew out of the community it serves, working to provide youth offenders with the programs and services they need to become skilled, active and engaged members of the community. RRS focuses on youth as assets to society, and works to increase resilience, capacity and agency among youth. RRS has become a leader in reintegration, demonstrating that their approach -- which gives youth ownership over themselves, creates a sense of community accountability and nurtures positive growth – works. Founded four years ago to address a gap in reintegration services for youth offenders, RRS seeks to tailor programs and services to the youth who come through its doors. These youth are connected both geographically to Scarborough and demographically with the African, Caribbean and South Asian communities. Given the over representation of African Canadians and ‘persons of colour’ in incarceration, RRS recognizes that, to transform this statistic, support and change must come through those with lived experiences who belong to the communities they serve.

##  Stage Two – feedback from interviews and group discussions:

‘While Canada embraces globalisation and romanticizes cultural diversity, there are persistent expressions of xenophobia and racial marginalisation that suggest a continuing political and cultural attachment to the concept of a white settler society. This unresolved tension is reflected not only in a racially segregated labour market and the subsequent unequal outcomes, but also in the quality of citizenship to which racialised group members can aspire. In recent years, racial and other forms of inequality have been exacerbated by the shift away from an activist role for governments, and towards a free market approach to social problems. This development raises questions about Canada’s commitment to the liberal democratic notion of equal citizenship as enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and to the international obligations under the various United Nations rights covenants and conventions.’

(Grace-Edwards Galabuzi 2001)

Within this section, we highlight a number of principles, which informed interventions for racialised groups in Toronto, Canada. However, prior to this, it is necessary to consider the context within which there emerged a need to develop specific interventions for racialised groups in Canada. Drawing upon our in-depth interviews with the host organisations and informed by secondary data analysis of government and academic papers, we unearth a number of structural challenges and contradictions, which have a profound impact upon racialised groups and young Black men in particular.

## The basis for specific interventions (the Canadian perspective)

From our interviews, there were was a remarkable similarity in the factors, which had a negative effect on racialised communities in Toronto, Canada. Firstly, we found there was a disproportionate school dropout rate for young Black men consistently cited as up to 48% for young Black children. It was notable that school dropout was attributed to a number of government policies enacted by (what our interviewees referred to as) an “ultra-conservative, ‘right-wing’ government”. In particular the enactment of the Safe Schools Act (2000), a zero-tolerance policy that introduced mandatory school suspensions for a number of behaviours, ranging from verbal abuse through to physical violence. This had the immediate effect of “African Canadian young people in particular being excluded at an alarming rate”. The Safe Schools Act was disparagingly also referred to as the ‘Gang Recruitment Act’ with community organisations and activists attributing this policy with the emergence of violent gangs within the Ontario district. For Margaret Parsons, ‘when these young people are at home, not engaged in education, they hang out on the corner. He wants to be part of something and that [Safe Schools Act] became the forerunner to the explosion of gangs in our communities, the explosion of guns.’

Secondly, and related to the above, Canada (similar to the England and Wales) has witnessed a number of criminal justice policies driven by “ideology rather than evidence.” For our interviewees this has resulted in the implementation of a range of mandatory sentences, which curtail the discretion of Judges. As a result, there has been an increase in the prison population where between the period of March 2003 and March 2013, the prison population in Canada has grown by 2,100 inmates representing a 16.5% increase.

Remarkably, this increase shows that the Aboriginal population grew by 46.4%, the ‘visible minority’ population (Black, Hispanic, Asian, East Indian and other ethnicities) increased by 75% over the same period.

Further, for the period between 2003 and 2013, the Black prison population grew by 90% whilst the Caucasian population actually declined by 3% over the same period. The over-representation of racialised groups within correctional facilities attest to what Margaret Parsons regard as anti-Black racism intrinsic to the policing of Black communities.

Third, respondents spoke to the over-policing of predominantly Black communities by the police. The interview with RRS highlighted the predominance of 72 policing zones in Black communities. Research by Jim Rankin and Betsy Powell (2008) points towards the notion of racial profiling which results in non-whites being ‘profiled’ or ‘engaged’ at 7/8 times more than their white counterparts. In relation to the wider correctional services, practitioners report that while Black people account for approximately 8-10% of the Greater Toronto Area, they represent approximately 30-40% of the Correctional Services caseload.

There was some attempt from interviewees to explain the racial disproportionality in Canada. At its core, the above shifts occurred within a political context of significant reductions in government funding for social and welfare services throughout the 1990s. These socio-economic changes were felt most acutely within urban areas and communities where approximately 75% of racialised groups live (Grace-Edward Galabuzi 2001:4). Further,

“There is a consistent demographic that are left behind, African Canadian youth, racialised youth, aboriginal youth, young people within rural areas and Franco youth. But in terms of African Canadian youth, it’s a tragedy what’s going on now. We’re not a large mass of the population in Canada, so for us to be overrepresented in the prison system is a tragedy. There’s a racialisation of poverty in Ontario, a lot of folks within the Black community are dealing with pervasive poverty...studies speak to the fact that there is a 29% income gap between Black folk and others in the province of Ontario. And also, the young guys you saw out there, many of them have [gang] tattoo’s so just imagine. You dropped out of high school, you have a criminal record, you have tattoos on your arms, your face, your neck, you’re a Black male. All those things increase unemployability exponentially. So it’s almost [naive] to think that some of these young people are able to succeed without some form of meaningful intervention”

[RRS]

It was within this context that a number of community organisations and activists converged to respond to the particular needs of African Canadian young men. It was expressed that there was a need for a model to work with those racialised groups who were coming out of incarceration. Groups acknowledged that “there were a lot of gaps as it related to substance abuse, housing, educational attainment, mental illness, the full gamut, a plethora of social ills.” As such, it was asserted that a ‘wraparound’ service delivery model designed to specifically work with racialised young people coming out of correctional facilitates was required.

## The principles of specific interventions

Throughout the research phase we were able to elicit a number of reoccurring concepts and themes that were presented to us as important when developing interventions for African Canadian young men. With this in mind, the following will highlight the five key principles to be considered in the development of interventions for young Black men subject to community supervision and intervention within England and Wales.

**Principle 1: Acknowledging institutionalised racialisation, differential treatment and racial disproportionality (from the individual to the structural)**

A central principle of CJS interventions for racialised groups is that any approach must acknowledge the experiences of racism, discrimination and (racial) disproportionality and how this may impact upon the individuals outlook and conception of self. Within the Canadian context there was a belief, that discrimination was driven by ‘anti-Black racism’ a term first coined by Stephen Lewis in a report responding to a number of fatal shootings of African Canadian men. Although contentious, anti-Black racism through his travels across the province,

“[I]t was young Black men who were in the jails, young Black men who were out of school, it was young Black men who were in the Criminal Justice System, in poor housing, high rates of unemployment and that was the result of anti-Black racism.”

The culmination of poor social conditions, reduced (legitimate) opportunities and increased levels of criminalisation for African Canadian’s was deemed so significant as to be included within the design of programmes of interventions. The practitioners we interviewed considered that it was essential to acknowledge the ‘everyday realities’ endured and experienced by young Black men. Fundamentally, the experience of racial discrimination or anti-Black racism may present as an inhibitor to engaging with processes of change, especially where interventions were delivered through the agencies of the criminal justice system. This principle is theoretically informed through the work of Prochaska and DiClemente’ s ‘cycle of change’ model (1982) which posits that some offenders may be held within a ***pre-contemplative*** *stage* of change. A pre-contemplative state means the offender is not yet ready to contemplate changes within life and are ‘ambivalent’ about their present circumstances. From our research, organisations and practitioners argued that the experience of anti-Black racism and institutionalised racialisation which acts as a barrier to engagement in processes of change. Further, these negative experiences increase anti-authority attitudes, particularly with reference to sentencers, police and probation practitioners.

A fundamental point of principle for Canadian correctional officers was that the referral of offenders to accredited group work programmes who ‘were not ready to change’ was immoral and “unethical”. Where the offender is not contemplating then there is no point in referring the individual through any process of change. It is within this context that our host organisations suggest that interventions therefore have to acknowledge the lived experiences and realities of racialised young men subjected to the justice system.

Similarly, previous studies have noted how the experience of racism can have a harmful impact upon the individuals ‘conception of self’ facilitating a negative self-image and self-concept (reference Robinson 1995). For Robinson (cited in Durrance and Williams 2003: 216),

‘[L]iving in a racist, white society, where blacks are viewed and treated as inferior and where they are in poverty in a powerless community leads blacks early in life to internalise negative beliefs and negative feelings about themselves and other blacks. [E]xposure to racism and oppression has damaged the black person’s psychological make-up and most probably is reflected in their conceptions of self.’

As early as 1995, Jeffers in a report for Inner London Probation Service (ILPS) found that ‘almost all Black offenders believed that racism was an important factor in their lives’.11 However, it is also evident that contemporary probation practice and associated assessment tools (eOAsys, OGRS, etc.) are not sensitive to the part that racism plays in the lives of young BME people who come into contact with the CJS.12 Arguably, low ‘motivation to change’ or poor attitudes to probation supervision may reflect the individual’s lack of trust or belief in the CJS. Unfortunately, such (negative) attitudes to supervision are likely to be misconstrued or assessed as problems with the individual rather than a consequence of the impact of inequality, discrimination and differential treatment endured by many young Black offenders.

##  Principle 2: ‘Knowledge of Self’ – towards self-development through empowerment

Related to the above principle, all programmes and interventions visited and observed advocated a clear focus on raising awareness of one’s identity. This principle can be enshrined within the simple quote that “you need to know where you’re coming from or literally you won’t be able to move forward in life.” As such, there emerges a focus on African Canadian people’s heritage and background. The principle adheres to the (re)affirmation of ‘spiritual values’, ‘culture’ and the individuals commitment to ‘community’, which it is argued is important to people of African Canadian descent. It is through ‘knowledge of self’ and self-empowerment approaches that participants can firstly deconstruct the negative stereotypes, attributes and experiences associated with young Black men and then reconstruct a positive self-concept through a (re)discovery of history, culture, social issues and self-identity. For our purposes empowerment approaches,

‘…must assist the individual in his/her understanding of the historical, social, economic and individual factors which have and will impact on the process of change, aid in the setting of realistic and achievable goals and assist in removing negative traits of behaviour. The individual must also be provided with an opportunity to identify strategies for coping with events that influence his/her lifestyle but for which he/she does not have ultimate control for change.’13

For Williams (2003), empowerment seeks to reduce the influence of pro-criminal attitudes by fostering the development of external social controls (positive regard for employment, training and education, strengthening family and community ties, acknowledgment of spiritual/religious values, appreciation and understanding of personal histories). Empowerment approaches therefore involve the development and application of skills based on culturally relevant ‘information sharing’ whilst centralising the importance of the ‘we’ rather than ‘I’. Critically, such approaches require that the individual look at their own situation from their own perspective to assist in the development of strategies to improve their personal and social situation.14 The empowerment model then is one

11 Durrance, P. and Williams, P. (2003), ‘Broadening the Agenda around What Works for Black and Asian Offenders’, Probation Journal, 50: 211–24.

12 ibid

13 Williams, P. (2013) Evaluation of the Yes You Can programme. Manchester: GMPT.

14 Durrance, P and Williams, P

strategy for facilitating change through assisting the individual to identify positive roles within their communities and their histories through which they can achieve status without offending.

Strategies include the (re)appropriation of historical and cultural artefacts, histories and stories from an Afro centric position. Further, such approaches seek to eliminate society imposed negative traits in behaviour by building and developing the personal assets of the individual/group. So for one interviewee,

‘For example, I dropped out of school at age 9, I had some serious issues with mathematics from grade 7. If I knew that my ancestor was Imhotep, a master mathematician who built more pyramids than anyone on the planet, I would have studied much harder at math. But I failed mathematics. I knew there were 28 grams in a ounce, 448 grams in a quarter pound, 2.2 pounds in a kilogram. I knew my other type of math based [on] my prolific [drug] work I was doing in the community. I could three bank shot on a pool table, I could hit a jump shot, I could hit a ball with the outside of my boot and make it spin like a banana. I was doing advanced trigonometry every day. I knew the amount of $20 bills, $1000 dollars in $20 bills, I knew how much that weighed on the scale. So I knew math very well in grade 8 and 9. But for some reason or another, I was unable to navigate the [education] institution.’

Approaches to empowerment seek to motivate and inform the participant by drawing strength from culturally and historically relevant information and experiences. In its simplest form, it is the acknowledgement of the contribution made by African people as a device to motivate young people to aspire and achieve. Further, the approach seeks to build positive ‘conceptions of self’ through an understanding of significant contributions and accomplishments made by significant racialised community members. Innovatively, the YJEP programme includes travel to an African country on a fact-finding visit. This would involve visits to sites of cultural and historical interest as a means of reshaping the young participant’s worldview and ‘knowledge of self’. To develop this further, a key component of the YJEP programme was their identity as African people.

‘To say to them, if you are from the diaspora, if you’re a diasporic African, given what our ancestors have been through, you are programmed to be successful. You are absolutely programmed to be successful and there is absolutely no reason why you shouldn’t be. In every way, in every way.

Similar sentiments emerged from our discussion with staff from RRS where they provided a culturally specific, Afro centric library and the delivery of empowerment sessions and programmes for young African Canadian people within the community. Such approaches, it was claimed, consolidated the development of positive constructs and knowledge of self.

##  Principle 3: Need, rather than risk, focussed

‘We identified through our research over the past three and a half years, engaging with our services a young person’s assets increased by 116%. And young people who went through [CJ] systems, solely the courts or engaged probation, (statutory) services in general, their assets decreased. Because they are engaging in a system that 9 times out of 10 looks at their risks. That is, focus on their deficits. Focussed on their lack of ability to navigate. For a young person who has had a hard time navigating their family, navigating youth shelters, navigating educational attainment or a job and then went into a correctional facility. What makes us think that

 they are going to come out and be able to navigate life? I think it’s just unproductive to just focus on folks risk

 and deficits.’ (RRS)

Risk management is the central driver of contemporary criminal justice practice in England and Wales. The oft-cited mantra that ‘resource follows risk’ dictates how CJ practice is funded, designed and delivered.

However, as stated within the above quote, a clear principle of the interventions developed for African Canadian people was the centralisation of the young person’s needs rather than the risk posed. Our earlier appraisal of the wider structural problems experienced by racialised groups point toward the prevalence of poor educational outcomes, the absence of legitimate (employment) opportunities, low financial support, substance misuse, mental health problems and low levels of wellbeing, the experience of inequality and marginalisation and the criminalisation of poverty. From our interviews, there was a belief that the CJS has an ‘asset stripping’ effect on those young people subjected to corrections. As a result, the focus on risk actually accentuates the very problems associated with offending behaviour and thereby inhibits the desistance process. As an example, one respondent noted how the Safe School Act (discussed earlier) resulted in a sharp increase in the numbers of young African Canadian people excluded from education. Yet still, once the young person was released from custody, their ‘risk status’ precluded their reintegration back into education. So, “a young man comes out of a jail and if his disclosures sticks, maybe its homicide, cocaine possession, a loaded firearm, whatever the case may be and [the education board] say “know what, we can’t take you.” On one level, it was claimed that this was a violation of the individual’s human rights. More significantly, the attribution of high-risk status reduced the opportunities and resources needed to facilitate the successful reintegration back into the community.

Contemporary constructions and responses to risk (and dangerousness) have seen the emergence of a series of inhibiting ‘punishing partnerships’15 introduced to manage the ‘risk’ of particular groups and individuals. Within England and Wales, such partnerships are designed in response to academically contested (and often racialised) discourses around the ‘gang’, radicalisation, Child Sexual Exploitation, etc., which legitimise the imposition of punitive and restrictive conditions on prisoner resettlement.16 Scholars from the USA and UK are developing the concept of ‘secondary punishment’ to describe this situation. This is where the offender label, licence release conditions (curfews, exclusion orders, surveillance and monitoring) imposed under the rubric of risk management and public protection within an environment of limited opportunities actually undermine and weaken the protective factors acknowledged as crucial for successful offender rehabilitation and desistance.

Therefore, our research advocated a focus upon ‘needs’ rather than risk. This required an acknowledgement of the strengths, assets, coping mechanisms and resilience of the young person.

‘You come into a correctional facility and you got caught with a nine pack of cocaine. Nine times out of ten, you got a network, whether it be sophisticated or not. And we’re using cell phones and we’re using text messaging - so that’s data entry. We’re connecting with people, interpersonal skills. We’re actually selling and pitching a product. We’re actually buying our product and looking at our profit margin. Those are skills sets. Those skills are transferable.

Where interventions recognised the skills and qualities of participants and support young people in a pro-social and empowering manner, then the likelihood of success was increased. For example,

15 Tufail, W. (2013) *'Partnership policing' in three marginalised communities: an ethnographic study*. PhD Thesis, University of Salford.

16 Smithson, H., Ralphs, R. and Williams, P. *‘Used and Abused: the problematic usage of gang terminology in the United Kingdom and its implications for ethnic minority youth’*. British Journal of Criminology. DOI: 10.1093/bjc/azs046

[W]e have amazing testimonies – a guy who got arrested for serious coke possession, came out and started a clothing line. That’s a clothing line, which was started right here in this space by young people who were in trouble. There’s a brother who runs a take-out grocery service. This brother has 84 clients, just in this neighbourhood in Scarborough. You know why? When he came out he said “I don’t want a desk job, I used to drive around all the time making [drug] drops, I like being in my car” – start a takeout grocery service. They now make between $4,000 and $6,000 per month through a legitimate business. And we helped them for the first time with their tax return.’

##  Principle 4: Being paid to change

Controversially, the majority of interventions and programmes observed in Toronto paid ‘a salary’ to programme participants as part of their involvement with the programmes. From our perspective, this marked a significant departure from the provision of group work interventions within England and Wales. Of the five projects that we visited, four made payments to participants. In response to the question, ‘how do you justify paying offenders to participate in group work programmes? The response was ‘we pay for these individuals anyway’. This statement reflects a consistent acknowledgement across the organisations as illustrated below.

‘We’re all bearing this load as it relates to young people who are incarcerated. They come out [of prison] a lot of them are on social assistance…taxpayers pay for that. We pay $2.6 billion incarcerating folks. In 2008, it used to cost $88,000 to house an inmate; right now, it cost $116,000. It cost $325 a day to house a male, $588 to house a female. This is a lot of money and we as taxpayers are bearing this load. If we can get folks into employment, it broadens the tax based and costs less.’

Specifically, the Youth Justice Education Programme (YJEP) made payments of $30,000 per annum to their “employees” as part of their three-year programme. The adoption of ‘employees’ as the title for offenders undertaking the programme again signals the organisations values and the empowering principles of deconstructing the negative label of ‘offender’ toward the more positive title of ‘employee’. The simplistic change in the label attributed to the offender would have a favourable impact upon programme participants and is an approach that would be endorsed by contemporary desistance theorists (Maruna 2001). In relation to YJEP, the programme means that employees are paid, “they get a steady income, they get health benefits, they get vacation. So they are a part of the company, they are employees and are afforded the benefits of all employees. In essence, “they are being paid to work on themselves.” To elaborate further,

“This to me is better for society. This makes society safer and healthier. At the end of the day its poverty and money that’s driving their criminal activity. When you look at where they come from, the homes they come from…I mean we had one young man on the programme who until he started working and getting paid, he had never slept on a bed. He didn’t have a bed. He finally bought a bed when he got his pay. And that’s the extent to which this family was poor, living in a rich country like Canada. And to me that’s unacceptable.”

In addition,

“The key features of such programmes are income stability and housing stability. You cannot get somebody to focus on changing themselves until they know, I know, where I’m going to sleep tonight and know what I’m going to eat tonight and how I’m going to pay my rent, have money to take care of myself. So that takes away a major worry of theirs. Then, you get them to focus. So those were some of the features of the programme that were very important, and I think that’s part of the success of the programme”

It is worthy of note that payments for programme participation was not used simplistically as a strategy for engagement and motivation, but as a means through which to build financial literacy with participants. ‘Employees’ are required to budget, open bank accounts, devise spending plans and account for their money management. To develop this further, as employees they were required to purchase suits, to attend team meetings, to attend conferences, to engage with educational mentors, etc. The ultimate aspiration of the programme was for programme participants to attain a degree. For the programme manager, “they can become whatever they want to be. However, if they want to be Plummer, they are going to be a Plummer with a degree.”

‘Getting paid’ then was a crucial element of the YJEP programme where many of the programme participants had never been in paid employment and were unfamiliar with the financial responsibility of a regular salary. More importantly, payment facilitated a purer (less coercive) engagement with the core objectives of the programme by eliminating what was regarded as the central problem (need area) experienced by programme participants, that of poverty.

##  Principle 5: Interventions delivered by non-statutory organisations and charities

“We’re still not there…in terms of formalised systems and programming to specifically target the cultural nuance of the challenge that young Black men face in terms of the criminal justice system and even in terms of some of the social conditions and personal conditions that contribute to their offending patterns. It’s not there.”

(Senior Correctional Officer)

In discussion with Correctional Officers of Ontario Correction Services, practitioners began to highlight a number of barriers that inhibit successfully intervening with young Black people. Related to the above principles there was a belief that some correctional officers were still unable to consider the wider implications and impact of racism and discrimination for racialised groups subject to correctional services.

“It comes back to the individual probation officer, their level of cultural sensitivity or cultural competence to say, I see what I have in front of me, where do I need to refer them, how do I push them knowing that things are different. For me, it’s an acknowledgement that racism exists in society. That acknowledgment is not always there. So, if you can’t acknowledge that, how can you move beyond.”

(Senior Correctional Officer)

In addition to this, practitioners highlight the intrinsic Eurocentric basis of the available suite of group work interventions currently used within the correctional agencies. Related to the above, there was a question regarding the applicability of such accredited programmes to respond to young Black people. So for our interviewee,

“There also has to be an acknowledgement that we are still pushing Eurocentric programming. So for Black, Brown or Asian people, if you don’t understand that [they’re] pissed off or angry about racism, how you gonna give [them an] anger management programme when we haven’t dealt with the substantial issue, which in my mind a lot of things can flow from? How can I cope and how can you (as a probation officer) give me that, when you haven’t had to cope with my reality. And then to compound that, because your mind isn’t open enough, because you’re on probation, here’s the programmes, here’s your assessment, here’s where I’m putting you, this is what I’m going to do in terms of motivating, intervening, holding you to account.”

For RRS, acknowledging the ‘lived reality’ of people subjected to correctional services was crucial in responding to the needs of racialised communities. As such, their services were defined as coming from a ‘lived experience’ able to understand and respond to the young person under supervision.

“we have a strong lived experience here. Our model is birthed out of lived experience, so I grew up in Scarborough, I lost a lot of friends (to gang violence), I’m 29 years old now and I’ve lost 33 friends. I don’t live in a war torn country, I live in Canada, the land of milk and honey… thirty three friends in the grave.”

Clearly, non-statutory organisations are not constrained by organisational priorities, which resulted in the provision of a more holistic engagement with the broader needs of racialised groups. This was reflected through the comments made by participants of the organisations we interviewed. For Margaret Parsons,

“We have what is known as ‘knowledge of self’ programmes and all our programmes are based in African- centred practices. So we have rites of passage programmes, we have an anger management programme, that says look, Black folks have a right to be angry, but you got to learn how to manage your anger.”

Further, the non-statutory organisation interviewed as part of this project centralise the delivery of interventions from those who have a ‘lived experience’ of racism and discrimination, an understanding of processes of criminalisation and clearly, an acknowledgement of the wider structural inequalities experienced and endured by racialised groups and communities in Toronto.

Compounding the problems of a lack of cultural awareness or competence by statutory practitioners and the Eurocentric nature of accredited group work interventions was that practitioners were driven by the priorities and obligations of offender management. Controversially, it was suggested that there was a lack of commitment from senior management to respond to the reality of racism and discrimination in the CJS and that some white practitioners may ‘sabotage’ initiatives designed to respond to racialised groups.

“We haven’t got that pronouncement from the top. [For probation] there’s been challenges, where the CO [correctional officers] are putting up blocks and starting their bullshit and the rest of the stuff around why it shouldn’t happen. Doing things (in my mind) to subtly sabotage it, like encouraging white offenders to go, this programme’s not for white offenders. Just acknowledge there’s a difference between me and white offenders.”

In considering the precise barriers to responding to the personal, social and criminogenic needs of Black people on probation, correctional officers remarked at the predominance of objectives and priorities, which drive correctional services and practice. Therefore there was a discussion that culturally responsive practices are not enshrined within probation policy and practice and this therefore acts as a barrier to engagement where rather than responding to the needs of the offender, practitioners can deny responsibility by simply stating “I’m following policy”.

Finally, the YJEP programme by ACLC was delivery as a three-year intensive programme where participants were required to attend every day. As stated above, programme participants were referred to as ‘employees’ of the organisation. It was disclosed by ACLC that “we’re going to work with high-risk offenders for no less than three years because that’s the time we feel you need to change people’s behaviour, attitudes, their thinking.” This declaration to funders was that if they were unwilling to fund such a project, then they should “leave us [the organisation] alone.” Within a UK context, it is perhaps inconceivable that a group work programme could be delivered over a three-year period. Notably, at the time of interview, the YJEP programme was delivered in a voluntary capacity, designed for eight participants.

Remarkably, there was a list with approximately 300 young people waiting to enrol on the YJEP programme. This finding is a testament to the desirability of group work programmes and interventions that specifically seek to respond and alleviate the needs of young Black men.

The above findings that some practitioners have a lack of cultural awareness/competence, the inappropriateness of current accredited programmes for racialised groups and the continuing ‘silence’ from correctional services on the issue of racism, discrimination and disproportionality all indicate that the probation service cannot be the (organisational) site to appropriately respond to the needs of young Black offenders.

Taken together, this study points towards a series of important principles, which it is, argued are essential for informing how criminal justice agencies should respond to Black and Asian offenders who are subject to community supervision. The following section will consider the extent to which such principles can be incorporated into a practice delivery model for England and Wales.

# Discussion and Conclusion

‘It is impossible to accept that group work which gives scant attention to race as a cultural factor is seriously addressing the real experiences and consequent needs of black offenders and, in light of the considerable over- representation of black offenders in the criminal justice system, this finding is painfully ironic. The existence or non-existence of such groups conveys something important about the services attention to anti-discriminatory practice and about its approach to offenders generally.’17

The probation service of England and Wales has undergone a major restructure under the Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) agenda. This process has resulted in the outsourcing of probation practice to a range of private, voluntary and charitable (VCS) and statutory organisations in the delivery of services to offenders. We have therefore witnessed the implementation of a National Probation Service responsible for the management of high-risk offenders and the creation of 21 Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) responsible for the management of low and medium risk offenders. It is notable however that there does not appear to be a clear commitment to respond to those offender populations who historically have been over-represented or differentially treated within the CJS. This is further problematic where we consider that the Secretary of State has made no commitment to undertake an Equalities Impact Assessment to consider the impact of the changes for minority groups. Within the MOJ NOMS Commissioning Intentions (2014) document, although there is some acknowledgement of a requirement to respond to the protected status enshrined within the Equality Act (2010) it appears that responding to diversity and difference will be capture through the responsivity styles of probation practice and interventions.18 The Young Review has noted that there are clear gaps in the TR proposals, which do not place a statutory obligation on CRCs to respond to the perennial, but specific needs of BME young people. Clearly then the opportunity to implement interventions that acknowledge the aforementioned principles will be contingent upon individual CRCs commitment to respond to the needs of young BAME people. It is noteworthy that the desistance literature posits that ‘making a real difference requires tailored and specialised responses from providers, with a lot of experience supporting people in those groups, often helpfully rooted in the community.’19

Still, despite the recent restructure of the probation service, contemporary practice is still informed by the evidence-base developed in the mid-1990s. One of the contentious aspects of this evidence based was its reliance on cognitive behaviourism as the central theoretical driver of the effective practice.20 Effective practice was notably conceptualised through the Risk, Needs and Responsivity (RNR) model, which posits that interventions should be designed and developed upon a clear theory base, which are effective in reducing the likelihood of future offending behaviour. At its core then, the ‘risk’ principle suggests that offenders, who pose a higher risk of reoffending, then interventions should be of a higher intensity and duration and conversely lower risk offenders should receive less intensive interventions. Secondly, effective practice is realised through adherence to the ‘need’ principle, which states that supervision and interventions should be based upon those needs that

17 Caddick, B. (1993) ‘Using groups in working with offenders: a survey of group work in the probation services of England and Wales’. In A. Brown and B. Caddick (eds) Group work with Offenders. London: Whiting and Birch.

18 Ministry of Justice (2014) NOMS Commissioning Intentions 2014. London: MOJ. <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/about/noms/commissioning-intentions-2014.pdf>

19 Clinks <http://www.clinks.org/community/blog-posts/tr-so-far-4-will-it-ensure-suitable-services-all>

20 Durrance, P. and Williams, p. (2003)

are associated with offending behaviour – criminogenic needs. Where interventions address criminogenic needs then this will directly influence pro-social behaviour and lead to a reduction in future offending. Finally, the ‘responsivity’ principle alludes to the matching of interventions to learning and delivery styles that encourage and maximise the active participation of the offender.

However, a number of dissenting voices have challenged the predominance of this approach. Writing in 2003, Durrance and Williams raised questions around the applicability of the theory base for Black and Asian offenders and specifically the theoretical reliance upon an individualistic basis of offending behaviour. That is, offending behaviour emerges because of cognitive deficits that arise through poor socialisation processes and the learning and inculcation of pro-criminal attitudes from one assumes criminogenic environments. Probation practitioners from Canada alluded to the Eurocentric nature of the evidence base and recognised its limited applicability to Black and Asian offenders. Approaches that do not acknowledgement the wider structural and social dimensions of offending behaviour will limit the effectiveness of probation-accredited programming. Indeed, where interventions do not consider the role that structural racism plays in the development of offending identities then such programmes cannot be deemed to respond to the needs of young BME offenders.

In relation to the above, contemporary practice is driven by the sentencing aim of protecting the public within a discourse of risk (of harm). Where the management of risk (of harm) is centralised as the main aim of probation interventions, then our findings suggest that paradoxically, this is likely to have a negative effect on desistance and will inhibit risk reduction, serving only to ‘contain’ the risk. In a valuable report written for London Probation Trust, IARS identified that ‘probation reports and assessments will become a lot more successful in achieving desistence if they were focused less on managing risks and more on identifying and nurturing individual talents.’21 For us, building the assets and talents of people on probation, through an empowerment approach, responsive to the needs of young people is more likely to have appreciable impact upon ‘risk’ reduction rather than the containment and exclusionary strategies, which damage those protective factors associated with desistance.

The findings from this study and the emergence of a set of principles to inform approaches for working with Black and Asian offenders can only be realised where there is a commitment by the commissioners of services and CRCs to fulfil the key probation aim of facilitating the rehabilitation of people on probation. Again, there is some hope that the reconfiguration of probation services for offenders may offer an opportunity for innovation in responding to historical racial disproportionality in the CJS.

An important principle to emerge from our study was that interventions should be delivered outside of probation practice. Were this principle is to be upheld, it would be necessary to build relationships with community-based organisations that have a ‘lived experience’ and are able to work with an understanding of the young BME offenders’ reality. Crucially, such VCS organisations should be funded to work with young BME offenders, particularly with reference to developing legitimate opportunities. The principles highlighted above should be funded to include ‘personalisation budgets’ which have been incorporated into a number of ‘through the gate’ projects

21 Gavrielides, T. and Blake, S. (2013) Race in Probation: Achieving better outcomes for black and minority ethnic users of probation services. London: IARS Publications.

within Greater Manchester and the Northwest. Such models will ensure the provision of financial budgets to support the aspirations of young Black people under supervision.

In advocating for alternative interventions for BME offenders, a key principle to emerge from our findings was the centrality of empowerment and self-development approaches. Empowerment approaches are not new to programme interventions within England and Wales and findings from a number of evaluation studies point toward some success in the ‘motivation and engagement’ of programme participants. Most recently, the evaluation of the ‘Yes You Can’ programme delivered through the IAC project, GMPT, highlighted the positive feedback from programme participants.

Clearly, where CRCs are motivated, interventions should incorporate and respond to the aforementioned principles identified from our research. At its core, it is only through an empowerment approach, which is aware of the experiences of young BME people that we can effectively intervene to facilitate desistance.

In conclusion, interventions for young BME people must recognise and respond to the (personal, historical, cultural and offending) identities of young Black people. Second, approaches which do not provide legitimate opportunities, may frustrate those offenders who continuously see their opportunities blocked. Therefore approaches should inform young BME people of their obligations and responsibilities and support offenders to recognise their accountability. Finally, such approaches will invest in building resilience within young BME people subjected to supervision.

# Conclusion

This report highlights that the needs of BME young men are distinct and different to those of others, and as such there is an argument for different treatment by CRCs and the NPS. This can only be delivered through specific interventions and resources that meet and indeed recognise those needs. Currently there is a starting point for working with this cohort of offenders by way of the ‘Yes You Can’ workshop. It offers a sound base for developing future work with BME young men that recognises the changing offender management landscape - in terms of utilising and working collaboratively with community-based organisations to meet the needs of BME young men. Further development and structuring of that intervention alongside partner organisations will meet the needs of this cohort of offenders, whilst embracing the new ideas of working collaboratively with community-based organisations to address (criminogenic) need. In order to meet the above aspirations we propose a number of recommendations and future actions.

## A review of the Yes You Can Workshop Manual to inform the development of that intervention so it can be delivered to all 18 – 25 year old men within CGM CRC.

The review will need to look at the current manual and any additions to that taking into account the findings from the research report following the previous delivery of Yes You Can within the IAC. The review will also need to consider some of the key learning points raised in this report arising out of the study visit to Toronto, Canada in particular the YJEP Programme and how they can be implemented within Yes You Can. In particular the relevance of an African-centred approach within the delivery.

The possibility of delivery of the Yes You Can programme within a community based locality by a preferred organisation

## Explore relevant community-based organisations that can work with CRC CGM and alongside ‘Yes You Can’ to support and nurture individuals within a community based locality, giving access to community interventions and services.

1. **Align Yes You Can with a relevant community based organisation that will foster and develop the skills explored within Yes You Can and offer a continued ‘journey’ for the young person focusing on skills such as education, employment, and financial management**
2. **Explore using Yes You Can for the Through The Gate (TTG) cohort of offenders specifically 18 – 25 year old BME young men within the city of Manchester**
3. **Developing and utilising community based mentors alongside the delivery of Yes You Can through the supervision element to which the TTG cohort will be subject.**



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