



The London Borough of Newham

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# **Relationship Between Black Boys and the Borough**

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*Report*

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by The London Borough of Newham

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## Foreword

This is the first report arising from an in-depth scrutiny review of how the Council and its partner agencies can improve the lives of Black boys and young Black men in the borough. The review is part of Scrutiny's commitment to ensure equality and opportunities for Newham's residents.



Newham's Young People's Charter pledges to celebrate diversity and ensure that all young people can reach the best of their abilities, ensure equal participation and remove all stigma and discrimination wherever it can be seen. The Mayor's vision is that all young people in Newham should be able to fulfil their potential. Unfortunately, the research, data and lived experience shows that Black boys often are not able to reach their potential or enjoy positive outcomes when compared with their peers from other ethnicities. The Scrutiny Commission therefore aims via this inquiry to support the Council's ambition to create fairer, inclusive communities where every individual has the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

This Commission was set up to examine Black boys relationship with the Borough, in particular as it relates to the social, political, criminal justice, economic, health, educational attainment and other relevant social policy dimensions impacting on or shaping this relationship. The routes of underachievement within the Black community and its boys are a result of structural poverty, class and environment; which are all areas where the Council has a focus and sphere of control and influence. However, its levers are education, social care and youth justice.

The Scrutiny Commission recognises the persistent challenges faced by Black boys and young Black men in areas such as education, social integration, economic wellbeing, and health. The Commission will use evidence to identify what more the Council can do to address the disparities and improve the lives of these residents by developing strong recommendations to deliver tangible change.

I have long been concerned that the narrative on Black boys has not changed since I came to the UK in the 1980s. The establishment of this Commission met with some resistance and since then our work has been stymied at various levels within the Council. It beggars the question that if this is my experience, what is the reality for the boys who do not have an amplified voice as does the Commission. What is it that stops us from moving and acting quickly? This report has highlighted the need for structures and systems to be addressed urgently and will form a key part of the next phase of this Inquiry.

It is always about *under* achievement in areas such as educational attainment, social and economic wellbeing and *overrepresentation* in the criminal justice system and mental health issues and arguably these are seemingly the accepted norms by some. For far too long the establishment has used table tennis and DJ mixing

classes as a sticking plaster for the issues we see today. Perhaps, it works for a minority, but what we need is systemic change.

This Commission is committed to listening, learning, understanding the specific needs and aspirations and prioritising the voices of Black youths, their families, and community organisations that support them, via recommendations to the Executive. To this end, the Commission urges the Executive to proactively work to tackle disparities faced by these groups by creating a responsive, inclusive, and supportive environment for them to thrive.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony McAlmont". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'T'.

**Councillor Anthony McAlmont**  
**Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

## Executive Summary

This report highlights the need to act now. Over the last 40 years generations of young Black boys and men have continued to experience significant challenges than their peers. This begins early within their home and the experience of poverty to significant impacts on their mental health in later years. As well addressing critical life stages in these young men's lives, we also need to consider the great divide that must be bridged with an improvement in the relationships between young Black boys and men and the police and local authorities.

Systemic and structural challenges in relation to these young people have not only existed over a long period of time but they run deep and have become embedded into a negative narrative in our society. The solutions to this must lie in what we do – the action moving forwards but also in addressing the things that we should stop doing. This is part of having difficult conversations to break with the old and navigate into the new.

This Commission invites our communities, councillors, the council and key stakeholders to join us in the next stage of this Inquiry. This will involve further evidence gathering, engagement and collaborative exercises. This will look and feel different to conventional engagement as we breakthrough into new areas of collaboration. We will be using the methods of corporate, global companies in developing transformative scenarios and applying the principles of social justice. This collaboration will enable a deep listening exercise that both identifies and challenges systemic and structural inequality.

A key part of this is for the council to provide strong leadership in this area as some of these recommendations echo the result of other previous work. That is why the recommendations ask for a consideration of the wider complex factors at play. This includes a high turnover of staff and the impact of training people who go on to leave the organisation - leaving a gap in knowledge and skills. We must also consider resources and funding for key areas not just for the recommendations contained here but other areas that need to function well at a structural level for these recommendations to be effective.

This report and recommendations urge a consistent, well-resourced approach that has clear leadership across the Council. It means demonstrating organisational accountability in decision making, where resources are attached, as well as including the lived experience of our communities in this process. It also means being able to clearly define opportunities for external accountability and demonstrate how this has impacted and changed the way we work and think.

As you read these lines and start to engage and decide on our recommendations, we ask you to pause and reflect. We have this moment in time to act quickly for these young men and boys. This report highlights the need to act now and is sounding a call to action. We cannot simply go back to business as usual; it is

important respond to the alarming trends and patterns identified in this report will deepen further and become more entrenched and embedded.

We must work to turn the tide, keep trying new ways and experiment so that we can look back and say – *we chose to act*, do something different, work across party lines, council silos, challenge organisational culture and even overcome indifference.

We risk the areas identified in this report becoming an issue of national concern. We appeal for you to imagine with us a different and surprising news report or article. It is the opposite of what we have believed for so long and conditioned to think could never change. In moving into the realm of the imagination we are in an unexplored and often unlikely place where we can see change manifesting for these young boys and men. It is a place where every young Black boy or man is fulfilling their potential.

We know about the power of mentorship to encourage healthier relationships, and lifestyles. We know that it builds confidence and self-esteem as well as encouraging young people to think more positively about school and further or higher education. The power to shape and influence personal choices through mentorship is something that we need to do more of to reach more young Black youth.

But there are also things that need to stop, to be prevented and dismantled and taken down. Before we can do this, we need to understand what oppression looks like in all of its forms, and speak truth to power collectively together with these young boys and men. We cannot do this without them. For this reason, we have chosen a collaborative approach in the next phase of our work that will take us into the realm of imagination, connecting in new ways and building a map to take us into the future. It is time to invest in the solutions and not the problems.

## **Membership of the Scrutiny Commission**

The members of the Relationship Between Black Boys and the Borough Scrutiny Commission are:

- ❖ Councillor Anthony McAlmont - Chair
- ❖ Councillor Belgica Guana
- ❖ Councillor Harvinder Singh Virdee
- ❖ Councillor Lakmini Shah
- ❖ Councillor Lester Hudson
- ❖ Councillor Susan Masters
- ❖ Councillor Danny Keeling
- ❖ Councillor Lewis Godfrey
- ❖ Councillor Terence Paul
- ❖ Mr Paul Leslie (Co-opted member).

## **Recommendations**

### **Recommendation One: A Plan for Action**

**That an action plan be developed on how Newham Council will address systemic and structural inequality across the organisation to include the status of current interventions across the Council and identification of areas for improvement. This should include the people and departments accountable for implementation, clear milestones, resources and quantifiable outputs and outcomes and impact assessment, including mechanisms for external assessment and accountability.**

**This should be produced within the next 12 months.**

### **Recommendation Two: Community Leadership**

**That a community action plan be developed on how Newham Council and local partner agencies, including key voluntary sector organisations, will address systemic and structural inequality across the Borough, to include the status of current programmes and across Newham and identification of areas for improvement. This should include the people and organisations accountable for implementation, clear milestones, resources and quantifiable outputs and outcomes and impact assessment, including mechanisms for external assessment and accountability.**

**This should be produced within the next 12 months.**

### **Recommendation Three: Targeting Progress Towards Equality**

**That the Council review its Equality Monitoring processes, including the process, approvals and sign off, training quality assurance and timescales. This should include an action plan addressing any areas for completion, training, risks and mitigations.**

**This should be produced within the next six months.**

### **Recommendation Four: Using Lived Experience to Inform Policy**

**That assessment be carried out of the whole council's service data referenced against protected characteristics and linkages to council policies and decisions. This should be used to inform the decision making processes and shared with key stakeholders to help influence and encourage collective change.**

**This should be produced within the next six months.**

## **Recommendation Five: Newham Safeguarding Children's Partnership**

**That Newham Council request that the Newham Safeguarding Children's partnership produce a measurable action plan with outcome metrics, to reduce the disproportionality and disparity of Black boys in educational exclusion, child protection planning, care and the criminal justice system so that it is in line with the general population of Newham.**

**This plan to be provided within 6 months and approved at Full Council within 12 months.**

## **Recommendation Six: Preventing School Exclusions**

**To review and build on existing support provided by the council's education service to identify further areas of information, awareness raising and options for intervention. The review should consider areas such as the timing of support, accessibility of support, measures to educate parents, language barriers and accessing system wide support.**

**This should be completed within the next six months.**

## **Recommendation Seven: School Behaviour Policies**

**To review School Behaviour policies and their implementation in Newham. This should include the implementation approach, quality of the training and measures and responses of the schools where these are challenged.**

**This should be completed by September 2025.**

## **Recommendation Eight: Engaging on Community Safety Strategies**

**That a review of community safety strategies be carried out, building an approach which engages directly with young Black boys and men. The review should work to understand structural and systemic inequality and build trust and confidence with young people and organisations seeking to support them. This should include Newham taking part in the London wide Stop and Search project with the police as part of early intervention and prevention.**

**This should be completed within the next six months.**

## **Recommendation Nine: Stretch Collaboration**

**That Stretch Collaboration workshops be carried out through Transformative Facilitation and the building of Transformative Scenarios to facilitate collaboration between young Black boys and men and senior leaders of key institutions including the Council and leaders from across nearly every area of society, such as police, health, education, employment and business.**

**This should be completed within the next six months.**

### **Recommendation Ten: Mapping Opportunities**

**That opportunities for engagement with Black young men and boys be mapped and publicised, inviting participation from residents and communities to be involved in external scrutiny including internal and external partnerships or forums.**

**This should be completed within the next six months.**

### **Recommendation Eleven: Trauma Responsive Training**

**Identify and deliver trauma responsive training for all staff, in the next six months. This will enable a people focussed approach and leadership at all levels in tackling structural and systemic inequality. This could include extending the existing training delivered by Public Health or making it available as a requirement.**

**This should be undertaken within the next six months.**

### **Recommendation Twelve: Black Youth Voices**

**We endorse the Rights and Equalities in Newham Survey recommendation: Collate Black youth voices and experiences into one coherent strategy, embedded into the council's work plan each year, with external scrutiny to evaluate effectiveness and success, and identify gaps and areas for improvement.**

**This should be completed within the next six months.**

### **Recommendation Thirteen: Black Boys and Young Men Working Group**

**That a working group be established of young Black boys and men, community leaders, business leaders and Council colleagues to help inform Council and community policy and service delivery, including young people with care experience, education, youth justice and community safety, to work alongside experts to develop opportunities outside of current and traditional pathways.**

**This should be produced within the next six months.**

## Introduction



*Evidence gathering session on 5th March 2024 at East Ham Town Hall.*

***“It is what it is for now but it can be changed...”***

1.1 Newham’s [Young People’s Charter](#) pledges to celebrate diversity and ensure that all young people can reach the best of their abilities, ensure equal participation and remove all stigma and discrimination wherever it can be seen. Every child in Newham should be able to fulfil his or her potential. Research shows that because of systemic and structural racism Black and Global Majority boys fare less well than their white peers and this has been seen across a range of issues, including their levels of employment, educational achievement, interactions with youth justice, overrepresentation in the criminal justice and mental health systems. In many areas of society Black boys and young men are negatively overrepresented or negatively underrepresented.

*Our approach:*

1.2 The intentional approach of this Inquiry has been:

**Non-linear** (changing its approach and not always following one stage to another- this enables us to challenge our own thinking).

**Iterative** (cycling back after progress to its original purpose and adapting and changing to drive improvement).

**Emergent** (listening and responding to witnesses and the lived experience of young Black boys and men to help us consider experiences beyond the data and the negative impact of structures and systems).

*Phase one - Evidence gathering and early recommendations*

- 1.3 In this phase we considered the following evidence from key witnesses including young Black boys and men. We considered best practice and national evidence and how we could move forward tackling structural and systemic inequality and build greater equity.
- 1.4 Our borough is socially and culturally diverse. In the 2021 census just under 70% of our residents are from ethnically diverse communities, with 17.5% identifying as a person of African or Caribbean heritage and 2.1% identifying as a person with mixed Black African or Caribbean heritage. There are 120,728 children and young people (under 25 years old) living in the borough. Of those, 23,878 are of Black, African, Caribbean, or mixed heritage and male making up 20% of Newham's child and youth population.
- 1.5 We examined the Young Review (2014) which focused on improving outcomes for young Black and/or Muslim men in the criminal justice system. Alongside this we looked at work undertaken on Improving Outcomes for Young Black Men by London Councils in 2016. This initiative aimed to develop partnerships with local voluntary and community sector organisations to help deliver better outcomes for young Black men. We considered the Lammy Review (2017), which was an independent review into the treatment and outcomes for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system.
- 1.6 We reviewed the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (LIIA's) disproportionality information, data and report in September 2020. These highlighted key areas of concern and influenced the design of our approach. The following year the government released its report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities in March 2021 which focussed on key areas of education, employment, crime and policing, health, and care and the economy.
- 1.7 We thought the good practice case studies in the March 2021 report of the London Councils 'Tackling disproportionality in the criminal justice system: schools', reflected our experiences in Newham, in our youth justice system, schools and criminal justice system. We were further supported by the work of our school governors and others to help us better understand how our plans are being implemented. The Year of the Young Person in 2021 also helped to respond to the lived experience and concerns of young people in relation to racism, inequality, and disproportionality in schools and in the community.

- 1.8 We also considered the Hackney - Improving Outcomes for Young Black Men - Hackney Council (2018-2022): This ambitious plan, was developed by the Hackney Community and Voluntary Services, the Council and local agencies to improve life chances for young Black men aged 18-25 years and provide support and opportunities for them.
- 1.9 This Scrutiny Inquiry was re-established in 2024 to pick up on the work previously carried out by Newham scrutiny committees on this issue. We have provided this report and recommendations as a call for action to galvanise cross sectoral work through Newham Council and in collaboration with other community agencies. We would like to join up and focus work already being done and also to engage with young people and the community on making sure approaches are effective and relate to young people in the real world.
- 1.10 This is not intended to be the end of our work in scrutiny on this issue, but rather the instigation of work by the Council and community partners, as well as further work by Newham's Overview and Scrutiny committees into 2024. This report is intended as a first report to be followed up with further oversight and collaborative scrutiny on this issue and a second report later in 2024.
- 1.11 In the meantime, this report sets out 13 recommendations to the Executive to take the lead on strategic challenge and change to improve outcomes for Black boys and young men and set the scene for further specific actions based on evidence from our community and Black boys and young men in particular.

In phase one our early recommendations will focus on:

- Structural and systemic inequality- Embracing complexity
- Voice, Connection & Relationships - Breakthrough Collaboration
- Building Equity – Opening New Pathways

#### *Phase two – Stretch Collaboration and Transformative Scenario Building*

1.12 In this phase we will continue to gather evidence and hear from people across the system. We will implement a new approach to transform lives through the principles of Power, Love and Justice. This will involve collaborative exercises using a whole systems approach with key stakeholders including the police, senior leadership of the Council, faith organisations, community and voluntary sector as well as employment and business. In this phase we will have a focus on key areas such as social care, health, housing and other wider determinants.

#### *Phase three - Final report and recommendations*

1.13 The last phase of this Inquiry will involve a final report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet later this year. This will include the findings of the

Stretch Collaboration and Transformative Scenario Building exercises and a final set of recommendations to tackle structural and systemic inequality and build greater equity.

## Phase One – Evidence gathering and early recommendations

### Section 2: What does the data tell us?

#### Gathering evidence - work across the council

Here are some of the key areas:

##### Tackling Inequality, Racism and disproportionality Programme

2.1 This is an ambitious programme focussing on four key themes:

- Newham as an employer
- Newham as a beacon of social change
- Newham as the best place for children and young people
- Newham as a deliverer & commissioners of service

While the programme focussed on tackling inequality for all communities it has a focus on young people with a key objective to help make Newham the best place for children and young people.

##### Newham Council Children Overrepresented Pathfinder Project 2020-2023

2.2 This project provided a support package to Black, Asian and other overrepresented children dealing with trauma experienced from Adverse Childhood Experiences during the pandemic. It helped prevent young people becoming involved in the justice system and shared the learning to help other work in Newham.

##### Disproportionality Challenge Fund

2.3 This programme helped to tackle disproportionality in the Youth Justice System for Black males aged 10-24 who are at risk of entering the youth justice system, children known to youth justice services, 18-24 years olds known to probation and children known to local schools at risk of entering the youth justice system. It creates safe spaces for young Black children to consider their experiences, works with positive Black role models, provide mentoring support and helps to support routes out of offending and risk into more positive pathways.

##### Newham Council's sponsorship of Education 4 Change (E4C)

2.4 Launched in 2020 this work addresses tackling racism and inequalities as experienced by young people and staff in schools. This work takes a strength-based approach and encourages positive conversations in order to build cultural competency across the education workforce. The aim is to understand the context of racism in education and how school leaders can address racism and social justice. It helps support young Black people with employment, through vocational / leadership pathways and opportunities who are about to leave school or who are at risk of Not in Education, Employment or Training.

#### *Moving on Up programme*

2.5 This programme helps young Black men to find jobs and careers in London's competitive labour market. It is aimed at 16 – 24 year olds and offers a range of interventions such as employability programs and events designed to support young Black men into higher level, aspirational, career jobs.

#### ***Gathering evidence – working with Governors***

2.6 The Chair of the Inquiry presented the aims of the Review to Newham Governors Forum. This led to a discussion on system change and thinking about how the Schools Behaviour policies were being implemented. The meeting also discussed key areas such as safeguarding and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

#### ***Gathering evidence – hearing and responding to lived experience***

2.7 The Inquiry heard from young Black boys and men who were invited as witnesses to share their lived experience. We also heard about how they would like to be engaged in the future, their aspirations and how the council and the Inquiry could help tackle key areas of concern for them.

#### **Key information – Education**

2.8 In 2021 we heard evidence from the Corporate Director for Children and Young People. Many young Black boys are supported by our inclusive schools and alternative education settings, the Youth Empowerment Service, Youth Justice Service and the Youth Safety Board, and that they go on to achieve very good educational outcomes despite the challenging social and economic circumstances they face.

- Relative under-achievement of Black Caribbean boys compared to other ethnic groups begins as early as Key Stages 1 and at GCSE.
- Lower attendance leads to higher exclusion rates, referral to alternative education provision, and their overrepresentation in unemployment statistics and Not in Education, Employment Training (NEET) indicators.
- Vulnerability to joining youth gangs outside of school, can, for some, lead to youth offending and crime.

- Evidence of disproportionality in education attainment that disadvantaged Black boys achieve less well than their non-disadvantaged peers in Newham, across London and compared to England averages, except disadvantaged Black Caribbean boys who achieve significantly higher than their London and England peers, but much lower than the national overall average.
- Black African, Black Caribbean and Black Other boys were ranked towards the lower end of attainment compared to other ethnic groups, but achieved higher than peers across London and nationally.

*Educational Achievement of Black Children Looked After (overseen by the Virtual School)*

2.9 The role of this school is to promote the best possible outcome of each child taking into account their vulnerabilities and complexities.

- Children who have suffered trauma are more likely to have additional learning needs due to their brain development being impacted by abuse and neglect.
- Children's Service have a duty to accommodate Unaccompanied and Separated children (UASC) in their care and due to their journeys to the UK, inclusive of trafficking, are likely to have suffered trauma.

*Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)*

2.10 Highest proportion of young people categorised as Not in Education, Employment or Training is in the Asian, Black and White ethnic groupings.

- In March 2021 there was an average of 24% represented by Black young people, where twice as many are male (67%) compared to female

*Education Participation (attendance, suspensions and exclusions)*

2.11 Pupils directed or placed at Alternative provision (AP) or Pupil Referral Units (PRU) settings

- Black pupils, mainly boys, accounted for as high as 41% in 2018-19, reducing to 38% in 2019-20, and a further reduction to 17% with now each setting seeing the largest representation from mainly White British boys in Years 8 and 10 of their secondary education.

**Key information – Education and Youth Justice**

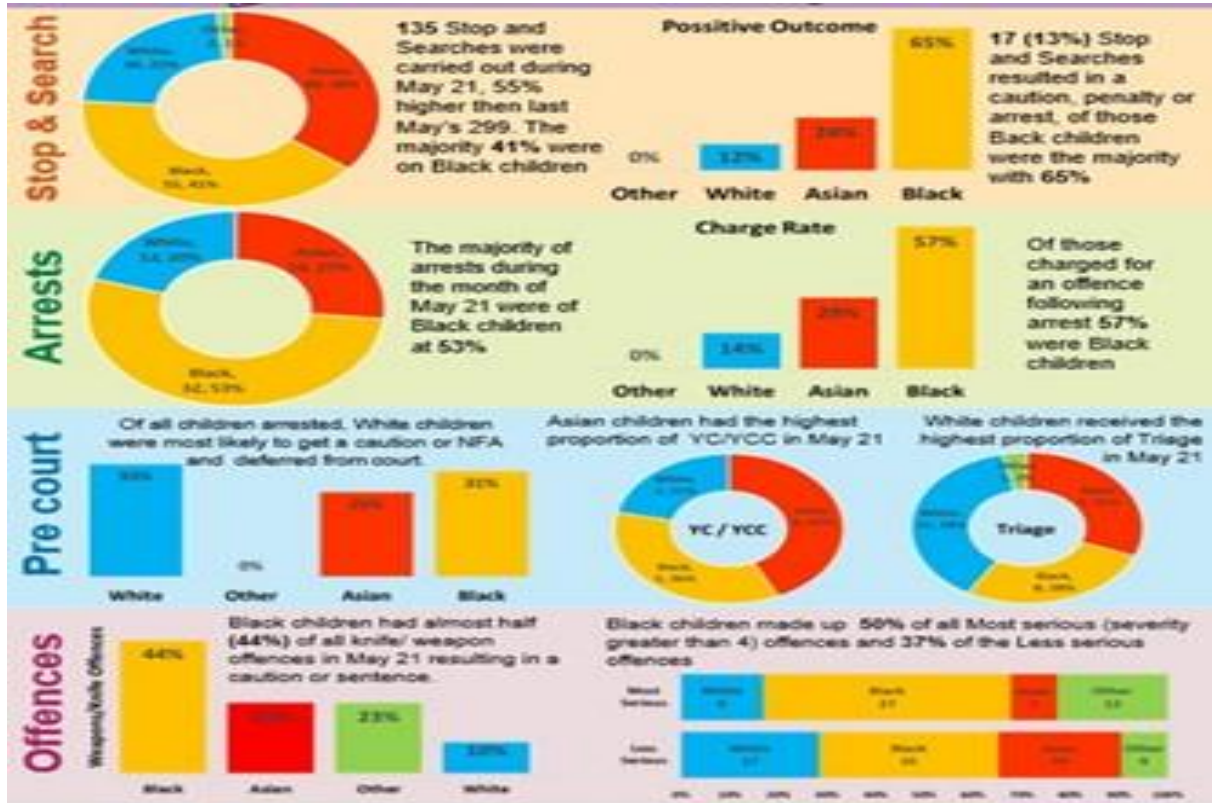
2.12 In August 2021 we have heard evidence from council officers in Education and the Youth Justice Service.

- Highest number of pupils excluded over the previous 4 years were from the Black African and Black Caribbean groups of pupils – with a rising trend for both ethnic groups.
- Highest number of suspensions over each of the 4 years shown were from the Black African (445 in 2019) and Black Caribbean (219 in 2019) groups of pupils, showing a rising trend for both ethnic groups.
- Youth Justice Board has identified that children of Black heritage are four times more likely to be arrested than White Children. They are less likely to receive an out-of-court disposal and avoid going to Court than their White counterparts and nearly twice as likely to receive a custodial outcome as their White counterparts.
- 12.5 times more likely to be subjected to stop and search which can be a traumatic experience
- The London Crime Reduction Board report 'Disproportionality and race equality in the criminal justice system: the role of local authorities' (October 2020) highlighted Black children occupy a higher representation in more serious offence groups and experience the lowest rate of decrease in first time entrants.
- The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime - Tackling Ethnic Disproportionality in Youth Justice Action Plan makes recommendations to identifying out of court disposals as an opportunity to divert children away from advancing into the criminal justice system and criminalising young people unnecessarily.

# Tackling over representation

42% of children who came to the YOS during May 21 were Black

Black children make up 23% of Newham's general youth population

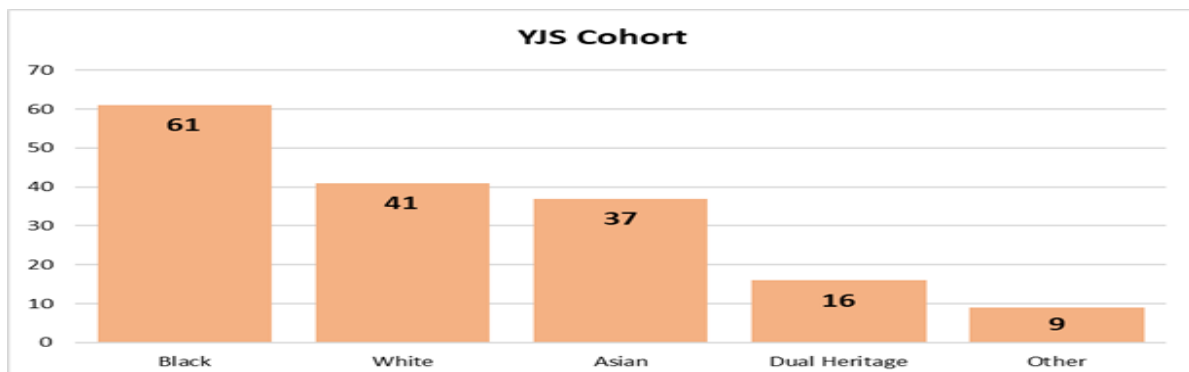


Sources

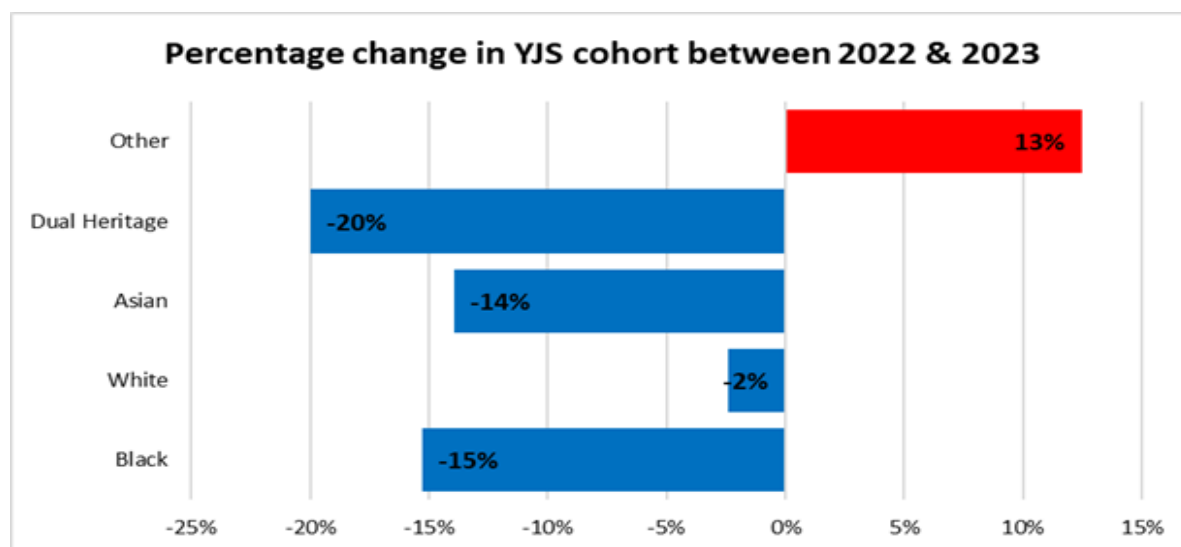
1. Metropolitan Police Arrests, May 2021
2. YOS Children data

\* Please note Other ethnicity refers to children of mixed heritage, Arab, Afghan, Filipino and Turkish

75% of the Youth Justice Service cohort for the current financial year April 2023 to December 2023 are from a Black minority ethnic background- (evidence to Inquiry from Acting Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services – February 2023)



*There has been a reduction in the proportion of children in the Youth Justice Service cohort from a Black minority ethnic background this year compared to the previous year- evidence to Inquiry from Acting Corporate Director of Children and Young People’s Services – February 2023*



### **Key information - Community Safety**

2.13 In April 2024, the Commission received a report from the Director of Community Safety within the Council, noting that:

- Black boys and young men within the borough and wider London are disproportionately represented or adversely impacted in several areas, significantly affecting their lived experience and life opportunities.
- Relationships between London communities and the police are at a low point, which is a focus of both police and the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime plans.
- The March 2023 Casey Review revealed institutional racism, misogyny, and homophobia in the police service, noting its defensiveness and resistance to change. The Commissioner plans to address these issues moving forward.

### *Newham Stop and Search Data (April 2022 - March 2024)*

2.14 Over 15,000 stop searches were conducted, with around 46% involving young people aged 14-24.

- In terms of ethnicity, the number of White and Black people (all ages) stopped and searched were around 35% each, and approximately 17% per 1,000 of the population.
- About two-thirds of all stop searches were for drug offences.
- Where stop searches led to further action, the overall percentage was 28%, but for Black people, it dropped slightly to 26.3%.

- Crime data for the borough shows that Black boys and young men are not disproportionately impacted as victims. Black victims under 25 make up 16.7% of cases, comparable to White victims. Asian young people represent over 25%, while 40% of young victims have an unknown or other ethnic background.

Comparison with Other London Boroughs – Black Victims Aged 1-24

2.15 In 2023, Newham saw a concerning 6.4% increase in offenses against young Black individuals, though it was lower than many other boroughs. Ranking 7th in offense volume, most incidents involved violence and robbery, making up over 54% of the recorded crimes.

Offences by Borough with Black Victims Aged 1 - 24			
Borough	2022	2023	% Change
Croydon	2,259	2,510	11.1%
Lewisham	1,946	2,079	6.8%
Southwark	1,796	2,061	14.8%
Lambeth	2,041	1,984	-2.8%
Greenwich	1,504	1,592	5.9%
Hackney	1,596	1,525	-4.4%
<b>Newham</b>	<b>1,418</b>	<b>1,509</b>	<b>6.4%</b>
Enfield	1,342	1,479	10.2%
Haringey	1,133	1,324	16.9%
Brent	1,269	1,155	-9.0%
Barking and Dagenham	1,028	1,087	5.7%
Wandsworth	1,080	1,020	-5.6%
Westminster	976	984	0.8%
Waltham Forest	987	973	-1.4%
Islington	952	947	-0.5%
Ealing	790	839	6.2%
Bromley	788	832	5.6%
Camden	747	768	2.8%
Tower Hamlets	663	759	14.5%
Hounslow	638	724	13.5%
Redbridge	673	715	6.2%
Bexley	681	706	3.7%
Barnet	730	651	-10.8%
Hammersmith and Fulham	587	600	2.2%
Havering	502	595	18.5%
Hillingdon	559	578	3.4%
Merton	550	504	-8.4%
Sutton	407	468	15.0%
Harrow	455	377	-17.1%
Kensington and Chelsea	375	353	-5.9%
Kingston upon Thames	192	223	16.1%
Richmond upon Thames	194	181	-6.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30,858</b>	<b>32,102</b>	<b>4.0%</b>

**Key information – Tackling Equality and Inclusion Priorities for Black Boys and Young Black Men in Newham**

2.16 In March 2024 the Inquiry received evidence from the Assistant Chief Executive, Chief Transformation Officer.

## ***Social Care***

2.17 Nationally, Children from Black, and Mixed ethnic groups tend to show overrepresentation in comparison to the general child population of those represented in the social care system

- Nationally, almost 1 in 5 Black children who became looked after in 2019-20 had previously been looked after at some point in the previous 8 years (19% compared to 13% of all children entering care).
- Black and Asian children are less likely than White or Mixed ethnicity children to have been on a child in need or a child protection plan in the month prior to becoming a looked after child.
- Children from Black African heritage, make up a particularly high proportion of children who are Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (40%) compared to zero or a minority of children from 'Mixed' and 'White' ethnic groups.

## ***Employment***

2.18 Young Black men face some of the highest unemployment rates in London – 33% compared to 15 % for young white men

- Research has shown that increases in educational attainment has had small impact on this inequality and that young Black men are cumulatively impacted by lower employer expectations about their potential, biased recruitment processes, as well as unequal pay and prospects for progression.

## ***Health***

2.19 Research indicates from age 11, African Caribbean boys are not more likely to present with a diagnosable mental health condition compared with their white peers. But as they grow up, young Black men are more likely to be sectioned under the Mental Health Act compared to their White peers, and more likely to end up in costly and restrictive mental health crisis settings.

- In Newham, detentions under the Mental Health Act are more likely to have been exercised upon Black and minority ethnic groups than their White peers.
- Individuals from marginalised ethnic backgrounds often encounter barriers that hinder their engagement with mental health programs. These disparities in access to mental health service have profound implications for the health and overall wellbeing of Newham's Black men, exemplified by the alarming overrepresentation of Black men in mental health sectioning.
- Language barriers, limited awareness of available services, and deeply entrenched cultural stigmas surrounding mental health, contribute to these disparities. Recognising the critical need to address these disparities and enhance mental health outcomes is crucial and there is an urgent and compelling call for targeted initiatives and interventions.

- Overweight and obesity prevalence in Newham is 10.8 and 11.5 percentage points higher for boys when compared to girls and the percentage of overweight reception children was highest for Black ethnic groups (51.5%) in 2021/2022.

## **Section 3: Structural and Systemic inequality – Embracing Complexity**

3.1 Structural and systemic inequality can be difficult to describe. In our research we have found it helpful to consider how it manifests through injustice.

### **What is a system?**

*“A system is a particular set of things working together in a way that forms a whole. A social system is one that is structured by a network of relations that emerge and depend on social learning. These relations are formed in social practices that organise us in response to things taken to have positive or negative value. The value of something is encoded culturally in social meanings”.<sup>1</sup>*

### **What is structural injustice?**

*“Structural injustice occurs when the practices that create the structure – the network of positions and relations – (a) distort our understanding of what is valuable, or (b) organise us in ways that are unjust/harmful/wrong, e.g., by distributing resources unjustly or violating the principles of democratic equality”.<sup>2</sup>*

3.2 Structural inequality describes inequalities in wealth, prosperity and resources, and other results because of the unfair practices of organisations. These practices can take place in different sectors such as educational, legal, healthcare, business and government.

3.3 It leads to a lack of trust and confidence in organisations across society. This can be an embedded cultural, linguistic, economic, religious/belief, physical or identity-based bias which provides advantages for some members and marginalises or produces disadvantages for other members.

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<sup>1</sup> Haslanger, S (2022), Systemic and Structural Injustice: Is There a Difference? Cambridge University Press

<sup>2</sup> Haslanger, S (2022), Systemic and Structural Injustice: Is There a Difference? Cambridge University Press

3.4 Structural inequality is defined as a condition where one category of people are attributed an unequal status in relation to other categories of people. This relationship is maintained and reinforced by a merging of unequal relations in roles, functions, decisions, rights, and opportunities.

**What is systemic injustice?**

*“Systemic injustice occurs when an unjust structure is maintained in a complex system that it’s self-reinforcing, adaptive, and creates subjects whose identity is shaped to conform to it”.<sup>3</sup>*

3.5 Systemic inequalities describe inequalities of income, wealth, and wellbeing, and the foundation for this is differences between groups of people in accessing the same opportunities as well as experiencing inequity. It means people cannot access key things such as a good education, employment or home ownership. This means that the strength of relationships and support for each other in a community can be decreased so that people lack social capital and shared resources.

3.6 Societies are complex dynamic systems which are self-organising with much interaction between structures and systems which can make inequality much more challenging to address. For this Inquiry to understand injustice or inequality it is important to look at relations that structure our society.

3.7 Our research highlights that often structures are understood as rules or laws that are designed by policy makers and enforced by rules or punitive measures. This does not simply mean we can change a rule or practice to remove unfairness. We must look at structures and systems.

3.8 If repression is applied and presented by people for others to accept, we understand that there is a self-regulation or an acceptance of this in fulfilling these roles. So, if a structure regulates our interactions and is self-sufficient, we can look to change attitudes in particular practices and further than that learn and change to move in a new direction.

*Male population under 25 by Ethnic Group (Census, 2021)*

Ethnic Group	Total	%
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: All	47133	39
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	16739	14
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: including Asian	8714	7

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<sup>3</sup> Haslanger, S (2022), Systemic and Structural Injustice: Is There a Difference? Cambridge University Press

Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean and Black African	7139	6
Other ethnic group: including Arab	4452	4
White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	6592	5
Other White	13126	11

***“We are the most powerless people in the process...yet we are asked again and again for solutions”***

### **Structural and systemic inequality – Embracing complexity**

3.9 Thinking differently when tackling inequality also means embracing complexity and not being overwhelmed by the challenges it brings. This area of work requires identified strong leadership accountability to work both at an organisational and borough level. It means addressing wide structural impacts such as staff turnover, resourcing and new training. It requires demonstrated and real accountability at all levels so that we can learn and grow and build trust with our communities. Understanding that lived experience and data drive our decision-making processes and that we have legal obligations to ensure that these are done well and are of a high quality. It is vital that we understand the need to intervene now and build greater equity outside of existing structures and systems to create new opportunities and pathways for change.

It is recommended that the Mayor and Cabinet agree the following recommendations:

#### **Leadership, decision making, training and resources**

3.10 It is recommended that a clear action plan be developed within the next six months on how Newham Council will address and tackle systemic and structural inequality across the organisation. This should include a report back on the current picture of all interventions in this area across the council and value for money. This supports the work that is currently being proposed for the Social Justice and Equity Strategy and work plan. The plan should have clear leadership, a consideration of wider impacts if they present risks and clear opportunities for external accountability. This plan should include a way of demonstrating and holding senior leaders to account in relation to tracking their decision making and evidence-based approaches to tackling inequality.

3.11 This action plan should include new training, approaches and methodologies on how to tackle structural and systemic inequality. The training should invest and upskill staff, partners, members and the community and voluntary sector to be better equipped to identify, diagnose and intervene in complex challenges. A community of practice involving all key stakeholders should be considered to implement this.

#### **Recommendation One: A Plan for Action**

**That an action plan be developed on how Newham Council will address systemic and structural inequality across the organisation to include the status of current interventions across the Council and identification of areas for improvement. This should include the people and departments accountable for implementation, clear milestones, resources and quantifiable outputs and outcomes and impact assessment, including mechanisms for external assessment and accountability.**

**This should be produced within the next 12 months.**

### ***“It’s Them and Us ....”***

3.12 All of the data and research calls for exploring this issue at a borough level, looking at what is in our ecosystem in Newham so that we can work across sectors. Understanding how we can eliminate inequality and disproportionality using the power and influence of a collective force. This Inquiry has had amongst other areas a strong focus on education and community safety and has used the Black Boys in Newham Survey to help illuminate some of the systemic issues in these areas.

3.13 The findings call for increasing the numbers of Black British (Caribbean / African) representation within the Senior Leadership Team in educational establishments as well as examining recruitment and retention practices in this sector. It suggests considering more creative and innovative ways of increasing the opportunities for work experience, and quality careers pathways for young Black boys and men, more positive engagement with the police as well as ensuring greater accountability for the police service around stop and search. In thinking about public and open spaces the recommendations call for more cleaning of local areas, with increased lighting, and CCTV to improve security, physical safety and feeling safe.

#### ***Leadership at a systems level***

3.14 That the Council uses its leadership, power and influence at a borough level to tackle structural and systemic inequality through cross-sector leadership. That a clear action plan be developed in the next six months including stakeholders that are involved in key areas of a lifecycle to enable strengthened approaches and resource allocation through better connections.

3.15 This should include a report back on the current picture of all interventions across the borough in this area and value for money. The plan should identify how the council as an anchor institution and its partners is sharing its learning, practice and challenges across other sectors to tackle inequality and embed this in the new partnership framework to be developed (Local Government Association). This should include sharing training around new approaches and methodologies with opportunities for building longer term ideas around a community of practice.

### **Recommendation Two: Community Leadership**

**That a community action plan be developed on how Newham Council and local partner agencies, including key voluntary sector organisations, will address systemic and structural inequality across the Borough, to include the status of current programmes and across Newham and identification of areas for improvement. This should include the people and organisations accountable for implementation, clear milestones, resources and quantifiable outputs and outcomes and impact assessment, including mechanisms for external assessment and accountability.**

**This should be produced within the next 12 months.**

***“Most of the representation we see is within supply teachers & subject teachers. We don't see many black members of staff, let alone black male members of staff in high positions within our school”***

3.16 Our evidence highlights the need to review our Equality Monitoring Processes. It is vital that what we say and do demonstrates equality and inequality awareness. In addition it is using every opportunity and interaction to build trust and confidence in officers, the council and our engagement processes. Part of this is using the right creative and innovative approaches for the situations where the council is engaging and ensuring that we let participants and respondents know about the outcome and its impact. It is about a strong and robust equality monitoring process where we have conversations with our communities and understand where the data is lacking, putting the rights processes in place and starting from a strength-based approach.

3.17 It is helpful to share and update the Equality Impact Needs Analysis document throughout the engagement process so we can be sure that we have an in depth understanding of people's lived experience and their needs. It helps the council to think about negative impacts or other potential areas that need to be addressed. Publicising our approach will generate increased trust and transparency and greater accountability. Key steps should include what we know from all the data, evidence and lived experience and an understanding of public perceptions, attachments to a place and local sentiment.

### Equality Monitoring

3.18 That the council provides a report in the next six months on a review of its current Equality Monitoring processes. This should include details of the process, including approvals and sign off, the type and take up of training offered and timescales given to complete these including assessments on quality assurance. This should include an attached action plan addressing any areas of patchy completion, training needs for all staff including senior leaders and members, adjustments in the process or organisational culture that will mitigate risks in the process and lead to the improved quality and effectiveness of the plans.

3.19 This information should be included in annual performance reporting. We would like to see greater leadership accountability for Equality Monitoring across the council that is linked to clearly defined performance measurement tools starting with the senior leaders and each directorate in 2025/2026. This will enable greater monitoring of implementation and outcomes.

3.20 The action plan should include training on the importance of our responsibilities under the Public Sector Equalities Duty and ensure that all staff are collecting the correct information during consultation and engagement processes. This includes information about protected characteristics and the needs of people we are engaging with to create effective mitigations where necessary. The action plan should include a plan to share data with key stakeholders to help influence and encourage collective change.

3.21 Currently council officers review the financial and legal implications in a cabinet report, the same robustness needs to be given to Equality Impact Assessments. We would like to see greater scrutiny and quality assurance of these important documents by opening up the process to external scrutiny by a community and voluntary sector organisation.

### **Recommendation Three: Targeting Progress towards Equality**

**That the Council review its Equality Monitoring processes, including the process, approvals and sign off, training quality assurance and timescales. This should include an action plan addressing any areas for completion, training, risks and mitigations.**

**This should be produced within the next six months.**

3.22 The Inquiry found systemic issues which affect children at key points throughout their lives to adulthood. The Commission felt that better data collections mechanisms used early and at a disaggregated level would be helpful. The evidence around disproportionate differences begin early and understanding complex needs and intervening early is vital. The evidence further highlighted that young Black boys were performing well in early years but fall behind at Key Stage 4 and greater clarity is needed to understand why.

3.23 The Commission found that one of the challenges was also around data access especially in schools that are academies. With an inconsistent picture it is difficult to gain an understanding of wider areas of disadvantage such as poverty or complex learning needs when looking at educational attainment. It is important to consider further that there are attendance disparities, particularly between children of African and Caribbean heritage.

3.24 The disparities in achievement between Black pupils and their peers significantly increase during the transition into secondary school. One of the areas that the Inquiry would like to examine more closely in the next phase is preventative measures during this particular phase to maximise success into adulthood. We are also concerned about lower GCSE results among young Black boys in Newham compared to their peers, their lived experiences, higher expulsion rates and different treatment by teachers that can lead to inequalities in academic outcomes.

#### Data, research and lived experience

3.25 That a report of an assessment of the whole council's service data detailing that which is disaggregated be completed in six months. Given key areas of intersectionality this should be carried out looking at protected characteristics. This should include an understanding of which departments are collecting this data and any challenges they have. The information should be included in an action plan along with a set of interventions including how additional research and the collection of lived experience informs decision making processes.

#### **Recommendation Four: Using Lived Experience to Inform Policy**

**That assessment be carried out of the whole council's service data referenced against protected characteristics and linkages to council policies and decisions. This should be used to inform the decision making processes and shared with key stakeholders to help influence and encourage collective change. We recommend that this includes the data from Newham Safeguarding Children's Partnership and referrals from other agencies.**

**This should be produced within the next six months.**

#### ***“Don't be quick to put us in detention...”***

3.26 In thinking about the higher rates than those of the general population for school expulsions of Black young boys it is important to look at the practice of off-rolling.<sup>4</sup> The Inclusion and Education Safeguarding Service who are closely linked across Children and Young People's Services are working to support schools in

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<sup>4</sup> The practice of off-rolling is the removal of a pupil without the option of permanent exclusion. This practice disproportionately affects young people with additional needs.

implementing alternative approaches to exclusion. The service aims to help individuals and educational settings understand the impact of disproportionate representation and exclusion. There is work planned to look at the analysis of suspensions and exclusions, reasons given, and national rankings, and ensure that schools adopt inclusive practices and approaches to supporting the rising trend in pupils presenting with social, emotional, or mental health (SEMH) difficulties.

3.27 The Commission heard that there had been some successful work in challenging permanent exclusions. The Inclusion Service has been effective in disputing decisions and maintaining strong relationships with schools with 10 permanent exclusions successfully challenged last year, indicating a high rate of successful interventions.

3.28 We are concerned that needs are often diagnosed when it is too late or that complex needs are not detected early enough. The social and economic context, poverty and disadvantage can significantly influence the aspirations of young people to access, participate and engage fully in education. This may lead to pupils feeling disaffected which can lead to suspension or expulsion or referrals to the Pupils Referral Unit and Alternative Provision.

3.29 The Commission heard about the connection between exclusions and the late diagnosis of needs in education, particularly among Black boys. The tendency to label black children as 'naughty' rather than investigating underlying issues such as Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or autism spectrum conditions was noted. The role of parental involvement, especially for non-English speaking parents, and the need for greater support in understanding and accessing assessments was highlighted.

3.30 We understand that that this is also part of a wider systemic issue. Some young boys' disadvantage is influenced by their social, economic, health and care circumstances. These boys do not always have an educational advantage and cannot enjoy or participate in the opportunities that have been provided. This can often lead to youth offending, crime, referrals to alternative education provision and pupil referral units. We recognise that this support is available for these young people but they may still go on to underachieve at key points in their education leading to their unemployment. It is these cycles that we want to break in their lives.

#### **Recommendation Five: Newham Safeguarding Children's Partnership**

**Newham Council to request that the Newham Safeguarding Children's partnership produces a measurable action plan with outcome metrics, to reduce the disproportionality and disparity of Black boys in educational exclusion, child protection planning, care and the Criminal Justice system so that it is in line with the general population of Newham.**

**This plan to be provided within 6 months and approved at Full Council within 12 months.**

***“It makes me feel limited ...”***

**Support and intervention to prevent school exclusions**

3.31 To review and build on existing support provided by the council’s education service in the next six months and identify further areas of information, awareness raising and options for intervention. Not all parents understand the implications of their child being suspended, or excluded. This review should aim to empower parents and families at risk of exclusion as action at the right time is vital in deciding a young person’s future.

**Recommendation Six: Preventing School Exclusions**

**To review and build on existing support provided by the council’s education service to identify further areas of information, awareness raising and options for intervention. The review should consider areas such as the timing of support, accessibility of support, measures to educate parents, language barriers and accessing system wide support.**

**This should be completed within the next six months.**

*Our Inquiry Chair, Councillor Anthony McAlmont with School Governors - April 2024.*



***“Listen to us when we answer –if we say it wasn’t us and people back us up –listen”***

3.32 The 2016-2019 figures show Black African-Caribbean boys when compared with the Boys from Bangladesh, Pakistan and India put together were half the

number in terms of our population. However, these boys had experienced 52 permanent exclusions compared with 30 from boys with an Asian background. A review of the school's behaviour policies and how this is implemented may help to understand the dynamics of this pattern.

3.33 Children and young people with unidentified, unassessed and unsupported special educational needs and disabilities are also one of the key drivers related to persistent disruptive behaviour, which is the main reason for both fixed term and permanent exclusions.

3.34 While work is planned to review and assess existing policies and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion it is important to understand the data behind and specific criteria for which children receive Special Educational Needs and disabilities support and which children receive Behavioral support. It is vital that we look at the different dynamics operating in schools between those that have low and high levels of pupil expulsion to see what we can learn from them.

***“When you get angry about something you can't really do anything about it, otherwise you're aggressive or something”***

#### Schools Behaviour Policies

3.35 To review the Schools Behaviour policies and provide a report within the next four months of an agreed approach with a select number of schools with the assessment and proposals delivered by September 2025.

3.36 The schools should include those that have the highest number of exclusion and expulsion rates alongside those that have the lowest number so that we can identify areas of best practice. This assessment should include participant observation, talking to parents and young people as part of its evaluation with the development of data agreements with schools, staff and children.

#### **Recommendation Seven: School Behaviour Policies**

**3.37 To review School Behaviour policies and their implementation in Newham. This should include the implementation approach, quality of the training and measures and responses of the schools where these are challenged.**

**This should be completed by September 2025**

***“The use of stop and search is disproportionate...”***

3.38 Our Inquiry found Black children are over four times more likely to be arrested than their white counterparts. We know that Children’s services like other councils across London will start to use a safeguarding lens through which to view Stop and Search. This work has started in other local authorities where safeguarding partnerships are working to ensure stop and search process are fair.

3.39 The Black boys in Newham survey also highlighted disproportionality in police stop-and-search practices among young Black men. Overall, 47% of young men had confirmed an encounter with the Metropolitan Police, most of those encounters were through a Stop and Search. As a result, the survey found that a lot of young men were unaware of their rights.

3.40 The survey found that some young boys did not feel safe in Newham and those that did were younger aged 13 and lower and only attended school in Newham but lived out of the borough. Safety was also highly linked to spaces where there were lots of people, there to intentionally do something. For instance, basketball courts and football pitches were mentioned as places of safety, whereas buses felt unsafe as the young men noted people could be going anywhere to do anything.

3.41 The survey further found that young people would reach out to friends and family for help versus any emergency services. This was for reasons such as feeling they would be useless, take too long or be unable to help. This was mainly in circumstances where they needed help. If a loved one was in trouble the chances of reaching out for help increased dramatically.

3.42 When describing the police the young people used mostly negative words such as “scarce” and “ineffective” or “useless”. There were more positive perceptions of the police particularly among younger boys who had yet to have a personal encounter with them. A lot of what they described was based on what they had seen in the media which had come across in a positive way.

3.43 Except for one or two young men, the police were the first people that the young people would go to if they encountered any trouble. The only times they said they would call the police were if someone they loved or knew needed help and it was outside of their control. This suggests a call to action to develop positive engagement between the community and the police.

***“I am not against stop and search, but can we bring the numbers down, so we do not have to go through this?”***

*Engaging on Community Safety Strategies*

3.44 That the Community Safety Team reviews its current function over the next six months and works to build an approach which engages directly with young Black boys and men. This will enable a greater understanding of their needs, aspirations and areas of inequity that could influence and shape the priorities of the Community Safety Partnership. The review should involve how it will work to understand structural and systemic inequality and build trust and confidence with young people and organisations seeking to support them.

3.45 It is important that young people are engaged directly with both shaping the review and helping to design key messages and communication. This review should also include the commissioned areas that the Community Safety function is responsible for and ensure that it captures disaggregated data with strong qualitative feedback that supports strong outcomes for young Black boys and men.

We endorse the Rights and Equalities in Newham Survey recommendation:

A commitment to EDI and anti-racism enshrined in a charter mark for education, health, police, social services, libraries etc. and a process designed to achieve it (similar to an IIP process). This should include an annual external review of equity, diversity, inclusion and equalities proactivity across statutory sector services, measured against Equality Act 2010 or agreed Pan London standard.

**Recommendation Eight: Engaging on Community Safety Strategies**

**That a review of community safety strategies be carried out, building an approach which engages directly with young Black boys and men. The review should involve how it will work to understand structural and systemic inequality and build trust and confidence with young people and organisations seeking to support them. This should include Newham taking part in the London wide Stop and Search project with the police as part of early intervention and prevention.**

**This should be completed within the next six months.**

## Section 4: Voice, Connection & Relationships - Breakthrough Collaboration

***“You have the power... we have the connections ...let’s collaborate...”***

4.1 We are keen to learn and build upon work that has taken place to tackle inequality and disproportionality. We found clear evidence of the need for continued conversation and collaboration.

***“The Disproportionality Challenge Fund mentors are providing amazing support to our children. They have built great relationships with children, Youth Justice Service staff and the wider professional network helping to enhance and improve the support we offer...”***

(Youth Justice Service staff- Disproportionality Challenge Fund programme)

Some of the evidence so far has highlighted:

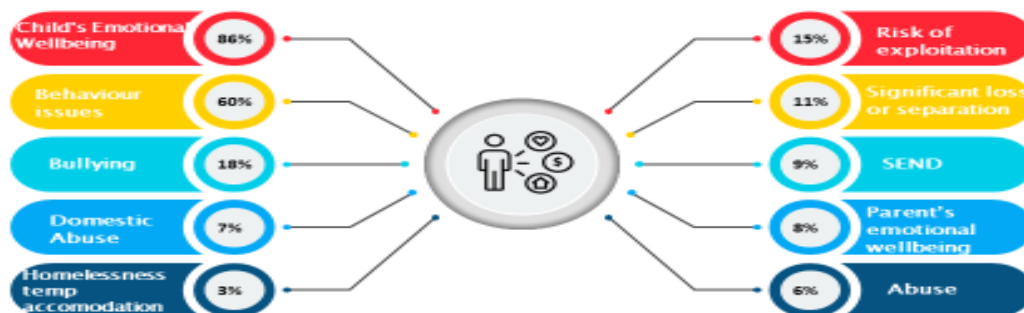
*Youth Justice Pathfinder project*

4.2 This project highlighted the needs that the young people presented with as well as sharing its learning. The key challenges includes the wide scope of the programme and multiple needs, continued engagement and a changing borough.

***“I really appreciate that my mentor was able to come down to the police station by 1am in the morning and just be there for me, while supporting me all through as well. No one outside of my family has ever done this for me”***

(Voice of Child – Disproportionality Challenge Fund programme)

# PRESENTING NEEDS



WE ARE NEWHAM.



# CHALLENGES & LEARNING

CHALLENGES	LEARNING/DISSEMINATION
Impact of pandemic	Whole Family Approach
Wide scope of program	1-1 Intensive long term mentoring linked with diversionary activities
Staffing	Collaboration with partners & VCFS
Multiple needs compared to resources	Cultural Competency/Humility/Sensitivity Trainings as an ongoing exercise
Changing landscape of borough	Whole System Mapping
Stakeholder engagement	Outcome Star
	Early Help & Prevention

WE ARE NEWHAM.



## Youth Safety Summit

4.3 In March this year the Mayor of Newham's Youth Safety Summit held a discussion around Child Exploitation Awareness. The discussions focused on Relationships, Engagement and Communications and included understanding that trusted relationships take time to build for young people that have experienced high levels of trauma. It recognised the need to tackle bias in the system, including unconscious bias in demographics, confirmation and situational bias and to work with schools to prevent exclusion. It reflected on the importance of inviting children

and young people to train staff and build trust between the young people and police to improve interactions and relationships.

***“I enjoyed the sessions and looked forward to Mondays as it gave me some structure. I am glad that my mentor did not give up on me during my low moments. I am proud of myself and glad that I was able to sit for my GCSEs at school which is somewhere I never thought I would go back to, thanks to the mentor.”***

(Voice of Child – Disproportionality Challenge Fund programme)

### Community Safety

4.4 As part of our evidence gathering the Community Safety Partnership highlighted the disproportionate representation of Black and mixed ethnicity individuals in the youth offending cohort (56% in 2021). Further engagement and the development of measures to reduce youth offending and improve community safety could disproportionately benefit young Black men and boys.

4.5 Listening to the experience of the young men and boys at our Inquiry evidence gathering session on 25th March, the Community Safety Director recognised the real disconnect and distrust with the police in keeping them safe. Moving forwards this function of the council is considering direct engagement with young Black men and boys. It is also considering a systemic approach that will help them in their aspirations and to transition from childhood, adolescence and into adults.

***“I am grateful for the support from the mentor. It was empowering to speak to someone outside of statutory services who listened to me and understood my pain and challenges with my son”.***

(Voice of Parent – Disproportionality Challenge Fund programme)

### Black Boys in Newham Survey (REIN)

4.6 This survey explored the key areas of education, employment, community safety, racism, mental health and health services. Some of the participants suggested that we engage in schools and in particular reaching out to students in isolation units who often feel overlooked. Outside of school the young people said that they would like to be engaged in local parks, leisure centres, youth clubs, or

areas of high footfall. In reflecting on previous successful engagement strategies, barbershops and similar safe spaces have been a helpful environment for honest and open conversations.

4.7 When asked how they could feel safe in the borough the young people said it was for local authorities and others to demonstrate actions instead of just stating intentions such as increasing visible diversity in the educational system, having park rangers in parks instead of police for a more welcoming environment, and encouraging the use of youth clubs and other safe spaces.

#### *Stretch Collaboration and Transformative Scenarios*

4.8 We will be engaging widely with young Black boys and men in a range of ways as part of the next phase of this Inquiry. We will be intentional in ensuring a representative reach across the borough and build on what we have learned in this Inquiry. We want to challenge current thinking and develop creative solutions to tackling the areas of inequality, and disproportionality that have been highlighted.

4.9 We will be using the Stretch Collaboration methodology through Transformative Facilitation and the building of Transformative Scenarios in the next six months. This will involve collaboration between young Black boys and men and senior leaders of key institutions including the council and leaders from across nearly every area of society such as health, education, employment and business. This methodology uses a whole systems approach that has been successfully tried and tested and has led to transformative change across different parts of the world. We recognise the need to create new ways of working across our systems, draw new insights and re-define how things are done so that we can embrace complex challenges involving social justice and bring greater clarity and focus.

#### *What is Stretch Collaboration?*

4.10 [Stretch Collaboration](#) and the idea of 'Stretching' offers a way of working with those we may not agree with, like or trust. It involves breaking out of habitual ways of working and finding new ways even though we may not agree on everything. This approach helps groups, organisations and sectors work together knowing that we do not need to agree as much as we think to progress and build relationships. It embraces conflict and connection, the diversity of different points of view and enables us to move forward as stakeholders in experimenting or 'feeling' our way forward.

## Stretch Collaboration

	<b>Conventional Collaboration</b>	<b>Stretch Collaboration</b>
<b>How we relate with our collaborators</b>	Focus on the good and the harmony of the team (one superior whole)	Embrace conflict and connection (multiple diverse wholes)
<b>How we advance our work</b>	Agree on the problem and solution (one optimum plan)	Experiment our way forward (multiple emergent possibilities)
<b>How we participate in our situation</b>	Change what other people are doing (one paramount leader)	Step into the game (multiple co-creators)

### What are Transformative Scenarios?<sup>5</sup>

4.11 The Transformative Scenarios Process employs scenarios not only to adapt to an unpredictable future but to influence or transform the future.

A scenario is not a story about what will happen (a forecast or prediction) and not a story about what should happen (a vision or proposal or plan).

A scenario is a story about what could happen: an internally-consistent hypothesis about the future that is relevant, challenging, plausible, and clear.

Scenarios are a tool for communicating about and working with an unpredictable future.

### What is unique about this approach?

4.12 The focus is not only to understand or adapt to the future but also to shape and transform it.

4.13 The scenarios are created not by academics or consultants but by an inclusive multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary group of actors who involve a “microcosm” of

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<sup>5</sup> REOS and partners [www.reos.com](http://www.reos.com)

the system. Each participant holds a valuable piece of a wider puzzle, not only in their knowledge but also in their agency and sphere of influence.

4.14 The facilitation approach is co-creative and builds relationships, trust, insight, ownership, and collaborative capability, thus generating results that go beyond the knowledge outputs produced.

### **Why use this approach?**

4.15 This approach is a powerful tool in:

*Addressing Systemic Inequities:* Reforming systems is crucial to dismantle ingrained injustices that hinder community progress.

*Enhancing Accessibility:* It's vital to ensure that we reach all segments of the community, especially those traditionally marginalised.

*Responding to Growing Challenges:* As London faces escalating challenges, more effective and fair systems are imperative for timely and adequate responses.

*Promoting Strategic Thinking:* By encouraging a step back from day-to-day operations, organisations can adopt more innovative and long-term strategies.

*Future-Proofing Through Scenarios:* Using scenarios to explore possible futures helps to prepare for and shape a more unpredictable environment.

*Leveraging Newham Council, Police, and key stakeholders Position:* With a broad reach we are able to work together and lead this critical transition.

4.16 The table below shows two different directions towards the future. Adaptive Scenario's planning uses stories about possible futures to study what could happen. Our approach of Transformative Scenario planning assumes that the studying the future is insufficient and so it uses stories about possible futures to influence what could happen.

	Adaptive Scenarios	Transformative Scenarios
Point of view	Single organisation or stakeholder group looking towards its context	A group of stakeholders (who influence and are influenced by the situation) exploring the system they are a part of
Orientation	Context is outside our influence, we need to accept and adapt	Our situation is or could become unsustainable or unacceptable; we must try to change it
Purpose	To understand what could happen in our context so as to more easily survive or thrive	To understand possible futures so as to influence them
Results	New/enhanced understanding and more robust strategies	New/transformed understanding, strategies/policies, initiatives, commitments, relationships, and capacities
Requirements	A rigorous process and a team of experts	A diverse team, a structured process, experienced guides, and an enabling space for co-creation

### **Recommendation Nine: Stretch Collaboration**

**That Stretch Collaboration workshops be carried out through Transformative Facilitation and the building of Transformative Scenarios to facilitate collaboration between young Black boys and men and senior leaders of key institutions including the council and leaders from across nearly every area of society such as police, health, education, employment and business.**

**This should be completed within the next six months.**

### Communications and Publicity

4.17 Tackling structural inequality is about tackling unfair organisational practices but how an institution communicates and to what extent is also vital. To build better connections, trust and confidence it is important to engage meaningfully and raise awareness to shift the negative and dominant narrative often associated with young Black boys and men. It can serve to shift perception and culture but also to create aspirations, and show love, respect and value. It also informs and enables a stronger approach to democracy by inviting our communities to both challenge and hold the council and other institutions to account.

4.18 We recommend that all cabinet reports and key documents that are published or used to communicate and raise awareness are written in a simple and accessible way that is compassionately communicated. Training and support should be available to all staff with agreed measures for written and verbal communication including cultural competency.

#### **Recommendation Ten: Mapping Opportunities**

**That opportunities for engagement with Black young men and boys be mapped and publicised, inviting participation from residents and communities to be involved in external scrutiny including internal and external partnerships or forums.**

**This should be completed within the next six months.**

### Trauma Responsive Training

4.19 Identify and deliver trauma responsive training for all staff, in the next six months. This will enable a people focussed approach and leadership at all levels in tackling structural and systemic inequality. This could include extending the existing training delivered by Public Health or making it available as a requirement.

#### **Recommendation Eleven: Trauma Responsive Training**

**Identify and deliver trauma informed training for all staff, in the next six months. This will enable a people focussed approach and leadership at all levels in tackling structural and systemic inequality. This could include extending the existing training delivered by Public Health or making it available as a requirement.**

**This should be undertaken within the next six months.**

**We endorse the Rights and Equalities in Newham Survey recommendations:**

**Universal cultural sensitivity training across multiple statutory and voluntary sectors – annually updated to maintain agreed standard**

**Set up a confidential phone line, similar to child line, to provide support for young Black boys.**

#### **Recommendation Twelve: Black youth voices**

**We endorse the Rights and Equalities in Newham Survey recommendation:**

**Collate Black youth voices and experiences into one coherent strategy, embedded into the council's work plan each year, with external scrutiny to evaluate effectiveness and success, and identify gaps and areas for improvement.**

**This should be completed within the next six months.**

## **Section 5: Building Equity – Opening New Pathways**

***“For someone like me to thrive is a rarity... for Black people and those of African descent...”***

5.1 Our evidence gathering found that access to economic opportunity is more inequitable for young Black men and boys as they continue to experience barriers. We welcome work being undertaken by the council on the Social Justice and Equity Strategy and work plan.

### **Moving On Up**

5.2 The Black Boys in Newham survey highlighted that there was a need to support the entrepreneurial ambitions of young men of African and Caribbean Heritage. In response the council launched the Moving On Up programme which aims to support entrepreneurship of young Black men. This programme supports young Black men to find jobs and careers in London's competitive labour market.

***“I don't see enough representation in staff or students in courses that aren't sport, so I don't feel encouraged to do anything outside of sport. Why would I want to be an outsider?”***

### Newham Apprenticeship Scheme

5.3 Newham Council has run a successful apprenticeship programme for over 30 years. The current programme is aimed at 16–30-year-olds and is paid at the rate of the London Living Wage. Every two years 30 Newham residents are recruited and apprenticeships are also promoted as a way of filling skills gaps and developing leadership capability. Programmes are offered to new recruits and to existing employees at all grades.

5.4 The programme works in partnership with Our Newham Work, and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Care Leavers Teams who have committed to providing employability training to target groups before they begin work. Vacancies are targeted towards disadvantaged groups such as care leavers, 16–18 year olds, and those without higher qualifications and who are not in education, employment or training.

5.5 Our evidence gathering heard about the lived experience of young Black men and boys. The key factors that were impacting their lives and aspirations were around the offer of limited career pathways primarily sports or music. The impact of teachers imposing limiting beliefs led to a discussion on teacher training and cultural awareness and the need for more targeted training. The connections between a lack of Black teachers in schools highlighted a key gap suggesting the need for more culturally and racially diverse teachers as part of the schools workforce.

5.6 The young people suggested it would be helpful to be exposed to a broader range of successful role models in different fields such as law and stressed the importance of education that goes beyond fitting into the system. The young people expressed the desire for more diverse career paths, entrepreneurship, trades, and understanding of taxes and politics. It was suggested that schools should organise more events to expose students to various professions such as banks, law firms and the stock exchange.

5.7 The impact of restrictive parenting because of concerns about safety led to a discussion about creating safe and welcoming spaces for young people offering them opportunities for positive engagement. Parental engagement in education was also examined, acknowledging the difference it can make, particularly with more privileged parents who often engage more assertively with teachers. One young person shared his experience of his mother's regular communication with his teachers, highlighting the role of parental involvement in monitoring and supporting educational progress.

5.8 There is significant pressure on apprenticeship applications and if the young people highlighted in this report are already experiencing barriers at every level, including trauma, complex needs, inequality and as a result a lack of aspiration it will be more challenging for them to access these opportunities.

5.9 We think as well as trying to get these boys and young men to access current opportunities it is also important to address the systemic and structural inequality at a broader level. This is about unlocking the potential of resources, social capital, connections and creatively opening new pathways.

***“I have a side hustle; I flip trainers online ... I thought I would do this because I'm not old enough to get a job but I want money ... I chose to make money legally because I don't really know how to get involved with those other things so I'm more likely to make a mistake and get in trouble.”***

#### Building equity and opening new pathways

5.10 Tackling systemic and structural inequality through our approaches and the lifecycles of young Black boys and men must also involve finding new pathways and creating new opportunities outside of the existing system. It is vital that we do this now so we are acting to remove inequity in the fastest possible way. As an East London Borough we can influence Canary Wharf and the City of London to support our work in this area.

5.11 The Commission recommends that Cabinet set up a working group in the next six months of young Black boys and men, community leaders, business leaders and council colleagues working in areas such as Special Education Needs and Disabilities, young people with care experience, education, youth justice and community safety to work alongside experts to develop opportunities outside of current and traditional pathways. This can include key contacts working in the financial sector that can navigate and connect with the corporate social responsibilities of companies.

5.12 This working group should receive support from the councils Human Resources, and Organisational Development teams as well as regional organisations such as the East London Business Alliance to develop a programme of Corporate Social Responsibility. The working group should create pathways outside of the existing system to support the creation of good job opportunities, apprenticeships and wrap around support. This can form part of a Newham initiative, a possible joint borough approach with our neighbour Tower Hamlets via their Race Equality Leaders Forum or Newham leading a regional response.

#### **Recommendation Thirteen: Black Boys and Young Men Working Group**

**That a working group be established of young Black boys and men, community leaders, business leaders and council colleagues to help inform Council and community policy and service delivery including young people with care experience, education, youth justice and community safety to work**

**alongside experts to develop opportunities outside of current and traditional pathways.**

**This should be produced within the next six months.**

**We endorse the Rights and Equalities in Newham Survey recommendation:**

**Young black boys are to be supported to access work experience opportunities and future careers that aren't sports related.**

## Phase two – Transforming lives through Power, Love and Justice

### **Section 6: Stretch Collaboration and Transformative Scenarios**

6.1 Our Inquiry heard evidence from two schools that were leading in best practice – both had taken different approaches. As the Inquiry prepares for Phase Two - Stretch Collaboration and Transformative Scenario Building we learn from the schools that are moving in the same principles of Love, Power and Justice.

#### *Kingston School testimony*

6.2 The school representative was asked how can we ensure that we know what to look out for and what to become aware of in our own unconscious biases? The response was that the pupils would sometimes give off behaviours that were not helpful to their education. The teachers had not realised how this had affected the Black children. The reasons for many Black boys being excluded related to racism and therefore pupils might display more aggressive behaviour. The consistent exposure to racism could leave pupils concerned about their safety, which could result in increased aggression in an attempt to better protect themselves, their peers or loved ones. Some of the children may experience racial trauma, feelings, negative flashbacks and reactions because of this.

#### *St. Bonaventure's School testimony*

6.3 This school had the largest cohort of Black boys in the Borough and the lowest exclusion rates. When the school's representative was asked what we could learn from their approach the response was that the school has a strong culture with a focus on students' behaviour and the school's expectations. The children were said to love the school and the staff loved every child there. It exhibited a culture of speaking openly about loving them, looking after them and caring for them.

6.4 The staff worked on inclusion within the school with a very dedicated team that spent a lot of time engaging with young people who were at risk of exclusion. The

school had second-hand uniforms on site and equipment which they would give out continuously so no-one was sent home. The school believed that it was because of these simple acts, every single day that the students knew that the school loved them. The school also had strong principles around forgiveness, mercy and restorative justice which were used alongside sanctions not instead of them.

***“This feels different this time...it’s like there is a fresh wind of change...”***

6.5 In Phase 2 of this Inquiry, we will continue to engage and gather evidence through a series of informal meetings to understand the experiences of young Black boys and men. Our engagement focus will be on life transition point’s education, employment, health, social care and criminal justice. This will include exploring wider determinants such as health, housing and poverty. We will engage governors and headteachers, projects involving fathers of Black boys, set up data workshops and hear evidence from expert witnesses.

#### Shifting the narrative

6.6 On 25<sup>th</sup> March at Old Stratford Town Hall the Commission invited a group of witnesses – young Black boys and men to participate in a discussion on the theme of Community Safety in Newham. This led to a conversation about stop and search and the culture of the police given the findings of the Casey Review in 2023.

6.7 The young boys expressed a desire for strong connections and relationships and for the dominant narrative that is associated with them to be changed. These boys were ready to engage, as community leaders, overcome obstacles and pioneer new ground in tackling complex challenges. This Commission will work to ensure that the council is supporting them and using the full force of its power and leverage to move quickly, and address racism, discrimination and inequality faced by young Black boys and men.

6.8 We recognised that that beyond the evidence and data there is an on-going repetitive and polarised narrative that has become embedded in our culture over the last 40 years. This is unhelpful as it means that we need to challenge our worldviews and assumptions to ensure that it does not affect how we seek to help and support these young people. For this reason, we want to hear from these young boys and men in a different way. This means changing the dynamics of how we engage, moving away from conventional engagement exercises to a whole systems approach and a deep conversation about building a new future together.

**“We need a change – Black boys can’t change until we see you change”**

Stretch Collaboration and Transformative Scenario Building

6.9 One of the greatest challenges in working together with people is being able to work with those who we may not agree with, like or trust. One of the key ways of removing structural and systemic inequality is by adopting new and improved approaches, building on what we know to become more effective.

6.10 Often with complex challenges the same conversations and dialogue present themselves. We get into a pattern of hearing the same descriptions to problems with a diverse group of people holding perceptions or views that have stayed the same over years. Similar to systemic and structural inequality these ideas, assumptions and worldviews become deep-rooted and harder to influence or change.

6.11 Stretch Collaboration and Transformative Scenario Building moves away from conventional collaboration. It helps people work together across differences to transform systems, sectors, organisations and perspectives. It helps where people share a problematic issue to work together through conflictual situations and establish new imaginations and new narratives. This model of engaging takes us out of the conventional collaboration forms to tackle complex problems, breaking out of habitual ways of working and finding new ways of working together

6.12 Stretch Collaboration involves Transformative Facilitation and the building of Transformative Scenarios. It enables us to shift power dynamics, helps to facilitate dialogue between people who have different roles and perspectives and power levels. It lifts us into the realm of power and imagination and looks at what could happen and not what should happen.

6.13 To move forward it is important to embrace the conflict as well as the connection and find a way to work together even though we may not agree on everything. Organisations often present a structured timetable of events when sometimes a situation is so complex that the best way is to allow for emergent possibilities and experiment or feel the way forward. In this we may find it challenging to change or influence others but we can change ourselves.

6.14 There are three Stretches that help us collaborate.

1. *Embrace conflict and connection.* We can build relationships based on mutual understanding.
2. *Experiment our way forward.* There may be no single plan but we can feel our way forward. We can consider what it is that we are doing that is working, how are people responding to it and how can we adjust our course. We can

change approaches based on the way people work together so the system is responding to our efforts.

3. *Step into the game.* This is where we can cease to blame others for the problem and step into the ways where we could see ourselves as part of the problem. We can consider the way we need to change things about ourselves and the role we are playing in the system. We are multiple co-creators we can all change something in order to shift that reality.

***“It is important to see beyond the world we have created in order to change it”.<sup>6</sup>***

6.15 Collaboration in a global context is a choice (sometimes people use force, adapt or exit) if they don't want to collaborate. If we go a step further we could also see that there may be forms of collaboration where people do not feel fully free. We have chosen this methodology and approach because we see its value and how it can be best used in a conflicted and complex situation.

6.16 Stretch collaboration requires deep commitment and the need to build capabilities and practices that make the collaboration genuine and effective for the change we are trying to bring about.

6.17 We see this approach as a way of being able to listen to fears, concerns as well as dreams and to engage in the possibilities of undesirable futures as well as those we want to see. This is a co-creative approach to systems change which will involve many conversations and ideas as well as a strong emphasis on making the ideas a reality. It will enable us to confront the challenges that are identified for us to collaborate for that change.

6.18 In trying to solve the systemic challenges facing young Black boys and men we can get stuck. The challenges can seem significant and too big to fix, especially when people do not like, agree or trust each other. In the development of Transformative Scenarios we have the opportunity to change ourselves and the systems around us.

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<sup>6</sup> Haslanger, S (2022), *Systemic and Structural Injustice: Is There a Difference?* Cambridge University Press

# Phase three - Final report and recommendations

## Section 7: Next steps

7.1 This Scrutiny Inquiry has provided a call to action across the council and the borough to tackle systemic and structural inequalities faced by young Black boys and men. We are supporting and joining the work that is currently happening to ensure that we learn from others and make use of our resources to tackle these urgent concerns.

7.2 The approach that we proposing was developed by Reos partners [www.reospartners.com](http://www.reospartners.com) and is taken from the systemic change practice model. Reos have worked with diverse groups across the world to tackle complex problems and where conventional collaboration is not sufficient.

7.3 Reos works in an adaptive way appropriate to each context through:

- Deep listening to the different needs and perspectives and mirroring back the dynamics, challenges and opportunities.
- Building capabilities to enable people to collaborate with others who they don't necessarily agree with, like, or trust.
- Facilitating inclusive dialogue, and collaboration across different roles, perspectives and power levels.
- Helping local actors to develop scenarios for their own future.
- Supporting a co-creative approach to systemic change.

7.4 Reos is a team of 80 people from 18 countries speaking 15 languages. It was founded in South Africa and specialised on working in situations that are complex, uncertain and conflictual. This involves people in sectors and organisations becoming stuck and needing to create movement and change across sectors, organisations and perspectives. It has worked to dismantle structural racism with indigenous communities in Brazil, Canada and Australia looking at key areas such as power, privilege, rank, race, diversity, justice, dignity and belonging. With a team based in the UK REOS partners have also worked with the Ubele Initiative with the African diaspora and Black and minoritised communities in the UK.

7.5 The Stretch Collaboration and building of Transformative Scenarios will include collaboration between young Black boys and men and senior leaders of key institutions including the council and leaders from across nearly every area of society such as health, education, employment and business. This collaborative exercise will invite further discussions with the wider Black community.

7.6 The next steps for the Commission will be to undertake Phase two which is further engagement with our communities. This will include a small working group that will help design the collaborative process and support the development of an engagement, communications and publicity plan. We will invite further discussions from the wider Black community by sharing the findings and outcomes from the workshops on Stretch Collaboration and building Transformative Scenarios. The Commission will produce a final report and recommendations from this Inquiry to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet later this year. We will also be sharing what we have learned with wider stakeholders and networks as part of this Scrutiny Inquiry.

***The importance of the scrutiny commission on the relationship of Black Boys with the London Borough of Newham, is immeasurable and has the potential to be life changing for Black Boys and how they navigate inequalities in the borough, now and in the future.***

***The commission has gathered information for some time, has met with young black boys and has questioned senior officers across a number of directorates, who individually and collectively have responsibility for education, community safety and policing, social care, children and young people's services. I and other members of the commission have spoken directly with young black boys, who in turn have fully engaged with the commission, with honesty, openness and transparency; I believe the commission is committed to facilitating sustainable service transformation that will have a measurable impact on the lived experiences of Black boys in Newham.***

***Paul Leslie –Chief Executive of Rights and Equalities in Newham***

## **Witnesses**

*The Scrutiny Commission Inquiry has received oral evidence from the following witnesses:*

Audrey Johnson, Director of Early Help and Children's Health Brighter Futures - Newham Council

Geeta-Subramaniam-Mooney, Corporate Director Brighter Futures, Newham's Children and Young People's Commissioner - Newham Council

Anita Stewart, Director of Education, Inclusion and Achievement – Newham Council

Tim Aldridge, Corporate Director for Children and Young People Services – Newham Council

Vik Verma, Acting Corporate Director of Children & Young People – Newham Council

James Partis, Assistant Chief Executive/Chief Transformation Officer – Newham Council

Sean Mcdermid, Director of Community Safety – Newham Council

Paul Smith, Strategic Education & Inclusion Adviser - Newham Council

Michelle Edwards, Head of Youth Justice and Adolescent Safeguarding –Newham Council

Ben Ramsay, Senior Community Safety Analyst – Newham Council

Bernard Bruce, Programme Manager Tackling, Race, Inequality and Disproportionality – Newham Council

Tom Alexander, Head of Schools Human Resources – Newham Council

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Thank you to the young boys and men that provided wisdom and insights through their lived experience in evidence gathering sessions and for the quotes in this report. This includes young people from Rights and Equalities in Newham (REIN), Fight for Peace, Kailo, and the London Legacy Development Corporation, Youth programme Elevate. We would like to thank the Newham Governors Forum and colleagues that worked on the Disproportionality Challenge Fund Programme for sharing the feedback from children, parents and the Youth Justice Service staff.

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<https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/node/29943>

Improving Outcomes for Young Black Men - Hackney Council (2018-2022): This ambitious plan, developed in collaboration with young people, parents, and local agencies, aims to improve life chances for young Black men and coordinate support and opportunities for those aged 18-25

<https://hackney.gov.uk/young-black-men>

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