

TACKLING DISPROPORTIONALITY

Good Practice Case Studies

LB Lewisham
Establishing a cultural competency
approach to youth justice

Building on its long term ambition to becoming a trauma informed service, Lewisham's youth offending team is using data, external facilitators and workshops to embed cultural competence within it service



The challenge we were seeking to address

The importance of ensuring equalities by race and ethnicity is a very current theme for organisations and professions. Recent events remind us, if we needed it, that racism is embedded in society. Unconscious bias affects everyone but , by recognising it exists and is a business risk, we can start to formulate policies and practice to reduce racial disparity to address it and other forms of discrimination.

Building on the trauma work the Lewisham Youth Offending Service is in a strong position to establish anti-racist and anti-discriminatory policy and practice. The service has taken the time to reflect, to provide each other with support and articulate the impact of racial trauma.

It is our view that the commitment and sustained attention to the levels of racism, prejudice, intersectionality and programmed bias that is faced by black people does not lose momentum and the conversations keep going to use this time as a paradigm shift for improved outcomes for children and families.

Organisations that are culturally competent can inspire and enable young black children and young people to aim high and achieve higher.

Partners involved

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The solution

- The borough has spent the last six or so years becoming trauma informed, a key component of this is establishing a culturally competent workforce and environment.
- The starting point is to ensure services and the support being provided is not doing any further harm – this is the key foundation in the journey of change.
- The council has also looked at the diverse backgrounds and identities across Lewisham to contextualise the need for a new approach, ensuring the work is evidence based – the importance of using strong data.
- Used external facilitators for a period of 6 weeks. They led workshops that help identify and be honest about challenges but also identify ambitions.
 - Self-assessment to examine and understand the where and how young black people were experiencing racism. Holding the organisation /service to account
- Workforce resilience – equipping the team with what they need to connect with families
 - Also means providing resilience for young people and their families to ensure they feel safe enough to engage
- Addressing unconscious bias:
 - Ensuring diversity at all levels across the service, having a representative workforce
 - Developing a culture/way of working that's relevant e.g. openness, lack of defensiveness
 - Shifting from unconscious bias to proactively anti-racist
- Championing the approach to partners – building trust with communities, promoting activities, engaging with partners to shape the narrative.

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Desired outcomes

Delivery of services to meet needs

In 2020 it won the National MJ Award for workforce transformation – in recognition of service change and leading the council towards a trauma



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responsive service – considering unconscious bias a child first stance – and its restorative practices. Using the ‘journey of the child’ data, LYOS has begun the process of examining the pinch-points in the system where young Black/mixed heritage children can potentially face bias and discrimination. LYOS in collaboration with our key partners have devised an Anti- Racist Action plan, which aims to hold ourselves and our partners accountable as we challenge and change systemically racist practice

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The model

Trauma-informed approach

Lewisham Youth Offending Service is now described as a ‘**Trauma-Informed Service**’ (*Department of Education – Innovation Unit, 2018*). A trauma-informed service is one in which service delivery is influenced by an understanding of the impact of violence and victimisation on an individual’s life and development.

Restorative Justice

Complementing and linking with the trauma-informed response, the team has been developing **restorative practice** which allows a specific focus on an incident to achieve learning and shift from shame, therefore contributing to greater capacity to process Adverse Child Experiences (ACEs).

Unconscious Bias

The third key element is increasing awareness of and understanding **bias** in its many forms across the youth justice system. Our model identifies potential bias at each stage in the system.

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Child Exploitation, risk and safeguarding:

Lewisham's Child Exploitation Strategy 2021

Using an evidence-based and systematic process – and adhering to a performance management framework and clearly defined accountability structure – the Child Exploitation Strategy and action plan uses programmes that PREVENT violence & abuse through early intervention & education – PROTECT providing interventions that keep individuals and their families safe from harm – REPAIR providing longer term support to enable recovery following abuse – PURSUE – holding perpetrators to account whilst providing opportunity for change and support. All this is underpinned by PEOPLE – practitioners and communities - having the knowledge and skills to identify and respond to abuse

The Concern Hub is a preventative offer of support for the client and family with earlier identification of risk. It provides a multi-agency forum to jointly share and map information, risk assess and safety plan for agencies to inform a contextual safeguarding approach. Our focus is the under 25 year olds who are exposed to Child Criminal Exploitation, Child Sexual Exploitation and Serious Youth Violence

The mapping of concern hub cases – pulling together the intelligence of all professionals - has become a key tool in understanding young people – enabling the mapping of intelligence and information relating to a specific case - drawing up a visual overview of associations, threats, and support.

The concern Hub database captures and reports on over 120 characteristics, with the ability to dynamically drilldown on specific concern factors.

Data from Concern hub

- 58% of Black young people were assessed as being at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation concerns.
- All Black young people referred were seen as being perpetrators/Victims. While all others referred were seen as victims. (adultification bias see Goff et al 2014))
- 80% of referral with SYV concerns were Black.

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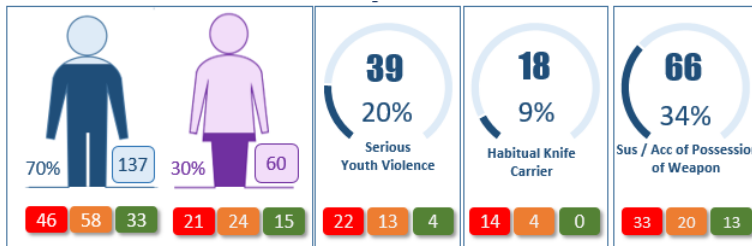
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Good Practice Case Studies

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Restorative Approaches

Restorative Practice (RP) allows Restorative clinics provide a strong focus on an incident for learning, as well as a shift away from shame. RP is used at every stage of the engagement process with young people to enhance opportunities for meaningful victim interaction. Lewisham YOS is instrumental in developing wider education, police and social care restorative practice across the borough.



Lewisham's Public Health Approach to Reducing Violence in 2018 is in line with one of the council's priorities to build safer communities

Lewisham's Public Health Approach to Reducing Violence in 2018 is in line with one of the council's priorities to build safer communities – through a shared approach commitment involving local communities and public agencies across the borough in the solution - where every resident can feel safe and secure - working together towards a borough free from the fear of crime. The aims include:

- Reducing the impact and level of actual violence across Lewisham.
- Identify the causes of violence in Lewisham, and act to deliver short and longer-term reductions.
- Listen and work with communities to build on their strengths and deliver solutions together.
- Impact positively on wider social, economic and health outcomes for our residents.

Lewisham Youth Justice Partnership Strategic and Operational Development Plan

Workforce Development Since 2017 the YOS began the journey to become a learning organization – constantly transforming itself in response to practice and the needs of young people. Service training has included the trauma response model (2016) – the unconscious bias training (2017) Restorative approaches and Restorative enquiries (2018) and more recently (2020/21) the race-based stress training.

Lewisham recognises that systemic racism has been a factor in workforce disproportionality and that both developmental opportunities for staff and organisational change are needed. Lewisham have supported developments to help address the under-representation of minority staff in leadership positions within London's Children's Services.

TACKLING DISPROPORTIONALITY

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To this end the Service has sponsored eligible BAME managers within the YOS onto BAME management and leadership development courses with specialist input specifically aimed at BAME leadership.

Therapy hub: Lewisham YOS Family Team and integrated CAHMS team

In 2019 the development of the Lewisham YOS Family Therapy Team (LYFT) formed a closer partnership with ARTS (Lewisham Forensic CAHMS) to physically collocate under the leadership of the YOS Operational Manager (Family Specialist supervisor) to create a single-entry point for joint formulation, case planning within the intervention framework. As part of the Therapy Hub these services will be embedded in the organisational structure of the YOS.

Anti-racism policy, Journey of the Black child and wider work

Disproportionality and over-representation in the Criminal Justice System, the Youth Justice Management Board has driven a borough-wide, self-assessment and action plan during 2018/19 – strengthened by an Anti-racist policy in 2020/21 which includes:

- Provision of Unconscious bias training across the partnership during 2018/19.
- Sponsoring eligible BAME managers within the YOS onto BAME management and leadership development courses with specialist input specifically aimed at BAME leadership.

Stop and Search: Proposed actions:

- Facilitate and support the distribution of “know your rights” cards to young people in the borough.
- Increasing preventative work with young people especially in primary schools and community groups to avoid section 60’s being enacted.
- Importance of Police training including unconscious bias training - on-going and delivered to frontline staff.
- 40 per cent of its new police recruits from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds from 2022.
- Investigating a way to facilitate and support young people to make complaints through a third party mechanism.
- From March 2021, the Executive Director for Children & Young People will chair the Prevent Delivery Group. Ensuring that Prevent is aligned with other safeguarding issues, as well as raising its profile amongst senior officers.
- 58% of the general public viewed the Prevent programme favourably compared to just 8% who viewed it unfavourably.

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Learning / evaluation

The YOS operates within a continually 'learning environment' to meet the changing and varied personalized needs of children and young people. The service has benefitted from the following evaluations – embedding all learning back into the service:

Violence Reduction Trauma Informed Group Work Programme - South bank University, 2020 – Devised by Lewisham YOS - 22 YP involved over 4 cohorts from 2017 incl. 12 (55%) Black YP – 5 (23%) mixed YP.

Findings showed improvements shown in more positive perceptions of peers and prosocial personal relationships - Improved relationship to authority - healthier use of social media use and greater sense of personal responsibility. Trauma-informed model – Goldsmith University, 2020

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The evaluation of the service approach 2019-2020: Data from young people and families. 63 Surveys completed - 81% of survey participants were from BAME backgrounds: 63% identified as Black (Black African/Black Caribbean/Black British); 13% identified as mixed/multiple ethnic groups.

Findings showed that 'the LYOS is providing a safe and trusting environment for its service users - impressive that young people unanimously expressed their trust in the service and their YOS workers'

The report was clear that the LYOS approach to bias awareness/reduction had a positive impact on family member's experience of the service and that frontline staff at LYOS appeared to be exceptionally dedicated to the trauma-informed approach and used it to show how the trauma-recovery approach builds resilience, hope for positive future pathways, and a positive sense of self-identity in young people.

What did the community say about violence in Lewisham? A report on key findings (2020) from Mutual Gain Community Champions in Lewisham: World Cafés held across the borough during Oct'19 – Feb'20

See Mutual Gain report : *'The community points to Lewisham not having tackled deprivation over the years, with some communities disproportionately affected by poverty and limited life opportunities particularly the black and minority ethnic communities (although not exclusively). For some, that place is one of isolation and hopelessness and the attraction of money, power and belonging that is advocated through the plethora of media channels can trigger the desire to enter a world of crime that comes with violence'*

Findings showed that 'the LYOS is providing a safe and trusting environment for its service users'

Please contact [Keith Cohen](#) – Head of Lewisham Youth Offending Service for more information.

