

To end racial disparity we require your absolute focus

Around this time last year, the Youth Justice Board (YJB) published 'the disproportionality journey of the child'. One year on, and we've updated it to reflect the latest data and show what we have done in that time to bring about change.

In doing this, we have produced a presentation described as ['exploring racial disparity: how it affects children in their early years and within the youth justice system'](#) and an infographic that summarises some of the main points [Exploring racial disparity: summary \(infographic\)](#) (PDF, 273KB, 3 pages).

We've also responded to feedback and taken advantage of new data to look more closely at marginalised groups, such as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) children and looked-after children to help us identify areas for potential work in the future.

Against the backdrop of this new data it's clear that ethnic disproportionality remains a concerning issue. Black children are still more likely to be arrested, more likely to be held in custody on remand, receive generally harsher penalties and, shockingly, children from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds now make up more than half of all children in custody.

As this presentation shows, over-representation in the youth justice system is a complex issue. That is true, but it does not mean that we cannot change it. Complexity is not an excuse for inaction or giving up, it's a challenge, and one that we must collectively meet.

Over the past year, as part of our programme of work to tackle the issue, we have been involved in a range of activities, for example we have revised a number of tools to analyse ethnic disproportionality and also used our influence to change how our partners approach this issue. We supported the Alliance of Sport to secure a record-breaking £1,000,000 grant from the London Marathon Charitable Trust for "Levelling the Playing Field" – a sports-based project to benefit children from BAME backgrounds. In September, we will bring together experts to improve employment opportunities for children disproportionately represented in the justice system and later in the year we are expecting to publish research into disproportionality in sentencing and the use of remand.

At the YJB, we remain determined to change the system, but we cannot change it alone. We need the help of government departments, agencies and statutory functions. We ALL need to look at the evidence and ask ourselves, "are children from BAME backgrounds over-represented in my area? If so, can I explain why that is, and if I can't, what am I going to do about it?"