

Improving Outcomes for Young Black Men in Hackney - Programme summary 2016 London Borough of Hackney

1. Overview of programme and ambitions

The Council, [Hackney CVS](#) and local partner agencies have worked with young people and parents to launch an ambitious programme to improve outcomes for young black men. This responds to the fact that young black men (YBM) tend to fare worse than their peers in many ways, from poorer educational results to higher offending rates. This has been a problem for many years and there have been many responses from public bodies and from the community, but they have not had the impact needed. Rather than tackle individual problems, our approach involves local people, the voluntary and community sector and the statutory sector in shaping and delivering solutions, with young people at the heart of this.

The work is championed by Cllr Bramble, lead Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. We seek to improve life chances for future generations of young men as well as co-ordinating support and opportunities for those who are 18- 25 now. There are many black boys, young black men and black families that are succeeding in Hackney. It is vitally important that this work does not stereotype or problematize black men or the black community; the focus of this programme is on harnessing the potential of successful young black men, increasing their visibility as well as tackling inequalities where they do exist.

The programme sets some clear ambitions to reduce disproportionality over the next 10 years:

Within 10 years: Outcomes and opportunities for black boys and young black men should be the same as the wider population.

Within 15 years: We start to see cultural changes in terms of aspirations and in terms of trust of the state

Within 15 years: Working with other authorities, central government and the state, we also want to see changes in media representation and portrayals

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

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2. Who do we mean by “young black men” and who are we trying to reach?

Our definition is broad. We want to engage with diverse sections of the African and Black diaspora which is as inclusive of all sections of the community as possible covering:

- Black African, African Caribbean and mixed race
- Faith and secular communities
- Representing the range of equality groups within the community - ie, age, gender, class
- A range of geographic locations
- Recent migrants and settled communities that might have lived in Britain for many generations

There are different sections of the community that the programme will reach in targeted ways:

- Young black boys from 0-16
- Young black men from 16-24
- Young black men from 25-34
- Parents and carers within the community
- The wider black community
- Black owned businesses

The largest group of Black people in Hackney are Black African (11.4%). This is also the third largest ethnic group in Hackney after White British and Other White. We have seen an absolute increase of 15% (+3686) since 2001 although the proportion of black Africans in the overall population has dropped slightly (0.6%) as Hackney's population has grown. The largest group within this category are the Nigerian community. Conversely, the Black Caribbean population in Hackney (7.8%) has decreased since 2001 both in absolute and relative terms.

The proportion of people who say they are mixed heritage has increased in proportion and absolute number since 2001, both for mixed White and Black Caribbean and mixed White and Black African. In 2011, there were 4,614 young (age 16 to 24) black (including Black British and also Mixed: White and African and Mixed: White and Caribbean) men.

3. Developing a theory of change

Since January 2015 we have engaged with partners from all sectors, young people, businesses and parents and have identified what we consider to be the key drivers to inequality and the possible solutions. Young people and parents have been at the centre of the engagement and enquiry; a youth advisory group has been established to work with the partnership to define issues and develop solutions and parents of black children were engaged as peer researchers to interview other parents about their experience of parenting in Hackney.

We have also engaged evaluators University of East London and Runnymede Trust and set up a dashboard of data to understand inequality and differentials across all key outcomes.

We have developed a theory of change based on all the engagement with parents, young people and partners, considered alongside data and evidence of what works

This Theory of Change sets out our main assumptions about what is driving inequality and the actions we want to take forward. There are challenges here for the partners agencies, young men and the wider community. We are currently further testing the assumptions we have made and the actions we have identified to firm up commitments by this autumn, whilst piloting work sooner if we can.

4. Who did we talk to?

This list is not comprehensive, but gives an idea of who was involved in developing the Theory of Change

- Interviews with key partner agencies (April/ May 2015)
- Focus group on growth and change in Hackney with young people (July 2015) and follow up with the young people's advisory group (September 2015)
- Focus groups with young people on employment (April 2015)
- Engagement with local businesses (April – September 2015) to create group of businesses committed to creating opportunity and promoting inclusion
- Peer research led by HCVS with parents (87 parents) (April – August 2015)
- Specific cross sector workshops and discussions on employment and opportunity and Mental Health- Children (July 2015) and Adults (Sept 2015)
- Hackney Council Staff Equality Network discussion with 60 members of staff (July 2015)
- Co-production session in September with young people to develop draft theory of change
- Partnership meeting in October to develop theory of change
- Meeting with Head Teachers (Nov 2015)

5. Cross cutting workstreams

The Theory of Change identifies a number of cross cutting workstreams. The key issues identified to date are set out below. Further details are provided in the Background and Context paper.

Improving Life Chances for Black Boys

Critical intervention points

There are well known key transitions or critical points that can negatively impact on a young person's life such as the transition from primary to secondary school, a first exclusion as well as things that happen beyond their control such as a bereavement. There has already been a great deal of focus on co-ordinating support around these critical points as well as at transition points, for example to reduce repeat offences or to support the transition from primary to secondary school. However the work so far has highlighted that black boys and young black men are disproportionately represented in, for example, exclusion rates, child protection or in the criminal justice system, so we need to understand the reasons for the over-representation, and how these can be reduced. There is also a strong perception that when things go wrong for a young person, their circumstances can worsen very quickly, so we then need to understand the reasons for this and how this can be averted.

Role of schools

There remains a gap in achievement between black boys and the wider school population. We need to collaborate with schools to look more closely at how we narrow the gap, how schools manage behaviour for black boys, as well as the relationship between parents and schools. This could be contributing to the higher rate of exclusions which in turn could lead to far worse life chances for those young people. We also need to understand why we have the highest rates of conduct disorder in the country. As school environments have changed and become more formal, some young people and parents have felt less engaged. Young black men and parents have reported being negatively stereotyped or labelled at school and there are studies about how this might lead to poorer attainment (“stereotype threat”.)

Trust between parents and the statutory sector

Relationships between black parents and the state did not appear generally positive and this was thought to be undermining opportunities to work constructively together to get the best for children or to deal with problems or issues at an early stage. Outside of the school environment, parents describe a lack of trust in children’s social care, concerned that they would be problematized if they sought help. Some parents wanted their cultural heritage and identity to be valued more, seeing it as a source of strength rather than a problem or division. For this reason some parents valued supplementary schools that taught parents’ first languages to children, or for helping to bridge the gap between school and home life.

Families

There are concerns about the disproportionate level of violence and abuse within the black diaspora, both within families and in the community and how this affects children young people. Statutory social work assessment witnesses a disproportionate number of families where physical violence to discipline children is the norm. In addition Domestic Violence is a key issue in Hackney and needs to be addressed to safeguard women and children.

Partners have highlighted the critical importance of what happens in the early years of a child’s life and the impact on outcomes. There is overwhelming evidence that children’s life chance are most heavily predicted on their development in the first five years, starting before birth during pregnancy. Disadvantages experienced by young children accumulate across the life-cycle, with an increased risk across a range of outcomes.

Some parents identified multiple external strains that affected family life such as low income, financial difficulty and poverty, overcrowded housing and insecure immigration status. This cluster of issues suggests the need to look at how preventative safeguarding strategies and family support contributes to this agenda. It identifies the opportunity to scale up activity which is focused on challenging gender stereotypes.

Empowering the community

Community leadership

The level of engagement so far by parents and young people is an indication of the interest within the community to shape and deliver solutions and responses to the considerable inequalities for young black men. This has highlighted the need to build a better

understanding and mutuality between the black diaspora community and the statutory sector, in terms of valuing heritage, understanding the issues and challenges for young people growing up and exposed to “street life” and gang culture and in terms of trusting each other.

Improving outcomes for young black men

Young men at risk and community safety

The Gangs Unit estimate over 1000 young people on the periphery of gangs that need to be engaged positively to avoid getting more involved in gang life. There is a concern that without engagement the situation for young black men at risk can deteriorate more quickly because they do not know how to seek help or would not go to the statutory sector for support. Despite Hackney becoming a safer borough in recent years, getting around the borough safely can be an issue for some young black men because of postcode rivalry and gang activity and this risk limits their ability to take up opportunities. Knife crime and culture is once again a growing concern with crime rates on the rise across the country, with young people seeing it as “normal” and stabbing seen as a rite of passage within gangs. Overall there is a need to continue to build a greater level of trust in the police that might increase reporting and reduce crime.

In terms of ex-offenders there was a strong view from stakeholders that support needs to begin whilst people are still in custody and then continue beyond probation, so that ex-offenders are supported to identify positive opportunities as opposed to thinking that a return to custody is inevitable. A positive transition from young offending to probation can also help prevent re-offending. As black men get older (25+) it can be more difficult for them to access help (employment support, housing, mental health) when they want to turn their life around, especially when they have a criminal record, and this can lead them back into the grey economy or into re-offending.

Mental health

Mental health issues are affecting wider outcomes of young black men; young people need to access support more quickly, but mental health services need to examine institutional bias and stereotyping. The extent of substance misuse (alcohol, cannabis) are seen by young people as a significant trigger of mental health problems among young black men.

In terms of accessing support, there can be a stigma in the black diaspora community around seeking mental health support. There is also a strong relationship between social networks and mental health: those with few social contacts are at increased risk of mental health problems. Focusing on roots and heritage can be a source of strength and recovery. Clinicians and stakeholders alike were interested in how creativity can promote wellbeing.

Regeneration and opportunity

Young people felt that the Council needed to engage differently about the changes in Hackney rather than just provide information. They felt that many young people were in housing need or in temporary accommodation and this compounded their problems. Young

people did not always know how they could benefit from the increasing prosperity in Hackney and that their aspirations were being limited whereas they may have had bigger ambitions. The programme to date had not actively engaged as many of the existing base of black owned businesses as had been anticipated, although a number were engaged through outreach. From this, the indication is that some of these businesses that were engaged are finding it difficult to survive and are not able to engage and make a wider community contribution.

Culture and Identity

Valuing heritage and celebrating success

The insight work highlighted the need to focus more on black culture, identity and heritage (in all its diversity) which is not often celebrated or talked about. They also felt there was a need to counter negative stereotypes in wider society with positive presentations of young black men and their success stories. The cultural legacy of slavery was something which needed to be explored not suppressed because it created a “personal glass ceiling” that is holding the community back. Many parents engaged in the peer research saw their faith as a key aspect of their lives. Some young people **also** said that faith built their resilience but they also saw problems with their parents’ faith if it meant that they turned to prayer when something went wrong rather than dealing with the issue.

Behaviour, lifestyles, culture and identity

The insight work with young men uncovered the extent to which some young black men feel alienated by mainstream society and angry about injustices; they therefore may distance themselves and behave in a defended manner. This can make gang lifestyle or criminal activity seem attractive, as a way of being empowered and accepted, without seeing the negative consequences for themselves and others. There can also be strong gender stereotypes imposed on men within the black diaspora community. Challenging these and encouraging a more flexible approach to masculinity would offer boys and young men the opportunity to relate to a more nuanced and realistic identity. Some black girls and women look for the wrong things in relationships and make men feel that being “bad” is more attractive even though it will ultimately harm them.

6. Next steps

Smaller working groups have been established to test the assumptions further and develop actions. In seeking to understand what is driving the disproportionality of outcomes, we need to adopt an approach which is multi-dimensional and considers what is driving inequality that might be linked to:

- Direct or indirect discrimination based on gender, age, ethnicity and the intersection of all three
- Contextual or cultural drivers e.g. lack of trust between the community and state, cultural barriers

- Poverty and socio-economic inequality – the black community is more likely to be in low income households in Hackney and experience other socio-economic inequalities

We therefore need to examine data and insight which helps us to understand outcomes compared with the wider population, and also outcomes compared with other young men, and to analyse data and insight by different sections of the black diaspora.

In responding to the drivers of inequality we need to understand what changes are needed within:

- Individuals and the community
- Institutions
- Wider society

We expect recommendations to include changes which are:

- Universal- bringing about changes for everyone
- Making an offer or service more inclusive
- Targeted to address a specific cohort by ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic group or an intersection of these

7. Cross cutting enablers

This programme is about more than the individual workstreams highlighted above. At its heart is the need to bring about cultural and institutional change. The partnership has identified a number of cross cutting enablers which we need to progress together

- A constructive and positive relationship needs to be built between the statutory sector and community
- People need to be open and honest to thinking about how racial identity and culture drives inequality for young black men, beyond socio-economics and to acknowledge the possibility that stereotyping, discrimination and bias is impacting on young black men's outcomes. However for this work to be successful there have to be wider strategies to reducing inequalities and socio-economic polarisation in Hackney
- A whole community approach is needed that is understood and involves local people (not just the black diaspora community), the voluntary and community sector and the statutory sector in shaping and delivering solutions - this needs to be underpinned by a clear communication and engagement plan
- Young black men should be involved in shaping and delivering solutions
- Partners need to make a long term commitment to the programme actions and to working together to find the resources required whether mainstream or external funding
- Raising the profile of the work in the media and with stakeholders to garner interest and support of stakeholders nationally
- There is a need for continual evaluation to keep under review progress against the main ambitions of the programme
- Develop a common approach to youth development and empowerment
- Develop a common approach to inclusive leadership to bring about institutional change

8. Theory of Change

Theory of change – overview



9. Ethnic Groups in Hackney –2001 and 2011

Ethnic Group	2001 Census		2011 Census		Change between 2001 - 2011	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	% Change
ALL	202,824	100	246,270	100	43,446	21
White	120,468	59.4	134,617	54.7	14,149	12%
British	89,490	44.1	89,030	36.2	-460	-1%
Other white	24,861	12.3	39,897	16.2	15,036	60%
Irish	6,117	3.0	5,216	2.1	-901	-15%
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	NA	NA	474	0.2	NA	NA
Black/Black British	50,009	24.7	56,858	23.1	6,849	14%
African	24,290	12.0	27,976	11.4	3,686	15%
Caribbean	20,879	10.3	19,168	7.8	-1,711	-8%
Other	4,840	2.4	9,714	3.9	4,874	101%
Asian/Asian British	19,791	9.8	25,867	10.5	6,076	31%
Indian	7,624	3.8	7,599	3.1	-25	0%
Other	1,655	0.8	6,747	2.7	5,092	308%
Bangladeshi	5,970	2.9	6,180	2.5	210	4%
Chinese	2,377	1.2	3,436	1.4	1,059	45%
Pakistani	2,165	1.1	1,905	0.8	-260	-12%
Mixed	8,501	4.2	15,869	6.4	7,368	87%
Other	2,251	1.1	4,994	2.0	2,743	122%
White and Black Caribbean	3,075	1.5	4,989	2.0	1,914	62%
White and Asian	1,576	0.8	3,020	1.2	1,444	92%
White and Black African	1,599	0.8	2,866	1.2	1,267	79%
Other	4,055	2.0	13,059	5.3	9,004	222%
Any other ethnic group	4,055	2.0	11,338	4.6	7,283	180%
Arab	NA	NA	1,721	0.7	NA	NA
TOTAL	202,824		246,270		43,446	21%

* New ethnicity categories introduced in 2011 Census for the first time.

** There were a number of changes to the ethnic classification between 2001 and 2011 which affect these comparisons. These include: the introduction of 2 new ethnic categories and; a change to the placement of the Chinese category (from the 'Other ethnic groups' category to the 'Asian/Asian British' category).

10. The percentage of local residents that are black males aged under 25, with housing estates shown in red

