

# Submission to Sheffield Race Equality Commission on behalf of Sheffield Youth Justice Service

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- The YJS intends to strive for anti-racist practice in all aspects of its work and culture.
- The service recognises that people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds are disproportionately represented within the Criminal Justice System, and that includes Sheffield Youth Justice Service.
- There is service-wide recognition that we still have significant work to do to ensure that the service is self-aware and that it recognises and challenges unfair discrimination both internally and in partner agencies.
- The service is building an action plan and wants to be held to account for continued progress.

In 2019 Sheffield Youth Justice Service examined the breakdown of its caseload by ethnicity. Overall, when compared to the school census Black, Asian and minority ethnic children appeared to be over-represented by a small proportion. However, when individual ethnicities were looked at it became evident that children from certain ethnic groups were more likely than white children to be within the service, and that disproportionality increased as the gravity of sentence increased. Sheffield has a very small number of children in custody meaning that each child significantly affects results and therefore we have to be cautious about drawing conclusions. Having said that, our results broadly reflect those reported nationally and so we have determined to accept them rather than seek further evidence before acting.

Following the death of George Floyd there was strong feeling within the service that as the criminal justice service within Sheffield City Council, we had a clear responsibility to be at the front of the development of anti-racist practice. We know it should not have taken such an incident to provoke this momentum, but also, that we should not let it pass without action.

The service had already commissioned Unconscious Bias Training for frontline staff which had been postponed owing to Covid, but then worked with the trainer so that it could be delivered via Zoom. In recognition that the culture of the organisation is about more than frontline work there is a further training session commissioned so that all staff within the organisation will have undertaken the training by the beginning of October. The training delivered so far has been well received and is also recognised as insufficient on its own to bring about anti-racist practice.

A monthly anti-racist focus group began at the end of June to which all Youth Justice staff are invited and have been well-attended. This has supported the management team in setting an agenda of action with the following key themes;

- Recruitment
- Training and Continual Professional Development
- Supervision and Team Meetings

- Casework
- Resources
- Links with community
- Challenge to other services

Further to this there is agreement that Practice Development Meetings, involving all practitioners, will focus on anti-racist practice development on at least alternate months.

Diversity is an agenda item in all supervisions and team meetings and there is guidance for facilitators to support this being meaningful and keeping a focus on race.

We have also built our library to include a number of key texts about Black history and racism, as well as celebrating Black excellence. The service also promotes other forms of personal education around ethnicity such as podcasts and TV programmes. Personal education on race will be built into Personal Development Reviews.

We recognise that this is just the start. The action plan is still in a partially completed state and needs to build detail and responsibilities, be approved by our management board, and its monitoring and review be built into process.

We have yet to formally consult the people we are working with and who we have worked with about their experiences of being clients and the families of clients of this service, in relation to what extent their ethnicity has been respected and their needs supported by our people and processes.

We are committed to this work, but we would welcome the scrutiny and challenge that would be brought by this commission to ensure that good intention results in positive impact and outcomes for the people of Sheffield.