

IMPROVING PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT:

Considerations for practitioners and policy officials on empowering and meeting the needs of parents of Black, Asian and minority ethnic children (BAME) in the Youth Justice System (YJS)*



Ministry
of Justice

1. Acknowledge and address the potential for a multi-generational lack of trust in the Criminal Justice System within BAME families, through the promotion of transparency and concentrated engagement:

- Consider extending preventative and intervention-based programmes into pre-arrest avenues (e.g. schools, community services) to reach out to BAME parents and children early on.
- Proactively inform BAME children and parents about their rights to build trust.
- Be empathetic towards BAME children's and parents' needs, and be realistic and honest about the support you can offer, signposting parents to other relevant services where appropriate.
- Consider the barriers that BAME parents might face in accessing certain services, and proactively seek to engage them to offer support.
- Ensure that communication with parents is clear and uses means that maximise parental engagement, and clearly communicate to parents the situation of their child at all times.
- Ensure that the voices of BAME parents and children are heard, and use their feedback to improve the service you deliver.
- Be transparent about the challenges faced, and the work done to address them, in delivering a service to BAME parents and children, to increase trust and reassure parents that their child's wellbeing is the key focus.

2. Understand the value of, and develop, closer partnerships with peer and community organisations in supporting parents with a BAME child in the YJS.

- Engage peer and community organisations to access communities harder to reach, and to engage BAME parents and children more effectively.
- Engage prominent figures, that have the trust of local communities, and seek their support in engaging parents.
- Deliver or signpost parents to good quality parental programmes, offering them the flexibility to commit gradually and, wherever appropriate, on a voluntary basis.
- Simplify the 'layers' of professionals that parents and children will encounter in navigating the system.
- Facilitate whole-family, strengths-based discussions between parents, children, and other professionals.
- Where possible, ensure that both parents are equally engaged in their child's journey in the YJS.
- Tailor services availability around parents' other commitments (e.g. deliver them during non-working hours).
- 'De-mystify' the YJS for parents and children through engaging events, presentations and materials.
- Have a workforce that reflects the local area's demographics, and ensure that staff members are trained to work with BAME children and their parents, to understand their needs and offer appropriate support.

3. Ensure that parents can access appropriate resources to understand and navigate the system, to facilitate and encourage them to support their child and to challenge the decisions and actions of their child, where necessary.

- Ensure that parents have a point of contact, including whilst their child is in custody, that can simplify for them the process of accessing a service or information about their child.
- Ensure that parents have the chance to write parental statements, that are then presented and considered in court, in cases in which they cannot attend court procedures.
- Ensure that parents get to see pre-sentence reports, as early as possible, and understand them.
- Ensure that parents understand the decisions that were made about their child, and the reasons behind them.
- Consider the impact that video links in court may have on parental engagement, and consider other ways of maximizing parents' engagement during court procedures.
- Be clear about what information is recorded about the child, where it is stored, who can access it and how.
- Where English is not their first language, provide or signpost parents to translation/interpretation services.

* Suggestions identified through discussions with parents, third sector organisations, non-departmental public bodies and executive agencies.