

DATABASE

The Impacts of Racist 'Gang'
Profiling and Surveillance on
Young People in London

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What is Justice?

I think, oh,
not again; I'm just
minding my business, so
there should be no reason
they need to interact with me. I
don't want to talk to them. (...)
But I live here, where can I
go? I can't escape it. (...)
It's harassment. It's
crazy.

- Caleb

My justice
would be for the
police to stop harassing
me, just stop all of these
searches...They shouldn't
just be harassing young
black people.

- Gabriel

Summary

The ‘gang’ label has been used to legitimise the over-policing of Black and racialised people and communities, for example through the Metropolitan police’s Gangs Matrix, and councils, like Barnet, which has historically also carried out ‘gang’ profiling.

This project sought to uncover, understand and present the experiences of, and impact on, people monitored, profiled and databased in the London borough of Barnet, focusing on the Grahame Park estate. While the Gangs Matrix database is set to be erased, and Barnet council has said it no longer conducts ‘gang’ screening, we found that ‘gang’-related profiling, databases and data-sharing is a widespread and embedded practice in policing and the local council. This leads to stigmatisation, harassment, criminalisation and violence against young people in the area, especially young Black men.

What young people targeted know about the surveillance, profiling and databases

The majority of the young people we spoke to knew only little about the technological and data infrastructure behind the monitoring, surveillance, profiling, harassment and violence they have been subjected to at the hands of the authorities.

Many of them were all too aware of being constantly surveilled and monitored by police and authorities in their local area. Some had heard and knew about the police's Gangs Matrix, and knew generally

of the structure of police databases and profiling young people as alleged 'gang' members. None of them knew with any certainty which databases they were actually on, or the real information or details behind their targeting by the authorities, beyond casual comments police made to them on the street. Some had tried to find out more information by asking the authorities, but they were always rejected.

“When the officer leaves his house, he has a picture in his head of the 10-20 people he wants to see; (...). They know who their targets are when they leave their yard.”

• *Anonymous*



People's experiences of being surveilled, profiled and databased and the consequences

“I have experienced policing here more than anywhere else. It starts from young”

- *Dean*

All of the people we spoke to had experiences of being monitored constantly by police in their local area, being harassed and questioned by police, stopped and searched, and stopped and pulled out of cars. They described being stopped and searched at incredibly young ages, with this continuing throughout their teenage years into young adulthood.

People told us about how police were targeting the area where they lived and individuals that lived there under suspicion

of it being an alleged ‘gang’ area, and targeting them when they were with their friends or in groups for being alleged ‘gang’ members, or treating them as being ‘exploited’ by older neighbours on the estate. There were common experiences of police making up reasons for stopping people, and a repeated theme that police had a ‘script’ of reasons or excuses for this targeting and unjustified stops.

The impacts of being surveilled, profiled and databased

“I am paranoid; you think more and are careful with what you do. (...) Especially if they know where I live”.

- *Adam*

People we spoke to told us about how the constant surveillance and harassment from police became embedded in their lives and severely impacted their well-being and mental health. Some spoke about the chilling effect this had on them and their ability to move around their local area.

Others were subject to incredibly restrictive conditions. One young adult, who was 12 years of age at the time, was subject to a curfew and restrictions on who

he could ‘associate’ with, while another was banned from going to the Grahame Park estate. Others, had had issues with their driving licences being removed by the DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency) at the behest of the police, based on often unevidenced allegations that they were ‘driving under the influence’. These consequences limit people’s opportunities, contributing to forcing them towards a cycle of criminalisation.

The authorities' database, profiling and surveillance infrastructure

The report then examines the technological and data infrastructure that enables this monitoring, harassment, intrusion and violence against individuals and communities. The Metropolitan police's Gangs Matrix database is due to be erased, and Barnet council denies conducting any form of 'gang' related profiling. However, there already exists a widespread structure of databases, data-based profiling systems and data-sharing between the police, local authorities and public services providers, which maintains the same narrative of 'gangs' and other related forms of 'criminality'.

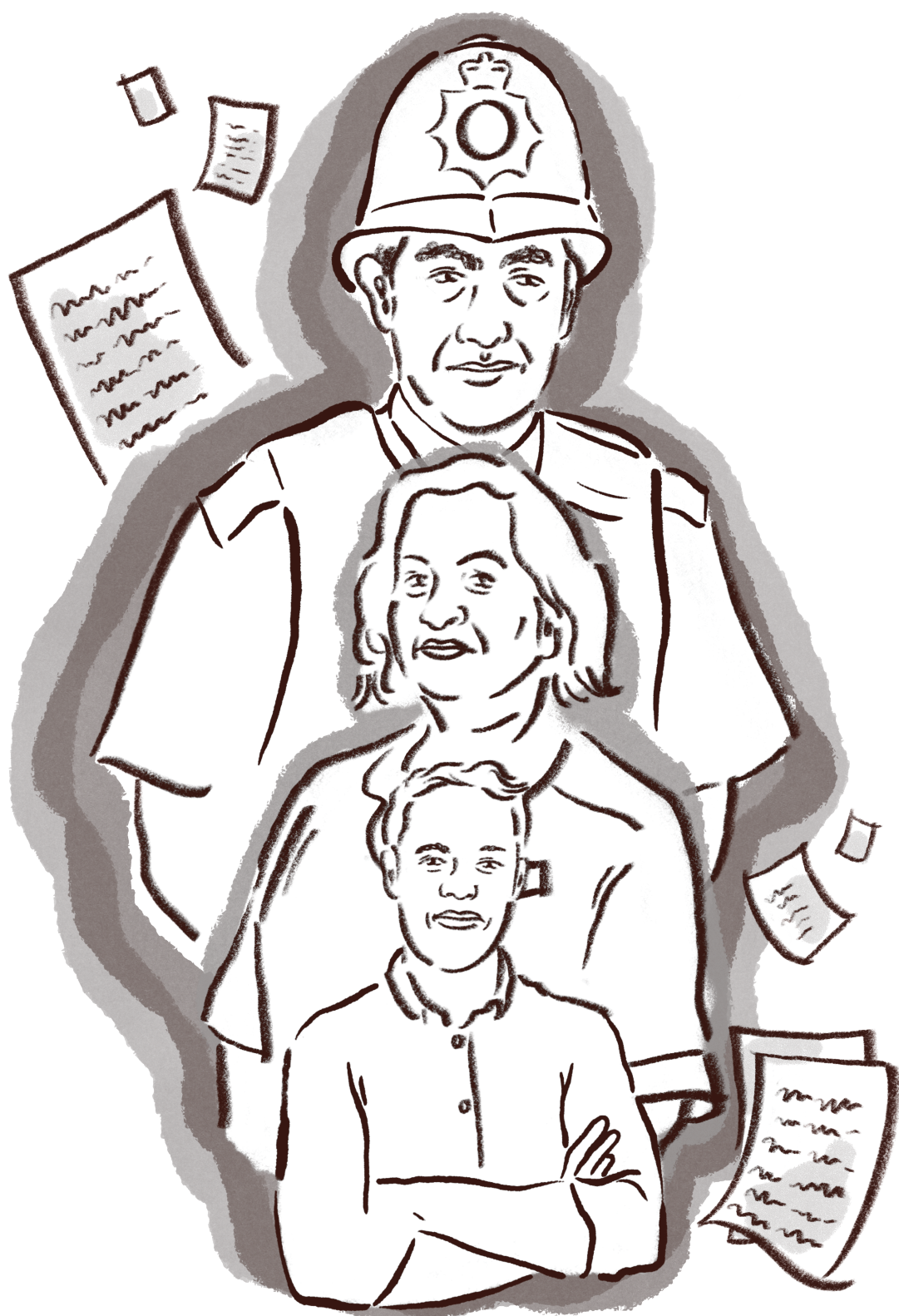
This narrative has proliferated and spread, alongside the use of more benign safeguarding narratives such as 'exploitation' and 'vulnerability', used to defend the repurposing of 'old' databases and the expansion and development of new databases in local authority boroughs and police force areas.

This convoluted interlinking nexus of monitoring, databases, data-sharing and related profiling is difficult to fully and comprehensively map, and is

undoubtedly an intentional structure which serves to diffuse transparency, evade accountability and deny responsibility for the racist data-harms generated by this infrastructure.

The Metropolitan police's new 'Violence Harm Assessment', a profiling tool and database of alleged violent offenders and 'gang' members, is a perfect example of the continuity of the 'gang' narrative, not just metaphorically, but in a literal sense, with people targeted under the gangs matrix now targeted under a new database with the same aims and almost identical criteria, just given a different name.

For communities who are subject to monitoring and surveillance the police rightly become the visual representative for this work. However, our findings clearly implicate local authorities - councils - as accomplices, which are equally perpetuating and upholding the same harmful narrative and outcomes. While the police are the public face of this violence, local authorities are more concealed, more clandestine. Councils appear to be conducting much of the



data collection and providing data and data infrastructure which, in collaboration with the police, enables and justifies the treatment of these young people as alleged 'gang' members and complicit in or otherwise associated with criminality.

While Barnet council denies officially carrying out 'gang' profiling anymore, it too preserves a complex and convoluted network of supposed 'safeguarding' profiling, databases and data-sharing, in which the gang narrative is maintained through the use of 'criminal exploitation', 'vulnerability' and 'county lines'. Therefore, this is not safeguarding in a true sense, but a version which involves social-worker led surveillance, profiling and crime work.

A central finding here is that these authorities have significant punitive power over the lives and opportunities of the children, young people and young adults we spoke with: powers to threaten, sanction or actually withdraw people's access to welfare, housing, education, schooling and even people's ability to live here, through deportation, all of which has been evidenced in the context of the Gangs Matrix.

The use of new technologies and information gathering, collection and analysis will always be attractive to police and local authorities, as they seek to monitor and control marginalised communities. The use of these profiling tools and databases are used to present notions of legitimacy, capability, efficiency and objectivity: legitimacy to the vague and discriminatory 'gang' narrative, a capability and efficiency to actually addressing the imagined issue, and thin veil of objectivity to the racism and discrimination that they maintain and reinforce.

This surveillance, profiling and database infrastructure underpins and is used to justify and maintain the targeted and violent policing and oppression evidenced by young people Black and racialised people in Barnet.

What is justice?

“Justice to me wouldn’t just be for me; it would be for everyone”

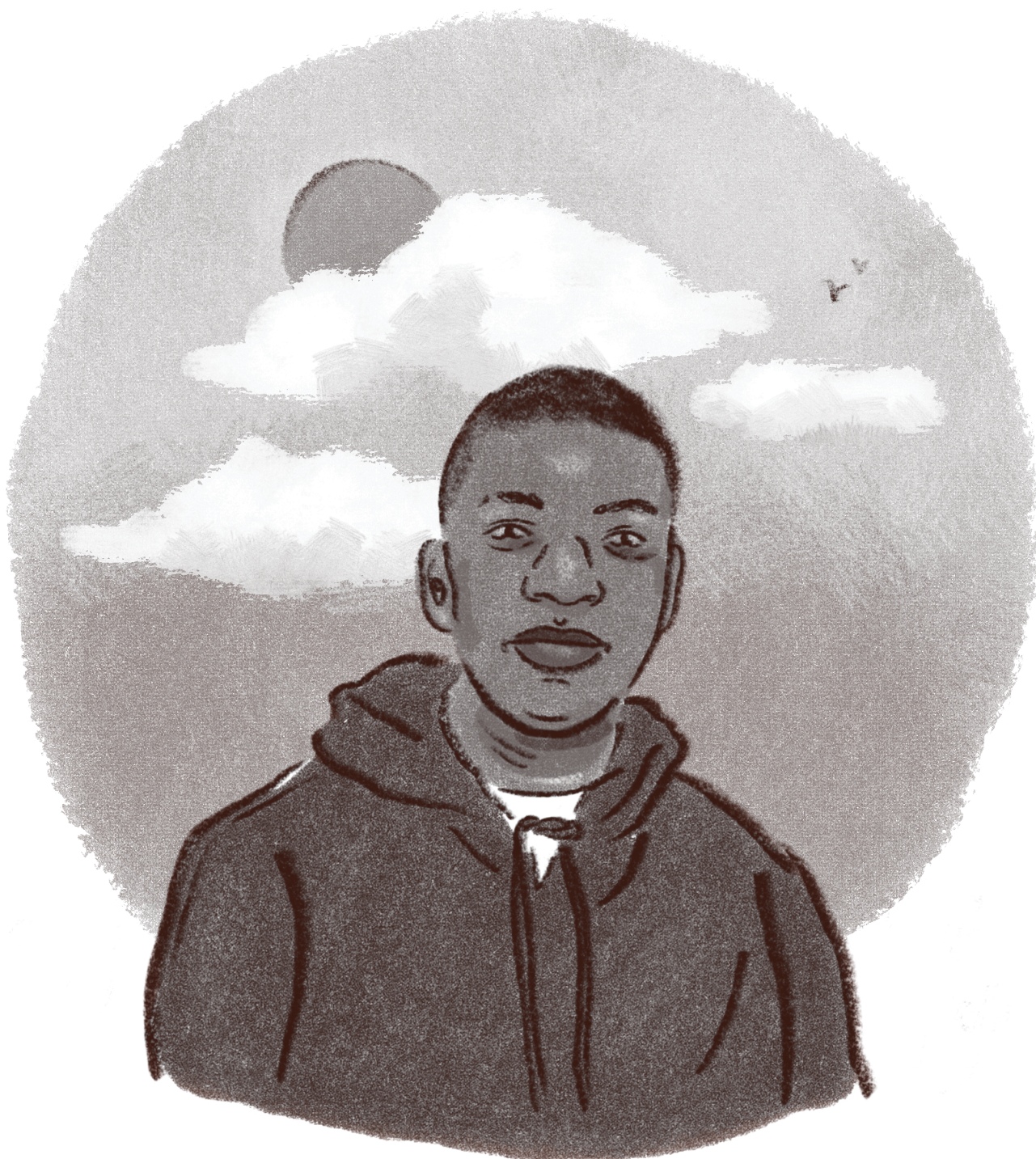
- *Myles*

We asked the young people involved in this research to think about and discuss what true justice might look like for them in this context: what would help them to feel like justice had been done, or harm had been repaired.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many struggled with the task of envisioning what justice could look beyond the mechanisms that the police, criminal legal system and local authorities purport to provide them. Many of the young people we spoke to expressed frustration with the existing routes for seeking ‘justice’ for the harm caused to them. As detailed above, several criticised the existing supposed transparency and accountability processes. Also unsurprisingly, for people

have lived under and within these oppressive systems for most of their lives, a key theme in their responses was for it all to stop.

However, beyond that, it appears difficult for the young people we spoke to conceive of what else justice could look like for them. It suggests that, given that this level of surveillance, monitoring, profiling and databasing has become a part of everyday life for many of them, in order to consider what true healing might entail, they would need to be provided with much more space and time than they are currently given.



Background

How the Gangs Violence Matrix, a discriminatory London police database that disproportionately targeted young Black men, labeling them as gang members without substantial evidence came to be.

The police ‘gang’ database: The Gangs Violence Matrix

The Gangs Violence Matrix, commonly known as the Gangs Matrix, was a database set up by the London Metropolitan police and Mayor of London after the 2011 uprisings, as part of the Government’s narrative that the widespread social unrest was caused by ‘gangs’.

The Metropolitan police and other authorities, including social housing providers, job centres and borough youth services, used the Gangs Matrix database to label and profile people as gang ‘nominals’, based on the ill-defined and vague criteria of suspicion of being a ‘gang member’, associated with ‘gangs’ or ‘at-risk’ of gang violence’. In reality this resulted in people being registered not for their behaviours or what they may have done, and more on their ‘associations’ such as, who their friends or family were, the areas of London they lived in, or even the type of music or videos people shared online.

The police claimed it was a tool aimed at preventing ‘serious youth violence’, but in reality, it has been used as a surveillance tool to criminalise young people, particularly young Black men and boys. As many as 80% of people profiled and put on the Metropolitan police’s Gangs Matrix database were Black, with a large majority aged under 21, and the youngest ‘suspect’ being 12 years old. Three-quarters of the people on the database were also victims of crime themselves. Of significance, almost 40% of people on the Matrix were assessed as posing a ‘zero-harm’ score by the Metropolitan Police – that is, they were assessed as posing no risk of violence.

Despite this, people on the Gangs Matrix database were subjected to enhanced levels of policing and multi-agency interventions. They were targeted by the police for surveillance, experienced significant harassment, repeated stop and search and police raids on their homes.

Utilising multi-agency frameworks and arrangements, also described as ‘punishing partnerships’, the Metropolitan Police, local authorities and other essential service providers, including the Department for Work and Pensions, housing authorities, schools and immigration authorities, maintained a network of surveillance and data-sharing on individuals on the Gangs Matrix database, and executed other non-criminal justice forms of punishment and control.

Amnesty International and Stopwatch found that families were refused access to welfare, children were excluded from mainstream schools and education, while some were placed into the ‘care’ of the local authority, and others were refused training and employment opportunities. Family members of people on the database were threatened with deportation, and individuals on the database were actively deported. Furthermore, individuals were prosecuted and punished under the Joint Enterprise doctrine as ‘secondary parties’, and are now serving lengthy custodial sentences for offences that they did not commit.

Here, the ‘gang’ label was used to legitimise the over-policing of Black and racialised people and communities, despite the fact that many profiled and databased were assessed by the police themselves as posing no harm. This is a common thread throughout this report.



Dismantling the Gangs Matrix

Since its inception, the Gangs Matrix has been subjected to significant criticism and political challenge from community activists and campaigners especially in those communities affected by the over-policing caused by ‘gang units’ and ‘gang’ monitoring and surveillance practices.

A consequence of this organising saw the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) in 2018 publish an enforcement notice detailing how the Metropolitan police’s use of the Gang’s Matrix breached data protection law continuously since it was created in 2011. The London Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) conducted a review of the Gangs Matrix, and in 2018, stated that the database contained “a disproportionate representation of black and minority ethnic Londoners relative to their offending and victimisation”, however, it did not call an end to the database, merely that the Metropolitan police “must take action to comprehensively overhaul it”.

In February 2022, Awate Suleiman, UNJUST and Liberty launched a legal challenge against the Metropolitan Police

arguing that the Gangs Matrix database discriminated against people of colour, particularly Black men and boys, and breached human rights and data protection requirements. In November 2022, the Metropolitan police admitted that the database was unlawful and breached the right to privacy and family life, and agreed to make “wholesale change” to it, including removing more than 1000 names from the database.

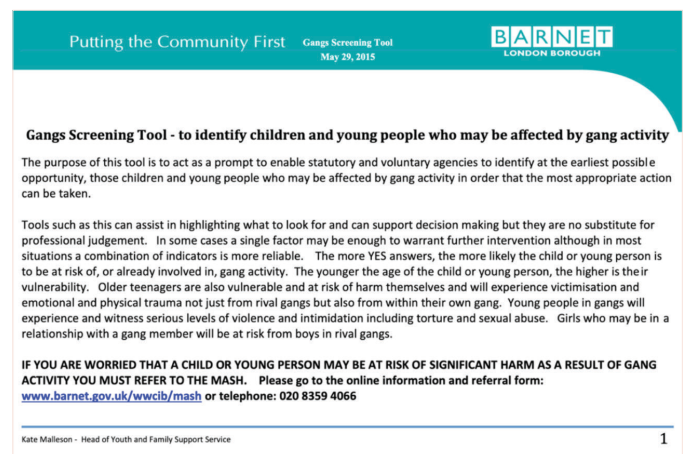
In February 2024, the Metropolitan police announced that the Gangs Matrix was being scrapped. However, the force said the database was being replaced by another database and profiling system, called the Violence Harm Assessment.

Barnet council ‘gang’ profiling tool

To this point particular attention has been paid to the surveillance role and function of the Metropolitan Police. However, integral to the police gang surveillance is the council who are complicit in administering harm to those who are registered to ‘gang’ databases. Amnesty International, referred to this as the ‘Achilles Heel’ whereby young people, their friends, siblings and families were coerced into submission - through unlawful threats of withdrawing access to essential goods and services.

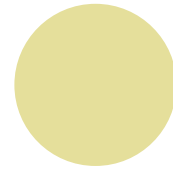
As recently as 2016, the London Borough of Barnet was using a ‘Gang Screening Tool’ to profile young people in relation to alleged involvement in gangs. This was a written algorithmic decision-making tool, which the council described as:

“a prompt to enable statutory and voluntary agencies to identify at the earliest possible opportunity, those children and young people who may be affected by gang activity in order that the most appropriate action can be taken.”

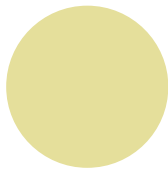


The Gang Screening Tool consisted of a total of 16 questions with YES/NO answers, including on alleged ‘vulnerability factors’ in relation to so-called gang activity, such as ‘offending behaviour’, ‘family circumstances’, ‘school’, ‘peers’ and ‘community’. Each vulnerability factor contained alleged indicators, as well as an explanation of why this was considered ‘significant’, and a requirement for a source or reference for this answer.

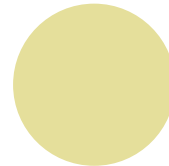
The following behaviours were considered indicators of 'gang' activity under the tool:



Living in an area of deprivation and poverty characterised by high-level gang activity



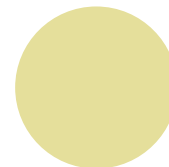
Victim of physical attack or serious crime within the last 6 months



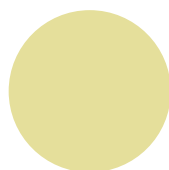
Young people placed in alternative education provision such as the Pupil Referral Unit



Supervision and boundaries are inconsistent



Increase in fixed term exclusions especially for physical and verbal abuse at primary school



Dips in educational attendance or attainment

The tool asked the following questions, alleging that affirmative answers were indicative of ‘gang’ activity:



This tool sought to label and criminalise young people as ‘gang’ members based on the fact they were from areas of deprivation, whether they were themselves victims of crime, were not

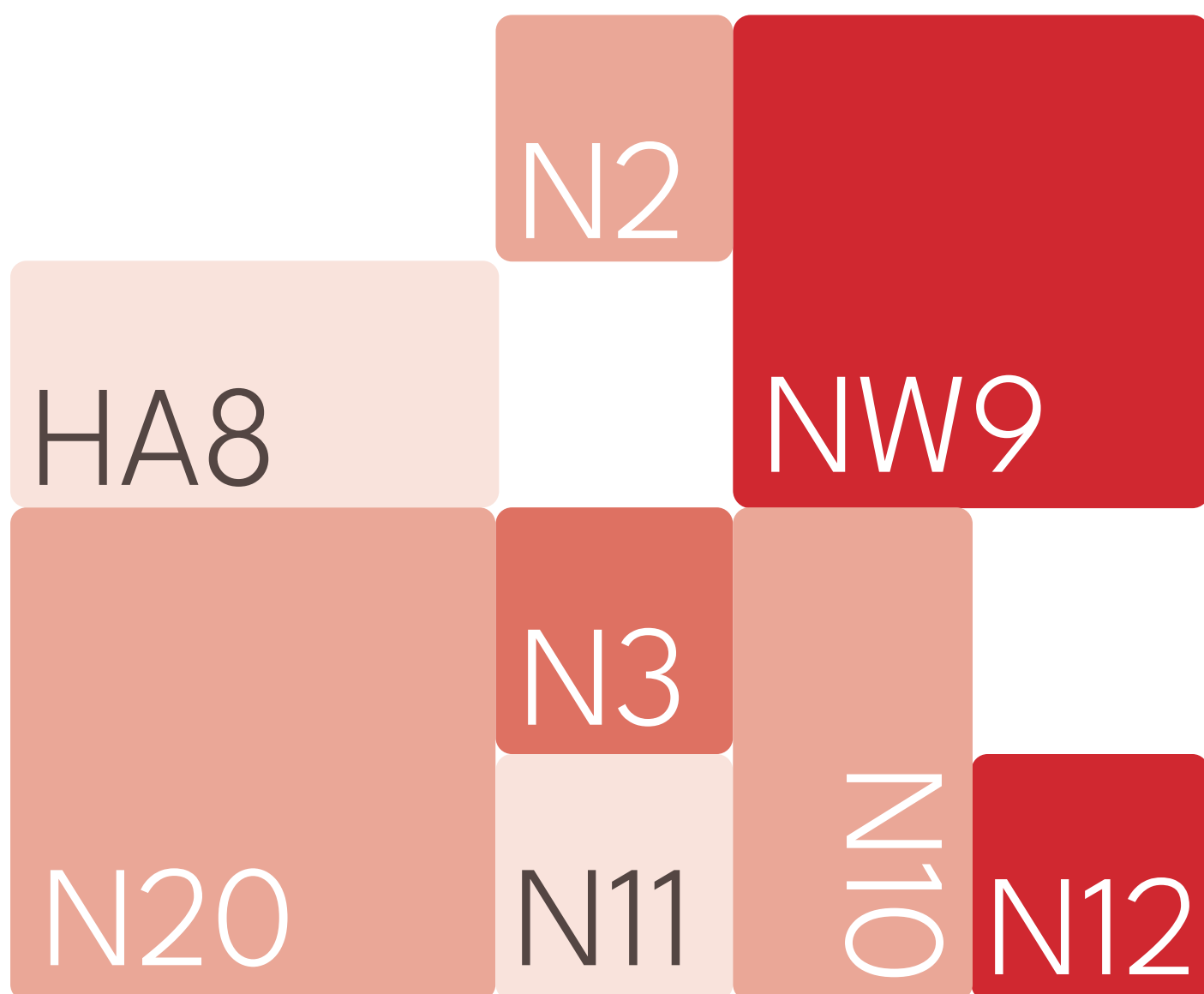
doing well in school, had difficult family relationships, or wore certain clothes or made hand gestures. It is noteworthy that none of the above listed behaviours are criminal or indicative of criminality.

Neighbourhoods labelled as ‘gang’ areas

The Barnet council ‘gang’ screening tool even stated specific postcodes which it labelled as areas of ‘gang activity’, stating that “some postcodes in the borough which carry a higher risk of gang involvement than others”.

It stated “HA8 is an example of an area in which serious youth violence is more likely to occur” and that “Gang members

currently live in HA8, NW9, N3, N2, N12, N20, N11, N10”. The Grahame Park estate is an area within NW9 that has long been targeted by police as a result of people and communities residing there profiled and labelled as ‘gangs’ or otherwise considered to be associated with criminality.



Definition of a ‘gang’

While Barnet council said in October 2024 that it does not use the ‘gang’ screening tool detailed above, it continues to perpetuate this narrative. The council uses the following definition of a gang:

“A relatively durable, predominantly street- based, social group of children, young people and, not infrequently, young adults who see themselves, and are seen by others, as affiliates of a discrete, named group who (1) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence, (2) identify or lay claim to territory, (3) have some form of identifying structural feature, and (4) are in conflict with similar groups.”

The use of such broad and vague terms such as “a range of...”, “identify or lay claim to...”, “some form of” and “similar” allow a huge amount of discretion and interpretation to the point where it has little meaning. This kind of broad

definition allows the stigmatisation and criminalisation of groups of friends. In addition, this allows for people who do not actually consider themselves part of any ‘gang’, but can be merely “seen by others” to fit that definition. This allows completely unchecked discretion for young people to be labelled as ‘gang’ members, and targeted as a result.

Other notable terms through which this narrative is perpetuated are ‘criminal exploitation’, ‘child criminal exploitation’ and ‘county lines’. These are also vague and broad terms which can be used by authorities to refer to differing forms of criminality. Criminal exploitation and county lines can be seen as new bywords for the ‘gang’; indeed the official Home Office definition of criminal exploitation describes it as ‘county lines’ and ‘gangs’.

nephew

student

uncle

son

father

teacher

cousin

role model

friend

person



The notion and use of the ‘gang’ label

The databases and profiling tools considered above, used by both the Metropolitan police and a local council, Barnet, are based on the premise that ‘gangs’ are responsible for serious youth violence in certain areas. However, there is a key difference between areas affected by serious youth violence and areas which are labelled as ‘gang’ affected. Between 2021 and 2023, more offences were committed by children per head in West Yorkshire and North Wales than in London. Yet, it is in London that such violence is attributed to a ‘gang’ narrative, and surveillance, profiling and databases are set up to target those populations.

Below, we hear about the individual experiences of young people targeted by this narrative and related surveillance, profiling, databasing and harassment in Barnet. Then, we consider the structures and databases through which Barnet council and the Metropolitan police continue to perpetuate the ‘gang’ narrative.

Experiences & Impact

In order to try and understand and surface the way that people were experiencing and being impacted by so-called ‘gang’ related surveillance, profiling and databases, we focused our engagement with young people in one London Borough, Barnet, and in particular, one area: the Grahame Park estate in Colindale, NW9.

We held a group discussion and conducted individual interviews with young people from this area, asking them what they know about the surveillance, profiling, databases and data infrastructure that they are targeted by, their experiences of being targeted, and how this impacts them and their lives.

What people know about the surveillance, profiling and databases

The majority of the young people we spoke to knew only little about the technological and data infrastructure behind the monitoring, surveillance, profiling, harassment and violence they have been subjected to at the hands of the authorities.

Many of them were all too aware of being constantly surveilled and monitored by police and authorities in their local area. Some had heard and knew about the police's Gangs Matrix, and knew generally of the structure of police databases and profiling young people as alleged 'gang' members. None of them knew with any certainty what databases they were actually on, or the real information or details behind their targeting by the authorities, beyond casual comments police made to them on the street. Some had tried to find out more information by asking the authorities, but they were always rejected.

People in our group discussion spoke about how *"every corner you take is just being watched all the time, theres cameras everywhere"* and that *"...we could just be chilling doing nothing, and all of a sudden, police comes out of nowhere, boom, (...) 'The boys are there, go there'. [But] we are just chilling and socialising."*

Lucas, said that police stopped and searched him and a friend just a few weeks before, after giving his friend some tobacco in front of a CCTV camera:

"Outside the shops here, there is a big camera on both sides. One of my friends asked for tobacco, and he wanted to roll one."

→



"I took out my tobacco and gave him some to roll one; I thought nothing of it. Two minutes later, I saw the police moving weirdly, trying to block us off. I didn't know anything about it. But (...) the police ran towards us. What was going on? They were talking about drugs, talking how they talk. 'There is a report of you lot doing a transaction at the shops'; I said 'are you serious? My bredrin asked me for tobacco, that's the transaction that you have seen on that camera', from then they said we are still going to search you."

A young person said that police stopped and searched people as a form of intelligence gathering for their databases: "That's why they keep harassing people and stopping people. So they can get the names and stuff". Dean also spoke about police information gathering tactics, databases and how police went looking for alleged gang members, referencing people by name:

"To search everyone, to get intel, to get your name and where you are from, you're just building intel, and I feel like that's where the gang matrix comes into play. For example, the way I experienced it or knew about it was the police pulled up on a group of us, and they were like yeah, is anything happening with GPE [Grahame Park estate] boys? They were naming names."

Caleb described how police target the Grahame Park estate, labelling it as a drug hotspot and profiling people in it as gang members:

“the police will say this is a drug hotspot, and when they see us in the area, they just try and harass us. (...) One time, yeah, when they stopped me on the estate when I was driving, they were like ‘they are known to be [in a gang],’ (...) that’s what they tried to imply, but there is no evidence of anything to suggest that”.

Gabriel said he had been directly targeted by police, who also knew him by name:

“one time [during a stop and search, like some undercover police were giving me attitude, so I gave it back to them, and they were saying, ah, we know who your brother is and that, because my brother is in the system, and they would say, my brother’s name out of nowhere.”

Lucas described how police also came up to him and knew his name:

“Every time the police see me, they call me by my first name. It is like they are trying to antagonise me and not like how they [speak to] normal civilians.”

One young person spoke about finding a police notepad with specific information about his brother:

“Last week, we were walking... and found a Police notepad on the floor. I was looking through the notepad, and at the top was ‘briefing’ My brother’s name was on the notepad, stating he was returning to the GPE [Grahame Park estate] gang; it had a date on it; he was already out of jail, and they had other people’s names on it.”

On hearing this story, another young person expressed how unjust it was to be targeted in that way: “what’s mad is that your brother isn’t even back in the ends yet and hasn’t been given a chance; they are already prepping to stop and search him.” Another young person said police knew exactly who they were looking for:

“When the officer leaves his house, he has a picture in his head of the 10-20 people he wants to see; (...). They know who their targets are when they leave their yard.”

As a result of the policing he was experiencing, Caleb put in a Subject Access Request but the police told him they had no information: “they told me there was no intelligence, but that doesn’t make sense because of how they dealt with me.”

Myles also tried to get data from the police, in the form of body-worn video footage, but he was refused:

“anytime you get stopped, and they say I am recording you, I put in a request, I’ve put in a request three times, and none of them has ever come back and given it to me. So, when you say put in the request, they know you won’t get it, so they ignore you. (...) Every time I request camera footage, it never works.”

Another young person said they wanted to be able to get police bodyworn camera footage of being stopped or arrested:

“We need to be able to get body-worn camera footage; they say you can have the footage you apply for it, and they tell you no. I did a complaint for all three stops, two by myself and one with 4Front. They said no; I was trying to get the footage, and they said it’s a GDPR thing.”

These experiences demonstrate the difficulty in getting any form of accountability from the police or other authorities, even when people try the ‘official’ routes. Police speak to people by their name, but when these individuals try and find out what the police know about them, they are told the police hold no information.

This is both hard to understand and unsettling for the individual, and there is a clear suspicion that the police are providing incorrect information. Others request to see bodycam footage of their arrest or other violent or harmful incident, and are similarly obstructed or rejected. This not only portrays the difficulty of seeking accountability within the current system and under current laws, but also a denial of a route to justice.

People's experiences of being surveilled, profiled and databased and the consequences

All of the people we spoke to had experiences of being monitored constantly by police in their local area, being harassed and questioned by police, stopped and searched, and stopped and pulled out of cars. They described being stopped and searched at incredibly young ages, and this continuing throughout their teenage years into young adulthood.

People spoke about how police were targeting the area they lived and individuals that lived there under suspicion of it being an alleged 'gang' area, and targeting them for being alleged 'gang' members, or treating them as being 'exploited' by older neighbours on the Grahame Park estate. There were common experiences of police making up reasons for stopping people, and a repeated theme that police had a 'script' of reasons or excuses for this targeting and unjustified stops.

Micah, 20, said that when he was first stopped and searched on the Grahame

Park estate "I was 12 years old on the estate on my own" and that, since then, he's been stopped and searched "Multiple times, more than I can count." Despite this, he said "They have never stopped me and found something."

Dean, 29, was first stopped and searched in the Grahame Park estate at 14:

"I have experienced policing here more than anywhere else. It starts from young, and if you roll with a crowd of boys, you get looked at differently. Do you get me? You might not even be up to anything".

Another said police were just “Harassing man”.

Lucas, 26, who lives near the Grahame Park estate, was first stopped and searched at the age of 12. He said that his experience of policing was “My day-to-day (...) I see police arresting people and being chased by police a lot”, and that this was “just normal” for him. He also said he was strip-searched “a couple of months ago”.

Caleb, 27, has been being stopped and searched on the Grahame Park estate by police since he was 14-15:

“I had bad experiences since my early teens, I say from like 14 or 15, but it started getting worse when I started getting arrested. (...) It mainly happened with people, but then on the odd occasion I’ve been by myself, but as I got older, it’s gone from stop and search to being pulled over in my vehicle, my vehicle is being searched.”

Myles, 27, was first stopped and searched when he was just 10 years old:

“I’ve been searched. I would say I was searched 60% of the time [he was spoken to by police].”

He has been stopped and searched

“More than I can count, probably being stopped and searched four times in one day.”

Gabriel, 16, said has been stopped and searched around 10 times, with the first happening when he was just 14 years old.

A young person said he had been stopped and searched “More than I can count” and said

“I feel like there was some joy behind it when stopping and searching, not professional, to control and discriminate.”

Gabriel also said police targeted him because of his ethnicity:

"The police are just targeting black males, and I rarely see other races males getting searched. It's always black boys; most of the time, they love searching for us."

A young person described psychological harassment by police in his local area:

"There was a time when a police car pulled up near where I live and they was just playing music from the people from our area; it was weird. I feel like that was harassment, you just drove past playing it. What you lot doing"

Another said that police

*"come on the [Grahame Park] estate and try crack jokes just to try and get the mandem angry and stuff, so they provoke us.(...) They would come around and just call people by name and tag them or say... you got a haircut today just stupid joke like... Like I was walking with ***** one time, and they were behind us walking on the backroads but just laughing... it was weird. They wanted us to get paranoid."*

Dean spoke about how the Grahame Park estate is targeted by police:

"I'd say where I lived at the time; that's where many of the boys from the area hung around; every time you stepped outside, you would see police or undercover parked up. They could drive by and say you guys alright, so you are clearly watching me when it becomes consistent. You are watching this area and always asking the same type of questions."

Another young person said the same:

"I moved here 3 years ago to GP [Grahame Park] right, and the feds are always pulling up; I was shocked to see the number of feds that were here on a daily basis"

"The one excuse they always use is that you are in a high drug activity area and you are acting suspiciously; I didn't know they couldn't stop me from that, just being in a certain space."

Myles said that police often asked if he was being exploited by older people in the area:

"On the estate, because I was around a lot of older people, I always used to get spoken to by the police because they would ask if I was getting groomed. 'Am I holding this or that?'. They used to ask me these questions a lot, especially when they were stopping the older people, and sometimes I might be with the older people directly, but when they see me, they might come over and boom boom boom. 'Is there anything I need to tell them?'"

Myles spoke about how he had been the victim of a shooting, and that this actually made police target him more:

"one time, I got stopped, and I was a victim of a shooting before (...) and the policeman said oh, you were the one that got shot? I can't even remember what he said; when he heard it was me that got shot, it made him want to search me more, and I said to him like why do you want to search me more when I am the victim?"

Myles, 27, was first stopped and searched when he was just 10 years old:

"I've been searched. I would say I was searched 60% of the time [he was spoken to by police]."

He has been stopped and searched

"More than I can count, probably being stopped and searched four times in one day."

A young person said he had been stopped and searched *"More than I can count"* and said *"I feel like there was some joy behind it when stopping and searching, not professional, to control and discriminate."*

The impacts of being surveilled, profiled and databased

The people we spoke to told us about how the constant surveillance and harassment from police became embedded in their lives and severely impacted their wellbeing and mental health. Some spoke about the chilling effect this had on them and their ability to move around their local area.

Others were subject to incredibly restrictive conditions. One young person, who was 12 at the time, was subject to a curfew and restrictions on who he could ‘associate’ with, while another was banned from going to the Grahame Park estate. Several had had issues with their driving licences being removed by the DVLA at the behest of the police, based on often unevicenced allegations that they were driving under the influence.

Several young people spoke about the effect of the constant nature of the surveillance and harassment by police. Caleb said:

“a lot of the time, it’s been more harassment, so I get irate, and it just gets long, but people

are telling me to calm down, but it when it happens time and time again, it just gets annoying. (...) I think, oh, not again; I’m just minding my business, so there should be no reason they need to interact with me. I don’t want to talk to them. (...) But I live here, where can I go? I can’t escape it. (...) It’s harassment. It’s crazy.”

Dean said the impact of this had made him paranoid and careful:

“I am paranoid; you think more and are careful with what you do (...) Especially if they know where I live, that’s how I feel.”

Another young person also spoke about the paranoid effect it had on them:

“The way you look at people, the way you move, just because a bunch of weirdos like CID [Criminal Investigation Department, plainclothes police], any military-aged man that’s white

on a peddle bike, and he's got his face covered. It makes me think he is a CID officer, and it's got me paranoid to think like that; that's our normal. Even if you wear a certain attire, I think you're a fed..."

Myles said about the surveillance and profiling by the authorities that: *"It's impacted me because it's been like 17 years. It's normal to me, so it's part of me realistically, so now it's normal"*, while a young person said that it impacted them *"In ways you don't even know... every day and probably in ways we don't even know."*

Dean described a chilling effect that this level and manner of policing had had on the area:

"they [police] were doing some observation [in the Grahame Park estate] because they were peddling on their bikes in fives and twos, police cars up and

down, and people would be sending Snapchats to each other. There are police here, so you know. You could tell they were doing something. It was on Facebook groups; even older people were posting, like, why are there so many police? We are in the modern world, so everyone is clued up. If a normal civilian can see they are doing some observation, then being in the area, you have a hunch. They were asking if you were a part of GPE at the time. They directly asked me this, and from then, I knew they were painting a picture of me".

Dean said that as a result, he ended up having to avoid the area he lived in:

"I didn't get into trouble as much as others have. Especially because I didn't hang around the estate all the time."

Myles also spoke about the chilling effect this intense monitoring and harassment has on people and the way they are forced to act in a certain way to avoid being targeted:

"I now know how to manoeuvre more. When I was a bit oblivious to their methods, I was getting stopped way more. Still, now I am in tune with how they move; I get stopped less by trying to avoid them, not just by being a better person but by avoidance methods. Lowering my personality and my body language is weird; the things they would say are suspicious would be me naturally, so you have to tone down yourself. It's not good, but it is what it is."

Young people in our group discussion also said that "we are so used to it now, like it's normal to us.. if we see them [police], we try to ignore them or avoid them."

Dean spoke about what happens when you have been profiled by police, and how that impacts not just that person but everyone around them:

"I feel like it's who you are around; I know what happens if I hang around with certain people; for example, he always gets pulled over, and everyone knows that. If I sit my arse in his

car, there is a potential for him to be pulled over with me in the car. Summer just went, and it happened. I got in his car, and we got T-packed [hard-stopped] by 4-5 cars, saying this car had been linked to a gang incident, and it wasn't. It was flagged. The police said he was tagged for violence, but he's not that type of character, so I don't get myself in those situations, and it's about who you hang with and where you are. But it can happen anywhere in London, especially if you fit the description of living on an estate like GP."

Myles also described a similar personal experience of this:

"I have no criminal record, but my friend, who came out of prison, had conditions; one of his conditions was that he couldn't be around me. So, I already knew something was up because how come he couldn't be around me, and I got no criminal record, so even down to being a gang member, I think it's down to what they (the police) believe."

Lucas said that at the age of 12 or 13, he was subject to an Acceptable Behaviour Contract. This is described by the government as a “written agreement between a person who has been involved in anti-social behaviour and one or more local agencies”, and which carries with it the threat of being subject to an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) and even eviction from social housing:

“I was on an ABC order when I was in school; that’s what the younger person would be put on. I don’t even know what the order was.(...) I was put on this ABC order. I was under curfew and was in school; I had to go home (...) to be home by a certain time, it’s mad.(...) my conditions, the ‘I’m not allowed to be associated with’ are a list of people that [I] have nothing to do with”.

Micah spoke about being banned from the Grahame Park estate, despite living just next to it, when he was 14 years old:

“I was excluded from an area, and I was banned from GPE. I live about 5 minutes away from the estate (...) it was for a couple of months.”

Caleb described how after his arrest, despite not doing anything wrong or being charged, he had his licence taken away:

“the DVLA tried to seize my license because they thought I was a heavy cannabis smoker, and they wanted me to do a medical test or examination. (...) there was no examination, urine, or blood tests. I just had a conversation with a doctor, and that was it.”



Lucas described a similar story:

“When I failed my theory, I didn’t know how the police officers found out, but they messaged the DVLA informing them that ‘so and so is trying to get their license. We are aware that he is a cannabis smoker and driving under the influence’”.

He said that *“the DVLA sent me a letter saying the Met police had informed us I would be under the influence while driving”* and as a result, even though he passed a drug test, he said *“they banned me for 5 years from driving”*.

Ultimately, these are systems of oppression, control and punishment which do nothing to support these young people. As Dean said: “They don’t do anything to help; help them change their lives around, and even if they are getting help, they are trying to stop you”.

There are few reports that present these everyday realities for Black and racialised people in London. The above accounts serve to highlight the far-reaching and yet concealed strategies adopted by the police and local authority in Barnet to monitor, surveil and seek to control children and young people who reside within communities defined by these authorities as ‘gang’-affected.

The evidence given illustrates the prevalence of criminal and civil powers, justified, facilitated and exercised by and through these profiling tools and databases, which converge to harm community members. The harms range from the significant identified effects on people’s mental health and wellbeing, to affecting their ability to participate in education and other areas of life, disturbing and undermining a sense of belonging and agency, to restricting young people’s ability to move freely and with agency using their own transport.

Of particular concern is the clear ‘chilling effect’ that this has had on the way people live their lives in their local area, with people disclosing the lengths to which they have been forced to adopt strategies of avoidance, acting in ways to avoid police attention. That community members are forced to learn and adapt to ‘how the police move’ is indicative of the prevalence and nature of policing on the Grahame Park estate.

The reality is that the experience of being policed on the Grahame Park estate has little to do with whether the young people are engaged in criminality or serious youth violence.

It is simply by virtue of being present on this estate and within this community that these children and young people are profiled, databased and subjected to police attempts to control and oppress through surveillance, harassment and violence.

The current state of the database

The Metropolitan police's Gangs Matrix has not yet officially been erased, and Barnet council denies conducting any form of 'gang' related profiling, yet already there is an existing and widespread structure of databases, data-based profiling systems and data-sharing between the police, local authorities and public services providers, relating to the narrative of 'gangs' and other forms of 'criminality'.

This narrative has proliferated and spread, alongside the use of more benign safeguarding narratives such as 'exploitation' and 'vulnerability', used to defend the repurposing of 'old' databases and the expansion and development of new databases in local authority boroughs and police force areas.

This convoluted interlinking nexus of monitoring, databases, data-sharing and related profiling is difficult to fully and comprehensively map, and is undoubtedly an intentional structure which serves to diffuse transparency, evade accountability

and deny responsibility for the racist data-harms generated by this infrastructure.

The use of new technologies and information gathering, collection and analysis will always be attractive to police and local authorities, as they seek to monitor and control these othered outsiders. The use of these profiling tools and databases are used to present notions of legitimacy, capability, efficiency and objectivity: legitimacy to the vague and discriminatory 'gang' narrative, a capability and efficiency to actually addressing the imagined issue, and thin veil of objectivity to the racism and discrimination that they maintain and reinforce.

The Metropolitan police's new Violence Harm Assessment is a perfect example of the continuity of the gang narrative, not just metaphorically, but in a literal sense, with people targeted under the gangs matrix now targeted under a different database, under a different name.

Further, while Barnet council denies officially carrying out ‘gang’ profiling anymore, it too preserves a complex and convoluted network of supposed ‘safeguarding’, in which the gang narrative is maintained through the use of ‘criminal exploitation’, ‘vulnerability’ and ‘county lines’.

This database, profiling and surveillance infrastructure underpins and is used to justify and maintain the targeted and violent policing and oppression evidenced by the young people we spoke to.

Police

Metropolitan Police

Violence Harm Assessment

The Violence Harm Assessment is an individual ‘risk’ assessment profiling tool and database which the Metropolitan police uses to ‘identify and risk assess individuals involved in violence in London’, giving people a ‘risk score’ of the harm they are predicted to cause.

The Violence Harm Assessment is the successor to the Metropolitan police Gangs Matrix database, beginning in 2020, and also a replacement for several other police profiling tools and databases: the Habitual Knife Carrier (HKC), Priority Robbery Offenders (PRO) and Priority Firearm Offenders (PFO) matrixes.

A person is profiled and put on the Violence Harm Assessment database if they appear in four police crime reports (“crime incident or intelligence log”), or appear in three crime reports where the ‘harm score’ of these reports reaches a certain level, and be a suspect in a violent crime in the last year.

The Violence Harm Assessment database also includes data on individuals’ alleged ‘gang’ affiliation, just like its predecessor, the Gangs Matrix: “The presence of

intelligence in rolling 12 month period linking individual to criminal network / gang”.

This criteria means that an individual does not have to have actually committed a crime to be profiled by and put on the Violence Harm Assessment database. They can be profiled and databased just as a result of appearing several times in police reports. Communities and individuals which have historically been subjected to increased policing, and continue to be subjected to increased policing, particularly Black and racialized communities - such as those in Grahame Park - will be disproportionately over-represented in police reports generally, including police ‘intelligence’, meaning that their likelihood of appearing in a police report is severely increased.

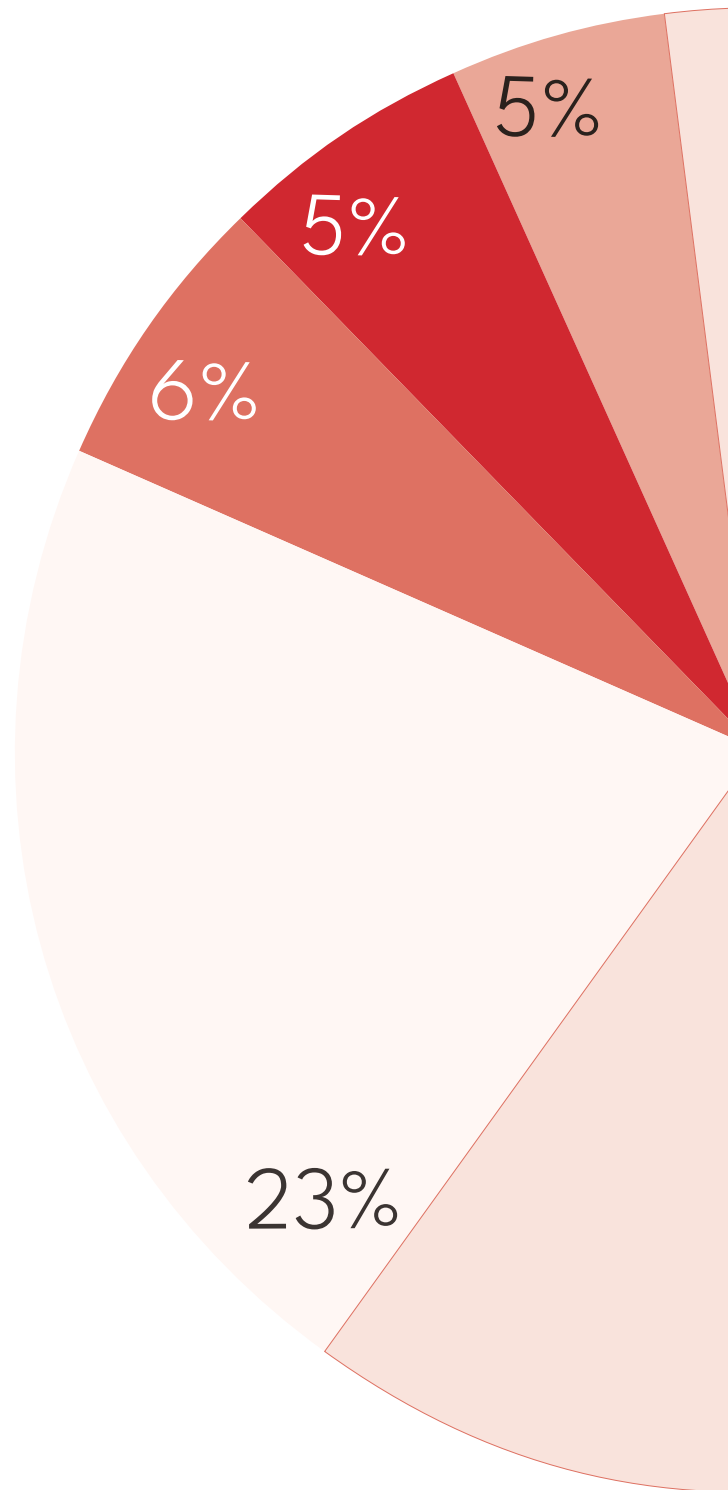
The police reports used to profile people as part of the Violence Harm Assessment include so-called police ‘intelligence’. Police intelligence is in reality, a police officers interpretations of events, such as that an individual or individuals were alleged to have been seen in a certain area (e.g on the estate), or that certain

individuals were alleged to have been seen in the presence of other individuals, recorded on a police notepad and fed into police databases. These are subjective, uncorroborated, and legally untested reports. They cannot and should not be considered factual, or indeed, 'intelligence' of any meaningful or actionable kind. Police reports on alleged gang members have been found to label an individual as a gang member without any evidence or substantiating information, as well as erroneously name individuals as members.

However, the use of such information in the Violence Harm Assessment profiling tool means that such uncorroborated, subjective and untested information is effectively laundered through the tool, to become treatable as verifiable and even objective information of an individual's alleged 'gang' status, and subsequently their propensity towards violence as a member of the Violence Harm Assessment database.

As of May 2024, 1413 individuals were 'assessed as meeting the inclusion criteria' for the VHA. 405 were under 18 years old (29%), and 612 were aged 18-24 (43%).

Background of those who were met criteria in May 2024

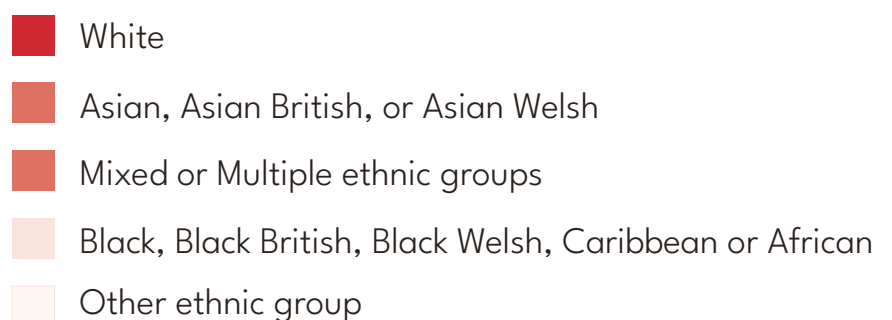


As of August 2024, 1307 people met the Violence Harm Assessment inclusion criteria.

- 870 of these people were identified as 'Black' (67%)
- 299 as 'White (Northern and Southern European)' (23%)
- 75 as 'Asian (Indian subcontinent)' (6%)
- 56 as 'Arab / North African' (4%).

The force's response to this disproportionality is that 'Police data indicates that young, black men are disproportionately represented as offenders of serious violence. The VHA is reflective of this.'

67%



However, even the police's own statistics, which must still be read in the context of police bias and disproportionate policing of Black and racialised communities, say that young Black people are responsible for 32% of serious violence (defines as 'Weapon Enabled Robbery', 'Most Serious Violence' and homicides), while young white people are responsible for 48%. The Violence Harm Assessment is therefore conclusively not representative of the police's own statistics on alleged offenders of serious violence.

The Metropolitan Police says that it will not “proactively and explicitly inform any member of the public that they feature on the VHA”, as it considers that this would “undermine and prejudice the lawful policing purpose of the VHA”.

If individuals ask the force if they are on the database, such as via a Subject Access Request, the force says it will assess this “on a case by case basis”, taking into account statutory exemptions as well as “the level of risk the individual presents and risks of notification to the individual”.

County Lines Intelligence Collection Matrix

The County Lines Intelligence Collection Matrix (CLICM) is a database within the Police National Database, a national database onto which individual police forces across Great Britain and Northern Ireland upload information. As part of this, every month police forces compile a spreadsheet called the ‘county lines intelligence collection matrix’, which contains information on alleged or suspected county lines-related drug dealing in each police force area.

The criteria for adding people to this database are extremely broad and vague, and, again, are significantly based on police ‘intelligence’, the problems with which are discussed above. The criteria states that individuals can be added to the database if “Intelligence/crime suggests they are actively engaged in county lines criminality”, or “Intelligence/crime reporting suggests they are vulnerable through involvement in county lines activity”.

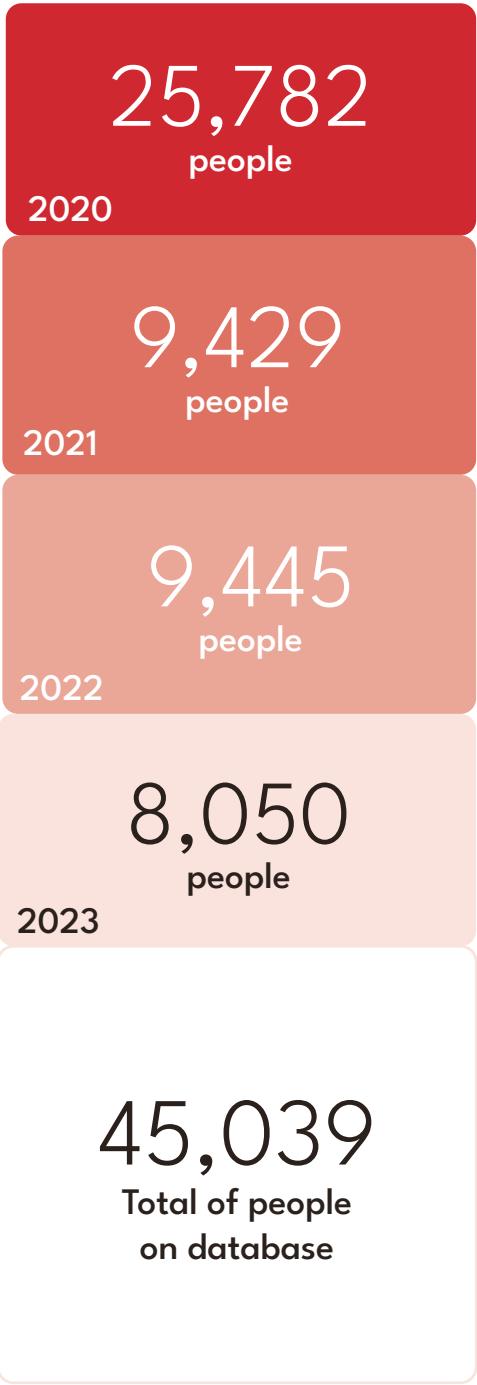
The database contains children, who are added if police have actual evidence, or

again, mere ‘intelligence’, that there is “a link to actively being involved in county lines activity”. Children do not have to be “definitively linked to a named [county] line” in order to be included on the database. The entire conception of this database is an example of a political crisis that, as described by Koch, Williams and Wroe, “elaborately repurposes racialised criminalised tropes”.

The county lines intelligence collection matrix has been criticised by the police oversight body, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary. It said that individuals are listed on the database “by the number of times they come to police attention”, which means that “‘street-level’ dealers are likely to be prioritised above the ‘controlling minds’”, and therefore, “action at this level doesn’t achieve long-term disruptions and may create further exploitation”. It also stated that children allegedly at risk of harm from county lines are “falling between youth justice, child protection agencies and the voluntary sector”.

Tens of thousands of people have been profiled and databased by the national police county lines database, with thousands on it at any one given time. As of November 2023, as many as 45,039 people had been on the database.

County Lines Intelligence
Matrix database (CLICM)
2020-2023



Young Black Londoners are the most targeted group under the county lines infrastructure.

Black individuals from London aged 10-25 years are 6 times more likely to be referred for ‘county lines’ concerns compared to all other ethnicities of the same age.

Councils

Barnet council

Barnet council claims that it no longer conducts ‘gang’ profiling. However, it continues to maintain an infrastructure of monitoring, databases and data-sharing, in many cases in collaboration with the police, which utilises and perpetuates the same narrative of ‘gangs’ and criminality.

Surveillance and database infrastructure

Barnet council monitors and surveils its local area via CCTV surveillance, and specifically targets the the Grahame Park estate and Colindale with “24/7, 365-day-a-year monitoring”, from a control room located in Colindale. In October 2023, a £2.3million ‘upgrade and expansion’ of this CCTV network in Colindale increased the number of surveillance posts from 127 to over 800, a 530% increase.

Barnet council also holds records for all children receiving services, and flags “all children where there is a concern for exploitation or who are in contact with the Youth Justice System” on its central database. It says that these flags are used to “enable monitoring of risk for specific groups of children”. This central database also includes risk

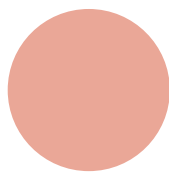
scores from profiling tools such as the Child Exploitation and Missing (CEAM) framework (considered below).

Barnet council has said that its strategy in relation to children and young people who it deems are “at the greatest risk of exploitation”, including what it deems ‘criminal’ exploitation, is to seek to ‘Predict and Prevent’, which it says involves gathering and sharing “multi-agency information and intelligence”.

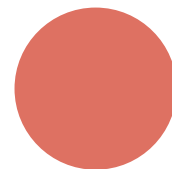
This information is also used to “to map hotspots” and “identify hotspot locations”, for “victim and perpetrator identification”, as well as “criminal activity involving children, including ‘county lines’”, in order to “task partnership services in the targeting of offenders and risk management of community spaces”.

Proliferation of profiling and data-sharing

Barnet council states that it seeks to tackle ‘violence and exploitation’ via a multi-faceted and convoluted network of meetings and panels:



Child Exploitation And
Missing, Strategy (CEAM)
meetings



Vulnerable Adolescents
Risk Panel (VARP)



Strategic Multi Agency
Child Exploitation Panel
(MACE)

This network “collates and share intelligence to understand emerging themes of exploitation” and “coordinates effective interventions... to disrupt and stop perpetrators of exploitation”.

Child Exploitation and Missing Tool (also referred to as CEAM)

Barnet council uses an assessment called the 'Child Exploitation and Missing Tool (CEAM)'. It describes this as a 'contextual risk assessment', which is completed by a 'multi-agency professional network' and aims to 'understand a range of contextual factors including associations with persons and groups of concern' and 'facilitates consideration of contextual concerns about a young person'. Barnet has said that the tool "scores 9 areas between 0-5" and that the scores are "determined and agreed on by the professional network".

Multi-Agency Child Exploitation

Barnet also participates in the multi-agency child exploitation (MACE) framework. This structure is a group or ‘panel’ of different agencies, including the police, that “continues to track and monitor the needs and risks facing all children and young people who are on the continuum of exploitation”. All 32 London boroughs have a MACE group, but according to the Metropolitan police, there are “variances across Boroughs.” The Metropolitan police has said that information is shared between the police, councils and “other agencies” in MACE groups “for the purpose of safeguarding”, including on individuals as young as 10. Data shared as part of MACE includes:

- Social care data: social care, youth offending service and early help information;
- Metropolitan police data;
- NHS data; and
- Education data.

This data is used to profile people. For example, NHS and education data is

shared through the MACE structure as this is used for “understanding the characteristics of the cohort of young people who are at risk of exploitation” through “highlighting background risk factors (such as poor school attendance and school suspensions and exclusion)”.

At least one local authority in London is using “data analysis and presentation tools” to analyse this data and profile children as part of MACE, in an attempt to “match and merge data from local authority education, social care and YOS data systems, together with information from MPS [Metropolitan police service] (...) to map and analyse data on background risk factors, characteristics and major incidents”.

Police data shared as part of MACE includes information on police interactions about “exploitation”, and so-called police ‘intelligence’ “about risk from different sources, suspicion that a crime has been committed” as well as information about allegations, reports

or convictions. This information is shared “in order to identify locations and times when specific offences are most commonly committed and to help build a composite profile of victims and suspected offenders”, therefore including information and details on not just suspected offenders, but also victims.

The MACE framework facilitates the profiling and targeting of areas and neighbourhoods, like the Grahame Park estate. Local authority groupings known as ‘community safety partnerships’ “provide hotspot locations to the panel on a monthly basis”, and MACE groups are provided with ‘an overview of hotspot locations from the Community Safety Team every month which is discussed and then disseminated’. A MACE group was also documented “identifying themes and hotspots and working alongside the Anti-Social Behaviour and Safer Neighbourhoods Team to address concerns and create safe spaces”. The response to this

area-based profiling is “led by the police, focused on enforcement using CCTV and a range of restrictive legal orders.”

However, a review of these surveillance profiling and enforcement strategies notes that “It is not currently possible to know what impact this activity has had and whether it has led to the safeguarding of individuals who are at risk.” The same review also acknowledges that the MACE data-sharing and profiling structures “have been criticised for displacing problems from one location to another, rather than addressing the root causes of concerns”, that “Typically they have not been characterised by a child-centred or ‘child-first’ approach” and that they have been criticised as “systems in which families become problems to be managed, rather than helped”.

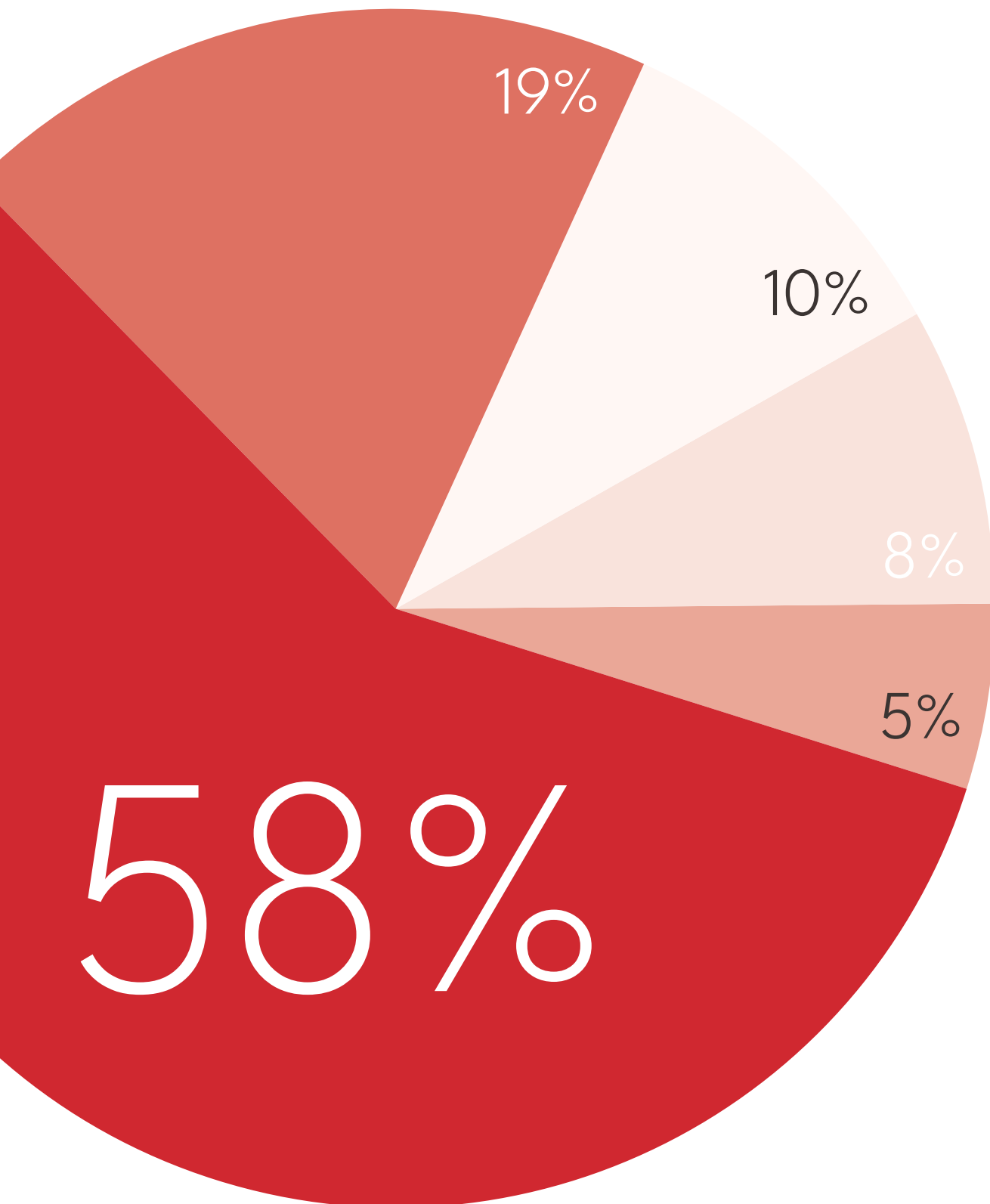
Who Barnet council has targeted

According to the 2021 census, the demographics of the London Borough of Barnet are as follows:

Barnet council has currently assessed 26 children to be at risk of 'criminal exploitation'. It has described the demographics of people profiled under the child exploitation and missing tool (CEAM), stating that "72% were of young people from Black and racially minoritised backgrounds". It has also stated that in conducting profiling of "vulnerable

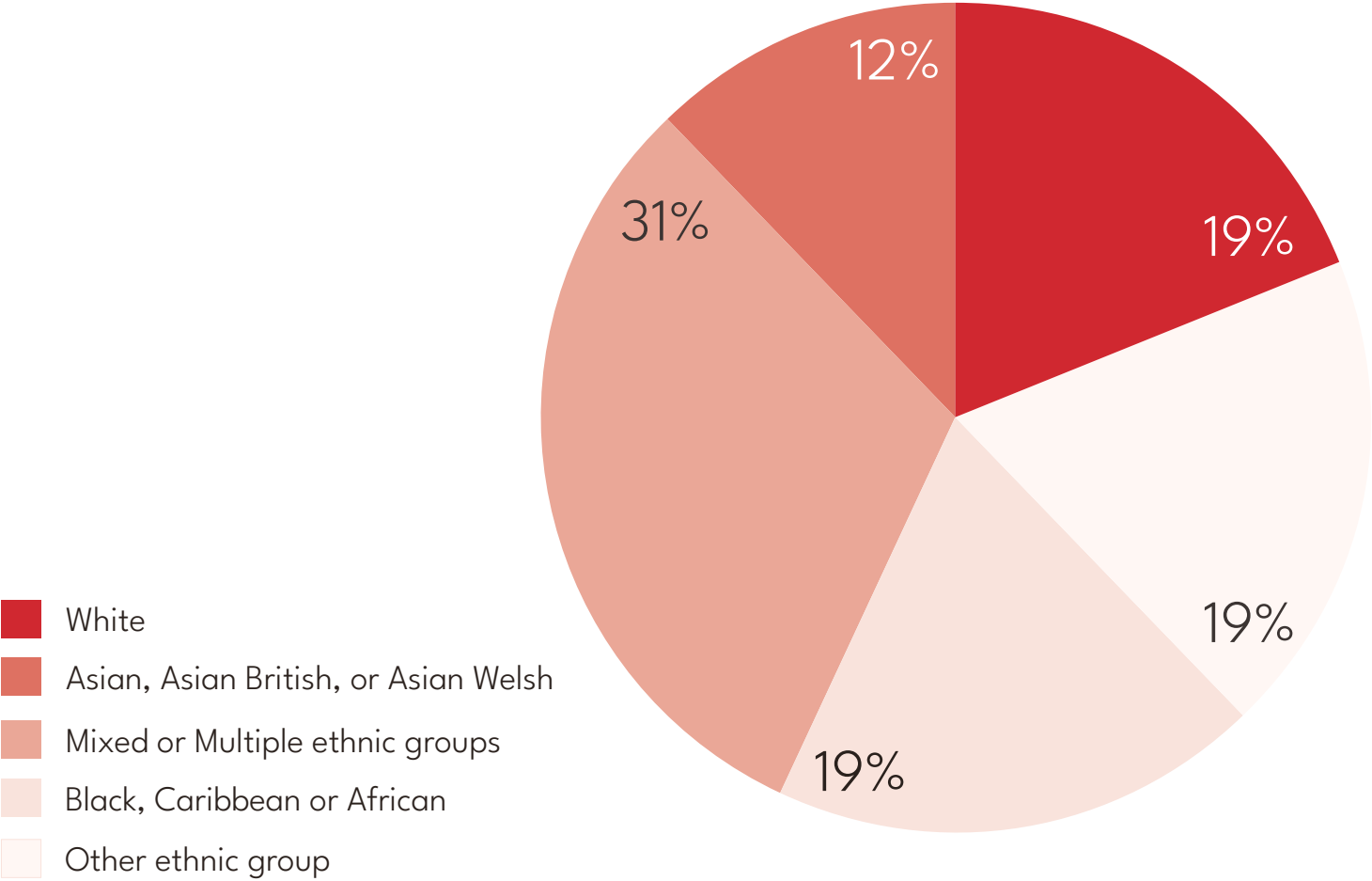
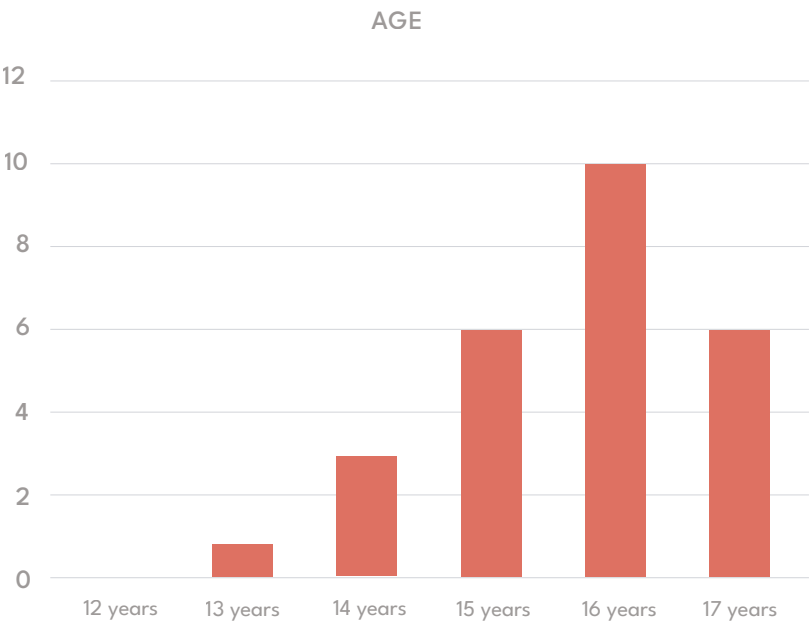
adolescents", it has identified "a higher representation of boys from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds as being at risk of criminal exploitation and involvement in gangs and serious youth violence".

- White
- Asian, Asian British, or Asian Welsh
- Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups
- Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African
- Other ethnic group



Children identified at risk of criminal exploitation

In every available statistic, Barnet council disproportionately profiles Black and racialised people in Barnet as at risk of criminal exploitation.



Other Councils

The same profiling, data-sharing and databases that Barnet council uses are replicated by local authorities across London.

Hackney council conducts screening in relation to so-called 'gangs' and 'suspicion of family's gang involvement' using the Hackney Child Wellbeing Framework and 'gangs and criminal exploitation' through its Children's and Family Service. Haringey council profiles people through its Youth Justice Service and uses an "exploitation screening tool"

to give people a risk rating in relation to 'gangs'. Lewisham council formerly held and used a database called the 'Concern Hub', to profile and monitor young people involved in so-called 'gang' activity, and now uses the multi-agency child exploitation (MACE) structure, focusing on criminal exploitation, county lines, serious youth violence, among others, amongst young people up to the age of 25.

What is justice?

In this section we focus on what repair could look like and ways in which we can achieve a sense of justice.

How can we achieve justice?

In the context of this surveillance, profiling and database infrastructure that the young people we spoke to are subjected to, and the harassment, violence, punishment and other consequences they experience from authorities as a result, we asked the young people involved in this research to think about and discuss what true justice might look like for them in this context: what would help them to feel like justice had been done, or harm had been repaired. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many struggled with the task of envisioning what justice could look beyond the mechanisms that the police, criminal legal system and local authorities purport to provide them.

As one participant said:

“What does justice look like? It’s hard to imagine. I know what it doesn’t look like. It doesn’t look like getting harassed as a child for walking to the shop. It doesn’t look like getting stopped and searched on your way to school. It doesn’t look like being in handcuffs and

people looking at you while you’ve done nothing wrong. All these negative experiences and the paranoia every-time you leave your house: that’s not what justice looks like, and it just gets worse.”

Many of the young people we spoke to expressed some frustration with the existing routes for seeking ‘justice’ for the harm caused to them. As detailed above, several criticised the existing supposed transparency and accountability processes. One young person, Myles, shared his experience of attempting to seek justice through the authorities official routes, via requesting police bodyworn camera footage, in order to hold them accountable for harassment or violence:

“We need to be able to get body-worn camera footage; they say you can have the footage you apply for it, and they tell you no.”

Myles also said that:

“I’ve put in a request three times, and none of them has ever come back and given it to me (...) Every time I request camera footage, it never works.”

He said that he wanted to see the police held accountable for what they had done: “these lot [police] being held accountable in a proper manner, then that would be justice”.

Given the constant and repeated nature of what they’ve experienced, some were understandably despondent about ever getting justice for what has happened to them. Caleb said:

“I got arrested for something I didn’t do. I wanted compensation, to be honest, but it’s done now, so long ago.”

One young person said that justice, to him, would mean “Reparations, no more neighbourhood watch, no more stop and search.” Another was very clear: “Stop profiling me, and yeah, literally that.” Similarly, Gabriel said that:

“My justice would be for the police to stop harassing me, just stop all of these searches and stuff and the people around me.”

They shouldn’t just be harassing young black people for stuff they are not doing. They are there to serve and protect, but that’s not what they do.”

Dean said that ““They shouldn’t be able to put you on [the database]... it shouldn’t affect anything... it has to be based on some real evidence” and that he wanted to see databases used to profile people deleted and erased:

“Well, justice for me would look like any time the report of a database, even files based on anybody, should be destroyed... it should be deleted, it should be removed.”

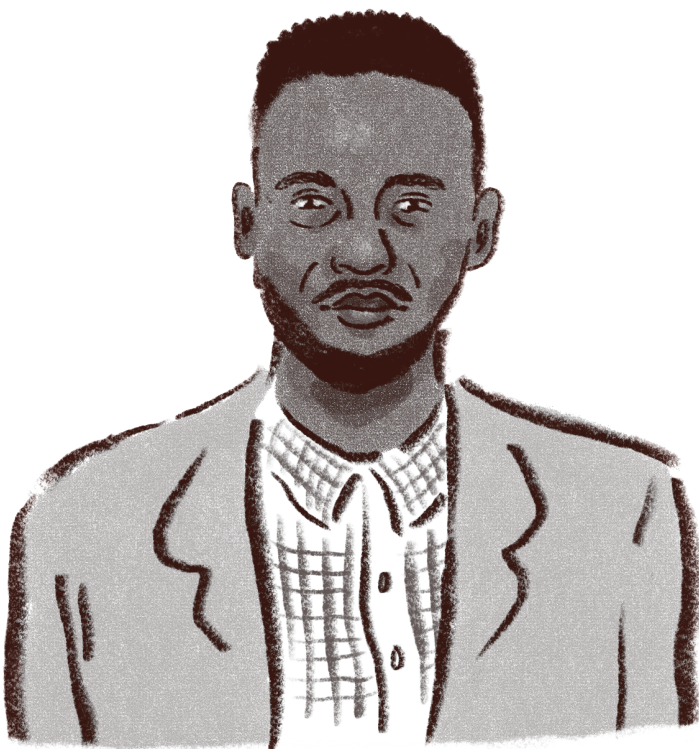
Myles made clear that this wasn't just about him, but for everyone affected by these racist databases, this harmful profiling, and the violent policing:

"Justice to me wouldn't just be for me; it would be for everyone"

The people we spoke to as part of this research have lived under and within these oppressive systems for most of their lives: surveillance, profiling, policing, police harassment and violence. It is no surprise that a key theme in their responses is simply a desire for it all to stop.

However, beyond that, it appears difficult for the young people we spoke to conceive of what else justice could look like for them. It suggests that, given that this level of surveillance, monitoring, profiling and databasing has become a part of everyday life for many of them, in order to consider what true healing might entail, they would need to be provided with much more space and time than they are currently given.

That people are not able to envision more beyond stopping or ending these harmful structures and systems, tells us that these young people, this community - and others like it - need the resources to engage with what this might look like; to have time and space to consider different meanings of justice, different alternatives to the current oppressive systems, and truly envisage what real justice would mean for them.



thank you

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