

Alliance for Police Accountability

# **POLICING & THE BLACK CHILD CONFERENCE REPORT**

*Summary of emerging themes and recommendations*



**ADA**

**2024**

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## Forward

### By Lee Jasper, Chair, Alliance for Police Accountability (APA)

The Alliance for Police Accountability (APA) is dedicated to achieving justice, accountability, and safety within Black communities. We are committed to a dual mission: advocating for transparent police reform while actively supporting community-led solutions to address and reduce serious violence. APA prioritises protecting Black lives through both institutional accountability and grassroots efforts, understanding that true safety requires addressing the root causes of violence, especially as they impact Black men, women, and children. By focusing on comprehensive strategies that blend systemic change with community empowerment, we strive to foster a secure, resilient, and empowered future for our communities. We need Justice and Safety in Equal Measure.

It is with deep gratitude and a sense of purpose that I present this report on behalf of the APA. The insights, findings, and recommendations contained within are the result of the *London Policing and the Black Child* conference, held in May 2024. This conference, which brought together over 400 participants, provided a strong public mandate for the APA's ongoing work in tackling systemic racism and the injustices inflicted upon Black children in the criminal justice system.

This report goes beyond mere reflection; it serves as a call to action, answering the community's overwhelming demand for systemic reform. The message from our communities was loud and clear: we must create safeguarding mechanisms that protect our Black children and ensure they are not disproportionately targeted or harmed by the institutions meant to serve them.

One of the conference's key recommendations was the creation of a *London Black Child Safeguarding Board (LBCSB)*, tasked with developing and overseeing the establishment of a *London Black Child Safeguarding Framework*. I am pleased to report that the APA, fulfilling its mandate, has already organised the first meeting of the LBCSB. This crucial gathering, attended by over 50 stakeholders, marks the beginning of a concerted effort to address the urgent safeguarding needs of Black children in London.

This report also outlines the pathway toward creating a *National Black-led Policing Charter* and a *Public Health Tackling Serious Violence Charter*. These charters are not just policy frameworks; they are essential tools for achieving the systemic change our communities so desperately need. They are rooted in the lived experiences of Black people and designed to dismantle the structures that have long oppressed and marginalised us.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the *APA Steering Group* for their vision and leadership. A special thanks to Dr. Nadia Habashi, *Director of Policing, Innovation Enterprise and Learning Centre*, and Charles Crichlow, *Senior Lecturer and Programme Lead for BSc Professional Policing Studies*, both from the *University of East London*, whose expertise and dedication played a pivotal role in the success of this project. I also extend my heartfelt thanks to Jeremy Crook, CEO of *Action for Race Equality*, and Serena Nalty Coombs, my PA, for their steadfast support throughout this journey.

Additionally, I wish to acknowledge all the speakers, volunteers, and the marvellous administrative, technical, and security staff at the *University of East London* who contributed so much to the success of the conference. Their professionalism and commitment ensured the event ran smoothly, and their support was invaluable on the day.

Together, we stand united in our commitment to ensuring Black children are safeguarded from harm. The public mandate we received at the conference energises us to continue this critical work, and we will not rest until we have secured the protections and justice our children deserve.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication.

Lee Jasper Chair, Alliance for Police  
Accountability (APA)

## Speakers and Facilitators

Charles Crichlow, UEL

Lee Jasper, Chair of the APA

Hon Dr Stuart Lawrence, youth engagement specialist and brother of Stephen Lawrence

Charmain Arbouin, IOPC Regional Director for London

Mina Agyepong, Mother of Child X

Bell Ribeiro-Addy, MP Streatham and Lambeth

Dr. Nadia Habashi, Deputy Cluster Lead Criminology, Justice and Policing, Senior Lecturer

Dr. Jacquie Dyer, Global Black Thrive

Jermaine Jackman, APA Youth Panel

Kenya Lamb, APA Youth Panel

Andy George, National President, Black Police Association (NBPA)

Janet Hills, MBE, former Chair of the MBPA and former President of the NBPA

Timi Okuwa, CEO, Black Equity Organisation

Eva Roszykiewicz, Raju Bhatt Solicitors

Jim Gamble CEO INEQUE Safeguarding Group. Safeguarding Lead Hackney and Southwark

Andy George, President of National Black Police Association

Kehinde Adeogun, Director of Legal Services and Policy at the Black Equity Organisation, President

Jeremy Crook OBE, CEO Action for Race Equality

Leroy Logan OBE

## Executive Summary

### The Purpose

The APA London Policing the Black Child Conference Report sheds light on the systemic failures in policing practices that disproportionately harm Black children in London. This report serves as a call to action for the Government, the Mayor and the Commissioner to address entrenched racial disparities, to safeguard vulnerable children, and to rebuild trust between communities and law enforcement through actionable solutions rooted in community insights and expert recommendations.

### The Problem

Black children in London face disproportionate use of force, stop-and-search and intimate searches, often conducted without appropriate safeguards or consideration for their welfare. Data reveals that these interactions are marked by racial bias and a systemic failure to follow existing guidelines, leading to lasting trauma and alienation within Black communities. The Casey Review highlighted systemic racism, a lack of police accountability and a toxic police culture, yet substantive change has not followed. This ongoing neglect underscores the urgent need for targeted reforms to protect Black children.

### The Conference

The Alliance for Police Accountability (APA) convened the conference in partnership with the University of East London (UEL) and Action for Race Equality (AFRE), bringing together over 400 participants including policymakers, community leaders and experts. Through presentations and community-led workshops, the conference identified key failures in current policing practices and generated actionable recommendations. Central outcomes include calls for a trauma-informed safeguarding framework, independent oversight of police interactions with children, and mandatory community-led anti-racism and cultural competency training for police officers to challenge biases and promote equitable policing practices.

### The Solution

The APA proposes three immediate steps to drive change:

1. Create a London Black Child Safeguarding Board to ensure that police interactions with children are trauma-informed and subject to oversight
2. Develop a community-led Policing Charter for London to address racial disparities and rebuild trust in law enforcement
3. To revisit these important issues regularly by making the APA Policing the Black Child Conference an annual event in London

### Call to Action

These measures, if implemented, can ensure systemic reform, safeguard vulnerable children, and restore public confidence in the institutions tasked with their protection. In the current climate there is a very real risk that civil unrest could be triggered by future serious incidents.

## Introduction

The APA London Policing the Black Child conference was hosted by the Alliance for Police Accountability (APA) in partnership with the University of East London (UEL) and Action for Race Equality (AFRE) on 18th May 2024.

The conference consisted of presentations by senior politicians, activists and academics from Black Organisations in London leading into an afternoon of community consultation workshops on key topics relating to the policing of Black children in London. The workshops represented the key focus of the day designed to initiate community conversations about the policing of Black children in London and to provide a mandate for the development of a London Black Child Safeguarding Charter to be carried forward by the APA.<sup>1</sup>

The conference was attended by over 400 participants bringing together high calibre community practitioners and professionals united to address the failure of the Metropolitan Police Service (Met) to follow through on the recommendations of the Macpherson Report that included measures to transform the attitude of the Met towards race relations and improve police accountability.

The goal of the conference was to collaboratively develop strategic recommendations to be included in the London Black Child Safeguarding Charter. These recommendations will be presented to key authorities, including the Home Secretary, Mayor of London, the Metropolitan Police, and other statutory child safeguarding bodies.

This report summarises the key themes and the community-led strategic recommendations that emerged from the conference, which together identify the pressing concerns in relation to the treatment of Black children at the hands of law enforcement in London.

## Emerging Themes

ONS statistics from the Crime Survey for England and Wales 2023 show an overall decrease in crime, with the number of homicides down by 10%, the number of robbery offences up by 11%, offences involving knives or sharp instruments up by 3% and offences involving firearms up by 13%.

Met Police and City of London Police Forces reported a decrease of violent offences in 2015/16 and an increase of violent crime in almost every year since then reflecting a pattern of increasing violent crime replicated across England and Wales as a whole.

Data on the use of force by the Met Police against 10-17 year-old subjects in 2022-23 prepared by Gavin Hales, Senior Associate Fellow at The Police Foundation, show that force was used overall against Black children at 3.4 times the rate of white children, and against Asian children at 0.5 times the rate. Where force was used, white children were 3 times more likely to be hospitalised than Black children (4.7% vs 1.7%) and twice as likely than Asian children (2.5%).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Conference agenda available in Appendix A

<sup>2</sup> MPS via the London Datastore: Use of Force Dataset, 2022-23 & ONS, Census 2021: Ethnic group by age and sex

The Mayor of London Sadiq Khan acknowledged in the MQT meeting held on 16th December 2021 that Black Londoners are disproportionately represented as victims and offenders for all categories of serious violence, reporting that 62% of homicide victims and 65% of offenders are Black Londoners. The disproportionate representation of Black Londoners in relation to violent crime contributes to an increase in the fear of crime that impacts the Black communities across London and Black children in particular.

The APA London Policing and the Black Child conference set out to look at the impact of the disproportionate use of force in the policing of Black children on the wider community and to put forward recommendations for change. The following key themes emerged from the front led presentations and conference Q&A's delivered by the distinguished speakers, politicians, activists and academics who shared their insight and expertise:

### 1. Safeguarding Framework for the Black Child

*The same names that I found out at school the next day came out 20 years later, someone from the community went to a police station and left the same names, someone came to our house and posted a piece of paper through our letterbox with the same names, someone picked up the hotline and left four of the names, but still within the first seven weeks (in the press) Stephen was a drug dealer, a burglar, someone that this thing should have happened to. Even though we're 30 years deep, that trauma, that pain, never goes away. (Hon Dr Stewart Lawrence, brother of Stephen Lawrence)*

The London Safeguarding Children Partnership (London SCP) is responsible for enhancing the safety and wellbeing of children in London. This is achieved by supporting local safeguarding partnerships to meet their statutory obligations under the Children and Social Work Act 2017, and by safeguarding children in line with the guidance set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE 2018).

The London SCP is accountable to London's local safeguarding partnerships and its member organisations. As part of London's wider systems of governance, the London SCP is mutually accountable to the three statutory safeguarding partner organisations represented by The Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS), the Metropolitan Police Service, and the NHS represented by Integrated Care Systems (ICS's) across London.

The London SCP meets quarterly and is chaired by a London Local Authority Chief Executive, attended by leaders from the three safeguarding partners:

- London Local Authority officers, represented by Chief Executives and London Directors of Children's Services
- Metropolitan Police, represented by the Assistant Commissioner and the Commander for safeguarding
- MOPAC, represented by Director of Commissioning and Partnerships
- NHS England (London), represented by Director of Nursing Leadership & Quality
- Integrated Care Systems, represented by a chief nurse from a London ICS
- London Councils, represented by the host of the London SCP

There are currently no Met Police guidelines around the safeguarding of Black children in London and a concerning lack of acknowledgment at any level that safeguarding guidelines specific to Black children are even a requirement. A major piece of research carried out by The Children's Commissioner into Child Q and the use of strip searching this year made a series of recommendations including better training among police forces, a child-first approach to



policing led by the National Police Chiefs Council, strengthened and clarified guidelines and improved data collection and monitoring.

The primary aim of the APA London Policing the Black Child Conference has been to bring the Black community together to focus on what we choose to be our key priorities in improving the safeguarding of Black children, and to use the community consultation workshops at the conference to start a collective conversation about what a robust safeguarding framework would look like for the policing of all children, and in particular of Black children who are disproportionately affected.

While the training provided by the Met police force leaves its officers in no doubt about the powers that they have, there is an absence of guidance in relation to when and how those powers are to be used. Critically there is no recognition that force used when stopping and searching and/or strip searching a Black child is psychologically damaging or traumatic.

For the Black community, who for obvious reasons do not perceive our own children as a threat, this highlights the need to scrutinise the broader culture of behaviour in the police force towards Black children, feeding into the need for statutory referral for all children subject to illegal searches to a children's police.

The IOPC continues to see rising complaints about strip searches particularly in relation to exposing intimate parts (EIP), and in March 2023 participated in a round table with policing and non-policing stakeholders where the number one recommendation was for a substantive review of the policing powers in relation to intimate searches. The IOPC made ten national recommendations as part of the consultation and were submitted to the Home Office, who partially accepted the recommendations and launched a consultation exercise in April this year.

The APA and its partner organisations are advocating for a safeguarding framework that enables any child, regardless of ethnicity, who experiences an intimate search or a violent arrest to be recommended to a child safeguarding board, where they would be given the supportive tools they need to find their way back to normality.

The issue of safeguarding Black children and the wider community from all forms of violence is critical and it is important that we do not shy away from exploring the question of the Black community's responsibility for tackling increasing rates of serious violence in our own communities. It is not possible to address the policing of Black children without accepting responsibility to some degree for the continuous escalation of serious youth violence, for teenage homicides, domestic violence, sexual abuse and exploitation of young women and girls, and for the full range and culture of violence that persists and evolves in our communities. The creation of a safeguarding framework for all children experiencing violence addresses the need to safeguard them from the violence they experience in the context of policing and the criminal justice system, as well as the violence they experience in our own communities.

## 2. Police Accountability

*"It doesn't really take much for your life to be at risk. And I think of all my years raising my kids, the biggest threat to my child so far has definitely been the Met Police, because in that moment, all of our lives were at risk, and I didn't know whether we were going to come out of my house alive, my main aim was just to make sure that we followed instructions." (Mina Agyepong, mother of Child X)*

The Metropolitan Police Service (Met) is a key institution in London, subject to multiple layers of oversight to ensure compliance with its mandate. The Commissioner is legally responsible for exercising police powers and is accountable to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and the Home Secretary. The Home Secretary and the Mayor of London jointly appoint the Commissioner, with the final decision resting with the Home Secretary.

Beyond its London policing duties, the Met also undertakes national functions such as counterterrorism, overseen by the Home Secretary. Since 2011, the Mayor of London has held responsibility for setting the strategic direction of policing through the Police and Crime Plan. MOPAC, led by the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, manages the Met's resources, budget, and effectiveness. MOPAC works with the Commissioner to monitor progress against the Police and Crime Plan and assesses risks to its delivery.

The London Policing Board, that meets four times a year, is a new addition to the Met's governance structure, and the London Assembly's Police and Crime Committee also scrutinises the Met's activities. MOPAC oversees the Met's finances through the Investment Advisory Board and the Audit Panel, which also monitors governance, internal controls, and safety and diversity standards compliance. At a local borough level, there are Safer Neighbourhood Boards (SNB's).

Other oversight bodies include:

- His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC): Evaluates the Met and reports to Parliament
- Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC): Oversees complaints against the Met to maintain public confidence
- Directorate of Audit, Risk, and Assurance (DARA): Provides annual assessments of the Met's governance, internal controls, and risk management
- London Policing Board: Created by the Mayor in response to The Baroness Casey Review to ensure that the Mayor is held accountable for his annual Policing Plan and for scrutinising the Mayor and the Metropolitan Police Service's annual budgets

Accountability is critical at every level for the simple reason that to a very large extent it is the absence of accountability that creates the climate and the breeding ground for the many publicly reported challenges the Met is experiencing from institutional racism to misogyny, homophobia, underperformance and toxic culture.

The widespread failure of the Met to report contentious events involving Black children will not improve until there is a robust framework for holding the police officers to account who fail to report them. The broader question being asked by the organisations behind the APA London Policing and the Black Child Conference is about who is holding the police to account for their systemic failure to take accountability.

The current Mayor of London has been in office since 2016 with his own Policing and Crime Committee. Sarah Everard and the issues raised in the Casey Review all took place on his watch and yet he has consistently failed to hold the Metropolitan Police to account on issues of race and disproportionality.

The primary aim of this conference, of the APA and of its partnership organisations, was to create a community-led charter for policing and safeguarding the Black child, and to get that charter on the top table of the Mayor's Office and the Home Secretary. Our only hope of reducing the impact of strip searches, violent arrests and racial profiling on our children and our

communities is to work together to acknowledge and address the broader issue of political accountability.

### 3. Stop and Search & Strip Searches

From the APA perspective, the Met is perceived to be the biggest safeguarding threat in London to Black children, with a striking 69% of all children arrested coming from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds<sup>3</sup>.

The legitimacy of the statistically evidenced disproportionality of searches carried out on Black children is further undermined by the ineffectiveness of stop and search policy at preventing crime, with less than a third of the cases (31%) leading to arrest.

For obvious reasons strip searching is particularly invasive, humiliating and psychologically damaging. The facts around the strip searching of Black children<sup>4</sup> seem to cruelly replicate and extend the social environment of the 1970's and 80's, in which every Black child risked being viewed as a suspect, a potential criminal and an agitator:

- Between the period of 2018 and 2020 a total of 50 children were strip searched, 25% of whom were between 10 and 15 years old
- 58% of boys who were strip searched were Black, and in 23% of all occasions there was no appropriate adult present
- 53% of strip searches of children resulted in no further action taken by the Metropolitan Police Service

The increase in recent years of police officers being sacked for racism, domestic violence, sexual abuse, rape and fraud, points to a systemic problem in the Met Police of a significant minority of officers who are actively racist and misogynistic. In addition to this criminal, the abiding experience of the Black community is that the policing of Black children in general operates from an unconscious bias towards seeing Black Children as inherently violent and therefore as a potential threat. The perception in the Black community is that this bias goes unchecked and unacknowledged largely due to the empathy deficit of police officers and of the police force towards the Black community.

In February of 2024 the National Black Police Association (NBPA) responded to the misconduct investigation targeting the Chair of the MBPA by calling for ethnic minorities to boycott joining the Met until there is more rigorous accountability placed on the commissioner to bring about the necessary and promised reforms to the service. The landmark report by Louise Casey highlighted that Black officers were 81% more likely to face misconduct charges than their white counterparts, concluding that this contributes to a pattern embedded across Met culture, where speaking out against racism often results in adverse consequences for the complainant. The already low representation of Black officers in the Met is perceived more generally to compound a behavioural culture at the grass roots of policing that operates through a lens primarily concerned with containment and enforcement which excludes the consideration of safeguarding the Black child.

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<sup>3</sup> Data obtained through Freedom of Information law by the Howard League for Penal Reform (2017)

<sup>4</sup> Children's Commissioner 2023: Child Q and the use of strip searching

When force is used in the carrying out of searches on Black children it needs to be both necessary and proportionate. From the Black community perspective, the use of force against Black children is wilfully disproportionate and comes as a consequence of a culture of racial profiling and an inability to tackle wholesale and systemic corruption, as the findings of the Casey Report demonstrated. There is a clear call to action for police officers to treat all children as human beings first and for all police officers to be inducted into a professional culture that sees and supports that humanity.

London is becoming increasingly diverse and the need for radical reform to restore trust and confidence is now urgent. The Met will need radical overall training to improve trust and to be truly accountable to the communities it serves. The empathy deficit of Met officers is a huge problem and the challenges they are experiencing will only increase as they face complex decisions in the frontline which require more than just a set of tools that enable them to arrest or search people. Instead, they require a more complex and comprehensive set of tools that empower them to see all children as children and all people as human beings. Conversations are urgently needed about better reforms of accountability for the disproportionate use of force in addition to conversations about how to help nervous, inexperienced or frightened police officers to understand how to conduct a forceful interaction with a Black child without contributing to its escalation, and in a way that considers the wellbeing and the welfare of the child.

Annual figures produced by the Home Office in 2022 revealed that police officers are still disproportionately using force on Black people. Where force is needed there must always be accountability, with clear guidelines and consistent monitoring. Currently there is often very little in real terms to stop frontline officers abusing their powers when they feel that that is their only option.

There has been a long history of reviews, studies and thematic consultations with communities and with police forces carried out by the discredited Independent Police Complaint Commission (IPCC) and taken over by the Independent Office of Police Complaints (IOPC) into the use of tasers and of stop and search. One of the main flaws in the current system is that it remains up to policing whether or not they take on recommendations that are made. As a result, important lessons learned that come as a traumatic cost to Black communities are not being implemented. This is a general and systemic failure in the Met and evidence that it is not learning as an organisation.

Since the APA London Policing the Black Child Conference in May 2024 a number of key policy changes have taken place which have a significant bearing on this issue and which are useful to include in this report:

In June 2024, the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) called for more clarity in relation to the referral of child strip search cases as outlined in the updated draft guidance to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) codes of practice introduced in response to the failings in the case of Child Q5.

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<sup>5</sup> Children & Young People Now:

<https://www.cypnow.co.uk/content/news/childrens-services-leaders-question-plans-to-refer-child-strip-search-cases/>

In August 2024, the Children's Commissioner published its third report on the use of strip-searching powers by police forces on children in England and Wales<sup>6</sup>. The report is based on a new and unique dataset demonstrating that more than 3,000 strip searches were conducted on children between 2018 and 2023, equivalent to one search every 14 hours on average, with the youngest child being just eight years old.

In November 2024, the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) revised its guidelines calling for urgent measures to stop the adultification of Black children by officers<sup>7</sup>, saying it is crucial that officers understand how adultification could influence decision making leading to the unjust treatment of children. In January 2025, the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill was debated in Parliament<sup>8</sup> which introduces major reforms to keep children safe from exploitation. The bill estimates that around 111,000 children are currently being home educated compared to 55,000 before the pandemic, alongside 150,000 children missing education all together at some point during the last year.

### Metropolitan Police Data

While the Met continues to report numbers of stop and searches and strip searches as going down, what we are actually seeing in the frontline is that events are in fact often not being recorded at all. Where they are recorded there is the important question of how they are being recorded, and of how much awareness and understanding there is of racial bias and of the adultification of Black children in the hearts and minds of the officers doing the recording, and more broadly in the data gathering policies, guidelines and templates of the wider organisation. As a result, the Black community does not trust the accuracy of Met data relating to their interaction with Black children.

The data that police forces collect in relation to intimate searches of Black children is not robust and, in many cases, does not exist. Because of the way data is collected and recorded it is, for example, almost impossible to find out after the fact whether there was an appropriate adult present, what if any efforts were made to find one, and where the strip search took place.

The youth charity Redthread who work in A&E departments in the major hospitals across London have said publicly that they do not recognise the Met's figures on the use of force on Black children, and that these figures bear no relation to their experience in the frontline. Redthread workers see Black boys and girls coming into A&E with taser wounds, dog bites, batting rounds and wounds from being forcibly arrested, and the organisation is so concerned that they have written to the Mayor and to the Police Commissioner saying that they have noticed a huge increase in the number of Black children affected.

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<sup>6</sup> Children's Commissioner 2024: Strip searching of children in England and Wales:

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/resource/strip-searching-of-children-in-england-and-wales-first-complete-dataset-for-2018-2023-including-new-data-july-2022-june-2023/>

<sup>7</sup> The Guardian: Watchdog calls for end of adultification of Black children by police in England and Wales:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/nov/28/adultification-black-children-police-england-wales-iopc-watchdog>

<sup>8</sup> GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/childrens-bill-to-keep-children-safe-from-exploitation>

Information obtained by the London-based human rights charity Rights & Security International (RSI) in February 2024<sup>9</sup> showed that the police failed to record information about race or ethnicity of more than 33,000 people referred to the Prevent counter-extremism programme since 2015.

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) published a review of the quality of police recorded crime statistics for England and Wales in May 2024<sup>10</sup>. The recommendations of the review were that the Home Office needs to strengthen its oversight of police force data quality, and that greater collaboration and knowledge sharing between organisations involved in collecting and processing police recorded crime data is necessary to strengthen that oversight and better communicate quality.

It will not be possible to know the extent of racial disproportionality in policing until officers follow the basic requirement of making a record of what they are doing in the frontline. The systemic bias that exists within every institution that reports on itself is no less valid in the Met, who continue to deny the existence of institutional racism from the very top of the organisation. This in spite of the fact that cases of race discrimination in the Met are up by 110%, and the success rate for making a race complaint in the MET is a staggering 1.6%. Resistance against the definition of systemic organisational racism in the Met is in part politically motivated by this government's ongoing culture wars. The Met Commissioner does not have to concede to systemic racism because the former government and the Home Secretary say it doesn't exist, the Prime Minister says it doesn't exist, and the cabinet says it doesn't exist. It is vital that the new incoming Labour Government and new Home Secretary Yvette Cooper resolve this implicit tension and clarify the government's position on the reality of systemic racism in policing as identified by Casey Review, and that they determine that systemic racism in policing and criminal justice is a major public health issue.

#### 4. Adultification

The concept of adultification is when notions of innocence and vulnerability are not afforded to certain children. This is determined by people and institutions who hold power over them. When adultification occurs outside of the home it is always founded within discrimination and bias. Regardless of the context in which adultification takes place, the impact results in children's rights being either diminished or not upheld.<sup>11</sup>

Adultification of Black children is a long-established concept that goes back to the Black experience of slavery and the legacy of that experience in the Caribbean today.<sup>12</sup> It is closely

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<sup>9</sup> Leighday:

<https://www.leighday.co.uk/news/news/2024-news/police-have-failed-to-record-information-about-race-or-ethnicity-of-more-than-33-000-people-referred-to-prevent/>

<sup>10</sup> Office for Statistics Regulation:

<https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/the-quality-of-police-recorded-crime-statistics-for-england-and-wales/>

<sup>11</sup> Davis and Marsh (2020)

<sup>12</sup> Bell Ribeiro-Addy, MP Streatham and Lambeth

related to dehumanisation, whereby it is easier to mete out cruelty to people who do not look like them, who we consider to be *worth less* and, on that basis, *less human*.

In the sphere of education and policing Black children suffer differential treatment and as a result are often not afforded the safeguarding and the trauma-informed support naturally provided to vulnerable people. Critics of police officers attending schools have argued that this activity might have harmful impacts, suggesting that it might cause young people to be criminalised for behaviour that would otherwise have been dealt with using non-criminal school sanctions.<sup>13</sup>

For the Black community, where racial profiling is a daily ongoing struggle, there is a clear sense that this culture is now being extended to our children, including adultification stereotypes alongside a suite of many other racial stereotypes.

## 5. Racism and Mental Health

*What you see in mental health hospitals is a massive over representation of people from Black African and Black Caribbean communities. It starts in the schools, from this heavy surveillance on our psychology and our wellbeing from the cradle to the grave. It impacts on our mental health and on our ability to actually navigate through society in any kind of healthy way, because the relentless nature of systemic racism is grinding us down. (Dr Jacqui Dyer, Global Black Thrive)*

The correlation between racism and mental health is well known and well documented, concluding that perceived racism is associated with adverse psychological outcomes such as emotional distress, anger, fear and shame, which can lead to depression and anxiety.<sup>14</sup> Harmful stereotypes undermine and dismantle the supportive and inclusive environments that are required for the good mental health and wellbeing of everyone.<sup>15</sup>

The logical implications of the premise and the conclusions of the Casey Review insofar as the reality of systemic racism, misogyny and homophobia in policing, mean that we are duty-bound to develop safeguarding mechanisms for the victims of the systemic racism at the heart of the review's findings.

The racial profiling of children by the police leaves scars that go far beyond the physical. They erode trust in the institutions that are meant to protect us and create a sense of fear and alienation that extends far beyond the individual child. Ongoing racial profiling, particularly when it is not acknowledged, fractures the fabric of our communities and sows seeds of distrust and resentment that can last for generations.

Black people in London cannot help thinking that the next time the police make a mistake it might be you, or your brother, or your son. It is precisely because Black people are disproportionately the victims of crime that there is such an urgent need for a police service we can trust.

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<sup>13</sup> Youth Endowment Fund: Police in Schools

<sup>14</sup> Yang et al (2025)

<sup>15</sup> United Nations General Assembly (2019)

Formal safeguarding reviews, for example in the case of Child Q in Hackney, too often reveal that the required policies and guidelines for protections are in fact in place, but that too often the rules are simply not being followed. There is no doubt that changes need to be made to the law to enhance the safeguarding of Black children in relation to policing and the criminal justice system. But it is also very clear that a big part of the problem is the lack of consistency in the application of existing policies, rules and law in the front line. This points clearly to the need for independent community scrutiny and pressure on police forces and the criminal justice system in their interactions with Black children.

The conference heard from legal experts working with complaints arising from high-profile cases like Child Q, reporting that the trauma is clearly evident from the first meeting with the child and their family. At the point in the legal process where a psychiatric report is commissioned it invariably confirms a diagnosis of PTSD, with the impact of the trauma often running far deeper than that of a single incident. The children in these cases present complex and embedded symptoms that speak to the longitudinal impact of the Black experience of policing in particular of children and of young people. The findings and recommendations that come out of these high-profile cases provide a clear indication of the wholesale impact of racial bias in the frontline of policing and highlight the need for legal and psychological support for all children who experience trauma in relation to their interactions with the police, and for Black children in particular who are disproportionately affected.

The residual policing trauma left unresolved and unaddressed has built up a well of anger and discontent in Black communities, who are left alone to deal with the trauma that inevitably comes from racist policing.

## 6. Historical Inquiries and Reports

Racism and discrimination within the police force and by the police towards Black and minority ethnic communities has been a prominent feature of many targeted inquiries and reports for many years with consistently similar outcomes and recommendations. Despite the range of reports and inquiries over the years, successive UK Governments have failed to acknowledge or address the racism inherent in policing, policy and practice. From the perspective of Black communities, it is clear that we need action, not more reports:

- Scarmen Report (1981)
- McPherson Report (1999)
- United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2016)
- Casey Review (2023)
- Children's Commissioner: Child Q and the use of strip searching: progress so far
- Angiolini Inquiry (2024)
- Power the Fight: Protecting Young Black Lives, Celebrating Black Professionals (2024)

The National Black Police Association (NBPA) and University of East London (UEL) submission to the United Nations Special Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination this year highlighted that racism and discrimination is still prevalent within police forces across the UK, and that it is causing a detrimental effect on BME communities and on the health, recruitment and retention of BME officers and staff.

The APA intends to work with local communities across London to hold the Met and the Mayor to account, so that these reports do not gather dust on the shelf and that the recommendations made are acted upon with urgency and commitment.



## Recommendations from Community Consultation Workshops

The Policing the Black Child Conference in London provided an opportunity for communities with lived experience to contribute towards developing and sustaining meaningful solutions to systemic problems and to make a positive impact on the lives of Black children and on policing policy and practice. Participants were invited to choose between five consultation workshops held in the afternoon and to feed into the recommendations to be carried forward by the APA and its partner organisations into the wider body of this important work.

This section provides a summary of the key recommendations from each of the consultation workshops.

### Workshop A: Police and Criminal Evidence Act Public Consultation on Child Strip Searches

*Objective: to develop key recommendations to monitor, address and reduce violent arrests of Black children, and to explore potential amendments to PACE strip search guidelines*

1. Commitment to preserve the dignity of Black children involved in violent arrests and intimate searches at all times and to contain the resulting trauma by not carrying out forceful or intimate searches of Black children in the school environment
2. Commitment to provide appropriate reflection for police officers after carrying out intimate searches on a Black child and professional counselling for the child
3. Assurance that an appropriate adult is physically present at all incidents of intimate searches carried out on Black children
4. Development of training and guidelines for police officers in establishing rapport with Black children before carrying out any search, promoting a culture where the search is seen as a last resort

### Workshop B: Violent Arrests and the Impact on Black Children

*Objective: to develop key safeguarding recommendations to ensure children experiencing violent arrests receive trauma-informed support*

1. To provide consistency around the use of body worn cameras during violent arrests so that recordings are uniformly available for scrutiny in contentious search and arrest scenarios
2. To improve access powers to body cam footage for members of the public in contentious search and arrest scenarios
3. To apply joint enterprise to police officers in cases of injury and death involving Black children during searches and police interventions
4. To codify race-related fearmongering among police officers in the context of the misconduct process, for example the denigration of certain geographic areas and the people and races who live in them
5. To provide consistency around the buy-in at Borough Commander level to the Race Equality Training developed by the Met, which is currently provided on an opt-in/opt-out basis

### Workshop C: Intimate Body Searches: Safeguarding and Dignity

*Objective: to develop key recommendations to ensure respectful and lawful treatment during searches, protecting the dignity of Black children*

1. Acceptance and implementation of a trauma-informed child first approach to carrying out intimate searches on Black children

2. Commitment to providing onward care and trauma-informed support to Black children after they experience an intimate search, taking into account the long-term impact of the search on the child's welfare and wellbeing The commissioning of duty of care training for police that is developed and
3. delivered in collaboration with Black community organisations, providing police officers across the board with access to informal community spaces where they are able to hear from people with lived experience of police violence

#### **Workshop D: Creating Effective Black Child Safeguarding Framework**

*Objective: to develop key recommendations for the formulation of a standardised process for mandatory safeguarding referrals post-police interactions with Black children*

1. Recognition that there is currently a lack of data to support the build of a comprehensive safeguarding framework, making referral pathways difficult to develop and monitor Recognition
2. that the language used in safeguarding referrals often lacks contextual and cultural understanding, often misleading social workers and other support staff about the true nature and extent of the incident and the impact on the child Availability of ringfenced funding for specialist
3. trauma-based mental health support for children who experience interactions with the police that cause psychological harm, with communities deciding who can access support

#### **Workshop E: Monitoring Police Interactions with Black Children**

*Objective: to develop key recommendations for a transparent and accessible monitoring system that tracks and reports police interactions with Black children*

- Development of training for police officers in trauma-informed practice with an emphasis on cultural awareness and collective trauma, designed and delivered from a community perspective
- Education of young people in relation not only to understanding their rights but also to applying that understanding in real time (reference to the GO WISELY acronym: Grounds; Objective; Warrant card; Identity; Station; Entitlement; Legal ramifications; You're detained)
- Creation of an app that children can use to record their real time interactions with the police, ensuring that Black children's voices are heard and providing a contextual data set able to challenge the formal data provided by police forces
- Acknowledgement by affected communities that if there were more active parenting of Black children there would be less policing. The adults in the community need to stand up and stop behaving as if it is somebody else's problem, because it isn't, it's our problem.
- Creation of knowledge and educational hubs for community members impacted by police violence against their children, and for the education of our young people
- Development of mechanisms that enable police forces to identify and penalise officers repeatedly carrying out searches that cause psychological harm, where Black children are systematically targeted and where nothing is found on them

## Overall Recommendations

The following recommendations were made collectively by the panel of speakers, politicians, activists and academics and the community participants at the conclusion of the London Policing and the Black Child Conference:

1. System-wide acceptance that only independent community-led oversight bodies like the APA have the power to influence and effect lasting change to the policing of Black children and Black communities
2. Commissioning of mandatory anti racism training for all police officers with community-led oversight of the process, ensuring that provision is effective and fit for purpose
3. Commitment to real policy reform in particular the acknowledgement that we do not need any more reports, that we have all of the information we need to move forward to make the changes that are necessary, and that what is needed now is implementation
4. Political accountability is key to this process and conversations need to happen around holding the Labour Party and The Mayor's Office to account for the systemic refusal to acknowledge institutional racism in the police force
5. If Labour introduces a race equality act, we are advocating very strongly that there must be a definition of institutional racism within that act. We need the legislation to challenge and change public authority cultures and to hold them to account.

- Development of a robust safeguarding framework for the policing of Black children
- Establishment of police monitoring groups and community-led serious violence reduction networks in each of the major cities in England and Wales
- Sharing of data and evaluations with policing observatories in each city
- Creation of partnerships with universities
- Development and delivery of community-led training programs for police officers
- Creation of national and international support networks
- Development of coordinated financial planning to fund local communities

## Next Steps

The London Policing the Black Child Conference was extremely well attended and the level of community participation over the whole day and particularly in the workshops demonstrated a high level of collective commitment. The APA and its partner organisations hosting the event received a clear mandate from the community to proceed and to advocate on this important matter on their behalf.

This report has been produced to capture the valuable learnings and recommendations of the day and to support the APA in the important conversations to come with the government, the Mayor and the Commissioner.

The partnership with the University of East London (UEL) is a good foundation and is something that has been needed for some years. In particular there is a great deal to explore in relation to

community representation in terms of input into the training offered as part of the UEL's Policing Degree.

Action for Race Equality (AFRE) supports the need for a Black led national initiative on policing and police accountability and recognises that resources will be fundamental to what is a multimillion-pound grand vision for change, expressing a commitment to explore sources of funding from Black communities and Black organisations that will have longevity, and which are not politically antagonised by race. Article 14 of the United Nations for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination which allows people to take cases to the UN has not been signed off by the UK, in contrast to convention rights of women and disabilities which have. AFRE will be working with the APA and with law firms to advocate for that to happen.

The work the APA is doing with its Youth Panel to empower young people to become more represented in the work ahead is an area that needs further investment and development to improve representation of the youth voice in this process.

While the focus of the conference was largely on Black boys in the context of violent arrests and stop and search, it will be important moving forward that thought is given to adequately representing the experiences of Black girls and women in the policing context. There is also more focussed work to be done thinking about Black children who are neurodiverse and those with hidden disability, who are more easily traumatised and more likely to experience interactions with the police that escalate into violence due to perceived non-compliance. Thought will also need to be given to the policing of Black children in rural areas where many of the same issues affecting major cities often go unnoticed and where racial profiling can be more extreme.

