

The government has been urged to act over the “school to prison pipeline” after a report found black and mixed heritage boys in England received poor support from youth offending services.

HM Inspectorate of Probation found “significant deficits” in the quality of work conducted by youth offending services and partner agencies when dealing with black and mixed heritage boys.

Many of those in the cases inspectors examined faced multiple disadvantages. Their report found 60% of those who had received a court sentence had been excluded from school. [Youth justice](#) staff were said to find it challenging to find suitable educational alternatives for these boys.

In half of the cases the boys had faced racial discrimination in their lives. The report also found that a third had been victims of criminal exploitation and a quarter had a disability.

Jabeer Butt, the CEO of the Race Equality Foundation, condemned these findings and called on the government to bring in measures to end what he described as a “school to prison pipeline”.

He said: “The evidence on the lack of early intervention to address multiple and complex needs of black and mixed race heritage boys now in the youth justice system is deeply dispiriting. But perhaps more shocking is that 10 years after the Youth Justice Board committed itself to identify and spread local effective practice, this report notes a lack of impetus to improve and deliver better outcomes for black and mixed race boys.

“The Inspectorate’s conclusion that it is yet to see progress in ‘casework being delivered’ should be a clarion call for urgent and sustained action in the provision of youth offender services. At the same time, the government needs to invest in and improve early intervention, as well as work to end the school-to-prison pipeline, which sees disproportionate exclusions from schools leading to over-representation in the youth justice system.”

For the report, the inspectorate reviewed a sample of cases from nine youth offending services across England, as well as inspection data gathered over a 12-month period. Inspectors spoke to senior leaders and youth justice workers, and worked with an agency to hear from some of the boys.

Justin Russell, the chief inspector of probation, said: “There is a disproportionate number of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system. Addressing this disparity has been a longstanding goal, but we found a lack of clarity and curiosity about why this disparity exists and what needs to be done to change it.

“Good intentions must translate to positive practice and real improvements across the country. More must be done to understand and meet these children’s needs earlier on, to prevent yet more black and mixed heritage boys from entering the criminal justice system further down the line.”

The Ministry of Justice has been contacted for comment.

Source: [‘School-to-prison pipeline’: youth justice services failing black boys](#)