



Race Equity in YEF Evaluations

**Insights from the YEF Evaluation
Conference 2024**

The Youth Endowment Fund's approach to race equity

The Youth Endowment Fund's mission is to prevent children and young people from becoming involved in violence. Because of the disproportionality in the criminal justice system and systemic inequalities in our wider society¹, it is clear that if we don't challenge the role that racism plays in young people's experiences of youth justice, education and access to employment and mental health support, we won't be able to make the difference we're here to bring about.

As an employer and What Works Centre, we are committed to being an anti-racist organisation. We have clear and actionable race equity commitments across five areas of our work: our funding, our research and change, our partnerships, our leadership and our team. We publish our progress in annual [Race Equity Progress Reports](#).

As part of our [objectives for race equity](#), we are committed to investing in the cultural competency of the researchers we work with, and ensuring they have the necessary awareness, knowledge and skills to avoid misunderstandings or biases in YEF-funded work. Part of this commitment is developing resources to facilitate the comprehensive scoping and assessment of projects. This document is such a resource.

¹ Children from Black, Asian and other minority backgrounds are significantly overrepresented at all stages in the youth justice system. Black children are four times as likely to be arrested as White children. As of May 2019, more than half of the children in youth custody were from Black, Asian or other minority backgrounds.

Aims of this document

This document provides a list of **reflective prompts** for our evaluators to consider aspects of race equity in evaluations. It is a summary of race equity considerations that other evaluators have made, and it would hopefully prompt evaluators to consider aspects of race equity they might not have considered in their evaluation so far and be used as a springboard for discussing ideas and considerations.

The approach taken aims at embedding **race equity as a fundamental part of quality assurance and ethics** into the research. This document focuses on YEF work and is therefore structured by YEF processes, but questions and principles may be transferable to delivery of programmes and evaluations elsewhere.

This document will be especially useful for reference at the design and set-up stages of evaluations but can naturally be revisited throughout the life of the evaluation. It also prepares evaluators to write protocols and reports, as questions in this document feed into what YEF requires to be reported.

This document is not intended as a complete and comprehensive list on how to embed race equity in evaluations, or as a checklist that would guarantee that evaluators have considered all relevant aspects of race equity for their evaluation.

This document is **derived from our evaluators' and race equity associates' reflections** at our Evaluator Conference 2024, on embedding race equity considerations in YEF evaluations. A special thanks to Dr Fatima Husain (NatCen) for her presentation on a holistic approach for embedding race equity and diversity in research.

Content was also taken from presentations by:

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Co-design and adaptation of the programme for evaluation

At YEF, co-design takes place once the programme team and evaluator have been appointed. A race equity associate might be appointed by YEF at this stage. The joint goal of programme team, evaluator and race equity associate is to develop a final proposal for the evaluation of the programme. If successful, this will be signed off by the YEF Grants and Evaluation Committee (GECO). Co-design is often the first time the entire project team works together and tends to be an involved process. As such it is worth thinking carefully at the outset about how best to work together.

Ways of working

- ✓ Involve race equity associate, programme team staff and service users from the start.
- ✓ Agree on ways of working that would enable the race equity associate to provide the most value/impact. This can include requesting input or feedback at touchpoints when changes are still possible, and feedback can still be implemented.
- ✓ Evaluator and race equity associate to reflect collaboratively on topics that arise.

The evaluator's relationship with the race equity associate

When a race equity associate gets appointed and joins the evaluator and programme team, it is likely that the evaluator has more knowledge than the race equity associate about the programme. It is part of the evaluator's role to involve the race equity associate in the project. Both evaluators and race equity associates have fed back that it is helpful for the evaluator to reflect on how they plan to involve the race equity associate, and to lead a '**ways of working**' discussion with them. This could be centred around the following questions:

- **When** will the race equity associate be involved? Key points of involvement might be consultation on decisions, progress updates, and once feedback has been addressed.
- **Which meetings** will the race equity associated be invited to and what will their role be?
- **What things can/cannot be changed?** For instance, if the timeline of the project has already been agreed with YEF, it is unlikely that changes can be made even if the race equity associate suggests it (please see our [Red Lines Guidance](#)).

The evaluator should:

- ✓ Ensure the race equity associate is engaged early in the project design phase, rather than at later stages. Schedule regular check-ins or planning sessions with the race equity associate from the beginning to ensure that race equity considerations are embedded into the project from the start.
- ✓ Provide clarity on things that are inside and outside the scope of areas requiring feedback, so the race equity associate can focus their attention on things they can directly influence.
- ✓ Build in **flexibility** regarding project timelines and budgets to allow for additional needs like translation, cultural adaptations, and other race equity-specific tasks.
- ✓ Close the feedback loop with the race equity associate by reporting the actions taken or things changed as a direct result of their feedback, and rationale where feedback was not able to be incorporated, if any.
- ✓ Consider more overt acknowledgment that programmes targeting children and young people may not address the root causes of systemic racism.

The programme

Race equity considerations for the programme team build on their knowledge of their target population. Relevant questions include:

- What is the **target population** of the programme? Anticipated race, ethnicity, gender, disabilities, socio-economic status, academic performance, etc.?
- What is the target population's **level of need**?

Language and Accessibility:

- Are there programme-specific resources that need to be **translated**?
- Will an **interpreter** be required for any aspect of delivery?
- Has this been factored into the **budget**?
- The evaluator should liaise with the programme team to ensure these needs have been considered and to avoid budget duplication.
- The programme team should liaise with the evaluator to communicate any language and accessibility needs participants might have, so that surveys and other research materials can be translated, and budget implications can be addressed.

Local Knowledge and Community Reach:

- Has the delivery organisation worked in the proposed areas before?
- Are they familiar with the demographic composition and specific needs of the communities and CYP they will be working with?
- If the evaluator plans to conduct **sub-group analysis**, have they ensured that recruitment will yield a **sufficient sample size** to enable this?

Representation in the Delivery Team:

- Does the delivery team **reflect** the **communities** and CYP they will be engaging with?
- If not, could this affect how the programme is received and, in turn, **impact evaluation findings**?

Landscape assessment

A landscape assessment describes the broader context in which the evaluation takes place. It is an opportunity to describe the wider setting of a programme that might influence the delivery of the programme and the findings of the evaluation. In the past, evaluators have found it helpful to consider the following:

- What is the **contextual background** of the sector? What are issues of equity, diversity and inclusion in the sector? What does intersectionality look like?
- What roles do race and racial disparities play within the sector that the programme operates in? Explicitly draw on evidence of racial disparities and structural barriers that exist within the sector and how this links to violence, exploitation and/or offending outcomes. The following information and reports might be of help:

For the criminal justice and policing sectors:

- The YEF's [Children, Violence and Vulnerability reports](#) on experiences of violence among young people in England and Wales, reveals racial differences when it comes to police perceptions.
- The YEF's report on [racial disproportionality in violence affecting children and young people](#) discussed how Black, Asian and other minority ethnic children may struggle to access appropriate support. For instance, a [review of the literature on disproportionality and diversion from the youth justice system](#) found that Black, Asian and Mixed heritage boys are less likely to receive diversionary support prior to entering the criminal justice system.

- The [Lammy Review](#) revealed that minority ethnic children and young people tend to be less trusting of police and the criminal justice system overall, and less likely to admit guilt, which can lead to them forgoing potential opportunities to reduce their sentence or to receive support.
- In the YEF [Focused Deterrence evaluation](#), some participants from Asian, Traveller, and Black communities revealed an unwillingness to engage with a support offer that was seen as coming from police and statutory services, due to mistrust in these agencies.

For the children's services sector:

- The Early Intervention Foundation's [report on improving the way family support services work for minority ethnic families](#) discussed how families from Black, Asian or other minority ethnic backgrounds have been found to experience racism within family services, with many facing barriers to accessing support that is built on an understanding of the challenges they face as racialised minorities.

For the education sector:

- School exclusions are linked to children and young people's vulnerability to becoming involved in violence and there is evidence that children and young people from certain minority ethnic groups are overrepresented in school exclusion rates⁵.
- Consideration: School is often portrayed as a safe space. Is this the case for participants in the programme, especially in multi-site trials? A similar question can be posed for the home setting, in cases of domestic abuse.

Landscape x programme:

Once the evaluator and race equity associate have a good understanding of the programme and the context it will operate in, it would be helpful to consider how the programme will interact with the landscape it operates in. It is worth reflecting on the following questions to prepare for a smooth delivery of the programme and evaluation:

- What **impact** does **racism** in the system have on participants of the programme, including on programme participation?
- How are race and racial disparities linked to the **outcomes** of interest?
- How will experiences of **racism and discrimination** influence **engagement** and effectiveness of the programme?
- How will the evaluation ensure **recruitment and retention** of participants from diverse backgrounds?
- How can **data collection** be racially equitable and inclusive? Will support be provided to participants when completing surveys?

² Based on data from Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions in England (Department for Education) and Permanent and Fixed-Term Exclusions from Schools (Welsh Government).

- How will the evaluation provide **sensitivity and inclusion**? For instance, how will the evaluation support groups who are disproportionately affected and/or underserved by existing services or delivery?
- What **language** do recruitment materials need to be in? Are interpreters required, for which languages and are there any budget implications?
- Do participants follow any **religious practices**, and how will these interact with programme activities? (E.g., Ramadan, Eid, Friday prayer, Diwali, Rosh Hashanah)
- For feasibility studies, should there be **success criteria linked to race equity** considerations?
- Is there **evidence of promise** for different groups of participants who receive the programme?

Involving young people and communities relevant to the target population

Based on exploring the previous sections (the target group of the programme, the landscape it operates in, and how these two interact), evaluators may consider the following points.

It is worth noting these should be considered in light of the resources available, as inadequate resources to build and maintain productive partnerships can risk further exacerbating inequity.

It's important to acknowledge that not all people from minoritised groups share the same lived experience or world view. Therefore, the key here is to involve people and communities that share relevant lived experience with the target population.

- Are there **local voluntary and community sector organisations** (relevant to the context of the evaluation) that the project could partner with to conduct participatory analysis and dissemination workshops and creating accessible reports? How can equitable relationships be built with these organisations?
- In the case of limited resources or time, are there specific stages in the evaluation where these partnerships should be prioritised – for instance, prioritising their input in the interpretation of findings over training groups to conduct analysis?
- How could young people or communities with lived experience relevant to the target population inform the project? For instance, recruitment strategies, ensuring a culturally sensitive delivery, etc.

- Would it be possible to use **peer researchers**? For instance, peer researchers can explain the RCT setup to participants and support the evaluation design, topic guides, consent materials, and dissemination of findings. What would the budget implications be for their involvement in different stages of the project?
- Would it be helpful to include members of the [YEF Youth Advisory Board](#)?
- Will **steering groups** be set up for this project, and will they be representative of service users? Could these groups benefit from having members with lived experience?

Example race equity associate tasks

- Listening and observational role in meetings/workshops between evaluator and programme team
- Reflections on topics that arise
- Review draft consent forms, information sheets and interview topic guides ahead of submission to the ethics board
- Review of evaluation protocol, with particular attention to race equity, diversity and inclusion elements and methods

Questions race equity associates might reflect on during this process

- Who wrote the proposal? How will they understand and reflect on the issues the programme aims to address?
- Who signed off the sampling approach?
- Is the terminology used appropriate⁵?
- Do the research questions reflect the landscape and target population assessment?

Preparation of research materials and processes – Research tools and data collection

Evaluators will be familiar with preparing research materials for a range of participants. In the past, evaluators and race equity associates have considered the following questions to design high-quality tailored research materials and data collection processes.

Research materials

- What **language** do research materials need to be in? Will participants require an interpreter to take part?
- **Reading age of participants:** Most adults in England have the literacy level of an 11–14 year old⁴. What is the reading age of trial participants? Does the information sheet have to be shared in written form, or could an audio clip or video be produced? Participants who speak English fluently may not necessarily be able to read English (or their native language).
- **Information overload:** Which information is essential? Can any non-essential information be summarised or made more concise? Can some information be presented in an animated format?
- How suitable are the proposed **standardised tools** for the participants, including their wording/phrasing and format? What potential issues may some of the language or format of the tool present?
- Based on work conducted on the landscape, programme and how they interact (see above), consider race and other equity, diversity and inclusion factors when formulating research questions. Try to delve into the root causes of the issue being examined.
- How will different groups of children and young people experience participation in the project?

Recruitment and data collection processes

- **Pilot** measurement tools and data collection with diverse (and potentially multilingual) groups and communities to ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness. Where possible this should involve the full procedure of how participants are going to complete the outcome measures in practice, rather than only a review of a subset of questions while removed from the research context.

⁴ Health literacy 'how to' guide (National Health Service). Additional resources:
• Health information: are you getting your message across (National Institute for Health and Care Research)
• NHS Medical Document Readability Tool

- Do frontline staff involved in recruitment and data collection have **trusted relationships** with the participants? If not, how can trust in the research process be built?
- Would it be helpful to involve **peer researchers** in data collection?
- Do recruitment and data collection need to be adapted to **religious festivals** or activities?

Questions race equity associates might reflect on during this process

- Are researchers trained to work with interpreters?
- Will there be opportunities for participants to give feedback on the evaluation's race equity approach during a pilot (qualitative interview or focus group)?
- Will there be an opportunity to embed feedback from the pilot before launching the RCT?

Delivery

- Safeguarding: Is there a clear way for participants to **report incidents** related to racism or discrimination experienced from delivery staff, instructors, chaperones, other participants, etc.?
- Does delivery need to be adapted to **religious festivals** or activities, such as Eid, prayer time, fasting days, etc.?

Questions race equity associates might reflect on during this process

- Research and data collection burden and what this really means in practice:
 - Will there be conflicts with jobs, childcare and other commitments?
 - Where will interviews take place or survey questionnaires be filled out, and is this a safe space?
- If an interpreter is required:
 - What are power dynamics in interpretation relationships?
 - Is there a trusted relationship between the interpreter and participant?
 - Are delivery partners trained to work with interpreters?

Project delivery

While evaluators are responsible for ensuring that the evaluation design is racially equitable (with support from a race equity associate where appointed), it is equally important that race equity is meaningfully embedded at all stages of programme delivery. This responsibility lies with the delivery organisation; however, both approaches should be closely aligned, ensuring a cohesive and integrated approach to both evaluation and programme implementation. Evaluators will need to consider that elements of programme delivery could impact evaluation findings.

- Based on a landscape assessment/knowledge of the delivery organisation:
Communicate to referral partners the demographic characteristics of expected referrals (e.g., proportions of participants from specific ethnic minority backgrounds)

Capturing Participant Experience:

- Can IPE fieldwork during delivery be used to capture how CYP are experiencing the programme particularly through a race equity lens?
- Could this help surface concerns early and allow for necessary adjustments to delivery?

Ongoing Monitoring and Adjustments:

- Evaluators should meet regularly with the delivery team to review recruitment and attrition data.
- If referral and recruitment rates for CYP from racialised communities are lower than anticipated, what are the barriers? What inflight adjustments can be made to increase referral/recruitment rates of CYP from racialised communities?
- If CYP from racialised backgrounds are disproportionately represented in endline non-completion, what factors might be contributing to this?
- Early identification of these trends is crucial to making timely interventions. For example, if an intervention is delivered in multiple waves, data from the first wave can be used to check for these trends, reflect, and make the necessary adaptations.

Analysis and reporting

Race equity at the analysis and reporting stage is about meaningfully reporting different perspectives, and understanding what works for children from Black, Asian, and other minority ethnic backgrounds. This includes collecting complete and accurate data on [demographic characteristics](#)⁵ including ethnicity, and tracking differences in the change the programme makes for white children who participate, as well as those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.

It is also about sharing findings in an accessible and inclusive way, using consistent language and terminology⁶ when describing race and racism, and discussing limitations regarding generalisability when reporting.

- Use of **analytical frameworks**: How do you interpret what people are telling you? Has there been a sense check that this interpretation is correct? Could the community be involved in data interpretation (e.g., in a findings validation workshop)? Are there any hidden subtexts?
- Report **demographic information** on participants, including race, ethnicity and other intersections.
- How can the **aggregation and homogenisation** of experiences of minority ethnic participants be avoided during analysis stage? Which intersectional subgroups would be meaningful? If small sample sizes do result in some form of aggregation, there needs to be clear signposting of the rationale and an explicit account of the limitations of the approach.
- Include analyses that explore the **root causes of structural disparities** affecting participants from minority ethnic backgrounds. For example, qualitative research on how families perceive support from statutory services could explicitly ask about experiences of discrimination.

Dissemination

- Who will be reading the report and is the report accessible to them? Is there a way to make the main findings more accessible, for instance can a video be produced?
- What language should dissemination materials be in and are translations required?

Questions race equity associates might reflect on during this process

- Who helps to interpret the results and how generalisable are the results to the aggregated or individual minority ethnic groups?
- Who helps to identify implications and recommendations, and what is their background? What would respondents recommend?
- Can community organisations be included to ensure findings are framed within a detailed understanding of the local context?

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[YEF Policy on collection of demographic data](#)
YEF guidance on terminology to be published in April 2025.



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