

New report and manifesto published on how to better understand and improve young black males access to mental health services.



- Peer research led by Greater Manchester mental health charity 42'nd Street.
- Co-produced with 27 young black peers.
- Access the full report [here](#).
- Watch a YouTube clip from the peers themselves [here](#).

A Manchester peer research group, We Tell You, based at mental health charity 42'nd Street, and supported by Manchester Metropolitan University, has authored a new research report and manifesto on black male perspectives towards mental health services. The goal is to improve understand and improve access to support.

Commissioned by the Manchester City Council (MCC) Equalities Unit the 27 young black peers began the research across Greater Manchester at the end of 2013. Together they have interviewed 78 black males aged 15 – 24. The result, titled 'Perceptions', is an insightful, honest and courageous report and manifesto with 14 key findings and 8 recommendations.

Simone Spray, chief executive of 42'nd Street, said "This report is critical as it shines a light on the issues that young black men experience every day when they need support with their emotional wellbeing. The young people that have

led this work have demonstrated why it's so important to listen and respond to the real lived experience and expertise; 42nd Street is taking the messages from the report and manifesto very seriously and is already looking at ways to design responsive and culturally sensitive services with young people to ensure that we address the inequalities that they have so eloquently and passionately been described to us."

Over half of mental health problems in adult life begin by the age of 14, and 75% by 17. But, 60 – 70% of children and young people who have experienced clinical difficulties have not received any form of early intervention. The Centre for Mental Health reported in May 2016 that it typically takes ten years for a young person to get any help, from the time they first show the signs of a mental health difficulty to the time they get support.

The experience of black males is even more striking. They are consistently under-represented in child and adolescent mental health services. Yet, are more likely to be detained under the mental health act, and are more likely to be admitted to a psychiatric hospital.

Patrick Williams principal lecturer in Sociology, and co-author of the report said: "Recent statistical studies have again confirmed some of the harmful consequences for some BAME people who come into contact with the police and other regulatory agencies. In the We Tell You report, it is through the young people's stories that we hear of the experience of mental health and wellbeing problems".

The report highlights how there is a general fear of using mental health services for black males, partly because of how it may be perceived by others; but also because of a fear of medical approaches as opposed to therapeutic person centred approaches.

Many of the young males are concerned their race may negatively influence their experience in a mental health service; and are therefore often reluctant to engage. However, the young males recognise the value of having someone they can talk to and it's benefit on their mental well-being.

Julie Walters, manager of Hideaway Youth Centre in Moss Side, while talking about their weekly group for young males, said: "It's a safe space for young males to talk but quite often those spaces are just not available. The sessions provide a positive environment where they can discuss what is going in their

lives with people they can trust. This is good for their general confidence and mental well-being”.

The report also places the concerns of young black males in the context of the on-going negative association of black people with mental illnesses.

Patrick added: “In We Tell You, young people speak of the perceived stigma of mental health problems, the personal impacts of negative media representations of young black men, amid the contemporary pressures placed upon our young people and the limited spaces within which to address their everyday concerns”

The report further highlights the importance of collective discussion groups and supportive activities including boxercise, cooking and art workshops. Along with a stronger presence of services in local communities; and a desire to see more positive images of young men and their stories of success.

Samson Dada, a peer-researcher, when asked about his time on the project said: “It has been an enormous privilege for every one of the peer researchers to be part of the We Tell You project. We feel we are helping to shape an important conversation in making sure that young black people get the mental health services they need and deserve”.