

Criminal Justice System Race Unit
and
Victims and Confidence Unit

The experiences of young Black men as victims of crime

Stella Yarrow

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM



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Executive Summary

Background

The study was carried out into the experiences of young Black men who had been victims of crime. The project was carried out for two reasons. First, it is a contribution to ensuring that Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) people receive equal treatment from the Criminal Justice System (CJS). Second, it will inform the Government's initiatives to improve services to victims. Both these strands are key to raising levels of confidence, in particular that of BME people, in the CJS. There is little in-depth knowledge about the experiences of BME people as victims of crime. This study dealt specifically with young Black men. A major reason for this choice was their poor confidence that the CJS treats them fairly.

The research

Twenty-five in-depth interviews and two focus groups were held with Black Caribbean and Black African young men aged from 16 to 24 in Birmingham and London. The research aimed to explore views and attitudes in detail, rather than to generate statistical findings. The young men had all been victims of crimes such as robberies of mobile phones, thefts from vehicles, assaults and burglaries. The objective was to inform the development of services so that they better meet the needs of young Black men and to explore factors associated with their confidence in the CJS.

Key Findings

Experiences of crime and the young men's response

- Most of the young men lived in high crime areas. There was a lack of confidence in the police's ability to deal effectively with crime, sometimes linked to a belief that the police did not take crime against Black people seriously.
- All victims reported some emotional effects as a result of the crime, most commonly anger, although the degree and duration of the effects varied. Some sought to play down the emotional impact on the grounds that crime was a familiar experience.
- Family and friends were an extremely important source of support with emotional and practical needs; this may be associated with the youth of these victims and the fact that about two-thirds lived with their families.
- The young men rarely had contact with any formal agencies that might be able to provide support or help, or even told organisations such as schools, colleges or employers about the crime. Such lack of contact is common to the experience of victims more generally.

- Some victims acted to protect themselves or to feel less vulnerable, for example, by installing security equipment. The response of some who had been violently attacked or threatened was to avoid going out alone, either by staying at home or by going out only with others. A few victims acquired knives. One response was to try to retaliate against the perpetrators. There was some support for the view that retaliation was legitimate, due to perceived police failings.

Reporting to the police

- Amongst those who did not report the crime to the police, reasons given for not doing so reflect those of victims in general, for example, that it would not achieve anything or that the crime was not sufficiently serious. The views of some victims in this study, however, were linked to perceptions of police racism. Poor confidence in the police and the CJS could lead to a fear of inadequate protection from intimidation if the victim reported the crime.
- Most people who reported the crime to the police were, overall, dissatisfied with the service. Views on the initial response were fairly positive, but there was dissatisfaction with the follow-up. Provision of information about the investigation of the crime was poor. Victims generally interpreted this as evidence that the police had done little or nothing. Other evidence shows that treatment by the police and keeping victims informed are critical to victim satisfaction generally. In the case of these victims, poor service may even be interpreted as inferior treatment due to discrimination.
- There was relatively little evidence of the police stereotyping the young men by treating them as suspects rather than victims.
- Some of those who did not report the crime would do so if the crime were more serious. A section of the young men, however, held strong views that they would not turn to the police, or only in the most extreme circumstances. A key factor in encouraging reporting, both among those who reported and those who did not, was confidence that the police would take effective action. A few suggested that more Black police officers would encourage reporting.
- Victims who suffered financial loss were generally un-insured or under-insured. Getting assistance and information about compensation particularly interested respondents.

Support services

- None received any help from Victim Support or any other organization that support victims. Levels of contact by victims in general with Victim Support are low. The young men's awareness of Victim Support was poor. Those who did know something about it associated it with emotional support or counselling (although Victim Support does not itself describe the support it offers as counselling). There was little awareness of the other forms of assistance it offers.
- There was a fairly widespread interest in using Victim Support or other support services available to victims, once the services offered were explained. This suggests substantial potential demand. Amongst those potentially interested, there was a strong demand for practical or financial help but some were interested in emotional support. A minority, however, felt that Victim Support met the needs of people who were older, more privileged and less street-wise.
- The young men found the content of leaflets and website pages aimed at victims useful and relevant, although a minority thought that such support was not for them. There was quite a wide view that the material's visual appearance should be improved. The use of letters to communicate information about services was not popular. This is the way of contacting victims mostly commonly used by Victim Support.

- How they would be treated personally was key to encouraging use of support services. Those providing services needed an ability to connect with the young men, and a knowledge and understanding of their situation and viewpoint. The ethnicity, age or gender of the person was important for some people but not others.
- The young men fell broadly into three groups. First, people aged 16-17 who had strongly held negative attitudes towards the police and support services. Second, a group in their early twenties, who had reasonably positive attitudes. The third group held the middle ground and it appeared that their views might tilt in either direction.

Recommendations

The main recommendations include:

- As the views and attitudes of young Black men varied widely, different types of support will be suitable for different people. Services should be sensitive to the needs of individuals.
- As word of mouth is a powerful influence on beliefs about the police, improving the experience of young Black male victims who report crimes is essential. The key areas for improvement were the need for a more personal service and keeping victims better informed. The Office for Criminal Justice Reform has asked Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) and CJS agencies to focus on the quality of service from police and other CJS staff and improving information to victims as key priorities.
- Alternative methods of resolving disputes such as restorative justice should be encouraged to discourage resorting to retaliation. Better evidence is needed about the effectiveness of restorative justice amongst BME groups.
- The findings highlight the need to address fears of intimidation to encourage reporting crime to the police. The Home Office Tackling Witness Intimidation strategy brings together measures to deal with fear of reprisals amongst witnesses (including victims). *No Witness, No Justice*, a government scheme, aims at identifying at an early stage victims' concerns about intimidation, in order to provide support.
- Information about Victim Support and other support services should be communicated more effectively to young Black men, including general raising of awareness and informing victims after a crime. Methods of communication must be relevant, appropriate, timely and accessible. In view of their key role, publicity should also be aimed at parents and other relatives of young victims of crime.
- A perceived association with the police may discourage some young Black men from using Victim Support. Alternative means of access to services, such as self-referral through the Victim Supportline, should be further promoted. Publicity should emphasize that services are free and confidential and that the crime need not be reported to the police. Peer education should be explored as a way of communicating information.
- Schools, colleges or universities should be engaged in seeking to support young victims and to educate them about support services. Local authorities, the NHS and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships should also be engaged in this process.
- Initiatives aimed at improving young Black men's engagement with the CJS (for example, those run by CJS agencies and LCJBs) should be used to inform them about support services for victims. Effective consultation with young Black men is also needed to develop appropriate and accessible services. OCJR is about to run pilot projects to demonstrate how community engagement can benefit the delivery of services to victims and others.

- The capacity of BME voluntary and community organizations needs to be further built up to allow young people access to a range of services.
- Further research is needed into the experiences of victims from other sections of the BME population. Better monitoring of the ethnicity of victims of crime and data on referrals to and use by BME people of support services is also needed. Victim Support is introducing ethnic monitoring of service users, which will be helpful.
- LCJBs have a crucial role in improving services at a local level. Such improvements will help them to meet their targets for increasing BME confidence that the CJS treats them equally and increasing the satisfaction of victims and witnesses. LCJBs should consider how to facilitate implementing these recommendations, with other partners.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

Overall, people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups have a higher risk of being a victim than White people (Salisbury and Upson, 2004). There is relatively little in-depth knowledge about the experiences of BME people as victims of crime and about their subsequent contact with the criminal justice system (CJS). This research, into the experiences of young Black men who are victims of crime, aims to contribute to filling this knowledge gap. The Criminal Justice System Race Unit and the Confidence and Victims Unit in the Office for Criminal Justice Reform carried out the research.

Background

The context to the research is the Government's commitment to putting victims and witnesses at the heart of the CJS, in order to increase the numbers of offenders brought to justice and improve public confidence in the CJS. Improving victim's experiences is key to improving confidence in the CJS. Having been a victim of crime is a strong predictor of lower levels of confidence in how crime is dealt with locally (Page et al, 2004). The Government's strategy is to ensure that victims and witnesses receive high standards of service from all criminal justice agencies. The standards will be implemented through a range of initiatives including a Victims' Code of Practice. The Government has, in addition, set a target to increase the proportion of BME people who say that the CJS agencies treat people of all races equally. Improving the experience of the CJS of victims from BME communities will be a crucial means to achieving this target.

The National Strategy on Victims and Witnesses recognised that certain groups, such as victims from BME communities, have particular needs, and that a better understanding of these needs is required (Home Office, 2003). An obstacle has been the lack of national data on victims' experiences of the CJS broken down by ethnicity although many individual police forces record the ethnicity of victims in certain categories of crime. A number of developments provide an impetus towards improving data about BME victims. As part of the national framework for assessing police performance, police forces must record the ethnicity of victims for violent crime and carry out surveys to measure BME victims' satisfaction with the police. A further impetus is the need for CJS agencies to fulfil their responsibility under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to monitor policies for adverse impact on the promotion of race equality. The Office for Criminal Justice Reform is also developing a national survey of witnesses' and victims' experiences, including BME victims. This will cover the experiences of the CJS for those victims where a suspect has been charged.

Most evidence that currently exists about BME victims derives from the British Crime Survey (BCS), a national household survey. According to the 2002/3 BCS, people from BME backgrounds were at greater risk of crime than the white majority. However, the risk of individual ethnic groups varied. People of Mixed ethnic origin and Asian people faced higher risks than White people. Black and White people had generally comparable risks, but Black people faced higher risks for particular crimes such as

robbery and vehicle crime than the latter. The BME population has a relatively young age profile and people aged 16-34 are at greatest risk of crime. After allowing for age, the higher risk of victimisation of people from BME backgrounds disappeared. The BME population tends to live in inner city areas where the risk of being a victim of crime is higher. However, for personal crime such as assault and robbery, the risk was still higher for BME people, even when area is allowed for. The risk of being a victim of racially motivated crime was higher for people of BME origin than for White people. BME people were also much more likely to be worried about a range of crimes than White people (Salisbury and Upson, 2004).

The BCS also provides some data on how BME victims respond to the crime. The rates at which people reported the incident to the police, according to the 2002/3 BCS, were, overall, similar for White people and people from BME backgrounds. However, people with a Mixed race background and Black people were less likely to report the incident (Salisbury and Upson, 2004).

There is evidence from earlier BCS data that BME victims suffer greater adverse effects of crime. The 2000 BCS found that, when asked to rate their crime on a seriousness scale, average scores for Black and Asian victims were higher than for those of White victims. Racist incidents caused a more serious emotional reaction than other offences. Both Black and Asian people rated the incident as more serious than White people (Clancy et al, 2001). The 1998 BCS, which studied victims' experiences in depth, found that Black and Asian victims were more likely than White victims to be seriously affected by the crime, to experience intimidation and to report relatively high levels of need (Maguire and Kynch, 2000).¹

The 1998 BCS found that Black and Asian victims were less likely to have had contact with Victim Support than White victims (Maguire and Kynch, 2000). However, the 2002/3 BCS found no significant differences between ethnic groups in the level of contact. There continues to be much lower awareness of Victim Support amongst BME people. Only 44% of Asian and 66% of Black people had heard of the organisation, compared to 82% of White respondents (Ringham and Salisbury, 2004). The 2000 BCS found that BME victims were much less likely than White victims to say that they found Victim Support very helpful. It was suggested that BME victims may have had experiences for which it was harder to provide satisfactory support. BME victims who had no contact with support services were markedly more likely than their White counterparts to say that referral to Victim Support would have been useful (Clancy et al, 2001).

Confidence in the CJS may affect the likelihood of victims reporting the crime to the police and their subsequent experience of dealing with the police and other CJS agencies. Survey findings on BME confidence in the CJS points in different directions, depending on how confidence is defined. People from BME groups tend to rate the effectiveness of most CJS agencies more highly than White people but give lower ratings for the system's fairness and integrity (Hearnden and Hough, 2004). BME people, for example, are more likely than White people to think that the police and other CJS agencies will discriminate against them on the grounds of race (Home Office, 2005).

While the knowledge we do have suggests that BME people may have in some respects a different experience of being a victim of crime from White people, detailed evidence is lacking. Experiences are likely to vary between different ethnic groups within the BME population, and according to age and gender. As resources were limited, it was decided to concentrate initially in this study on understanding

¹ There was no booster sample for BME people in the 1998 survey, and so numbers of BME respondents were relatively low. Findings may not be as reliable as for more recent sweeps of the BCS.

the experiences of Black men aged 16-24.² This section of the population was of particular interest for a number of reasons.

First, young Black men are relatively disadvantaged compared to some other sections of the BME population. For example, Black Caribbean boys are three times as likely to be excluded from school than other pupils (Social Exclusion Unit, 2004). The lowest levels of GCSE attainment are amongst Black Caribbean boys and the attainment of Black African boys is also low. The unemployment rate amongst Black African and Black Caribbean men is higher than for White men (Office for National Statistics, 2004). An effect of this disadvantage may be to make it more difficult to access services.

Second, lack of trust and confidence in the police and the CJS on the part of young Black men might affect their response to being a victim of crime. Almost half of Black people aged 16-24 think that the police will treat them worse than other people of other races, a higher proportion than for any other sector of the population (Home Office, 2003). This lack of confidence must be seen in the context of a long history of poor relations between Black young men and the police. This history has been characterised by events such as riots, deaths in police custody and the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, as well as the continuing use of stop and search powers. The police are six times more likely to stop and search Black people than White people (Home Office, 2004). They are also more likely to use this power against young men. The BCS shows that having been stopped in a car, having been searched or having a vehicle searched predicted low confidence in the police (Clancy et al, 2001).³ Another study in London found that being stopped, being young, male or Black predicted negative views about police integrity. It also found that Black victims of crime were less likely to be satisfied with how the police dealt with the matter than White people, men than women, and younger than older people. Being stopped by the police was amongst the strongest factors predicting dissatisfaction with the police (Fitzgerald et al, 2002).

There is also evidence that, regardless of ethnicity, young people who are victims of crime are more likely to have unmet needs for support. According to the 1998 BCS, victims aged 16-24 were most likely to mention having needs for support and less likely to have had contact with Victim Support or to have heard of it (Maguire and Kynch, 2000). The 2002/3 BCS found poorer awareness of Victim Support and the Victim's Charter amongst 16-29 year olds than those aged 30-59 (Ringham and Salisbury, 2004).⁴

Although young people are more likely to be victims of crime, relatively little research has been carried out on young people as victims in contrast to research on offending behaviour by youth (Newburn, 2002). Although a clear distinction is often drawn between 'victims' and 'offenders', they may share some common characteristics. There is an association amongst young people between being a victim of crime and of carrying out offending or anti-social behaviour themselves. This association may reflect lifestyles that constitute risks both for offending and victimisation (eg Wood, 2005; Smith, 2001).

Including women in the study might have raised concerns shared with their male counterparts, as well as issues such as sexual victimisation and domestic violence. It was decided that in a small-scale study of this type, it was not possible to do justice to the experiences and views of both genders. It is hoped that similar research can be carried out with young Black women, and other sections of the BME population.

2 Analysis of the 2002/3 BCS found that Black men aged 16-24 were less likely to be victims of crime than their White counterparts. However, the sample size was small so results should be treated with caution. It was considered whether to extend the study to younger people from ages 11 or 12, as they are particularly vulnerable. However, the rates of reporting crimes to the police are very low amongst this age group (Aye Maung 1995; MORI Youth Survey 2004). As one of the main aims was to research the experiences of people who had had contact with the police, only those aged 16 or above were included.

3 Being Black does not, in itself, predict lack of confidence.

4 This may partly explain why BME people are less likely to have heard of Victim Support due to the younger age profile of the BME population. People on lower household incomes were also less likely to have heard of Victim Support (Ringham and Salisbury, 2004).

Aims of the research

The broad objective of the research was to inform the development of services. The starting point was the recognition that victims cannot be treated as a single group. The study set out to explore whether young Black men have different needs associated with their ethnicity, age or gender in order to ensure that they receive appropriate and responsive services.

The specific aims were:

- To understand better the experiences of young Black men as victims of crime, including the impact of the crime, whether they reported it to the police or another agency and whether they used other sources of support.
- Explore their reasons for contacting/using support services (including reasons for not doing so), awareness of such services, and sources of advice
- Where services were used, explore respondents' views on how helpful, useful and appropriate they were
- Explore views on how services could be made more responsive and accessible and what, if any, specific services might be more suitable.
- Identify factors associated with their confidence (or otherwise) in the system.

Despite concern with gun crime in the Black community, the study focused on less serious types of crime, as these incidents are far more frequent.

Methods

A qualitative study was carried out consisting of 25 face-to-face interviews and two focus groups, each of which comprised eight participants. In total, 41 people took part in the research. It should be emphasised that the purpose of qualitative research is to provide an in-depth understanding of people's experiences and perspectives, not to generate statistical findings (Spencer et al). It is necessary to be cautious about generalising from these findings to young Black men generally, particularly as there was much variation between the views of the young men *within* the sample. It is also possible that some findings might equally well apply to men of a similar age group, socio-demographic status and area of residence, but of different ethnicity. The report draws on findings from other research, where possible, to try to highlight those which may apply specifically to young Black men.

A market research company was commissioned to recruit respondents and carry out and transcribe the interviews and focus groups. The researcher who carried out the fieldwork was of the same ethnicity and gender as the respondents. The CJS Race Unit undertook the analysis and report writing.

Respondents were selected to meet the following criteria:

- male
- aged 16-24.
- of Black ethnic origin⁵
- who had been a victim of one or more crimes in the preceding 18 months.

⁵ Young men were asked in a screening questionnaire to define their own ethnicity, using the 2001 census categories. Those who defined themselves as Black Caribbean, Black African and Black Other were eligible to take part. Nationality was not a relevant criterion for selection. It was not recorded whether respondents were born in the UK nor the country of origin of their families. However, the interviewer reported that most of the African young men were of West African heritage and that a small number were born outside the UK but had been living here for a few years.

The fieldwork was carried out in March 2004 in London and Birmingham, selected because the majority of the Black population in England and Wales lives in London and the West Midlands. Most participants lived in areas with relatively high crime rates. They were recruited by Black recruiters and screened face-to-face from street corners, bus stops, housing estate grounds, parks, recreation courts, sports centres, outside school and college premises and Black barber salons. Most of the interviews were held in respondents' homes but a few were held in public places to accommodate respondents who were uncomfortable at home or in the vicinity of other household members.

Respondents were given an incentive payment to acknowledge the help given to the study. The screening aimed at ensuring that the research would capture experiences of a range of different types of crime. The research focused on one specific incident experienced by the respondent. If the respondent had experienced more than one incident in the last eighteen months, the interview focused on that which he considered the most serious.⁶ The interviews and groups were taped (with permission of the respondents) and transcribed. The transcripts were coded and thematically analysed using NUD*IST qualitative analysis software.

The sample of respondents who took part in the interviews were distributed evenly over the age range 16-24. About two-thirds were living with their mother, with both parents, or another relative. The remainder lived alone, with flatmates or with a partner. With the exception of two respondents who were unemployed, they were evenly split between people who were studying and those who were working (some were doing both). The two focus groups, both held in London, were designed to consist of participants with similar characteristics, in order to encourage people to express themselves freely. One group consisted of Black Africans aged 20-24, in social grade B/C1 and the other of Black Caribbeans aged 16-19, in social grade C2/D.⁷ Figure 1 below shows that, overall, the sample of Black African young men who took part in the research was skewed towards the B/C1 social grades and were at the older end of the age range, while the Black Caribbean young men were more likely to be teenagers and in social grades C2/D/E.

**Figure 1:
Characteristics of participants (interviews and focus groups)**

| | Black African (n=19) | Black Caribbean (n=22) |
|--------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Birmingham | 3 | 7 |
| London | 16 | 15 |
| Age 16-19 | 5 | 15 |
| Age 20-24 | 14 | 7 |
| Social Class | | |
| B-C1 | 15 | 5 |
| C2/D/E | 4 | 17 |

⁶ The researcher carrying out the fieldwork was provided with information for respondents about Victim Support, in case it emerged in interviews or groups that they needed such help.

⁷ Social grades are commonly used in market research, usually based on the occupation and employment status of the chief income earner in the household. Social Grades B and C1 are non-manual workers; while C2 and D are, respectively, skilled and unskilled manual workers. Grade E consists of people dependent on state benefits, casual workers and those without a regular income (Market Research Society website).

Relatively few differences were found according to whether respondents were Black African and Black Caribbean, or their city of residence, age, or social class. Where such differences were found, they have been mentioned.

Structure of the report

In Chapter Two, the nature of the crime and the impact on the victim is explored, including physical, emotional and practical effects. It also discusses victims' needs for support and the support that they received from family and friends. Chapter Three examines the decision to report to the police and the experiences of dealing with the police. In Chapter Four, the victims' knowledge and awareness of Victim Support, their potential interest in using services available to victims and ways of making them more accessible are discussed. Lastly, Chapter Five deals with the conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 2:

The crime and its impact

As context to the study, the young men were asked about crime and policing in their local area. Participants in the focus groups and about half of the respondents in the interviews perceived themselves to live in high crime areas. Those who did described crime as happening at any time, in any place, and to be increasing or out of control. Amongst other types of crime which characterised their areas, for example, drug-related crime and mobile phone theft, a few mentioned territorial rivalries between young people, which could lead to being beaten up. Not everybody, including some of those who perceived themselves to live in high crime areas, said that they felt threatened in their local area. Those who did cited their own experiences of being a victim of crime or the experiences of friends. Familiarity with the area and local people was an important reason for not feeling threatened. Knowing people and being known was thought to give protection from crime. Being accustomed to high crime levels also prevented feelings of vulnerability.

“Our area is sort of ‘together.’”

“Everyone knows each other.” (Black African focus group)

“Because I am used to it.”

“I have seen a lot, I know faces.”

“People know you and you get familiar with the surroundings.”

“Because we see a lot, like you get more wise.” (Black Caribbean focus group)

Conversely, being new to an area or outside one's own area could be a reason for feeling threatened. Other reasons for not being threatened were having protection either in the form of back up from 'bredren' (ie friends) or being 'a big guy'. Two people specifically mentioned not feeling threatened as they lived in Black neighbourhoods. One said that this meant he could 'blend in', while the other did not feel threatened by Black people. There was some concern about the possible impact of crime on the safety of family members.

There was a lack of confidence in the effectiveness of the police in dealing with crime in their area. This was to some degree a reflection of their experiences of reporting the specific crime explored in the research. The young men also drew on the experience of other crimes that had happened to them, or to friends and family, where police response was slow or apparently no action was taken. Participants in the two focus groups and a small number of the interviewees perceived that the police were ineffective when Black people were victims. They were thought not to take such incidents as seriously as those in which White people were victimised, or if a White and Black person were involved in an altercation, to side with the White person.

“I think also they are very sluggish when going to Black people.”

“Another ‘Black on Black’ crime. Here we go again.” (Black Caribbean focus group)

“This is what happened to my aunt. Every time she calls the police they always give her messages that there is no available person, or they’ll phone as soon as possible, it might take like 20 minutes... Our neighbours, because on our estate it is mostly White, the neighbours they just call the police, the next five or ten minutes, they are there.” (Respondent O, London).

This belief was based, again, on personal experiences or word of mouth. A couple of participants also felt that the police did not take crime against young people seriously. Less frequently, abuse of police powers was mentioned such as excessive use of force and the use of stop and search of Black people without adequate justification.

There was some evidence that lack of trust and confidence had led to reluctance to engage with the police. A feeling that the police could or would not help them, had led to a feeling amongst some that they had to deal with crime themselves. There was also some acknowledgement that people were unwilling to help the police by giving them information. Reasons suggested for this were fear of intimidation, and police racism.

Some young men felt that the police lacked sufficient numbers or public presence to cope with crime levels or make people feel safe. These views are similar to those expressed frequently by people in other ethnic groups and of other ages (Docking, 2003). A few participants expressed positive views; that the police ‘try to do their best’ or gave good service. One of these cited an incident in which the police were called out to deal with some White boys who were harassing a Black boy. He expected the police to support the White boys, but instead they arrested and charged them.

The victims’ experience of crime

As discussed earlier, the research focused on the most serious crime that the young men had experienced in the last 18 months, although many had been a victim more than once during that time. The sample of young men was selected to include experience of a range of different crimes. Their experiences broadly fell into four categories.

- Crimes against property where the victim was not subject to any physical assault or confrontation with the perpetrator. The seventeen cases included five of burglary or attempted burglary and four thefts of vehicles, or from them, including a bicycle and moped.
- A theft, or attempted theft, but accompanied by threatened or actual violence. Ten young men had had experiences in this category.
- Violent assault, without the perpetrators seeming to have any motivations on property. There were twelve young men in this group.
- Serious verbal abuse. In one of the two cases, the abuse was racially motivated. This was the only incident where the outcome was a conviction and where the victim had any contact with CJS agencies other than the police.

The profile of the crimes experienced by the Black African and Black Caribbean young men differed. Most Black African young men did not experience any actual or threatened violence. For the Black Caribbean young men, the reverse was the case. The differences in the type of crime experienced might reflect differences in the socio-demographic profile of the Black African and Black Caribbean participants, discussed in Chapter 1.

Many incidents took place in the victim's local area. Some victims were able to describe the perpetrators. This excluded some incidents involving property crime alone, where the victim had no idea who the perpetrator was or only suspicions as to their identity. Where they could provide a description, the vast majority of perpetrators were described as young males in their teens or twenties. Only one female was mentioned. It was also frequent for victims to say that they had been targeted by people who were Black, or by mixed groups of people of different ethnicity, including Black people. The remainder were targeted by White people or, in one case, by a group of Asian young men. In almost all cases where the victim was attacked or threatened, he reported being outnumbered. The scenario frequently described was where the victim was alone (or, less frequently, with one other person or a small group of friends), while the attackers were in a larger group.

In seven cases, the victim thought that the crime had or might have been racially motivated. The main reason for thinking so was racial abuse accompanying the incident. In another case involving a theft at work, the victim thought that it could have been racially motivated because of a workplace culture of racist verbal abuse. Two victims felt that being seen with a White girlfriend motivated White men to target them. In one of these two cases, the perpetrators were arrested and prosecuted, resulting in conviction and a fine for a racially aggravated offence. In all but two of the seven cases thought to be racially motivated, the perpetrators were White. In one, the victim thought that the suspected perpetrators were Asian or Moroccan. In the other, the victim thought that he might have been targeted by a group mainly consisting of Caribbean young men, because he was African.

"I felt a lot of tension there, the comments about 'you African this, you African that' so I think that this is the reason it is racially motivated." (Respondent 5)

However, some other respondents targeted by Black youths dismissed the idea that the crime could have been racially motivated, on the premise that if the perpetrator was Black, this could not be so. One respondent expressed this view about Asian people too 'They're Black as well'.

Victims gave a number of other explanations as to why these incidents had happened to them although a few people said that they did not know. Some thought that living in a high crime area or chance explained it or that 'it could have happened to anybody'. Some of these explanations expressed fatalism and even a sense of powerlessness.

Sometimes you are in the wrong place at the wrong time and there is nothing you can do about it (Black African focus group).

However, some people thought that their actions or characteristics had contributed to being targeted. Some were factors that the victim could influence or change but others were not. For example, one – targeted by someone in his 30s – thought he had been an easy target because of his youth. Behavioural factors included failure (perceived by victims themselves) to look after property sufficiently carefully but one victim thought it was because he was out alone and another because 'he kept himself to himself' (although others thought the latter behaviour prevented trouble). Two respondents thought they were targeted because they were in unfamiliar territory. One had recently moved to Birmingham. 'They didn't know my face, I'm in their area..it's a territory kind of thing'. Being new to the area may also mean that the victim does not have the protection of a group of friends. Another was attacked and robbed when sent by his mother to shop in another area of London. A group of young people recognised him as coming from a rival area.

"They started saying 'You are [name of estate] man', and I was saying... 'I am not into your gang rivalry!'"

Envy of people who displayed visible signs of material success was seen by some as a factor which could lead to being targeted. Two incidents arose out of earlier altercations in which the victim had been involved; and in a third, disgruntled customers assaulted a sales assistant. Revenge seemed the motive in at least two of these three incidents.

Impact of the crime

The length of time since the crime varied considerably, and this would be likely to affect the victims' perceptions of the impact of the crime and their willingness to accept support.⁸ Just under half of the victims had had physical injuries, generally cuts and bruises, which healed relatively quickly, but two had broken noses and three were stabbed. Only about half of those injured were treated by a doctor or other health professional. However, this may reflect reluctance to seek help as well as indicate the severity of their injuries. One of the most seriously injured was a young man who had been stabbed and had a plate inserted into his leg. Several months later, he still had a limp.

Some victims had financial losses. The items stolen included laptop computers, a moped, bicycles, jewellery, mobile phones and trainers. The financial impact depended not only on the value of the item but the victim's financial resources (or those of his family). Victims generally were either uninsured or under-insured. A few lost income because items were stolen which they needed for work or because they were absent from work as a result of injuries. One student reported his bank card stolen, but the card was subsequently used to make purchases. He subsequently suffered secondary victimisation, when the bank believed that he had bought the items himself and investigated him for fraud. He was unable to resolve the dispute and had to pay about £200 out of his allowance.

According to the BCS, almost four out of five men in this age group have some emotional reaction to a crime. Anger is by far the most common emotional reaction amongst men in this age group, experienced by about two-thirds, followed by shock, and fear (experienced by 29% and 14% respectively). Some crimes affect people more than others; burglary, violence and threats affect victims relatively severely, in comparison to thefts. Black and Asian people are more likely to report being very much affected emotionally (Maguire and Kynch, 2000).

All the victims in this study experienced some emotional effects, although how serious or enduring varied, from a couple of weeks to a year or more. The view of a couple of respondents was that the mental injuries were worse than the physical injuries

"I feel as though it's affected me a lot more mentally than physically because... I don't feel safe walking down my local street. I feel like I am a target." (Respondent S, London)

Anger was a very common reaction. Some expressed hatred and a desire for revenge. This was expressed particularly by those who had experienced a personal attack or threat. Some reported shock. One was particularly affected because he had been attacked by somebody whom he perceived as similar to himself, another because he had been robbed by his 'fellow' in his own neighbourhood. Fear and anxiety were expressed by some, for example, of being victimised again or about the financial implications of loss of property. There was some anxiety about crime happening to other family members. The incident also affected the confidence and self-esteem of some of the victims, at least temporarily. Some felt that they were vulnerable. In order to regain their confidence, some felt that they had to re-assert control themselves, for example, by buying a knife or other behaviour changes discussed later.

⁸ No clear differences in reaction could be seen according to the length of time since the incident. Possibly higher numbers might have made such a pattern evident.

But while there was an initial emotional effect on all, some victims expressed the feeling that they had been resilient or tried to underplay the effect it had had on them. One explanation for why they had not been badly affected or had quickly recovered was that such incidents were familiar and were expected to happen.

"I didn't take it to heart. I've seen it happen to my friends, it's just one of those things – it happens. You get used to it... It affected me when it actually happened but, growing up where I grew up, you just take those things with a pinch of salt... it's an everyday thing." (Respondent H)

"I just said to myself, I have done some bad things, so I thought... 'That's it man, I got my turn'." (Black Caribbean group)

The incident had the effect in most cases of changing the victim's behaviour in some way. However, as this was often at least partly due to advice given by others, this topic will be discussed first.

Sources of support and advice

All the young men, except for two, told somebody about the incident. Most commonly, they spoke to members of their family, friends and, where relevant, their girlfriend. In some instances, they had no option but to inform their parent or parents, for example, because of visible injuries. However, while most victims informed parents (or another older relative), there were a few exceptions, for example, where the victim did not do so as they did not wish to worry them. Almost all the young men talked to friends about the incident. One, who was being continually harassed and bullied, did not do so in case his friends thought 'he was a little softie'.

The young men were asked who else they had told about the incident. As noted above, only about half of those who were injured sought help from health services; in a few of these cases, an ambulance was called by somebody else. Sometimes the victim did not perceive the injury as sufficiently serious to seek medical help, but one suggested that a further reason for not going to hospital was that the police might then get involved. It was rare for the incident to come to the attention of any other organisations. A few told their employer, but those who did, did not get any or much support from them. Those who were still in education did not inform their school or college. One young man, who was racially abused, consulted a Citizens' Advice Bureau and subsequently got a solicitor to advise him. In two cases, victims' mothers informed someone on their sons' behalf.

The main thing wanted or expected from family and, in some cases, friends too, was emotional support. They wanted someone to listen and understand their feelings, and to offer sympathy and consolation.

"I just wanted them to kind of, I guess, just sympathise with me, understand what it is like... someone like me who is... trying to grow up around here." (Interview S)

"Be there for me if I needed her [girlfriend] or anything... mainly emotionally as well... just to help me deal with my anger." (Interview U)

Some also wanted practical advice from family and friends on how to deal with the aftermath of the crime or to prevent a repeat incident. Family members, in some cases, were seen as a possible source of financial help.

A reason, for some victims, for telling friends was to discuss or seek support for taking direct action such as looking for the stolen property or trying to find out who the perpetrators were. In a few cases, victims wanted to take revenge or at least ensure that they and their friends were ready to defend themselves.

"I wanted them to be ready for war... we never went and looked for them... I just told them to keep on alert man, if you see them boys... just to be ready in case, man, to fight." (Black Caribbean focus group)

The support given by family and friends did a great deal to help the young men deal with the effects of the crime. There was, in particular in relation to parents and other family members, an overwhelmingly positive view of the support that they gave. With regards to emotional support, the young men reported that their families gave them 'enormous help' or that it was 'extremely helpful'. They understood and helped to relieve victims' feelings and gave them advice about how to deal with the emotional effects.

"They basically tried to comfort me and make sure that I know it's not just me. I haven't been targeted and this does happen a lot and generally not to lose confidence... I think it was very helpful and I managed to build my strength up basically as quickly as possible." (Interview C)

"My family dealt with it in the perfect way, they just offered their support, they tried to persuade me to go to the police but when they kind of clearly realised that I didn't want to do that they were just behind me and they were just there for me... I think it managed to get me through a rough patch, angry and frustrated." (Interview S)

It is possible that young men who felt that they might get an unsupportive response from family members did not tell them about the crime.

Family and friends also offered advice to victims, for example, on security measures and steps to try to recover property. Some family members advised reporting the crime to the police. In a few cases, friends advised taking revenge on the perpetrators. However, parents did not advocate this course of action, with one exception. In a few cases, parents specifically advised the victim against it. The advice of parents and other older relatives was influential on victims (although they did not always follow advice to report the crime to the police). Some spoke of their value for the advice they got.

"Because that is one of the only advice that I respect." (Interview Y)

"She [aunt] is older, she probably has more experience than I do... she's probably experienced something of that nature before." (Interview M)

The advice was not all one way; one reason for victims telling family and friends about the crime was a desire to protect them by warning them.

Family and friends also gave practical help. For example, mothers looked after victims who had been injured. Family members, and in one case, friends, gave money to compensate victims. In one case, the father of a 16-year old victim who was being bullied found out who the perpetrators were and spoke to them. The bullying, which had affected the victim's health, stopped.

The two victims who did not tell anybody about the crime both said that it was 'not worth it'. Neither felt there was any help that they would have needed. A minority of the young men said that there was help that they would have liked which they did not get (in addition to help from the police, discussed further below). One, for example, would have liked counselling for a racially motivated attack. Another wanted advice on crime prevention, while three victims wanted better help from their insurance company or their bank. It is necessary to be cautious about drawing conclusions about unmet need from this evidence because the young men's awareness about services available to victims was poor. After the role of Victim Support was explained to respondents, there was quite a widespread potential demand for the type of services it provides.

Chapter 3:

Responses to the crime: reporting to the police

In this chapter, the decision whether to report to the police and the adoption of alternative strategies are considered. The nature and quality of the victims' experience of the police is also discussed.

The sample of respondents was selected to include a roughly equal mix of cases where the crime was reported and those where it was not. Only two incidents reported to the police took place in Birmingham so views on police response reflect predominantly experiences in London. The incidents which had been reported included a range of different crimes but excluded some violent crimes including a stabbing and a knife attack. Cases sometimes came to the attention of the police as a result of somebody else contacting them or, in one case, CCTV cameras picked up the incident. Some victims who lost property reported it for insurance purposes; one thought that the police did not take crime against Black youth seriously but reported a stolen moped for this reason nonetheless. In one case, the victim reported the crime because he had been accused of fraud himself by his bank.

Some who had contact with the police expected the police to actively investigate the crime and, in a couple of cases, hoped to get their property back. However, others were pessimistic about what the police would do or be able to achieve, or had mixed feelings about it.

"I was hoping that they would either convict the people that done it to me or that they would get my bike back." (Interview C)

"[I expected the police to] try and console me and say they would get these people that did it to me and convict them really. I know it is a bit of a long shot but I just wanted some kind of justice to be done." (Interview Q)

"[I expected the police] to do their job of catching them and putting them behind bars but, as a Black youth, I don't expect nothing from the police." (Black Caribbean focus group)

Reasons for not reporting the crime included the victim thinking that the crime was not that serious or that the police would not take it seriously. Some people did not report it because they had very low expectations of what the police could or would achieve. In some cases, this was due to the circumstances of the crime, for example, lack of evidence. Others spoke in more general terms of the police 'not doing anything' or that nothing would result from reporting it. People's views were based on personal experience or that of friends who had been victims of crime. One young man mentioned, as evidence of police ineffectiveness, that when the police had come to the estate, the patrol car had had its tyres slashed. Lack of confidence in the CJS affected one interviewee who did not report the crime. He feared repercussions unless it was certain that the perpetrators would be caught and successfully prosecuted. He also feared the impact on his reputation.

"I don't want personally to have to go through the process of going to the police station... being labelled... where I live as a wimp. It will do more for my street cred not to go to the police, deal with it myself, let the bruises and cuts heal and just get on with it." (Interview 5)

Many of these reasons for not reporting the crime reflect those given by victims generally (Dodd et al, 2004). However, in this study, a belief that if the victim reported the crime, the police would not deal with it effectively, or would not regard it as serious, was linked by some people to police racism. As discussed earlier, some thought that the police did not care about crimes committed against Black people or so-called 'Black on Black' crime.

*"You can do practically whatever you want, let you run riot, you can kill each other."
(Black African focus group)*

Other reasons for not reporting, connected to police racism, mentioned by one young man were lack of respect from the police and that, as a Black youth, he would have been blamed himself for the crime. Evidence of the police viewing BME victims as suspects due to racist stereotyping has been found in other research (Bowling and Phillips, 2002). Other reasons given by the young men were misuse of stop and search tactics and that the police had 'set people up' for crimes. The BBC TV documentary, *The Secret Policeman*, had been shown a few months previously and was cited in both focus groups as evidence of police racism.

Other responses to the crime

Victims took actions in response to the crime apart from reporting it to the police, in order to prevent it happening again or to feel less vulnerable. They frequently acted on the advice of friends or family; the police were less influential as not all crimes were reported and, when they were, victims reported little advice being given. Some victims took precautions such as installing an alarm system in the home, buying new locks and being more careful how they carried their personal possessions. Others who had been violently attacked or threatened with attack avoided going out alone or in small groups. They either stayed at home, or went out with friends, or bigger groups of friends for protection. Two, also involved in violent incidents, said that they would be more careful whom they associated with. Three respondents acquired knives, and another said that the incident made him want to carry a weapon, although it was not clear if he had actually done so. One reason for carrying a knife was to feel more confident. Participants in the Black Caribbean focus group, said that the incident made them feel that they had to be tougher, stronger or more 'wise'.

"I feel more confident to do something bad... if those boys don't care about stabbing me... so why should I care about stabbing someone?" (Black Caribbean focus group)

As discussed earlier, one immediate reaction to the incident was to consider looking for the perpetrators and retaliating.

"I thought I needed to get these people because I don't like being treated like that, I had never been robbed before and it is not in my culture to get robbed." (Black Caribbean group)

One young man in the Black Caribbean focus group said that if his moped had not been insured, he would have searched for the people who stole it and 'I will stab one of them and I probably will end up in jail right now'.

Some considered this option but rejected it, either on the advice of others, or simply because they decided that it was not worth it or not the answer. One, who had recently moved to a new area, did

not have friends to support him. In a few cases, victims did attempt to retaliate; in at least two of these incidents, the victim or his friends carried weapons. Two victims did successfully find the perpetrators. One young man who had been stabbed 'marauded' the perpetrator's house with his brothers. In the other incident, a young man whose mobile phone was stolen and who was threatened with a knife, looked for the perpetrators with friends and got into a fight with one.

Some of the victims who considered taking retaliation but did not try to do so reported the crime to the police. Nobody who actually tried to retaliate reported it to the police and in some cases rejected this option.

"You don't go to the police like whatever happens to you really... the only other people I would have told is my boys but they all live in London... That's how it goes – if someone does something to you, you go and do it back to them." (Interview H)

Another victim with a similar view of the police commented:

"Whenever stuff like this happens, I don't see it as time for me to call... seek my uncles, or anything like that, or my Mum, or police, or the church. I see it as time for me to call my people, so we can basically find them and just basically hurt them. People say it's the wrong thing sometimes... that's the only way I find the way to deal with it." (Interview T)

In one case where the victim retaliated, the police had been called to the incident, but not by him. The explanation of the victim, who was in the Black Caribbean focus group, for retaliating was that 'the police didn't do nothing'. There was support amongst this focus group for the notion that direct action was legitimate, due to perceived police failings.

*"We don't get no support from like the police or nothing so we have to defend ourselves."
"We have to take the law into our own hands as well." (Black Caribbean focus group)*

Two respondents thought, with hindsight, that the advice from peers to take revenge was not helpful, on the basis that 'it would not have solved anything' and 'it just makes me look bad'.

It is not possible to say from this study whether the responses to the crime reported here, including 'sorting it out themselves', are particularly prevalent amongst Black young men, as opposed to being characteristic, generally, of young men living in similar socio-economic circumstances and areas. However, other research with young people has shown some similarities. For example, White school students in Edinburgh of a slightly younger age group responded to frequent victimisation by developing their own defence mechanisms. This culture of defence consisted of mutual support and sympathy; loyalty to one's peers; and hanging around in groups for security, although this could also be a source of potential trouble both from other groups and from the police. Young people who had been victimised had little recourse to the police (Anderson et al, 1994).⁹

Victims' experiences of the police

Most of the people who reported the crime were, overall, dissatisfied with the service they received from the police. Views on the initial response were fairly positive. When the police attended the incident, the response was quick, with two exceptions. The police were generally polite to the victim, although some thought that, nonetheless, they treated the incident as routine for them.

⁹ The young people aged 11-15 had a high level of 'adversary contact' with the police, especially being stopped and searched (Anderson, et al, 1994).

“They didn’t really seem bothered, they were polite, but you know it is just procedure for them at the end of the day.” (Black African focus group)

“They were more worried about it was their job to solve the crime rather than trying to care for me as an individual.” (Respondent Q)

One thought that, although the police took him seriously, this was because the incident happened at work. There would have been a different response ‘if you were a bunch of kids my age and had got into a fight.’

A few victims however were dissatisfied with the initial response because the police did not believe his story or take the incident sufficiently seriously. For example, one said that the police asked if he had really bought the trainers that had just been stolen. He felt that they implied that he was ‘scamming’. In another incident, the police demanded to see a receipt for the victim’s bike before intervening on his behalf. In a third incident reported at police station, the police did not record the crime or offer to investigate.

It was at the next stage, of follow-up to the initial report, that dissatisfaction with the police was most apparent. With some exceptions, very little was done following the initial crime report and taking of statements – or, if it was, the victims were unaware of it. The provision of information about what would happen next, or updates about the progress of the case, was poor. Some victims said that the police would contact them and then did not. In one of these incidents, the police never came round or phoned to follow up the initial report. While the crimes that had occurred to about twenty of the young men had come to the police’s notice, only three appeared to have definite knowledge of the outcome. In two cases, the police wrote to them that they could not take any further action. In a third case, the perpetrators were arrested and subsequently convicted of a racially aggravated offence. The others did not know what had happened, thought the crime was not investigated, or that any investigation had been unsuccessful.

“I heard from them the next day and I heard from them like a week later and then it just fizzled out to nothing really, it was just one for the records.” (Black Caribbean focus group)

The provision of crime prevention advice by the police was patchy. Most did not remember having received any advice. The police are only required to give advice if the victim asks for it. The Victim’s Charter states that victims can expect the chance to explain how the crime had affected you. However, only one victim recalled being asked about how the crime had affected him or about the impact of the incident.¹⁰ One victim commented that:

“They are not concerned with that, they just have to do their bit and get out.” (Black African focus group)

Police referral to Victim Support will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

When asked about their overall satisfaction with the police, most were dissatisfied. There were three main reasons. One was, as discussed above, people felt that the police did not act, or act sufficiently enthusiastically, to investigate their crime. The second was poor communication, while a third was slow response to the initial call.

“Basically they made false promises. They said that they was going to go and investigate the situation. But in my eyes, they didn’t do anything.” (Respondent U)

¹⁰ According to the BCS, the police asked victims about details of loss, damage and or injury in 52% of incidents and whether they feared further victimisation in 28% of incidents (Ringham and Salisbury, 2004). Victims can make a written Victim Personal Statement if they have made a witness statement to the police. The police should ask if the victim wishes to do so. However, the research did not explore their use as a separate evaluation has been carried out on this topic (Graham et al, 2004).

In two of the cases where people were dissatisfied, the police did not follow up the original report at all. Both felt that other victims might have been treated better. One thought that the fact that he was Black probably had something to do with it. 'He was a White policeman and probably, they see Black, you know I was a Black person, and he was probably, like, because I think that they all have this idea that Black people commit the crimes everywhere so it's like, I'm stealing my things'. The other thought that it was 'because of the area and who I am'.

A further small group had either mixed or neutral views on how the police dealt with the matter. One was not disappointed, because his expectations were low. Another said that he was 'averagely' satisfied.

"All they did really was note the crime and that's about it really. They didn't solve it. They didn't prosecute anyone for it." (Respondent V)

Two of the young men were satisfied with the service they received. Both felt that their case had been investigated. One said that, although the police failed to get his bicycle back, 'I felt that they gave 100%', he also reported a speedy initial response and said that they had communicated well. He was one of the two victims notified of the outcome and the only one asked about how the crime had affected him. The other felt that the police had responded quickly, been polite, sensitive and supportive – but it was difficult for him to assess how well they had dealt with his case because he did not know the outcome. Both young men had generally positive attitudes towards the police. These attitudes may have existed before their personal experience of reporting this crime and perhaps have helped to engender a positive police response. Alternatively, their positive attitudes may have been caused or reinforced by this satisfactory experience.

When asked what additional or improved support from the police they would have liked, a few respondents said they would have liked more help with compensation or insurance claim procedures. Others said that they would have liked the police to be more sensitive or give a more personal service. Better communications were also wanted; one suggestion was a direct telephone number to get an update on the investigation.

"People don't really understand the workings of the police, like myself, we don't know how to work the system... you don't know what questions to ask..."

(Interviewer) "What about helping you personally?"

"That would have been lovely too. Showing that they care, showing that they are concerned."

(Respondent F)

"[The police could] maybe offer advice, help... Keep me updated. Maybe phone me to say, 'I'm sorry but there's nothing that we could do at the time'... Could have had a bit more personal touch to it."

(Respondent V)

Only a very few incidents reported to the police were thought by the victim to be racially motivated. Respondents did not always tell the police about the possible racial motivation. In the case where the perpetrators were convicted of a racially aggravated offence, the police informed the victim about a support service for victims of racist incidents. However, he did not feel that he needed it. One victim who did not tell the police about the possible racial motivation did not do so partly because he thought it was too sensitive an issue to raise with a White officer, but also due to the officer's personal demeanour:

"Apart from being White, he didn't show any... emotion, or he wasn't sensitive in the sense he didn't say 'Oh, I'm sorry how are you going to get home? What's going to happen to you after this? How can we help you?'" (Interview M)

The findings about what drives young Black men's satisfaction with the police are consistent with research with victims of crime generally. This suggests that the needs of this section of the population in relation to the police are very similar to those of other victims. A survey carried out for the Audit Commission found that the ease or difficulty of reporting crime greatly influences perceptions of the adequacy of the response. Where police and victim agree that there is little likelihood of perpetrator being found, victims still need to feel there was a point to reporting and that their experience is taken seriously. Experience of initial reporting is generally positive but satisfaction then declines. Satisfaction with the information post-reporting provided by the police is low and is interpreted as lack of action (Audit Commission, 2003).

A separate survey of victims of crime and others who had initiated contact with the police identified a number of key factors that drive satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The findings underscore the importance of quality of customer care. How people are treated by the police and how well they are provided with information are as important, if not more so, than the speed of response to requests for assistance. For victims, the provision of information was particularly powerful in explaining satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Office of Public Services Reform, 2003). Research in London found that perceptions of lack of police effort or interest were key irritants, and often more important than getting a 'result'. The most frequent reason for dissatisfaction was failure of the police to do anything or enough, followed by the speed of response and failure to keep them informed (Fitzgerald et al, 2002).

Encouraging reporting to the police

Respondents were asked what would encourage them to report the crime to the police. Both amongst those who reported this incident and those who did not, a key factor in encouraging future reporting was knowing that it would result in the crime being solved and justice being done, or at least, that the crime would be investigated.

*"If there were a visible machine that the police are actually... working to investigate the crime."
(Interview F – reported the crime)*

*"If I can see that something is going to be done about it, if you can see an end to it, a result."
(Interview P – reported the crime)*

Amongst those who did not report the incident, some said that they would report it, if the crime were serious enough. This may reflect the view that the police were less likely to take relatively minor incidents seriously when reported by Black people. For a small group who held very negative views about the police, including the belief that they were racist, there was great reluctance to contact the police except in the most serious circumstances. Examples of what would be considered serious were 'getting beat up really badly', a stolen car, house burglary or someone in the family being killed. One stuck to the view that 'I'm not one of those who report'.

Respondents were asked about three specific measures which might encourage them to report the crime. One option was for a third party to report to the police on their behalf. Third party reporting centres already exist for victims of racist and other hate crime.¹¹ Some respondents who did not report the incident did not think it would make a difference to their decision. Others, including both some who reported it and some who did not, favoured the idea. A reason for supporting the idea was that the organisation would be able to help ensure that the police took action. One wanted a Black organisation to act as the third party.

¹¹ This follows the recommendation of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry that people should be able to report racist incidents at locations other than police stations, in order to encourage reporting. Forthcoming Home Office research suggests that third party centres need to be more accessible and well publicised.

There was some support for reporting the crime anonymously, in order to avoid intimidation or being regarded as a 'snitch' or losing 'street cred'. However, some did not see how anonymity could be preserved if the case progressed, while others thought it would affect their decision. The third measure was reporting crime by e-mail, which is already available for specific minor crimes. It is also possible to report racist incidents by e-mail in certain police forces. This option was not very popular. Respondents were not confident that there would be a prompt response and some preferred direct face-to-face or phone communication, or did not have Internet access. One was unhappy about giving his e-mail address. Other suggestions for what would encourage reporting were more Black police officers, and having somebody to go with you when reporting the crime.

Both those who reported the crime to the police and those who did not were asked at the end of the interview what they would do if the same incident happened again. Amongst those who did not report it last time, a few would do so. One reason for shifting their views was the information given to them in the interview about support for victims, one mentioning specifically possible compensation. Another victim would report it because he had decided to take out insurance (although had not actually done so). However, the rest would do the same as they had before, which for a few meant seeking retaliation. This was because they still held negative views about the police, and in two cases, said that retaliation was the norm.

Amongst those who reported last time, most would do the same again, including some who had unsatisfactory or mixed experiences of the police in the previous incident. One view was that all crime has to be reported. Despite the lack of a result in the previous incident, some still felt that something might be achieved or that they would report it for insurance purposes.

"If you do not report it, you guarantee that nothing will happen. If you do report it, something might happen." (Interview F)

Two felt that they had learned from their experiences about how to deal with the police. One said that he would report the crime earlier on, the other that he would know to push harder for action.

"I'd make sure they came and dealt with it, this time." (Interview R)

However, two victims who did report the crime said that they would not do so next time, as a result of lack of police action or a successful outcome in the previous incident (although one had reported the crime only five days earlier). They said that they would retaliate themselves instead.

Chapter 4:

Support Services available to victims

Potential use of services

The Victim's Charter states that the police will give victims a 'Victims of Crime' leaflet, which gives details about Victim Support, as soon as the crime is reported at a station.¹² In other cases, they will send the leaflet within five working days. The charter also states that Victim Support will normally send a letter, telephone or arrange a visit from a volunteer within four working days of the crime being reported. None of the victims in this study got help from Victim Support, or any other organisation that supports victims of crime, in connection with the incident. According to the BCS, only 8% of victims whose crime was reported to the police recall some contact with Victim Support. Only 3% of all crimes (whether reported or not) result in some contact with Victim Support (Ringham and Salisbury, 2004).¹³

Awareness of Victim Support amongst the victims was fairly low. Many had never heard of it. Some others, while recognising the name, had little or no knowledge of what it does.

"I haven't got a clue about Victim Support, that's the first time I heard anything about it so I don't know what it's about." (Interview D, Birmingham)

Those who did have some knowledge suggested that it offered counselling or someone to talk to, in order to help come to terms personally with the crime or to get advice.

"A group of people who helps people like us, like people who have been involved in something criminal, the other end of the stick from a criminal act, just to help us deal with it."

"Counselling... just to talk to us about what they went through and we can talk to them about what we went through." (Black Caribbean focus group).

There was little awareness that Victim Support offered practical help and information although one victim suggested that it advised how to avoid the incident happening again and another that it provided financial advice. A third thought that it would help victims deal with the police. One person knew that Victim Support has a helpline, while another that there is a Victim Support in each London borough. Sources of information on Victim Support were the TV, posters, and information provided by the police in this or other incidents. A few had heard of it by word of mouth. There was a perception amongst some that Victim Support was a governmental organisation or connected to the police.

Those involved in incidents which were reported to the police were slightly more likely to have heard of Victim Support. However, most victims who had contact with the police were apparently not given

¹² Victim Support is a national charity which provides free, confidential support to victims. It has a network of local branches across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Trained volunteers offer someone to talk to in confidence, information on police and court procedures, help about compensation and insurance, and links to other sources of help. For the Victims' Charter see http://www.cjsonline.gov.uk/victim/coming_forward/victims_charter/index.html

¹³ Not all contacts will be remembered and for some crimes such as burglary, the person interviewed may not know that another household member had contact.

information by them about Victim Support.¹⁴ The victims who were offered the opportunity of getting help from Victim Support by the police did not take it up. Some did not read leaflets and letters sent by the police about Victim Support. The youth whose case went to court was offered 'racial support counselling' but it was not clear if this was Victim Support or a specialist service for racist incidents. He had also been put in touch with a community group which provided support.

"I misplaced the leaflets or threw them away. I didn't actually take them seriously. I just wanted to see justice done." (Black Caribbean focus group)

Amongst those who had known about Victim Support at the time of the incident, reasons for not using it were explored. In the case of those who did not know about it, they were asked if they would have used it in relation to this incident, if the service had been offered to them. A brief explanation was given to them of the main functions of Victim Support.

A substantial minority of the victims said that they would have used Victim Support in this incident or would do so, depending on what it had to offer. Almost all of these victims had either not heard of the organisation or knew nothing about it, although some had reported the crime to the police. This suggests considerable untapped demand if the organisation was publicised in more appropriate, accessible and targeted ways.

Amongst respondents who did not or would not use Victim Support, a frequent reason was that the incident was not sufficiently serious or that they were not seriously affected. The seriousness of a particular crime is a subjective judgement. Some who said this were involved in incidents which might be regarded by others as serious (for example, one was punched and kicked and another beaten up in a fight). The view of some people who responded in this way was that exposure to crime was commonplace and so they were not seriously affected or did not regard the incidents as serious. They did not therefore regard Victim Support as suitable for them, or at least not in this particular incident. They thought that Victim Support had more to offer to others, differentiated from them by age, status or life experience.

"I don't think it affected me that badly and the sort of area I am from... it is just sort of everyday life to me, sort of victims of crime, or doing crime, or different things."

"You have just got to get on with it."

"Victim support is for other people, not for us."

"Not so streetwise, I think we are streetwise."

"In our communities, we see things like that a lot so we become sort of immune."

(Black African focus group)

They defined those whom Victim Support would help as 'upper class' 'privileged' 'people that don't understand the street' or 'naïve'. One thought that Victim Support was not for young people.

"It's probably like when it happens to old people and they don't know how they do all the things and they get depressed or they get scared, they don't want to go outside again... but I see these things happening and it's not really a big thing to me." (Interview H)

Another respondent thought that it was not for Black people. He assumed that White people would provide the service. 'White people can sit down and talk about it and Black people... they'd rather sort it out than sit down and talk to a White person'.

¹⁴ Two of these incidents involved theft from a motor vehicle, which is not automatically referred to Victim Support.

A few found it difficult or were reluctant to explain why they would not need Victim Support; as one said 'that's the way that I am'. But some expressed a feeling that they were self-reliant or strong and so did not need external help. They may perhaps have been unwilling to express feelings of vulnerability. Whether this was the case or not, the act of seeking help might challenge a perception of themselves which may be helpful to them in dealing with the crime. Some would contact Victim Support in a more serious incident. This was defined in the Black African focus group as an assault, rape, kidnap or torture, or being threatened with a gun (but not a knife). One respondent, beaten up in a fight, thought that this incident was not a big issue, but that being robbed face-to-face at knifepoint, or burgled, might warrant going to Victim Support. Another, who was punched, would have used it 'if I was beaten up badly'.

The perceived connection with the police affected some respondents' views about using Victim Support. One did not read a letter from the police about Victim Support because he 'felt betrayed [by the police], and when you feel betrayed, you don't want to trust nothing, you don't want to trust what the police have to offer'. An encouragement to use Victim Support would be 'if they [the police] showed more interest in your case'. One victim thought that using Victim Support would make him look more vulnerable. 'Make me look I am hiding away from things... extra support from the police as well. It's like I am actually scared'. He was unsure if the police and Victim Support were separate organisations. One respondent, who had been adamant about not reporting the crime, would use Victim Support if it did not involve the police and was confidential. According to the 1998 BCS, people from BME groups were more likely than White people to believe that Victim Support might pass information onto the police or others (Maguire and Kynch, 2000).

A third reason for why victims had not used Victim Support, or would not do so, was that they did not need help because they had had support from their friends and family, although it was suitable for others.

"Ideal for someone who has no-one to turn to." (Interview V)

"Good if you are a foreigner, or here by yourself, or have parents who don't care." (Interview Q)

Some of those who would use Victim Support or would consider doing so stated that they were not looking for someone to talk to, or emotional support. This was either because they had friends and family to offer this support, or could deal with any emotional effects themselves. Others, however, did express a desire for emotional support. The kind of help wanted was to have someone to talk to, to get reassurance, to relieve stress and understand better what had happened.

"Someone to talk to really... about my issues really, again, just to calm down." (Interview G)

"Reassuring, giving you that confidence and boosting your morale generally." (Interview M)

All those who said they wanted emotional support from Victim Support had talked to their families about the incident and most had reported that such support had been very helpful. This suggests that this particular group of victims had a strong need for emotional support (as well as a willingness to express it), and that any support from Victim Support would be additional to, rather than a substitute for, the role of families. Demand for emotional support was not expressed in the focus groups, apart from one victim of a racist incident. Victims may be less willing to admit to such need amongst their peers, although focus group participants did see a use in practical help.

There was a strong demand for practical or financial help from Victim Support, such as getting compensation, help with dealing with the insurance company or the bank, or advice on whether to

push further for police action.¹⁵ A few were interested primarily in getting their stolen property returned, which suggests an unrealistic expectation of what organisations which offer support to victims could do or a lack of clarity about their role.

*"In my case, I would like my phone back, I didn't get my phone back and that was all I wanted really."
(Black Caribbean focus group)*

When respondents were asked at the end of the interview or focus group what they would do should the event occur again, a small number in the interviews spontaneously said that they would use or be interested in using Victim Support or other services which offer support to victims.

"Because now I know that there are people out there for me who will help me." (Interview Q)

Altogether about half of respondents who took part in face-to-face interviews could be defined as potential users of support services for victims. This includes both those who would or might have used Victim Support in the previous incident if the service had been offered and those who would or might use the organisation or other support services if the incident happened again. Participants in the focus groups, generally speaking, expressed a more limited interest in such services. Not all of the people who would potentially use support services said that they would report the crime to the police if the same thing happened. This highlights the importance of alternative means of publicising services to reach those reluctant to contact the police. At present, only a tiny percentage of victims of crime in contact with Victim Support have contacted the organisation independently (Ringham and Salisbury, 2004).

Making services more accessible

Respondents were shown examples of material used to inform victims about the support available to them, in order to stimulate feedback on the best ways of communicating with young Black men. They were shown

- a poster for victims telling them about the information available on CJS Online, a website which provides information on the CJS.¹⁶
- a colour print-out of pages from CJS Online, including pages from the Victims' Walkthrough. This is an interactive virtual tour giving a step-by-step guide to the CJS process as it relates to victims. Most pictures showed police officers or aspects of the courts or CJS.
- a colour print-out of pages from the Victim Support website, mainly depicting victims or people offering support and advice.¹⁷
- a Home Office leaflet 'Victims of Crime – the help and advice that's available'.

Respondents did not, with a few exceptions, recall seeing any of the material before (although all who reported the crime should have been given or sent a copy of the leaflet by the police).¹⁸ Some general points emerged.

¹⁵ Men aged 16-24 were more likely to say that they wanted help with insurance and compensation; protection from further victimisation; help in reporting to the police and information from the police, according to the 1998 BCS (Maguire and Kynch, 2000).

¹⁶ See www.cjsonline.gov.uk

¹⁷ See www.victimsupport.org.uk

¹⁸ According to the 2002/3 BCS, 46% of victims who reported the crime recalled receiving this leaflet (Ringham and Salisbury, 2004).

- There were different opinions on the use of the word 'victim'. A minority found the term off-putting and/or did not identify themselves as victims. 'Victim' had connotations of being unempowered [sic], weak, and defenceless, suggested that the crime was their fault, and was demeaning. 'Target' was suggested as an alternative. Other people, on the hand, did not have difficulties with the term. The 'Have you been a victim of crime?' slogan on the CJS Online poster, for example, was said to be effective by some.
- Only the Victim Support website showed a Black person. Some respondents wanted either Black people or a more ethnically diverse range of people depicted as victims. This would give them someone to identify with and encourage use of services. A couple of people also wanted pictures of Black or ethnically diverse police officers.
- A minority felt that they would not seek help from the police or did not need support services and so these materials were not relevant to them. Many, however, found the information useful and relevant, in particular victims' rights and the availability of compensation. Some commented that it should be more widely publicised.
- Some did not have Internet access or use computers, or had doubts about the website format on the grounds that victims needed face-to-face or phone contact.
- Some wanted more emotive or shocking pictures, or pictures showing crime scenes. A picture on the Victim Support website showed a man doing a sponsored cycle trip to raise money for the charity. This was thought to convey a positive image of a victim fighting back.
- While respondents generally thought the content of the material good, many wanted it to have a bolder and more eye-catching appearance, especially in the use of colour. The Home Office leaflet in particular was thought very dull, though its small size was popular. Telephone numbers and website addresses should appear prominently.
- Some thought a lot of text either on web pages or in the leaflet was off-putting. The 'Victims' Walkthrough' concept was popular, as it was simple and easy to follow, and allowed users to find the topics they wanted quickly without going through lots of material.
- The CJS Online website has a link to a leaflet in other languages. Respondents approved of this in order to meet others' needs. It was suggested that more languages should be available and that the Victims' Walkthrough should also be available in other languages.
- Suggestions for additional topics to be covered on the CJS Online website were discrimination and police use of force; rights when stopped and searched; information to reassure those fearing intimidation if they report the crime to the police; and local police contacts. Reassurance for those fearing intimidation was also mentioned in relation to the Victim Support website.
- The CJS Online poster and website and the Home Office leaflet were thought by a few to be associated with the police and this could be off-putting. One suggested removing the Home Office logo because of its (to him) negative connotations.

A number of further suggestions were made about what would encourage people to or discourage them from approaching support services for victims.

- An awareness that services are free and confidential would attract people. A free phone number would be preferable to the current 0845 number for the Victim Supportline.

- Better or more prompt communication of information about services. One person did not receive a Victim Support leaflet until a week or two after the incident. By then, he had received help from friends and family. Another who felt that the information came too late said that the leaflet for victims of crime reminded him of something bad that he thought he had got over. The Victim's Charter states that Victim Support will contact victims within four working days of the crime being reported to the police. However, according to the BCS, only about half of contacts are made within that time period. Satisfaction was increased by speed of contact (Ringham and Salisbury, 2004).¹⁹
- Some expressed a lack of confidence about contacting support services. One person, who would not make the first approach to strangers, said he would prefer to be approached himself. On the other hand, others said they did not want the organisation contacting them.
- Hearing from someone who had used the service and had a good experience would encourage people to use it themselves. Conversely, hearing about bad experiences would put people off.
- Factors which would discourage use of services mainly concerned the way they would be treated, for example, lack of enthusiasm or understanding, a judgmental, sarcastic, patronising or disrespectful attitude, or if the organisation did not listen or keep its promises to get back to the victim. One was concerned that help might be dependent on reporting the crime to the police.
- There would be a need to be sensitive, when contacting victims, as both making too little effort and too much effort would be unwelcome. Other suggestions were for a discreet location, in order to avoid being seen going there, and for a Black organisation to provide such services.

Respondents were asked for views on different means of communicating information about support services to people such as themselves.

- TV was almost universally used and favoured. A broad range of channels was mentioned, including the five terrestrial channels and music and sports channels available on cable and satellite (although not all had access to these).
- Almost everybody listened to radio and most thought it a good method. Information or adverts had to be targeted on the right station at the right time of day. The stations thought appropriate were almost all music stations, either national or serving either London or Birmingham.
- Cinema adverts had quite a lot of support, but not all went to the cinema and there was some doubt as to their impact.
- Posters were thought to be a good means of communication, as long as they were sufficiently eye-catching or attractive. Good locations for posters were on public transport, at schools or universities, shopping centres, and on roadside billboards.
- Newspapers had only limited support as several people did not read them regularly. The newspapers suggested included both tabloids and broadsheets and both national and local papers. *The Voice* (a newspaper catering to the Black community) was also mentioned.

¹⁹ About nine out of ten contacts are made within ten days. As the BCS question states 'within four days' rather than 'four working days', the survey will underestimate compliance. The BCS cannot provide information on how long the police took to pass victims' details onto Victim Support.

- Some were enthusiastic about the Internet as a means of getting information and communicating with others. It was suggested that victims should be able to post comments or views on the website, or a forum board or chat room. Others did not have access to the Internet or did not use computers much. Some also preferred to deal directly with a person. Suggestions for sites from which there should be links were football sites; music sites such as Kazaa or MTV; police websites; Google, Hotmail, MSN and Yahoo, sites for students, games sites, sites aimed at Black people such as Blacknet, and that there should be links from chat rooms used by young people. Sites selling services or equipment could have information about what victims of a crime related to their business should do eg motoring equipment sites about if your car gets broken into, travel sites about bags being stolen on holiday.
- About half the respondents thought text messaging would be an effective method. Some, though, did not like getting too many messages, which could be regarded as junk or block phone space. Some did not want to give their mobile number for privacy reasons.
- Opinions were divided on whether leaflets were a good method of communicating, as some thought they would just be regarded as junk and would not be read. It was suggested that, if used, they should be distributed in schools, colleges and universities; at shops (in particular music or clothes shops) or shopping centres; at public transport locations such as bus stands or train stations; at hospitals, barber shops, youth centres and places of entertainment such as restaurants, nightclubs and cinemas. Some thought they should be delivered to people's homes or inserted into magazines or local papers.
- Letters were not regarded as a good method by most of the young men, and some were quite emphatic about this. The main reason for thinking they were ineffective was that they would be mistaken for junk mail and/or just thrown away. One even said that he was scared to receive letters, while another had concerns about his privacy, presumably because others may open his post. The most common way for Victim Support to make initial contact with victims following referral is by letter (Ringham and Salisbury, 2004).
- Other suggestions included announcements by DJs in nightclubs; the Connexions service; church; the workplace; putting information on mousemats at college; using Black role models and that the police could convey information, for example, by speaking at colleges. The Black Caribbean focus group suggested police community liaison officers that they knew and looked up to.
- There were not clear-cut differences about preferred means of communication between young men of different social class.
- When asked about the best way for them to make contact with support services, the young men were fairly evenly divided as to whether they would prefer telephone or face-to-face contact. Email was less popular than these options. Victims did not generally like the idea of making contact by text message.

The young men suggested organisations through which support could be provided. Several people suggested schools, colleges and universities, for example, in the form of a help office or an officer to support victims. Youth clubs and centres were also frequently suggested, although some had doubts due to lack of provision or because they were dealing with so many other issues. One favoured youth clubs, because it would also be a way of reaching young people involved in carrying out crime, and changing their attitudes. Respondents' views on church were mixed. For some, church did not seem relevant, as they did not attend, while one churchgoer thought that 'church and crime don't go together.' Others, however, thought it could have an important role. Church was thought to lend authority to a message.

“As a Black person, we all go to church on a Sunday, so there is a very large area to get information from. It is easy for us to talk to a pastor... We have confidence with them [sic] so it is a very good idea.”
(Interview X)

Other suggestions were the police; sports clubs and gyms, jobcentres, insurance companies, the Government and advice centres. There was little mention of local authorities or several services provided or funded by them such as libraries. Despite local authorities' responsibility for community safety as part of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, the young men did not appear to associate them with crime issues.

Some said that they would feel most comfortable dealing with another Black person when getting help, because another person of the same ethnicity could relate to them more easily or they would feel safer with a Black person. However, to others, it made no difference and one perceived opting for a Black person as being racist. One view was that ethnicity was only important in a case of a racist crime. Some would find it easier to talk to a man rather than a woman, some the reverse, while to most it made no difference. There was a general view that the person should be somewhat older than the victim. While the precise age preferred varied from young adults to middle age, a degree of maturity was thought important. A few thought age, sex and ethnicity were immaterial, as long as people had the right attributes or skills. It was important that the person could connect with them and have a knowledge and understanding of their situation and point of view. It was suggested by a few that the person should have had similar experiences themselves.

“Someone who has actually been in the situation who can say, like, this is the Bible, this is the way it is. This is what happens, I have been through it and they can explain it because they've experienced it themselves. That's the best way because they can relate.” (Interview L)

Chapter 5:

Conclusions and recommendations

Improving the experience of victims is essential in order to improve confidence in both the police and the wider CJS. Some conclusions and recommendations aimed at improving services for young Black men will also be relevant to improving services for victims more generally. The study did not have a comparable sample of young men from other ethnic groups. This limits the degree to which it is possible to say whether the findings are characteristic of young men in similar socio-economic circumstances, or whether being Black is the critical factor shaping their experiences and views. Where possible, evidence from other research has been used to highlight similarities and differences between the young Black men and other victims.

Victims and their experience of crime

Most of the victims lived in relatively high crime areas although not all felt personally threatened. Reasons for not feeling threatened were living in an area where they knew people and were known and that they were relatively impervious to crime through constant exposure. There was a lack of confidence in the police's ability to deal with crime. Some reasons for this lack of confidence reflect those shared by other sections of the population. However, it was sometimes linked to a belief that Black people were not treated seriously as victims of crime. Lack of trust and confidence, partly due to perceived police racism, had led some to disengage from the police. Fear of reprisals if crime was reported was another reason. The views of the young Black men in this study on the police reflects the results of much other research with this population group (eg Bowling and Phillips, 2002).

Where victims could describe the person(s) who had carried out the crime, the vast majority were young men of a similar age to the victims. Victims frequently said that they had been targeted by young Black men, or by groups of youths of mixed ethnicity, including Black youths. Just under half of the victims had physical injuries. In a few cases, these were fairly serious. Only about half of those injured received treatment from a health professional, which may have partly reflected reluctance to seek such help.

All victims had some emotional reaction, at least initially. Anger was the most common reaction, while some reported shock, fear, anxiety, and loss of confidence or self-esteem. Some victims minimized the seriousness of the impact or said that they had quickly recovered. One explanation was that crime was familiar or expected to happen. The types of emotional reactions reported were similar to those found by the BCS in relation to other young male victims. Although precise comparisons cannot be made, it appears that the young men in this study were somewhat more likely to express an emotional reaction and a desire for emotional support than might have been expected by BCS findings about young men (Maguire and Kynch, 2000).²⁰

²⁰ The 1998 BCS found two-thirds of male victims aged 16-24 reported any emotional reaction. Only 13% expressed a need for someone to talk to/moral support. Black and Asian respondents (of any age) were more likely to express this need than White people. Any differences might be due to differences in the research methodology used or possibly an increased willingness by men to discuss emotional issues in recent years.

The infrequency of contact with formal agencies over the incident is not unique to Black young men but applies to victims more generally. But while the victims in this study almost all turned to family and friends for support, the BCS found that less than three in ten victims asked for or received help from families and friends (Maguire and Kynch, 1998). This may be associated with the youth of the victims in this study and the fact that about two thirds lived with family members.²¹ While emotional support from family and friends was particularly appreciated, they also gave practical advice and help. Because of the role played by families, it is possible that the Black young men were more likely to have support available than some other categories of victims.²² However, this does not mean that it is less necessary for services to reach out to this group. First, not all young Black men have family or friends to turn to. Second, family members are likely to have good knowledge of the young person as an individual. However, they will not generally have the full range of specialist knowledge and expertise, for example, about compensation that statutory and voluntary organisations can provide. Third, the crime may have an impact on family members, who may have their own needs for support.

Reporting to the police and other responses

Reasons for not reporting the crime included the belief that the particular circumstances of the crime meant that it would not achieve anything. Some reasons reflected lack of confidence in the police, such as the belief that the police would not take any, or adequate, action or would not take it seriously. Some did not report it because they thought themselves that the crime was not sufficiently serious, but they may have been anticipating this reaction from the police. Reasons for not reporting reflect those cited by victims in general (eg in the BCS) but the views of some in this study were influenced by perceptions of police racism. For example, a view that the police would not do anything was explained by the belief that they did not take crime against Black people seriously. A few attributed their decision explicitly to police racism or poor police-community relations. Lack of confidence in the police and the CJS could also lead to a fear of inadequate protection from intimidation.

Some victims took action to protect themselves or to feel less vulnerable, for example, installing security equipment. Some who had been violently attacked or threatened, avoided going out alone, either by staying at home or only going out with others. A few victims acquired knives. One immediate response was to try to retaliate against the perpetrators. Some victims who tried to retaliate rejected involving the police and there was some support for the view that perceived police failings legitimised retaliation. Others, however, would consider either retaliation or reporting to the police as alternative options.

Some who reported the crime expected the police to actively investigate it and at least hoped for justice to be done, while others were more pessimistic or just reported for insurance purposes. Most were, overall, dissatisfied with the service they received. Views on the initial response were fairly positive. Most victims thought that the police were polite, although somewhat impersonal and mechanistic. There was much more dissatisfaction with the follow-up. Provision of information by the police about any investigation was poor and victims generally interpreted this as evidence that little or nothing had been done. Other research has shown that how victims are treated by the police and information provision are critical to victim satisfaction (Audit Commission, 2003; Office of Public Service Reform, 2003) This suggests that what young Black male victims want from the police is very similar to other victims. Current drives to improve these aspects of police performance should therefore improve the experience of young Black male victims.²³

21 Anderson et al (1994) argued that White 11-15 year old victims of crime generally did not involve the adult world at all, but Aye Maung (1995) found that around 40% of victims aged 12-15 told their parents or an adult relative about the crime. There was little difference between Afro-Caribbean [sic] and White young people but Asian young people were less likely to do so.

22 The 1998 BCS found that four out of ten people who expressed a need for support had not been in contact with any potential providers of support and assistance, including family and friends.

23 Getting information from the police may particularly a particular difficulty for young men. The 1998 BCS showed that men aged 16-24 were more likely than men 25 or over to say that they needed more information from the police; almost half said so.

Nonetheless, other research shows that, amongst victims, being young, Black and male are associated with being dissatisfied with how the police dealt with the crime (Fitzgerald et al, 2002). This suggests that there are particular factors at play connected to the specific experience of young Black men. There may be a feedback loop between lack of confidence and experiences of the police. Poor confidence may tend to foster poor interactions with police officers or a tendency to perceive the service received in a negative light, or to interpret low standards of service as evidence of racism. Dissatisfaction with the experience then reinforces low confidence. Alternatively, the standards of service provided to young Black male victims may objectively be inferior; perhaps influenced by police stereotypes of this section of the population as criminals. There was, however, relatively little evidence of the police treating the young men as suspects rather than victims. The 2002/3 BCS found that for victims in general, as in this study, police provision of information to victims is a weakness. However, satisfaction with the level of police interest shown and the effort made was reasonably high (Ringham and Salisbury, 2004)

Some of the victims in this study who did not report the crime would do so if the crime were more serious. However, a few would report only in the most extreme circumstances. A key factor in encouraging reporting, both among those who reported and those who did not, was confidence that the police would take effective action. Most victims said that if the same incident re-occurred, they would take the same decision about reporting as last time. However, two victims who reported the crime said that they would retaliate themselves instead, due to their experiences of the police in this incident.

Racist crime

While some concern was expressed about racist crime, it was not strongly emphasized by most respondents. Most lived in areas with a high Black population where racist attack may be less likely (and may perhaps have been reluctant to travel to areas where the risk was thought higher). In seven cases, the victim thought that the crime they experienced might have been racially motivated. When these cases were reported to the police, the victim did not always tell the police about the possible racial motivation.

Support services for victims

None of the victims received any help from Victim Support or any other organizations that support victims. Most who reported the crime to the police did not recall having received information about the organisation, and those who had did not always read it. Awareness of, and knowledge about, Victim Support was poor. This is unsurprising as the percentage of all victims who recall having contact with Victim Support is extremely low and young people are less likely to be aware of it (Ringham and Salisbury, 2004). *No Witness, No Justice*, a new government scheme, reinforces the importance of the police providing timely information to victims about Victim Support. At present, no data is available on referral by the police to Victim Support and take-up of its services by BME people. However, Victim Support is introducing monitoring of the demographic characteristics of its users.

The young Black men who did know something about Victim Support associated it with emotional support or counselling (although Victim Support does not itself describe the support it offers as counselling). There was little awareness that it offered practical help and information on subjects such as compensation, although this topic particularly interested them. There was a fairly widespread interest in using Victim Support or other support services available to victims, once the services offered were explained, suggesting substantial potential demand. However, while services should be accessible so that everybody has the choice of using them, seeking support may not necessarily be a helpful strategy for all victims.

Amongst the young men potentially interested, there was a strong demand for practical or financial help and some were only interested in such matters. Others, however, wanted emotional support. This would be likely to be needed in addition to, rather than instead of, emotional support from family and friends. Reasons for lack of interest in Victim Support were that the incident was not sufficiently serious or that they already had support from family and friends. Some would contact it in a more serious incident. Some thought that it was for older, more privileged and less street-wise people.

The content of material providing information to victims was generally thought useful and relevant. A minority disagreed, as they would not seek such support. There was a fairly widespread view that the material's visual appearance needed improvement. Some people found the word 'victim' off-putting as they thought it conveyed weakness. Suggestions for how to encourage use of services included receiving better and more prompt information after a crime and hearing directly from people who had had a good experience of them. Factors that would discourage use were mainly connected to how they might be treated, for example, if they encountered patronising or judgmental attitudes, or a failure to listen or understand. The crucial qualities and skills of those providing the service were an ability to connect with them, and a knowledge and understanding of their situation and viewpoint, possibly through their own experience of being a victim. The ethnicity, age or gender of the person was important for some but not others.

TV and radio were considered the most effective ways to communicate information about support to people such as themselves. Other media such as newspapers or the Internet would reach only some of this group. There was some mention of media aimed at Black people. There was less support for leaflets, and in particular, for letters, although these are currently the means of dissemination mostly commonly used by the police and Victim Support. Previous research with victims of crime indicates that the take-up rate of services from letters and leaflets is low and may be even lower amongst less literate and socially disadvantaged groups (Maguire and Kynch, 2000).

At present, the vast majority of contacts with Victim Support result from police referrals (Ringham and Salisbury, 2004). Owing to low confidence in the police amongst Black young men, a perceived association with the police may discourage contact. Not all who expressed an interest in support services would report the crime if the incident happened again. Victim Support recognises the need to reach the large proportion of people who do not report the crime to the police. However, it says that it is constrained by resources from undertaking national advertising campaigns. It has initiated local innovations in order to make services more accessible eg a website to encourage victims of hate crime to come forward (Victim Support, 2004).

Differences within the group of young Black men

There was a wide variation in the attitudes, views and needs expressed *within* the group of the young Black men. Overall, the victims fell into three categories (see Figure 2). The first consisted of younger victims, who had very negative attitudes to the police, were unwilling to admit to needing help from any external source and who saw 'sorting things out themselves' with the help of friends as a natural response to crime. Their views were strongly held. At the other extreme, there was a group of young men, slightly older, who had reasonably positive attitudes to the police and regarded them as the legitimate authority to deal with crime, even if they did not necessarily think they were effective. They were positive about support services for victims even if they did not need them themselves. In the middle, were a group of young men whose attitudes, it appeared, could shift in one direction or the other. Many were potential users of the police and support services for victims but some might also consider retaliating themselves. Their confidence in the police is fragile. Although it is necessary to be

very cautious about numbers in such a small-scale study, the largest number of young men by some way was in this middle territory. The greatest challenge is to reach the people in the most negative group. However, their views may be associated with their younger age, and may change to some degree with maturity.

Figure 2:
Categories of victims

| Group 1 | Group 2 | Group 3 |
|---|---|---|
| Think police are racist; poor confidence in effectiveness | May think police are racist; poor confidence in effectiveness | Police not racist; good/mixed confidence in effectiveness |
| Did not report crime – would report in extreme circumstances only | Some reported crime – might report depending on circumstances | Reported crime – police legitimate authority to deal with crime |
| Considered or carried out retaliation | Some considered retaliation but no action taken | Did not consider retaliation |
| Say do not need support services | Potential support service users | Potential support service users |
| Age 16-17 | Spread throughout age range | Age 20-24 |

Recommendations

- The young Black men in the study were not a homogeneous group; their views and attitudes varied widely. Services will need to be sensitive to the needs of individuals.

Encouraging crime reporting

- As word of mouth is a powerful influence on beliefs about the police, improving the experience of the police of young Black male victims who report the crime is essential in order to encourage future reporting and confidence in the CJS more widely. The police should provide a more personal service and should improve information to victims, following the initial report, even if no further action can be taken. The Office for Criminal Justice Reform has asked LCJBs and CJS agencies to focus on the quality of service from police and other CJS staff and improving information to victims as key priorities.
- The findings highlight the need to address fears of intimidation, in order to encourage people to report crime to the police. The Home Office Tackling Witness Intimidation Strategy brings together a number of measures to be delivered by the whole range of agencies to deal with fear of reprisals amongst witnesses (including victims). The *No Witness, No Justice* scheme aims at ensuring that the police and the Crown Prosecution Service identify at an early stage if victims have concerns about intimidation, in order to provide support.
- Alternative methods of resolving disputes such as restorative justice should be encouraged to deter young men from resorting to retaliation. Better evidence about the effectiveness of restorative justice amongst BME groups is needed. Improved confidence in the police would also encourage young men to report crimes rather than taking direct action themselves. This might reduce crime by breaking a cycle of retaliation and counter-retaliation.

Making support services more accessible

- Victim Support and other services for victims should be publicized more effectively to young Black men both in general and after a crime. The service offered must be relevant, appropriate, timely and accessible and the publicity methods used should reflect these qualities.
- A perceived association with the police may discourage some young Black men from using Victim Support. Alternative means of access to services, such as direct self-referral through the Victim Supportline, should be further promoted.
- Victims should be offered a choice of how they wish to contact (or be contacted by) services providing support. Under the *No Witness, No Justice* scheme, this is to be implemented nationally.
- Few organizations or professionals who could potentially refer victims knew that the young men had been victimized. Organizations such as colleges or churches would need to encourage young people to inform them about the crime, in order to act as a gateway to services.
- Initiatives to encourage young Black men to seek services should emphasize that the service is free and confidential, (in particular that information is not passed onto the police) and that the crime need not be reported to the police.
- The availability of compensation was of particular interest to the young Black men and could encourage them to report crime and to use support services. Help with getting information about the progress of the police investigation is also likely to be of interest. But it is necessary to ensure victims have realistic expectations, in order not to undermine confidence in support services, which may be fragile.
- As word of mouth is so powerful, peer education should be explored as a means of communicating information. The findings suggest young Black men may be reluctant to express needs for help within a group setting and so a supportive environment is essential.
- In view of the influence of parents and other relatives in advising many of the victims, publicity about support services should also be aimed at them. Consideration also should be given to family members' own needs for support, following a crime occurring to a young person.
- Schools, colleges or universities should be engaged in seeking to support victims in this age group and to educate them about support services. As young people in their early teens are even more likely to be victimized, such initiatives should also target a younger age group (for example, through the citizenship curriculum). The development of tailor-made materials for teachers would encourage this.
- Local authorities and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships should also be engaged in this process. A few victims did get medical help. Health services should be encouraged to play a greater role in informing young people about support services available to victims.
- Initiatives aimed at improving young Black men's engagement with the police and the CJS (for example, those run by LCJBs) should be used as an opportunity to inform them about support services for victims. Effective consultation with young Black men is also needed to develop appropriate and accessible services. The Office for Criminal Justice Reform is about to run pilot projects to demonstrate how community engagement can benefit the delivery of services to victims and others.
- Youth offending teams (YOTs) have a responsibility to encourage reparation by offenders to victims. This may extend to identifying the needs of younger victims and providing them with information, advice and support. While this will only help the minority of victims where the offender is brought to justice, YOTs should be further encouraged to offer support or to act as a channel to support services.

- The capacity of BME voluntary and community organizations needs to be further built up to allow young people access to a range of services.

General

- Low-cost insurance should be more widely available to reduce the impact of property crime on young Black men who may have low incomes.
- Further research is needed into the experiences of victims from other sections of the BME population, for example, those living in rural or isolated areas. Better monitoring of the ethnicity of victims of crime, and data on referrals to and use by BME people of support services is also needed. Victims Support is introducing ethnic monitoring of service users, which will be helpful.
- LCJBs have a key role to play in improving services at a local level for young Black male victims. Such improvements will help them to meet their targets for increasing confidence in the CJS, including the confidence of BME people, and improving victims' satisfaction. LCJBs should consider how to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations of this report, together with other partners.

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