

# Summary

## Introduction

The Glen Mills School has been operating in the Netherlands for 5 years now. While initially only the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport subsidized (50) places, the Ministry of Justice (Custodial Institutions Service) also started with the purchase of (100) places in 2001. Starting in 2003 the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport switched to the structural subsidy of 50 places.

At year-end 2004, the Ministry of Justice must decide whether to make a structural purchase of the Justice places. This is the one of the reasons for this study, which devotes a lot of attention to preparing, applying and weighing (the elements of) an assessment framework.

Depending on the results of this study, the Ministry of Justice / Research and Documentation Centre will decide whether to perform an effect evaluation.

## The Glen Mills School

The objective of the Glen Mills School's (GMS) approach is to restructure anti-social behaviour of youth into pro-social behaviour. Through a positive group culture, the Glen Mills tries to restructure the norms and values of the street that boys know from their past. The most important elements in achieving this goal are peer pressure, positive normative culture, confrontations, hierarchy, student participation, participation in a clear and structured programme from early in the morning to late at night and the offer of a good education. The youth themselves (called students) are responsible for a positive normative culture in the group. In addition to acquiring other behaviour, education is a core objective. The intention is to provide the students with an individual educational programme at their own level and their own pace. The basic assumption of the Glen Mills School is that youth are not bad, but have done bad things. Six status levels with their own privileges stimulate youth to rise in the hierarchy.

***The GMS emphasizes the value of the absence of fences and barred windows. This enables students to learn to take responsibility for themselves and for others. Nevertheless, innumerable measures are taken to ensure that the boys do not run away (a roll-call every twenty minutes; everything organized in groups of at least three boys; no confidential relationships between the boys and staff/fellow students; coaches devote a lot of time to monitoring safety).***

A youth receives follow-up supervision (declining in intensity) for 18 months after leaving the school. The objective of the follow-up supervision is to help youth integrate into society as rapidly and as adequately as possible.

Of the boys in the follow-up supervision process, an estimated 56% are doing well; 18% are struggling and 26% (probably) have relapsed (have been arrested)<sup>1</sup>.

Note 1 Figures are derived from an internal report from the Process Supervision Unit (May 2004); it involves an estimate of the recidivism of 117 former students who left the Glen Mills School

## Study

The study consists of 5 sections:

- 1 literature search (on effective programme components);
- 2 intake and placement analysis;
- 3 image and cooperation;
- 4 interviews with former students of the Glen Mills School;
- 5 programme evaluation.

### Literature search

For a responsible evaluation of the Glen Mills School programme, an *assessment framework* was set up, based on available literature (meta-evaluations) on effective factors that were found in tackling problematic youth. This framework is primarily based on '*What works*'<sup>2</sup>. This assessment framework includes a large number of factors on which the Glen Mills School is scored. However, not all questions are of equal significance. The factors are weighted, based on the literature. Of the 19 factors that are most important in criminal intervention, the factors that the programme satisfies were distinguished by those that were met to a high or reasonable degree and those that were not/or hardly met (see table 1).

### Intake and placement analysis

The intake in the Justice positions remains behind the objective. In 2003, 43 boys were placed by order of the Ministry of Justice, some (14) of whom were placed with the original placement titles (conditional) PIJ or OTS. Of the 100 Justice positions, 69 were occupied as of 1 February 2004. In the initial years, intake remained behind expectations. Due to the lagging intake, placement options were expanded and placement of 'multiple offenders' was also permitted via Justice, but this (still) has insufficient results. Twenty-nine boys were placed via this 'stamp procedure' in 2003. This group fits well with the GMS approach.

The disappointing intake is particularly attributed to:

- the duration of the GMS approach (the duration of the GMS programme (minimum of 18 months) in relation to the sentence is an impediment for placement officials and judges);
- the contra-indications (the exclusion of a large part of the psychiatric issue ensures that Justice cannot place nearly as many PIJ boys within the GMS);
- problems that placement officials have with certain aspects of the approach (image of tough approach and incidents described by the media);
- image among youth (considered in the decision by placement officials, the Public Prosecutor and judges. According to placement officials, youth prefer a short detention punishment rather than placement in the GMS, "where they have to do a lot" and which is far from home) and
- the age limit for placement is 16.5 years (to ensure that youth can complete the 18-month programme before their 18th birthday).

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between 3 months and 3 years.

Note 2 English What Works principles: Programme Accreditation Criteria, from the Correctional Services Accreditation Panel, London, August 2003.

In deciding on structural purchasing, it is important to look at the options of increasing the number of placements via the Custodial Institutions Service. A GMS employee states that a quicker intake would have endangered the (positive normative) culture.

The placement institutions value the clear and stringent selection procedure, improving the chance that the selected youth can manage the difficult programme.

### **Image and cooperation**

The GMS image is two-fold: on the one hand the GMS is seen as an opportunity for normally talented, group-sensitive boys who have already been part of other programmes without success, while on the other hand it has the image of the tough American approach, which has a number of disadvantages.

The cooperative partners are pleased about the cooperation (that has been intensified and improved since the beginning); it has also been observed that the placement officials receive few options for separate contact with their boys. The placement officials assess the cooperation regarding the registration as highly positive. They are also pleased with the admission procedure.

A number of placement officials have experienced that the youth they placed ran away and in a few cases boys said they were physically treated heavily-handedly. The follow-up process is assessed as moderately positive: points for improvement concentrate on a return to the family and a better information exchange with the other institutions.

### **Interviews with former students**

A split image of the GMS also emerges from interviews with 7 former students. Former students believe that the GMS is a tough programme and they all experienced it as very difficult – certainly during the first six months. For a number of students, the difficult period lasted as long as 18 months. The fact that youth hardly see family, cannot openly talk about emotions, have little supervision in dealing with emotions and must accept constant confrontations (also from younger students) is experienced as difficult. Measures such as not being allowed to have personal possessions, feedbacks, holdings and group processes are also difficult. In their view, not all staff members are competent in coaching.

On the other hand, the youth value the educational opportunities in the GMS, and the possibility to participate in sports and work on modules that focus on the ability to do things independently (finances, insurance). They also learn to respond less impulsively. They say they can offer better resistance to peer pressure from old friends (which all youth have to deal with). After their period at the GMS, the boys still see the GMS as a very difficult programme. But they also see the other side: thanks to the GMS, they believe they have had opportunities they would not have had otherwise.

The transition to society is not always simple. Boys still need support, particularly in arranging education and finding work or housing. It appears that the intensity of the supervision process has to be adjusted to the individual. Of the seven boys interviewed, two were able to apply skills learned at the GMS immediately (have work and a good relationship at home), three are still in the 'starting phase' (temporary work, starting new education, still re-

cently released from the GMS) and two are having difficulty returning to society and finding work and housing. These boys are still unable to cope for themselves. They are still strongly tempted to revert to their old behaviour. The GMS has taught boys to resist peer pressure from 'the outside'. All boys say they are now more capable of doing so. However, two boys indicate that they are tempted to earn money through criminal activities (one due to the lack of housing and the other due to the lack of work and because criminality simply yields more than a low-paying job or unemployment benefits). The interviewed boys indicate that the former students are at a crossroads: they can make good use or poor use of the skills learned. The boys mention the expected punishments, now that they are of adult age, as well as the (re-established) relationship with parents as the most important reasons not to revert.

### Programme evaluation

An assessment framework was developed for the programme evaluation. Based on the assessment framework, a description was made of the degree in which the factors present in the GMS are determining factors for the effectiveness<sup>3</sup> of the programme according to broad scientific research.

The assessment framework consists of 9 main elements; each main element has a number of assessment criteria. A total of 43 factors were assessed in the programme evaluation; 19 of these factors were considered to have greater influence on the effectiveness of the programme than the other factors.

The following are the most important findings from the programme evaluation summarized for these 19 factors. A breakdown was also made into factors that the programme satisfies to a high, reasonable and slight degree or not at all.

Table 1 GMS score on the 19 most important factors of the assessment framework

<b>Present to a high degree</b>	<b>Present to a reasonable degree</b>	<b>Present to a small degree/not present</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clear objectives</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• scientific basis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focused on reducing dynamic risk factors</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• careful selection procedure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• elements of cognitive behaviour therapy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• relationship intensity programme and recidivism risk</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• practical education, adjusted to level of the youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• practice opportunities skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• making use of family system</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in keeping with lifestyle and capabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implementation programme as intended</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attention of client for recognizing qualities that lead to committing criminal offences</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learning skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• employees can respond to differences in learning styles, motivation and capabilities of youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• breaking through these (intended above) qualities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personnel assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• follow -up care</li> <li>• registration of client data</li> <li>• effectiveness study</li> </ul>	

Note 3 Effectiveness in the sense of reducing recidivism.

Based on this overview<sup>4</sup> it can be established that five essential factors are strongly present in the GMS programme; nine factors are present to a reasonable degree and five to a slight degree.

Within the GMS, a number of matters are organized well. In many cases conscious choices are at the foundation of the factors that are present within the GMS only to a slight degree. For most of the factors that are present to a reasonable degree, the GMS does in fact aim to have these factors available in the programme to a high degree. The fact that this is not the case is partly explained by the rapid expansion of the number of clients, making it more difficult to implement the programme as it is intended. Moreover, there are a number of coaches who (still) lack sufficient control of the GMS operating procedure. These factors sometimes result in inadequate student supervision on the part of both the personal coach and the student coach.

In this report, the GMS programme theory is applied to the assessment framework (particularly based on *'What Works'*). However, the GMS programme is an experimental programme in the sense that it is not based on a programme that has been assessed scientifically and found to be effective. The GMS has a unique approach that has nothing in common with what we already know (and have assessed). Various core elements of the programme (including the GMS vision on 'peer pressure and positive normative culture') have never been submitted to broad scientific research and are not based on empirical research among this target group. This means that the core elements of the GMS are not based on prevailing theories or on evidence-based programmes. Since the core elements of the programme have not been previously investigated, there is no reason to assume that the GMS leads to the objective (reducing recidivism), nor that it does not work.

## **Recommendations**

The scores on the other important components from the assessment framework show a sharply changing image. To promote the effectiveness of the GMS, attention must be focused on the components that are (still) not strongly present in the programme.

The GMS has designated a number of these components as priorities for 2004, such as (re-introducing) individual supervision plans, the theoretical foundations of the critical components, (expanding) work with the family system, creating opportunities for boys to practice the skills learned, improving employee internal training (transfer of GMS knowledge by policy/supervisory employees and employees with administrative tasks), establishing the function requirements (competency model) for and refresher training of employees and expanding the network of cooperative partners in the follow-up care process. However, the question is whether it is realistic to realize all these priorities this year. It is striking that staff employees have an extensive task package and are heavily burdened as a result of the rapid expansion of the school. This partly explains why attention to matters such as registration, monitoring and detailing the theoretical framework has come under pressure.

Furthermore, there are matters that have an effect on reducing recidivism

Note 4 Table 1 is based on the most important factors from the assessment framework, which is included in its entirety in section 6.11.

according to the literature but are not included as a priority by GMS management: individual tailor-made work, intensity of supply in line with risk of recidivism, working with risk factors that lead to crime, preventing regression and cognitive behaviour therapy (part of change of thought processes) and social emotional development (not only in GGI). Once again, the GMS should consider whether these elements can be built into the programme. From its introduction until 2002, the GMS hired a research agency to conduct a study on process and effects. A change in research agency<sup>5</sup> took place early in 2004. The emphasis is now focused more on the study of the effects. We advise ensuring that the method of measuring the effects in this study can be compared with other programmes. Because the programme is in the developmental phase the question is what is being measured.

The organization faces a double task: producing while developing supply. This double task should be considered in financing. We consider the placement of more youth unfeasible at this point in time.

Note 5 This agency is starting its research retroactively as of 2003.