



A qualitative study on health education provided by Mainline for detainees in detention centre Schutterswei

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Summary

Mainline is a non-governmental organisation, providing health education for drug users. Mainline does outreach work within prisons, among which the detention centre Schutterswei in Alkmaar, the Netherlands. Requested by DJI (National Agency of Correctional Institutions) and by order of the WODC (Research and Documentation Centre), research bureau IVO has evaluated the activities of Mainline in this detention centre.

The central research question was: *In which aspects does health education in the detention centre Schutterswei regarding infectious diseases, harm reduction and self control related to drug use, have surplus value when provided by Mainline compared to the medical staff?* In the study, most emphasis was placed on detainees' experiences with Mainline-activities and with activities from the medical staff. In addition, we measured Mainline workers' view, that of the medical staff, and of two experts on both Mainline-activities as well as medical staff activities. Finally, a brief literature search was conducted regarding the effectiveness of specific components within Mainline's method.

Mainline emphasises that her activities in the detention centre are complementary to the work of the medical staff. In their routine in the detention centre, Mainline field workers embrace a harm reduction approach. This includes working according to the principles of the presence approach and using motivational interviewing techniques. In the literature search and interviews with experts, no evidence was found for the effectiveness of these methods on drug using detainees.

Results for our study showed that in the detention centre, Mainline field workers often do not have the opportunity to provide health education to detainees. Due to limited time and space in the detention centre, field workers mainly focus on getting acquainted with detainees and establishing a relationship with them that is based on trust. Both detainees and the medical staff in Schutterswei are positive about the activities of Mainline in the detention centre. Detainees judge conversations with field workers as pleasant, report acquiring new knowledge and appreciate the noncommittal contacts with Mainline. Because the medical staff in Schutterswei has insufficient knowledge on drug use, they allow Mainline to establish contact with the drug-using detainees. The medical staff acknowledges the expertise of Mainline as a valuable supplement to health education provided by nurses and doctors in the detention centre, which focuses primarily on prevention of infectious diseases. The fact that Mainline is able to provide continuation of care after detention is a major advantage in this respect.

Based on these findings we may conclude that on several aspects, the activities of Mainline in the detention centre Schutterswei have surplus value in the achievement of the goals within the health policies of DJI. Mainline utilizes easily accessible methods and her activities can complement the medical staff in the provision of health education regarding drug use.