

Summary

A system of network and roadmap meetings was introduced nationally in September 2008 in order to bring about a balanced aftercare programme for all youths leaving a detention centre. Its intended purpose is to facilitate cooperation between the various partners in the chain (the Youth Detention Centre, the Child Protection Board (*Raad voor de Kinderbescherming*), the Youth Probation Service and local authorities) to achieve proper, balanced aftercare for all youths who end up in a youth detention centre (*justitiële jeugdinstelling*, JJI) with a criminal record.

Under contract to the WODC and the Ministry of Justice, DSP-groep has conducted a process evaluation of the implementation of the network and aftercare roadmap meeting system. The process evaluation provides insight into how the network and aftercare roadmap meetings are established in practice and to what extent the chain partners value this system.

The evaluation consisted of two phases. In the first phase an analysis of the available literature was carried out and network and aftercare roadmap meetings were attended. In the second phase interviews were conducted with a total of 78 chain partners in all administrative districts and nine local authority officers. In order to assess the amount of time invested in the network and aftercare roadmap meetings, participants were asked to keep a record of the time spent on these activities for a period of two months.

Nationwide implementation of the network and aftercare roadmap meetings was done in a relatively short space of time and appears to be successful in a number of aspects. The chain partners are very enthusiastic and cooperation between the chain partners has been experienced in a positive light.

A network meeting should be held for a youth one week after entering a JJI, and should include the three chain partners (the JJI, the Child Protection Board and the Youth Probation Service). The aim of the network meeting is to acquire and exchange all relevant information about a youth, to make an estimate of how long the youth is likely to remain in custody and to make procedural agreements about who does what and when.

Implementation of the network meeting scheme is generally progressing as intended in all administrative districts. The goals that were set are largely being achieved. The greatest difficulty for the network meetings is making an estimate of how long a youth is likely to remain in custody. A number of bottlenecks are mentioned: a large investment of time is required (preparing and attending the meetings is time consuming), acquiring and exchanging information on youths placed in a detention centre outside of the region where they live is difficult, and the added value of network meetings for youths detained for short periods is doubtful.

A youth's case should be discussed in a (first) aftercare roadmap meeting in the youth's region of origin three weeks after entering a JJI. Besides the three judicial chain partners, the aftercare roadmap meeting is also attended by the local authority. The goal of the aftercare roadmap meeting is to reach mutual agreement on the details of the direction to be taken, (procedural) agreements regarding the roadmap (containing overall common goals, a plan for guided aftercare of the Youth Probation Service and the JJI's perspective plan), agreements on who deals with which problems and advice from the local authority representative with respect to the deployment of local authority resources.

Aftercare roadmap meetings have been initiated in all administrative districts. Half of these have deviated from the intended working method. These deviations concern the participants (fixed participants or changing participants) and, in the case of youths placed outside of their region of residence, the JJIs seldom participate in the aftercare roadmap meeting since this is not considered feasible for the staff of the JJIs. There is also no telephone contact during the meeting (this is often done prior to a meeting).

The extent to which the formulated goals of the aftercare roadmap meetings are achieved differs strongly between the administrative districts. Agreement on the details of a roadmap (the goals) is reached in the majority of roadmap meetings, but not always with all chain partners (the JJI is generally absent if a youth has been placed outside of his/her home region). Procedural agreements on the roadmap are generally only made for the benefit of the aftercare plan of the Youth Probation Service. At the time the research for this evaluation was conducted, most JJIs were not working with perspective plans. In the majority of administrative districts agreements are made with the participants present about who does what. The advisory role of the local authority varies per region, depending on the position held by the local authority representative.

The most important bottlenecks stated are: the large investment of time required, a lack of administrative support, no feedback of information in cases where youths are placed outside of their region of residence, difficulty in making a good connection between the network meeting and the aftercare roadmap meeting, a lack of information (from the JJI), insufficient added value for youths given a conditional suspension, a lack of clarity about the duties and responsibilities of partners.

A lot of time is expended by participants in the network and aftercare roadmap meetings. On average 5.5 hours are invested per youth in the network meeting and aftercare roadmap meeting. This conforms to the agreements made with the Ministry of Justice.

The majority of respondents (83%) see the benefit of the network and aftercare roadmap meeting system. The remainder have their doubts concerning certain components. The benefits of the aftercare roadmap meetings are generally clearer to participants than the benefits of the network meetings (the latter can sometimes provide little new information). In particular, the fact that all youths are now firmly in the picture as far as the chain partners are concerned and aftercare – also voluntary care - can be arranged for all youths, is viewed as a big step forward. Additional benefits experienced are improved cooperation between partners, keeping tabs on all youths that end up in a JJI and better exchange of information. The benefits experienced are negatively influenced by the following bottlenecks. Not enough is known about the extent to which recommendations are followed up. The exchange of information, feedback and the setting of programme goals do not run smoothly in cases where youths are placed outside of their region of residence. The usefulness of the network and roadmap meetings is doubtful for youths who are detained only for a short period of time. No clear agreements have been made for a number of target groups leaving JJIs (youths with a youth detention order (a PIJ-measure), single under-age foreigners, youths who are placed in detention as part of a conditional sentence and youths without a fixed residence or dwelling).

This process evaluation gives, in particular, insight into the bottlenecks and good practices experienced during the implementation of the network and after roadmap meeting system, but does not provide information about the ultimate aim of this system's implementation: to provide good aftercare for all youths.