

## Management Summary

01 This research report contains an account of the process evaluation of the pilot project for the Juvenile Supervision Improvement Programme (Verbetertraject Toezicht Jeugd, or VTJ), which was carried out in Breda court district. The improvement programme is part of the Fast and Consistent Youth Chain (Snelle en consequente jeugdketen) project within the Tackling Juvenile Crime (Aanpak Jeugdcriminaliteit) programme. The pilot project focused partly on ensuring timely execution of the special condition known as the Help and Support Measure (Maatregel Hulp en Steun, MHS) and partly on an appropriate response in the event of non-compliance with the condition. The key problem to be addressed in this process evaluation was as follows:

*Is the 'Juvenile Supervision Improvement Programme' project in Breda district being carried out as intended and are modifications required before the programme can be implemented nationally?*

02 The study was not a process evaluation in the classic sense in which an unambiguous, clearly defined intervention is evaluated. The aim of this process evaluation was rather to give a description of the current status of the pilot project in the light of the objectives that had been set. Some of those objectives were specified in detail and new working agreements have now been made with a number of new elements in order to achieve these objectives. There are other objectives, such as the policy on cautions, where it was agreed beforehand that the specific details of the objective and associated method of operation would be established in the pilot project. This evaluation considered how the process functioned, the extent to which the objectives were achieved and where problems had arisen. In addition, recommendations were made.

03 The study used various methods to obtain answers to the research questions:

1. A literature study, including a study of problems prior to the pilot project and the envisaged solutions;
2. Analysis of monitoring data on throughput times to see whether the objectives were achieved;
3. Semi-structured interviews in order to flesh out the findings of the literature study and monitor analysis, review the implementation of the improvement programme, track down problems and gather recommendations for the setup of the project and possible national implementation;
4. Group meeting to check the findings and discuss recommendations.

04 The remainder of this management summary gives the key conclusions for each secondary research question.

### What problems were there with the execution of the Help and Support Measure?

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05 The literature and interviews together indicated five problems:

1. The throughput times for initiating assistance by the Juvenile Probation Service and the execution of supervision were long;
2. The way in which the Juvenile Probation Service assisted juveniles given the Help and Support Measure was insufficiently reproducible and transparent;
3. There was no uniform policy on cautioning and reporting back;

# S I G N I F I C A N T

4. There was no clear picture of the tasks and responsibilities of the case management officers;
5. More attention needed to be paid to cases involving both youth protection and juvenile probation concurrently.

## **How was the Juvenile Supervision Improvement Programme expected to solve these problems and improve execution of the measure?**

06 Working agreements were made in the pilot project to reduce throughput times and the deadlines were emphasised. Correspondence took place by e-mail wherever possible to enable assistance to be started up more quickly. Delivery of the obligatory reports (plan of approach, annual report and final report) on time and the introduction of a six-monthly report were measures intended to make the Juvenile Probation Service's working methods more transparent. The case management had the task of monitoring deadlines and sending reminders, as well as checking the extent to which the objectives of the assistance had been achieved. Consultations would be held throughout the pilot project regarding policy on cautioning and reporting back in the event of non-compliance with conditions. The handling of concurrent cases would primarily be dealt with outside the pilot project, because of national policy due to be set up in the course of 2011. However, a number of workers would receive training in both youth protection and juvenile probation work.

## **Was the Juvenile Supervision Improvement Programme in Breda implemented as envisaged?**

07 The pilot project dealt with the various objectives in stages. The extent to which the objectives were realised in the pilot project varied for each objective and there were also a few problems.

*Were the project objectives achieved and the target group reached?*

08 The working procedure agreed upon in order to start supervision quickly was implemented in the pilot project, but it turned out to be difficult to meet all the agreed deadlines. The Public Prosecution Service's enforcement department turned out to need much more than one working day for faxing notification of the sentence unless both parties waived the right to appeal immediately after the hearing. The Juvenile Probation Service was only able to initiate assistance in a minority of cases within the allotted time of five working days after receiving the order from the Child Care and Protection Board. Initially, not every location recognised or accepted communication via e-mail as marking the start of assistance. Existing waiting lists and staffing problems also played a part.

09 The agreed working procedure for the execution of supervision was also implemented, but here too the objectives were not always realised in full. A plan of approach was drawn up within the six-week deadline in less than half the cases. There was resistance to the six-monthly reports that were introduced and they were seldom produced. In principle, the case management officers sent reminders when deadlines were not met but they sometimes saw sensitive issues in the Juvenile Probation Service as a reason for not sending reminders. A general cautioning policy was commissioned by the pilot project group and drawn up by the criminal justice chain partners

# S I G N I F I C A N T

involved. It was also agreed that the case management should investigate suitable interventions for reoffending in conjunction with remand in policy custody. The agreements were implemented in the final months of the pilot project. Concurrent cases were discussed by the project group and work was done on setting up concurrent-case teams.

10 In practice, some of the objectives turned out to be too ambitious, given what the chain partners were able to do and the limited length of the pilot project period. This applied in particular to the monitoring of the deadlines for the six-monthly, annual and final reports as well as the realisation of speedy execution.

11 In general, the pilot project did reach its target group. In practice, juveniles who were already receiving assistance from the Juvenile Probation Service when the Help and Support Measure was imposed ended up not being covered by the project. The same applied to suspension cases.

*Were there problems and/or (unforeseen) side effects during the implementation of the project? If so, what were they?*

12 All the chain partners were represented in the project group managing the pilot project. However, not all Juvenile Probation Service locations were involved from the very start. As a result, the Youth Care Agencies in Tilburg and Roosendaal in particular were not so well informed about the pilot project, and implementation started later there. These locations also had to deal with waiting lists and staffing problems at the same time, which meant that lower priority was given to the implementation of the agreements in the pilot project.

13 There was resistance within the Juvenile Probation Service to the pilot project. This related mainly to the active monitoring of deadlines and the introduction of six-monthly reports. There were also differences in the expectations that the chain partners had with regard to the reports.

**Could improvements be made in the setup and/or execution of the project? If so, what are they?**

14 We see the following points for improvement in the project setup:

1. Allow sufficient time for the preparations to make sure all those involved are committed to the project;
2. Ensure wider communication of the substance of the pilot project by organising a joint kick-off meeting and giving information to each organisation and location in person;
3. Arrange for greater involvement of operational staff at the chain level;
4. See whether the Juvenile Supervision Improvement Programme monitor can be further improved in terms of the standard times applied, recording when contact has taken place and the use of the results;
5. Focus from the start on how to anchor the working procedure in the organisations.

15 We consider the following points for improvement to be important for the execution:

# S I G N I F I C A N T

1. Consider what changes are required in the Public Prosecution Service's enforcement department to enable speedier processing;
2. Look at the options for deploying staff in a flexible manner so as to keep waiting lists down and reduce throughput times;
3. Work with criminal justice chain partners to find new solutions if the allotted times are (still) not being met;
4. Clarify matters if agreements are not being kept to due to ambiguities.

## **What recommendations can be made for the national implementation of the project?**

16 The results lead us to conclude that it is still too early for national implementation. There was little preparation time, the actual implementation took place later than intended and not all objectives have been achieved. Consequently, we recommend first extending the pilot project period and possibly testing an improved version in a second district.

17 We consider the following elements to be important if and when the project is rolled out nationally:

1. Set up a national project group to manage the rollout;
2. Invest continuously in broad support for the project and emphasise the shared goal;
3. Assign priorities to the objectives and phase them in;
4. Monitor the throughput times permanently, preferably using an automatic system;

Arrange a separate rollout for each individual district with its own project group, a customised approach and due consideration for local resistance.