

## Resultaten van veiligheidshuizen

Een inventarisatie en evaluatie van beschikbaar onderzoek

Sinds een aantal jaren bestaan in Nederland veiligheidshuizen. Hierin werken verschillende organisaties samen aan het terugdringen van criminaliteit.

In deze studie is het beschikbare onderzoek naar de resultaten van veiligheidshuizen geïnventariseerd, beschreven en geëvalueerd.

Veiligheidshuizen scoren positief op zes van de acht resultaatvelden. Ze leveren op onderdelen een bijdrage aan het terugdringen van criminaliteit. Daarnaast dragen ze bij aan een betere uitvoering van de gepleegde interventies. Tegelijkertijd is duidelijk dat er veel problemen en knelpunten overwonnen moeten worden om tot deze resultaten te komen.

De voornoemde resultaten zijn indicatief, omdat het beschikbare onderzoek naar resultaten van veiligheidshuizen zowel kwantitatief als kwalitatief nog beperkt is.

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## **Summary: Results of Safety houses in The Netherlands; A Research Synthesis**

### **Preface**

Safety houses are networks of local organisations working together to reduce crime. Criminal Justice Organisations cooperate with municipalities, social sector and care organisations to better combine and integrate penal and rehabilitative interventions for offenders. Most of the time the Safety house is also a physical office location. The operational goal is to create more alignment and unity in the approach towards different groups of offenders. Safety houses organize regular case meetings around individual offenders (or specific local safety themes). In each case meeting professionals from various organisations discuss the interventions for offenders. The first Safety houses started in 2005. Since 2009 there is a nationwide network of regionally operating Safety houses in The Netherlands.

The Minister of Justice has promised the Dutch Parliament a (first) evaluation on the Safety houses. This evaluation comprises a listing, description and evaluation of existing empirical research on the results of Safety houses.

### **Research Goal**

The goal of this research is to realise a research synthesis on the results of Safety houses so far. Existing empirical knowledge will be listed, described and evaluated. Furthermore this knowledge will be used to further support the development of the Safety houses.

### **Research Questions**

- 1) What knowledge is available on the results of Safety houses?
  - a) What are the results regarding:
    - (1) the input, throughput and output of the interventions?
    - (2) the outcome of the interventions?
    - (3) the impact on society?
  - b) Are there important differences reported between Safety houses, target groups or safety themes?
- 2) What conditions are reported to be vital for realising the above mentioned results?

- 3) Evaluation: what is the scope and value of the existing research?
  - a) What goals do Safety houses formulate and are they SMART?
  - b) Which of these goals are covered in the research?
  - c) What is the methodological value of the research?
  - d) Which lessons for the future can be learned from the research conducted so far?

### **Research Design**

To answer these questions the available research was listed. Then a selection was made on the basis of the following criteria:

- the research covers the collaboration between organisations within the 'Safety house framework';
- the research contains original empirical data on the realisation of one of the above mentioned results;
- the research encompasses Safety houses that exist for at least two years;
- the research is not a BA thesis;
- the research is not part of a larger or later study;
- the research meets certain minimum standards of methodological quality (descriptive and evaluative validity).

In total 59 titles were listed. 21 turned out to be relevant for this study of which 18 also passed the test of methodological quality. These 18 studies form the empirical data for this study.

### **Results of Safety houses**

To answer the first research question eight 'result realms' were discerned, distinguishing between input, throughput, output, outcome and impact. These realms are presented in the following table. Symbols indicate the results. 'O' stands for: no results reported or contrary results, '+' stands for: indications for positive results, but the quality and/or quantity of studies reporting the results is limited. '++' stands for: strong indications for positive results. 'Unknown' stands for: lack of (good) research to make an assessment.

<b>Summary of Reported Results of Safety houses</b>	
	Reported Results in 18 Studies
<b><i>Input, Throughput and Output of Interventions</i></b>	
<b>Realised Production Volumes</b>	+
<b>Shortening Completion Times of interventions</b>	o
<b>More Alignment and Unity in Interventions</b>	++
<b>Earlier/Better Diagnosis and earlier Interventions</b>	+
<b><i>Outcome and Impact of Interventions</i></b>	
<b>Crime reduction, Reduction in Recidivism amongst Clients</b>	+
<b>Increase of Well-being amongst clients</b>	+
<b>Cost-Benefit Advantages</b>	+ / unknown
<b>Other Societal Benefits</b>	Unknown

Positive results are reported with regard to six of the eight realms. These positive results refer to the quality of the enactment of the interventions as well as societal benefits (outcome and impact).

Amongst the involved professionals a broad consensus exists about the fact that Safety houses contribute to the quality of interventions, because interventions are more aligned and integrated. Moreover, there are (less strong) indications that cooperation in a Safety house contributes to earlier and better diagnoses of safety problems and more rapid reactions to these problems. Realising sufficient input, throughput and output turns out to be difficult in the initial phase, but there are indications that in most cases the production gets going after some time. The research into the shortening of completion times of interventions is scarce and the results are contrary.

In the realm of outcome and impact the research indicates that Safety houses contribute to social improvements in the lives of clients and (as a consequence) to lower recidivism rates in this group. Other crime reducing effects have not been researched. Some studies report that Safety houses realise cost-benefit advantages. These studies state that the additional cost of cooperation is lower than the benefits that are gained from the lower rates of recidivism. However, these studies invoke various theoretical and methodological questions. Research into possible scale of efficiency effects is still absent. Other possible societal effects/benefits of Safety houses have not been researched.

### **Conditions for Results**

Beside positive results, the studies sum up a great number of problems that Safety houses face realising their goals. From the list of problems that were mentioned a Top-7 of most mentioned problems is listed:

1. the (internal) information about individual cases is insufficient
2. the functioning of and the cooperation with the donating mother organisations is insufficient
3. the control and organisation of the Safety house is insufficient
4. relevant partners are missing in the cooperation
5. specialized local care facilities for repeat offenders and former prisoners are insufficient
6. the Safety house has formulated vague goals
7. (internal) communication between parties is insufficient

Comparative studies confirm that the conditions here presented as mayor problems are important to realise results. Safety houses that do well perform better with regard to these conditions. Moreover it turns out to be important that local cooperation leads to concrete decisions in individual cases. Cooperation without decision making is less effective.

Some more theory oriented studies show that many conditions must be met for Safety houses / (network organisations) to be effective. Kenis mentions the importance of coordination of means, products and clients, and the internal and external supply of information. Van Delden appoints the importance of various result conditions in different developmental stages of the cooperation. Mannak, lastly, describes three necessary conditions for and two possible paths to 'network effectivity'.

### **Evaluation of available knowledge**

At this point in time the available knowledge about the results of Safety houses in The Netherlands is quite limited. Most research has an internal focus, describing processes, participating organisations, the way things are organized, et cetera. Research into the results of Safety houses is still scarce and the methodological 'make up' of this research is often limited. Most of the time it is difficult to attribute the reported results to the activities of Safety houses. A great deal of research for example is based on self evaluation by the professionals involved. For future research it is important that researchers divert their attention to external (as opposed to internal) phenomena: the societal results of Safety houses instead of the internal processes. Moreover it is important that studies will be conducted that span a longer period of time, so long term effects can be studied. Finally it is important that more studies are conducted with control groups or conditions. More internal validity is necessary to better be able to assess the (autonomous) effects of Safety houses.

In many of the existing studies the conceptual clarity is missing. Researchers speak about 'effects', 'successes', 'results' or even 'additional value' of Safety houses without a clear definition of what they are talking about. In some cases even the 'effects' or 'results' are defined and measured

by the coincidental opinions of the involved professionals. Nevertheless, effect research into Safety houses does not have to suffer from measurement problems. The most important 'Result Realms' can be measured in a fairly straightforward way. In some cases this might imply some further thinking about the way to do it.

The coverage of the research is still limited. Most studies that focus on outcome and impact are confined to interventions concerning repeat offenders and former prisoners (most of the time also repeat offenders). In these studies most attention is paid to recidivism effects, less attention goes to care or welfare effects for clients. Effects of Safety houses with regard to other target groups or safety themes have not been researched. Some studies are available on the cost effectiveness of Safety houses, but studies on scale or efficiency effects are missing. With regard to input, throughput and output a lot of research has focused on aligning and unifying interventions and on the realisation of production volumes. Less research has been done on completion times and the early warning (and intervention) function.

The research shows that Safety houses need time to realize results. An important lesson for the future will be to bestow Safety houses this time.