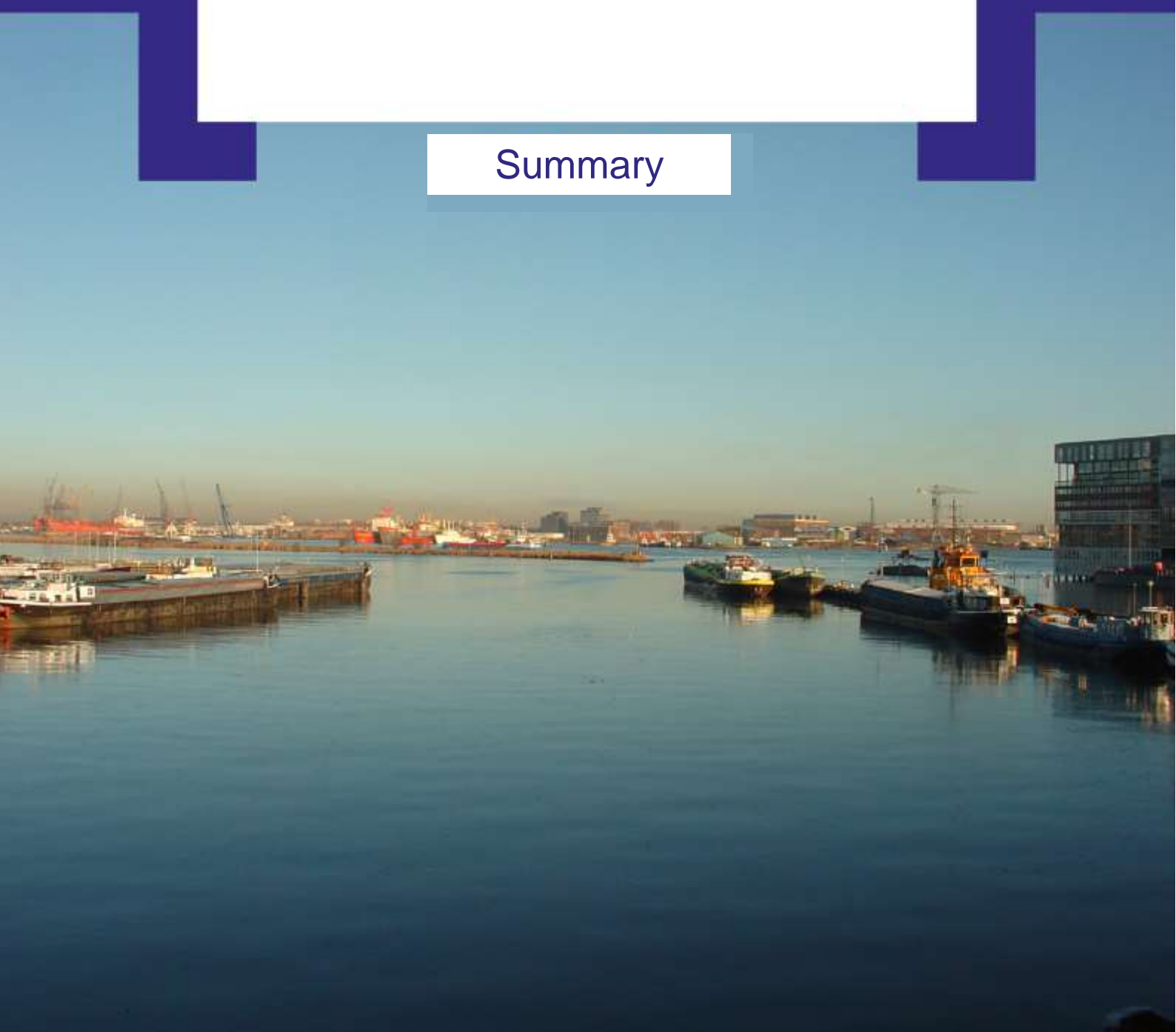


# Process evaluation Leren van Delict

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## Summary



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# Summary

## Introduction

Leren van Delict (Learning from an Offence) is a cognitive-behavioural intervention that focuses on young people between 14 and 23 years who have been convicted for a serious violent offence and reside in a youth detention centre. The goal is to prevent young people from committing (violent) offences again. The training course is individual and subdivided into three phases. In phase 1, an offence analysis is carried out; phase 2 concentrates on changes in behaviour based on the results from phase 1, and phase 3 consists of refresher sessions from phase 2 if changes occur in the young person's situation.

The intervention is given by trainers and co-trainers, and the programme coordination is carried out per youth detention centre by a local programme coordination organisation and nationally by the national programme coordinator.

Leren van Delict has been implemented in every youth detention centre. Since the 2006 Leave Review Framework (and repeated in the 2012 Leave Review Framework)<sup>1</sup>, an offence analysis is a condition for the application of systematic leave.<sup>2</sup> In order to prevent every youth detention centre from applying (and developing) its own offence analysis, the government department (Department for Judicial Youth Policy of the Ministry of Safety and Justice) has agreed with the youth detention centres to apply phase 1 of Leren van Delict as offence analysis. Phase 1 of Leren van Delict is thus routinely carried out for all young people who apply for scheduled leave.

In December 2009, the behavioural intervention was entirely acknowledged by the Accreditation Panel for Behavioural Programmes. The status 'accredited' is valid for a period of five years (until December 2014), after which the effectiveness (the result of the intended programme components) of the intervention must be demonstrated. If effectiveness is demonstrated, the acknowledgement can be conditionally extended by three years. After this period, the effectiveness of the programme on recidivism must be demonstrated.

Before a performance evaluation can be carried out, a process evaluation has to be done in order to work out whether Leren van Delict is executed as described in the manuals (test of the programme integrity). By order of the Dutch Scientific Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) of the Ministry of Safety and Justice, between October 2013 and June 2014, the DSP group carried out a process evaluation into the programme integrity of Leren van Delict. Another goal of the process evaluation was to establish any bottlenecks in the implementation practice and the underlying causes.

**Note 1** Ministry of Safety and Justice, Custodial institutions Service (2012). Leave Review Framework youth detention centres. The Hague: Ministry of Safety and Justice.

**Note 2** The following elements must be included in the offence analysis: a description of the index offence; circumstances in which the index offence was committed; criminogenic and protective factors; and the perception of the juvenile on the index offence.

## Research approach

In the study, we considered four aspects that affect proper programme integrity: target group, (execution of) intervention, staff and organisational factors (context).

In order to develop a picture of the programme integrity, we implemented various research methods:

- an analysis of the Stichting 180<sup>3</sup> registration data about entries, transfers and exits in all youth detention centres;
- interviews with programme coordinators about target group, intervention, staff and organisation in four youth detention centres;
- a case study with trainers, co-trainers and young people on the execution of the intervention at case level in four youth detention centres;
- a file examination of reports, indication forms, and instruments into characteristics of the target group in six youth detention centres;
- group interviews with trainers, co-trainers, treatment coordinators about the target group, intervention, staff and organisation in four youth detention centres;
- focus group with programme coordinators of all youth detention centres.

The majority of fieldwork took place in four selected youth detention centres. A selection was made of youth detention centres that have gained sufficient experience with the execution of the intervention. Additional file examination was carried out in two youth intervention centres where sufficient experience was gained in order to provide this component with increased capacity and to investigate whether the target group in the four youth detention centres investigated was not deviating, which proved not to be the case. The findings at case level were provided with feedback in a group interview in the youth detention centre to gain a complete image of the implementation in the youth detention centre. The findings of the four youth detention centres were provided with feedback in a focus group with all programme coordinates, to gain a perspective of the execution at a national level.

## Results

### Entries, transfers and exits in Leren van Delict

We established the following *entries and transfer* in all of the youth detention centres in 2012 and 2013:

- Phase 1, the offence analysis, was started 168 times. Phase 1 was prematurely aborted in about 15% of the procedures concluded. 12% of the procedures that were started are still running.
- Phase 2, which focuses on behavioural change, was started 28 times. The throughput of phase 1 to phase 2 is 20%. Phase 2 was prematurely aborted in about 50% of the procedures concluded. 25% of the entire number of procedures that were started are still running.
- Phase 3, the booster sessions, has not been executed.

According to the manual and the national programme coordinator, we can speak of Leren van Delict if both phase 1 and phase 2 are completed. According to this definition, the number of young people that has followed Leren van Delict in 2012 and 2013 is limited to ten. The majority of the young

**Note 3** Stichting 180 is a knowledge and network organisation that also manages behavioural interventions for the youth detention centres. See [www.180.nl](http://www.180.nl).

people receive only the offence analysis from Leren van Delict (phase 1), the component that has been made obligatory for an application for leave.

### **Target group reached**

The research shows that phase 1 of Leren van Delict is primarily implemented for young people who have committed a violent offence (92% of the researched and completed procedures), but also for young people without a violent offence (3%; 4% unknown). At the start of phase 1, the fact whether a young person has committed a violent offence is not explicitly considered. Because this is the case among the majority of the young people with a PIJ-measure<sup>4</sup> or long-term juvenile detention, the majority of the examined group complies with this criterion.

It is determined at the end of phase 1 whether the young people comply with the indication criteria and whether phase 2 can be indicated. The fact that this is to happen at the end of phase 1 is not univocally stated in the manual.

The obligatory character of the offence analysis is the most important explanation for the fact that phase 1 is implemented relatively often in comparison with phase 2. In principle, all of the young people who go on leave must complete phase 1 of Leren van Delict. In addition, in all of the youth detention centres, the treatment goals of the offence analysis (the results of phase 1) are used for the treatment of the young person.

About 75% of the young people who complete phase 1 comply with the participation criteria for phase 2. This means that they have been sentenced for at least one violent offence and have a moderate to high risk of recidivism for violent offences. In addition, at least one inclusion criterion must be present, without any contraindications. In order to complete phase 2 entirely, a sufficient remainder of sentence is required. This is the case for the majority of the young people with a PIJ-measure (57% of the completed procedures examined). The remainder of sentence can differ among young people with juvenile detention.

We conclude that the potential target group for Leren van Delict phase 1 is greater than the target group that has been reached. In 2012 and 2013, the entries of young people into a long-term detainee group in a standard security institution (480) was considerably higher than the number of young people that entered Leren van Delict in that period (168). The number of applications for leave (344) was considerably higher for that period in relation to the number of young people that concluded Leren van Delict (120).

The most important reason not to start with phase 1 is a shortage of remainder of sentence; also, phase 1 is not started if the young person denies the offence, which is often the case if no judgement has been given yet (pre-trial detention) or if he/she is in appeal. In all youth detention centres, the motivation of every young person is tested in an introductory interview. In addition, contraindications are a reason not to give Leren van Delict. In some cases, alternative offence analyses or other interventions are implemented. It is assumed that this does not explain every discrepancy between

**Noot 4** PIJ-measure: Placement in an Institution for Juvenile offenders

the influx in phase 3 of YOUTURN is given and the number of applications for leave on the one hand, and the number of young people that start and complete phase 1 of Leren van Delict on the other.

We also conclude that the potential target group for Leren van Delict phase 2 is greater than the target group that has been reached. 30 to 50 of the young people who complete phase 1 successfully every year, can continue to phase 2. In 2012 and 2013, 14 continued in each year.

The fact that young people fail to go from phase 1 to phase 2 does not imply that they are not receiving treatment that does not correspond to the results of the offence analysis. The learning goals formulated, based on the offence analysis, are included in the perspective plan and commonly dealt with through therapy or another intervention that is considered more suitable or affects the specific risk factors of the young people more deeply (such as the intervention Aggression Regulation). In addition, organisational bottlenecks are a reason for not executing phase 2: it is unfeasible to properly carry out the intervention (as a result of the absence of or limited availability of co-trainers).

### **The intervention in practice**

Because the entire Leren van Delict (phase 1 and phase 2) intervention is carried out to a limited extent and is considered a separate component by various phase 1 trainers, we studied the programme integrity of the separate phases.

We conclude that **phase 1** is executed in conformity with the manual in the majority of training courses. The obligatory nature of the offence analysis for an application for leave is an important external motivational factor for young people to follow and complete the course; for trainers to give the course and for treatment coordinators to indicate the course. In addition, attention is given to a number of topics in phase 1 that are not dealt with until phase 2 according to the manual; the extent of this differs as per youth detention centre.

We have established greater variety in the execution in **phase 2**. This variation particularly relates to the professional freedom the trainers take to devise assignments and exercises and implement components from other interventions in Leren van Delict. Phase 2 provides more opportunities for variation within the manual. The majority of active elements, however, is carried out with the exception of the implementation of exercise weeks and involving parents. They are present in none of the cases studied at the presentation.

We conclude that the majority of youth detention centres gives insufficient priority and attention to guarantee the programme integrity as regards peer review, supervision and documentation in journals. The main reason is the fact that this is insufficiently facilitated. Time spent on coordination, participation in peer reviews and documentation is not earmarked and the instruments from the manual are not completed/applied as standard. However, a programme coordinator is appointed in each youth detention centre and all coordinators meet twice a year. Realising follow-up days for trainers has been proven unfeasible because there are too many trainers who cannot be made available at the same time.

As indicated above, **phase 3** van Leren van Delict is not given. The object of phase 3 is to apply booster sessions in the case of changes in the situation of young people. However, we have

established that changes in situation of young people may also occur in the execution of phase 2. After phase 1, and thus during phase 2 also, many young people go on leave. The order described in the manual in which young people in phase 1 execute an offence analysis and work on behavioural change in phase 2 before going on leave does not correspond to the current practice in youth detention centres that work quickly towards leave.

### Conditions for the trainers

We conclude that the trainers and co-trainers comply with the conditions laid down in the manual in relation to preliminary training. The training course for trainer or co-trainer for Leren van Delict could focus more on the experience of trainers in giving interventions, interview techniques and the theoretical background models. In addition, the course requires greater attention for background theories (in particular the offence chain of Mulder (1995)<sup>5</sup>) and the report of the offence analysis (what should be in the report, what objective does it serve, the formulation of learning objectives in relation to the learning objectives of Leren van Delict). The training course focuses more on phase 1 than on phase 2.

All youth detention centres value phase 1 positively. The various employees consider the offence analysis a well-structured intervention that provides proper insight into the offence history and the offence chain and that corresponds as to why the young person is in the youth detention centre; namely the offence. The offence analysis provides proper tools for further treatment. Phase 2 is considered less positive. There are alternatives that correspond better to specific risk factors and the needs of young people (such as cognitive behavioural therapy, family therapy, schematic therapy, vocational therapy (specifically: drama therapy), Aggression Regulation).

### Conditions for the organisation (context)

We conclude that certain conditions for the organisation are not complied with. Leren van Delict has been implemented in the youth detention centres by training people without providing the necessary preconditions first. The majority of these preconditions has not been realised well (enough): time investment has not been earmarked, spaces are available to a limited extent, co-trainers are available to a limited extent and programme coordinators are facilitated in realising peer reviews and supervision to a limited extent.

Leren van Delict connects well to YOUTURN. At the treatment coordinator's request, phase 1 is implemented in phase 3 of YOUTURN as soon as possible because the results of the offence analysis provide good insight into why a young person is in a youth detention centre and what his/her treatment should focus on to prevent recidivism.

**Note 5** Mulder, J. (1995). Het terugvalpreventiemodel als behandelingsmethode in een forensische dagbehandeling (The relapse prevention model as a treatment method in forensic day treatment). Tijdschrift voor Psychotherapie, 21, 199-133.

### Conditions for the execution of a performance evaluation and effect evaluation

We conclude that not all prescribed measuring instruments from the manual are implemented *by definition* in the youth detention centres. Behavioural scientists doubt the validity of the self-reporting list for measuring progress in sub-goals of Leren van Delict because they believe that young people complete them in a socially desirable manner. In addition, the image of young people as demonstrated from the list to be completed by the supervisory team is relatively positive because it mainly provides an image of the functioning of young people within the rigid structure of the youth detention centre.

### Final conclusion

We conclude that Leren van Delict is generally executed to a limited extent. Phase 1, the offence analysis, is carried out relatively often (168 times in 2012 and 2013) because it serves as a prerequisite for leave. The execution of the active elements from phase 1 meets the programme-integrity requirements. Phase 2 is executed relatively little and more varied, and does not meet the programme-integrity requirements because parents are not involved and there is less explicit attention on encouraging motivation. So far, no experience has been gained with phase 3.

We conclude that guaranteeing the programme integrity receives insufficient priority and is facilitated insufficiently. Certain preconditions for the organisation have not been dealt with (since the implementation). We also conclude that the target group that has been reached complies mainly with the inclusion criteria and presents no contraindications for moving on to phase 2, but that this occurs to a limited extent. The potential target group for the entire Leren van Delict intervention is more extensive than the group that is currently addressed. The young people that do not move on to phase 2 receive other and, according to treatment coordinators, more suitable interventions.

Based on these findings, we state that the current implementation practice results in offence analyses that are used for the application for leave and the formulation of a treatment plan for the young person. Using Leren van Delict, emphasis is put on the first sub-goal of the intervention – providing insight into the offence chain – instead of changes in behaviour (the other sub-goals). It has not (as yet) been determined how the result of this first sub-goal is measured. Changes in behaviour are targeted using interventions other than phase 2 of Leren van Delict. If phase 2 is implemented, we expect the effectiveness of this phase to be increased if parent participation is implemented. Before moving on to a performance evaluation, the continued development of the intervention and the opportunities for sequential research must be considered.

This also means that an evidence-based manner of working is currently limited as regards the implementation of Leren van Delict. The Leren van Delict behavioural intervention, which has been acknowledged by the Accreditation Panel and includes phase 1 and 2 as a minimum, is executed to a relatively limited extent. Phase 1 of Leren van Delict is not an independent and acknowledged behavioural intervention. The combination of phase 1 of Leren van Delict with other (components of) interventions is not proven effective nor theoretically substantiated as possibly effective. This does not correspond to the goal of the Ministry of Safety and Justice to implement as many acknowledged behavioural interventions as possible because these may be expected to result in less recidivism.



Finally: using Leren van Delict, thorough offence analyses are carried out in a uniform manner in all youth detention centres. For working on the required changes in behaviour that result from the offence analyses, Leren van Delict is not yet used to its full potential.