



**Process evaluation of
the “Work after prison”
Social Impact Bond**

- summary -

Summary

INTRODUCTION

What is the “Work after prison” Social Impact Bond?

A Social Impact Bond (SIB) is an innovative funding scheme whereby private investors provide financing for tackling a societal issue. When the projected result is achieved, the government repays the investment and a previously agreed dividend is paid out. A SIB tests the workings of an innovative method and in principle it is temporary (for the period during which the project is being tested). If the method achieves satisfactory results, then the aim is that the government or other bodies take over the funding.

The “Work after prison” Social Impact Bond focuses on intensive employment support for ex- prisoners. The Work after prisonf SIB has four aims: 1) more employment support for participants, 2) less re-offending by participants, 3) to assess whether working with SIBs is worthwhile for local councils and the government and 4) to gain up experience with an SIB and gather pointers for future SIBs.

What is the aim of this study?

This report contains a process evaluation of the preparation and implementation of the employment support intervention during the period from the official launch of the SIB on 1 May 2016 to the end of May 2018. The project period has been extended until 1 August 2019. The study will not be extended because sufficient insight has been gained into the key points of the implementation of the process and the project is not expected to change in any significant way. The study examined a) how the SIB scheme was designed and whether such a scheme could also be used for future pilot projects and b) how the employment support intervention was implemented. The study questions and approach are set out in chapter 1. The report does not go into the results of the employment support intervention. The effect study will be carried out separately by Panteia research agency and is expected to be published in 2021.

RESULTS OF THE PROCESS EVALUATION

How was this Social Impact Bond set up?

The parties involved in the SIB are: the Ministry of Justice and Security (‘Client’), the Start Foundation, the ABN AMRO Social Impact Fund, Oranjefonds (‘Investors’) and Society Impact (the ‘Matchmaker’ that brought the different organisations together). Together, these parties formed the steering group for the project. Also involved was the Custodial Institutions Agency. Initially, the intention was to set up an SIB aimed at providing employment support for prisoners

who would be fitted with electronic tags, but because the bill regulating electronic monitoring had not been adopted by the Lower House, the investors and the client looked for a different target group. This group comprised offenders who had been sentenced to between three and twelve months in prison. Out of the four SIB aims stated, gaining experience with a nationwide SIB was gradually seen as the most important one.

Through a tendering process, the investors have since opted for Work-Wise Direct as the party (‘the executor’) able to provide and carry out the employment support intervention. This consisted of a consortium formed especially for this project, made up of: Stichting 180 (Foundation 180, with expertise in the field of interventions for young offenders), Stichting Exodus Midden-Nederland (Central Netherlands Exodus Foundation with expertise in the field of providing care and support to ex-prisoners) and Restart (with expertise in the field of employment support for people at a disadvantage in the job market). The Work-Wise Direct representative also attended the project’s steering group meetings.

What is the relationship to other organisations?

The prison system and local councils have the joint responsibility to support prisoners organise their reintegration both during their sentence and after release, in the area of

employment and/or income (or day care with a benefit allowance) and other basic conditions (accommodation, understanding debts, ID and healthcare). The probation services can also help former prisoners who on probation search for work. The standard supervision offered is less intensive than that provided by the Work after prison SIB: the SIB counsellor visits participants at home, accompanies them to official agencies and can be reached outside office hours. Prison staff, the probation service and local councils have stated that the more intensive SIB supervision, aimed specifically at employment support for ex-prisoners, is a welcome addition to what they have to offer, which although sharing the same purpose is less intensive.

How is this SIB appreciated by the organisations involved? What were the factors that facilitated or hindered the development of this SIB?

The parties involved believe the SIB to be a promising scheme. Not only due to the focus on a project that would otherwise receive less government funding but also because it is about an innovative way for private organisations and the government to cooperate in a way that has not been previously attempted at national level. We have divided facilitating and hindering factors into the following categories: 'knowing', 'wanting' and 'being able'.

The facilitating factors largely occurred in the 'wanting' and 'being able' categories:

1. The organisations that were part of the steering group were enthusiastic about the project. The collaboration was quickly found to be an enjoyable one and people trusted in each other's expertise. Employment support for ex-prisoners is seen by the steering group as a socially relevant objective that might benefit from a more results-oriented approach. In addition, gaining learning experiences with an SIB is mainly seen as something valuable. The steering group considers the added value of the SIB as being in the collaboration between the government and private parties. This collaboration proved to run well and, according to the members of the steering group, it is considered worth repeating. They find the actual results of the employment support intervention of less importance because it is mainly a pilot version of the SIB scheme. The lessons learned in this SIB can be used for future SIBs.
2. Clear and acceptable agreements were made about targets, funding, intended returns, measurements and repayment. All organisations have accepted the relatively high start-up expenses that form part of an SIB and they have given the project time and space.
3. The collaboration between the private parties and the government will lead to more social involvement than if the government were to be left alone to tackle these sorts of issues. The private parties can help reduce the social problems, which is something they consider to be an important role.
4. The steering group had trust in the knowledge of the executor and the executor had enough staff. The executor was able to offer highly intensive supervision to the group of ex-prisoners who might otherwise be supervised by local councils and/or the probation service, albeit in a much less intensive way. In the opinion of the steering group members, the executor and employees of the probation service and councils, this meets a clear need. By contrast, it emerged that other local councils already had their own provisions and did not see any need for additional measures.

Hindering factors were mainly found in the 'knowing' category:

1. Unfamiliarity with the SIB structure at national level meant investigating a number of issues in the preparation phase of the SIB (e.g. detailed calculations, requirements on tenders and VAT remittance) took up a great deal of time and reduced the amount of attention given in the Custodial Institution.
2. A number of steering group members have said that adding a number of other organisations to the steering group would be a good idea in terms of bringing in more knowledge: the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (due to its knowledge of employment support), the Ministry of Finance (due to its knowledge of VAT calculations relating to this sort of projects), the probation services (due to their knowledge of the target groups) and employers (due to their knowledge of requirements put on participants).
3. The steering group and the implementing organisation had little previous knowledge of this target group's needs and problems to (see also points 4 and 5). There is little research literature about the extent of work and benefits paid to the target group. However, the literature that is available about the issues and after care appears not to have been sufficiently integrated into the business plan.

4. It appears that too little is known about the influence of selection criteria on the results. The selection criteria (as stated in the programme guide) have been partly widened (in particular admitting ex-prisoners with addiction problems and mental health issues and ex-prisoners who are at a slight disadvantage in the job market). It appears that it was not known that the decision to drop these selection criteria could have a negative influence on the results. After all, if ex-prisoners with severe addiction problems are allowed to participate in a programme that has not been designed for them, it is possible that the results would not be achieved. By contrast, if ex-prisoners who actually only have a slight disadvantage in the job market are allowed to participate, then they will find work but not much more than the control group. The chance of attaining the objectives of the SIB is therefore lower (even though people with addictions in the control group) because the programme was not designed to reduce addiction problems, which require a different, specific approach.
5. The knowledge about tackling adult offenders does not seem to have been fully integrated in the programme guide. The intervention is an adaptation of an intervention for adolescents (not necessarily young offenders). This intervention is included in the databank of effective juvenile interventions assessed as 'well substantiated' by the sub committee for juvenile care and psychosocial/pedagogical intervention. The amendment for adult offenders was not presented to an accreditation committee. The implementing organisation assumed that the approach to finding work for adult offenders need not differ much from the approach used with adolescents. However, this did not turn out to be the case. The target group was shown to be more complex than first thought and it was more difficult to find work for ex-prisoners over the age of forty with little work experience and a long history of incarceration than it was for eighteen-year-olds. If the intervention had been presented to more experts (e.g. to the accreditation committee) then this could have been pointed out. Part of the programme could not be carried out by the more complex target group and this means achieving the objectives is at risk. With hindsight, most steering group members agree that the objectives were too ambitious, although they do believe that an SIB needs to have ambition in order to create a purposeful atmosphere that enables renewal and better results than would otherwise be possible.
6. A number of the steering group members say that the reasoning was target-oriented: they were enthusiastic and were keen to get started with the SIB. Knowledge of risks, that was provided by the prison system and the probation service and meta analyses, which showed that the results of employment support interventions had little effect on recidivism, appear to have been given little attention. It is possible that testing of the employment support intervention by an accreditation committee would have resulted in greater integration of available knowledge of aftercare and issues surrounding ex-prisoners.

To what extent is this SIB transferrable?

The organisations involved believe that as a financial instrument, the SIB is to be recommended for future projects, especially through collaboration between government and private parties, where projects of a sufficient scale are concerned. The employment support intervention could be adopted by local councils. The SIB scheme could also be used by local councils if financiers were needed. A few lessons have been learned from this SIB that can be applied to future SIBs. This mainly concerns the preparation (more general), the objectives (ambitious but achievable) and knowledge (broader inclusion of expertise from science and the field). Based on international literature and knowledge from this study, a checklist has been drawn up, which can be used in advance of future SIBs to gauge their feasibility. At the time of writing this report, individual steering group members and the executor are in talks with local councils about whether or not to continue the employment support intervention in the form of an SIB. Concrete agreements have yet to be made.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT INTERVENTION

What does the intervention involve?

There are two variants of the employment support intervention: the basic programme and the plus programme. The basic programme lasts no more than seven months; the plus programme no more than 10 months. Both programmes are preceded by a nine-month follow-up programme.

What was the target group and how was it selected?

The target group for the basic programme consisted of male and female ex-prisoners aged 18 and above with sentences of between three and 12 months and skills shortages in relation to work and education. The target group for the plus programme is also at risk in terms of housing, social networks and/or leisure time. According to the programme guide, the selection of participants could be carried out with the aid of a questionnaire, the 'Dariuz Roadmap' and supplementary interviews with case counsellors from the executor's Custodial Institution. In practice, a number of selection criteria were abandoned (addiction issues, mental health problems and being at a disadvantage in the job market) because the steering group was unwilling to exclude any participants. In the end, fewer than half of the participants (37%) meet the inclusion criteria as stated in the programme guide.

Moreover, the intended number of participants was not reached. 1,299 prisoners were eligible for the project and in the end 119 people took part instead of the intended 150. It had previously been expected that 10% of the potential target group would be willing to take part. In the end, this number was almost reached, but it took much more time and the recruitment period had to be extended. This was mainly due to the fact that a) the recruitment in the Custodial Institutions stalled, b) an number of the prisoners did not wish to participate and c) half of the selected participants changed their mind after release or could not be traced.

What were the characteristics of the selected participants?

The characteristics of the participants were measured with the aid of self-reporting in a questionnaire (the Dariuz) or through assessment by counsellors. The reliability of this method has not been investigated, however according to counsellors and participants, it falls short in certain areas. Care must therefore be taken with regard to the interpretation of the data. The following characteristics emerged: 82% were male, 47% no partner, 36% older than 40, 24% had not completed any education beyond primary school and 21% were of no fixed abode. As already stated, the participants turned out to have had a long-term history of incarceration and often little work experience (50% had previously had no paid employment). They had many complex issues: often a combination of debts (51%) and a lack of accommodation (21%). Questions about addictions and mental health issues were frequently not filled in; past or current addiction was indicated by 29% and mental health problems by 21%. There are also intellectual disabilities, but these were not registered. The offences for which they had been convicted were mainly crimes against property, with or without violence (43%) and breach of the opium law (30%). In relation to the potential target group and the regular prison population, a relatively large number of female and older ex-prisoners took part in the intervention.

What did the ex-prisoners think of the intervention?

Of the 20 participants interviewed, 18 were enthusiastic about the intervention. It is important to note that the participants interviewed did not drop out. Not all participants were so enthusiastic: in the first two years of the project, 33% of participants dropped out. The working relationship with the counsellors (which has a major impact on these kinds of projects) appears to be very good in the case of most of the participants who didn't drop out. Interviewed participants are happy with the large amount of support and the accessibility of their counsellors. Some expected that their counsellor would arrange everything for them and were somewhat disappointed that they had to do a lot themselves and that housing was not automatically organised for them. Participants mentioned the following areas of improvement: more jobs with career growth potential (not just production work); that the supervision should start sooner (when entering custody, not just a few weeks before release), create a shelter (so participants without a home of their own could look for work too).

Why did so many participants drop out?

Two years after the launch of the project, 33% had dropped out. When compared with extramural interventions that are run by probation services (where drop-out is 17-35%, Fischer, 2012), the percentage of those dropping out is not exceptional, also given the fact that participants with addiction issues were included in the programmes. However, since the project still has 14 months to run, the drop-out rate will still increase. Most people who dropped out at the beginning. The counsellor was unable to trace some of them shortly

after release. Without a phone number it was impossible to go looking for them in person. Other prisoners dropped out after they became untraceable at a later stage, after they had been admitted into a rehab clinic or were once again put in prison to serve old or new sentences. Those who dropped out were often participants without a partner, with lower levels of education, debts, little independence, fewer employable skills and who used hard drugs more often. Those who dropped out deserve our attention because research has shown that they are more likely to reoffend.

Where did participants end up?

The participants who find jobs, mainly end up working in construction or at production companies. They usually find work through friends or job agencies and doing so turns out to present relatively few problems for them. In this project, a lot of work was done job agencies because they were part of the consortium and because it was easier to discuss the history of detention with the agency, whereas this would not have been the case with the employer. The job agency was often aware of the participant's history of detention but no Certificate of Good Conduct needed to be submitted to the employer.

Two years after the launch of the project, about a quarter of participants have found jobs, 75% of whom have a direct employment contract and therefore no longer work through a job agency. The employment situation among participants is not as good as was envisaged but better than the steering group had expected of the control group (10%). More details will follow in the impact assessment. The counsellors (and local councils) expect that part of the group will never be capable of working or resolving their issues on their own. For the subgroup for which work is not a realistic option, a great deal seems to be gained if they achieve a stable living environment with a roof over their heads, debt restructuring, restricted substance use and monitoring.

How was the intervention carried out?

As described in the guide, the intervention consists of various methods that are used by individual counsellors (basic interventions, practical interventions, interventions with a focus on behaviour, cognitions and relationships). In practice, the emphasis is placed mainly on holding motivational talks and arranging practical matters (ID, bank account, debt restructuring, accommodation). Less attention is given to changing thought processes and behaviour than intended, which puts the results with regard to a permanent change in behaviour in jeopardy.

The longer participants are in the project and their situation improves, the more independent they become and the less the frequency of contact with the counsellors. When the project is completed, a final assessment is sent to the local council, provided a contact is known. If necessary, participants can get in touch with their former counsellor until the project has been completed (August 2019). The way in which local councils take over aftercare varies. No structural arrangements have been made in this regard as part of the project. Besides providing them with the written report, some local councils prefer to see counsellors and the ex-detainee getting to know the new local council contact (e.g. a neighbourhood director or aftercare coordinator) together because they believe this would reduce the chances of recidivism.

What was the situation with the preconditions for the implementation of the project?

The counsellors were highly committed. Although fewer than half of them had experience of counselling ex-prisoners, they did have experience with vocational reintegration and coaching (often of young offenders or non-offenders). The counselling mainly focused on the west of the country. There were no offices; meetings with participants often took place in public places or at the homes of participants. This sometimes made the counsellors feel unsafe. The security protocol has since been tightened and more attention is being paid to keeping counsellors safe. Colleagues met in order to monitor the quality of the execution of the project.

The further the project progressed and the more participants completed it, the fewer the number of counsellors became. They transferred participants to their remaining colleagues. Some participants had more than two counsellors. The counsellors and

participants often felt positive about the handover, although it sometimes took some getting used to.

What did other organisations think about the intervention?

Virtually all of the employees (of the project executing organisation and of all other organisations such as DJI, the probation service and the local council) are positive about the project, in particular because intensive and flexible help is provided and this is exactly what this target group needs. They are also satisfied with the collaboration. In the initial phase, the division of tasks between the project, the local councils and the probation service was not entirely clear, but gradually good communication was established. At the end of the project, however, the local councils noted that people were enthusiastic because the project was aimed at employment support, whereas in practice it was precisely that goal that has not quite lived up to expectations.

The local councils involved see the project as supplementary to their own work. However, sometimes it overlaps local council projects. For example, in Amsterdam, although habitual offenders were not allowed to take part in the SIB, they were put through their own council project. Other local councils also offer assistance, especially in order to arrange the preconditions. The probation service is also enthusiastic about the project, seeing it as supplementary to its work. Employees appear to be a missing factor in the project, as indicated mainly by local councils, external specialists and participants. They point out the need for a permanent network of companies that can lead to more opportunities for growth, lasting jobs and more openness about the participants' history of detention. After completion of this study, the matter of whether the SIB method can proceed will be examined. However, no check was carried out as to whether existing organisations are able to adopt this method.

Conclusions

The SIB scheme is viewed by those involved and external specialists as a promising one for the development and testing of innovative and targeted projects for which too little government funding would otherwise be available. The organisations involved in funding and the executive organisation dared to take the risk in taking part in a project with a new form of funding and collaboration.

A lot has been learned about the way in which SIBs might be set up more efficiently in future and the parties involved are enthusiastic about the collaboration. The steering group members say that gaining experience was found to be more important than the substantive objective and the project's financial returns. In this sense, the project has been a success. Otherwise such an intensive employment support project would never have been undertaken. It is noteworthy that in this SIB, less importance is attached to the financial aspect (reward for effectiveness), whereas that is precisely an objective of an SIB. In this phase it is possible that the need to experiment with and get to know the SIB is playing a more dominant role than the financial aspect. In the long term, in order to scale projects up, the financial aspect and the accountability for it using feasible objectives will have to play a greater role in existing and future SIBs.

With hindsight, the objectives were too ambitious and more attention could be paid to sustainable, long-term results. Although the SIB has allowed scope for interim changes to the approach, the changes (in particular dropping the exclusion criteria) will not all help us achieve the goals. The checklist that was drawn up during this study can be used for future SIBs.

The implementation of the actual employment support (and lasting labour relations in particular) of ex-prisoners did not get off the ground as well as intended. Due in part to the fact that the target group was tougher than expected, a key element of the programme could not be implemented and the targets were not always achievable, which put the results in jeopardy. The counselling was flexible, committed and intensive, which is lauded by all of the experts spoken to because no care-as-usual exists that monitors participants so intensively, and this is considered essential to this target group.

The most important explanation for the fact that the programme could not be implemented as intended, is that neither the steering group nor the executor had much previous knowledge of the needs and issues of the target group. As such, the target group was tougher than anticipated, which was also unintentionally reinforced by the deviation from the selection criteria that had been set out in the programme guide. Involving a broader range of expertise from the field and science might prevent the under-utilisation of available knowledge, as was also the case during the development period. Although an SIB is designed to be innovative and people therefore want to deviate from the familiar pathways, systems and procedures, contradiction from experts in the standard system can also contribute to reaching the objective. There is a risk that time and again, projects are launched among great enthusiasm and from which despite lessons being learned, progress is slower than intended, as well as being slower than necessary. The extent to which objectives are achieved and the results are better than those achieved with standard counselling will be revealed in the effect study that is expected in 2021.



WHICH INTERVENTIONS REALLY HAVE AN IMPACT ON HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

Prins Hendrikkade 193
1011 TD Amsterdam

Tel +31-20 6684797
E-mail info@mpct.eu
Web www.mpct.eu

impact^{R&D}