

# MANDATORY FINANCIAL SUPERVISION OF JUVENILES PILOT EVALUATION FRAMEWORK



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# Management Summary

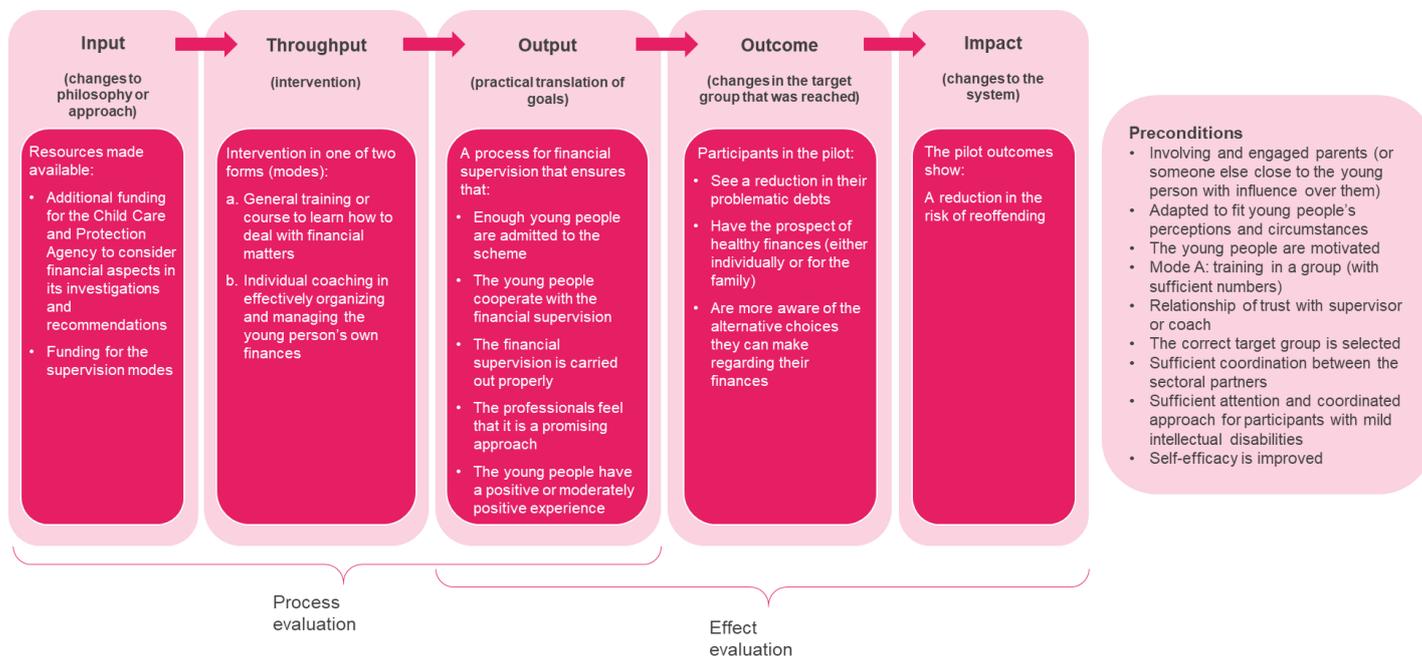
## Background and motivation

Following a motion tabled by Nispen and Van Oosten, a pilot project was started in The Hague introducing the option to impose mandatory financial supervision on young people. The supervision can take two forms (also termed 'modes'): training to improve financial skills, or coaching with the same aim. Based on the investigation by the Child Care and Protection Agency, the Public Prosecution Service or the court can decide to impose one of these forms of supervision. The juvenile probation service then makes sure that the supervision mode that was imposed is indeed carried out.

The question of whether mandatory financial supervision could reduce repeat offending has been discussed for some time. That is why it was decided at the start of the pilot project to develop an evaluation framework that would enable measuring the pilot's results. The Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) gave Significant APE the assignment to draw up the evaluation framework. The pilot started in September 2020.

## The theoretical framework and the Theory of Change for the pilot

A theoretical framework was drawn up based on a literature study, interviews with people involved in the pilot and various academics. This resulted in a 'Theory of Change' in which we describe how the pilot can help reduce repeat offending and give an overview of the preconditions that the forms of financial supervision need to meet if they are to be effective.



The figure above shows the Theory of Change for the mandatory financial supervision pilot. It can be summarized as follows. There is a demonstrable association between having financial problems and a risk of reoffending; reducing such problems can therefore reduce the risk of reoffending. However, less is known about this relationship in the specific case of the target group for the pilot, adolescents aged 12 to 18 (Koenraadt et al., 2020). Experiences with a previous pilot showed that it is difficult to persuade young people in the age range 16 to 23 to take part voluntarily (Weijers, 2019). Furthermore, individuals are only personally responsible for their debts from the age of 18 (De Jong, 2017). Evaluating the pilot can make a useful contribution to knowledge about this target group.

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The preconditions state what conditions need to be satisfied by the supervision modes and the monitoring by the juvenile probation service. Some examples are the extent to which the parents are involved, the extent to which the solution ties in with young people's own perceptions, and the extent of the alignment with other issues the young people might have. The Theory of Change and preconditions have also been translated into specific indicators. The overview, with the indicators to be measured for each Theory of Change level and for each precondition, forms the basis of the evaluation framework. This overview can be found in Section 4.2 of the main report.

### **Research design for evaluating the pilot**

The next step in compiling the evaluation framework was to work out a suitable research approach for measuring the indicators that were identified. A key point to pay attention to when drawing up the research design is the low intake numbers to date, a situation that is expected to continue. This means that an effect assessment with a control group is not feasible (at least, not yet). The logical approach is therefore to carry out a process evaluation during the pilot, that does not draw conclusions about results in terms of impact and only does so to a limited extent regarding outcomes.

The following considerations have played a role in our decision not to have an effect assessment as yet:

- a. At present, it is not clear why the numbers are so low. The process evaluation could give a better understanding of the underlying reasons. The pilot's approach can then be adjusted, if possible, to ensure that eventually there will be enough participants to permit an effect assessment.
- b. It is debatable whether the effect assessment will be able to give answers to the research questions under the current circumstances. The numbers may be too small to allow conclusions to be drawn. The small number of participants can lead to problems in a practical sense too. For example, it is not certain whether there are enough participants for training courses to be run. The effect assessment inevitably requires a certain investment and effort, while it is not clear whether the assessment will produce useful results.
- c. Finally, the timing plays a role. The choice of research method for the effect assessment needs to be made quite soon, but at that point it will still not be clear how the numbers are going to develop.

The process evaluation could be started before the end of the pilot. There would be enough participants for a process evaluation and this would also allow the findings to be incorporated more quickly through modifications to the pilot approach.

It will only be worthwhile reconsidering the option of an effect assessment once there are enough participants for this option — for example, several dozen. We would therefore use a combination of the following methods for the process evaluation of the pilot, to be performed by independent researchers:

- a. Desk research on recently published literature and any manuals or protocols for the modes of financial supervision;
- b. An overview of the participants based on the data recorded by the Child Care and Protection Agency, juvenile probation service and trainer;
- c. A study of the files on the participants in the pilot as held by the juvenile probation service and Child Care and Protection Agency;
- d. Interviews with professionals involved in the pilot and with the participants;
- e. A group meeting with professionals involved in the pilot;
- f. Observation by the researchers of training sessions.

### **Answering the WODC's research questions**

We conclude this summary with brief answers to the research questions regarding the evaluation framework for the pilot. In doing so, we discuss the research design for evaluating the pilot and collecting the information required for this in greater depth.

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1. *What would be a satisfactory research design for performing the process evaluation of the Mandatory Financial Supervision of Juveniles pilot?*

We have drawn up an evaluation framework that centres on the following research questions for evaluating the process implemented in the pilot:

*General questions regarding the process evaluation (throughput)*

1. To what extent was the pilot set up in line with the action plan? Where this was the case, what worked well in setting up the pilot? Where this was not the case, why not? What aspects differed from the action plan? What do the supervision modes look like? Have manuals or sets of procedures been compiled for the implementation?
2. What are the characteristics of the pilot population? What is the composition (based on the following variables) of the group who are advised or required to take part and who do so?
  - i. Age
  - ii. Male/female
  - iii. Home and living circumstances
  - iv. Types of debts
  - v. Type of offence for which the supervision mode was imposed as a special condition.
3. How did the cooperation between the various parties involved go?

*Questions concerning the output*

4. Was there a sufficient intake of participants for the pilot (in other words, were the intended/predicted numbers achieved)? (Possible additional question: if not, why was the intake too low?)
5. Were the participants from the intended target group and were they the intended participants (one of the preconditions)?
6. To what extent did the professionals implementing the pilot feel that the pilot constituted a promising approach? Where this was not the case, why not? What aspects made that approach so promising?
7. To what extent did the participants cooperate with the supervision modes that were imposed? Where they did, why was that? Where they did not, why not?
8. Were the supervision modes implemented properly in line with the plan, and were the preconditions met?
  - i. Were the participants' parents involved in the coaching or training, or alternatively indirectly in the wider supervision process?
  - ii. Did the training course or coaching fit with the young people's perceptions and situation?
  - iii. Was attention paid to motivating the young people?
  - iv. Did the training sessions (supervision mode 1) have good group dynamics? Were there sufficient participants per group to enable this?
  - v. Were the trainers and coaches able to build up trust/a trusting relationship with the young people?
  - vi. Was there sufficient coordination between the criminal justice system partners?
  - vii. Is the approach sufficiently tailored to the needs of the MID target group (people with minor intellectual disabilities) and were they taken into account in practice?
  - viii. To what extent was the participants' self-efficacy improved?
9. What were the experiences of the participants?

We recommend a research approach that uses a combination of research methods to answer the process evaluation questions. The approach comprises the abovementioned desk research, overview of the recorded data, examination of the files, interviews (with professionals and participants), a group meeting and observation.

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2. *What data should be collected to determine whether the mandatory financial supervision of juvenile offenders is being implemented as was intended and what problems have arisen?*

The answers to most of the research questions will have to be based on qualitative information from interviews with professionals working for the parties involved and from the examination of files. This is because most of the information cannot be obtained from IT systems using automated methods. Chapter 4 of the present report contains a detailed overview of the information that needs to be collected for the evaluation. There are, however, a few process evaluation questions (is the intake sufficient and did the participants cooperate?) where recorded data obtained using automated methods can be used.

3. *Which parties should be involved in recording the data referred to in research question 2?*

The organizations that should be involved in the process evaluation are:

- a. The Ministry of Justice and Security: policy officers and the project manager;
- b. The Child Care and Protection Agency: the agency's representative in the project group and child welfare investigators;
- c. The Public Prosecution Service: the service's representative in the working group and a juvenile public prosecutor;
- d. The judiciary: juvenile judge;
- e. Jeugdbescherming West (a youth protection institution): the institution's representative in the project group and juvenile probation officers;
- f. The William Schrikker Foundation: the foundation's representative in the project group and juvenile probation officers;
- g. The trainers and coach delivering supervision modes 1 and 2.

It is important to interview all these professionals in order to collect information about how the work processes and the cooperation with one another went. Should any problems have arisen, this finding can be supported with specific examples. It is not necessary to link the identity of the participants to the examples that are discussed.

A small proportion of the data can be obtained from the juvenile probation agencies and the Child Care and Protection Agency. The rest of the information will need to come from an examination of the files. This too will be carried out on site at these organizations.

4. *What would be a satisfactory research design for assessing the success of the Mandatory Financial Supervision of Juveniles pilot?*

As mentioned earlier, it is debatable whether an effect assessment would be worthwhile. We have nevertheless answered the questions so that an effect assessment can be performed at a later date when the intake numbers have increased.

We have formulated the following research questions that need to be answered in order to assess the success of the pilot:

10. To what extent did the participants complete the process and do so successfully? If not, what was the reason for this (did they acknowledge the importance of the training/coaching)?
11. To what extent did the debts of the pilot participants decrease (and if so, which debts)?
12. To what extent do the participants in the pilot have better prospects for managing their finances properly?
13. Are the participants in the pilot more aware of the alternative choices they can make about their finances?
14. To what extent has the participants' general knowledge about financial matters improved?

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How these questions can be answered depends on the number of participants in the pilot. We distinguish between two options. Neither method involves using a control group; that is not possible given the expected number of participants. This also means it is not possible to carry out a comprehensive effect assessment capable of ascribing any effect found to the intervention and able to rule out alternative explanations for the effect.

- a. A study based on a Single-Case Experimental Design (SCED);
- b. A study in which interviews and file examinations are the main research methods.

If participant numbers are low, the SCED methodology would seem the most logical choice. In this method, individual cases are tracked intensively by holding structured interviews at various points in time at the case level. However, it is not clear whether this method is appropriate for the target group; the approach could be too much of a burden for the young people. Furthermore, this method only offers limited potential to demonstrate any effects and the link with the intervention, despite all the effort required. Finally, if this method is selected, the research will need to start immediately as the participants need to be followed throughout the process.

If participant numbers are higher, examination of files and interviews can be used to give an understanding of the effects of the mandatory financial supervision. It is not possible to compare the effects of the financial supervision with another group as it is not possible to create a control group. However, the effect of the pilot can be described to a limited extent by inquiring into the result for the target group and inquiring into their situation before they participated in the pilot. However, it is not clear whether all the research questions can be answered fully.

If the decision is taken to carry out an effect assessment, we recommend using the following methods in addition to the methods mentioned above:

- a. Desk research;
- b. Overview based on the recorded data that can be obtained using automated methods;
- c. Group meeting.

*5. What data should be collected in order to be able to determine in time whether the mandatory financial supervision is achieving the intended objectives? What parties should be involved in this?*

Chapter 4 of the main report contains a detailed overview of the information that needs to be collected in order to assess the success of the pilot. Once again, most of the research questions will need to be answered based on qualitative information, some of which can be translated into quantitative information. Depending on the research setup, the main source will be the repeated interviews (SCED) or the extensive examination of files.

*6. How can a comparison group be composed and what are the preconditions for this? What data needs to be collected about the comparison group and which parties should be involved?*

As stated earlier, we believe that it is not possible to compose a comparison group because of the small numbers involved. If the pilot period is extended, thereby increasing the total intake, an effect assessment *could* be carried out at a later date. That would enable the effect of the interventions to be demonstrated. A sufficiently large intake remains a precondition as only then will a comparison group serve any purpose. Alternatively, a SCED is a possible solution.