

Summary

Criminogenic needs in offenders who are eligible for behavioural interventions

The Reducing Recidivism policy programme [*beleidsprogramma 'Terugdringen Recidive (TR)*], which was launched in 2002, was intended to reduce recidivism amongst adult offenders. To achieve this, the programme introduced an integrated approach in which various methods are used to reduce recidivism: an evidence-based risk and needs assessment tool (RISc), behavioural interventions that comply with certain quality criteria, good collaboration between probation services and the prison system, aftercare and a structural evaluation of the effects of this approach (see www.justitie.nl/recidive). Following the development of the above tools, the policy programme was concluded in 2006 and the prison and probation services have incorporated the approach and tools in their regular activities.

The behavioural interventions that have been and will be developed within the framework of the Reducing Recidivism policy programme focus on changing so-called criminogenic needs. These are risk factors that characterise offenders or specific offender groups and which are related to offending behaviour (Camp & Gaes, 2005). The assumption is that targeting these criminogenic needs through behavioural interventions will make it possible to reduce recidivism amongst offenders. To be able to determine which behavioural interventions are needed and approximately how many offenders will be eligible for participation in behavioural interventions, it is necessary to gain a clear insight into the nature and extent of criminogenic needs among offenders.

The goal of this study is to present an overview of the prevalence and nature of criminogenic needs among the group of offenders who are eligible for participation in behavioural interventions. This group consists of offenders with a remaining prison sentence of four months or more (the intramural group) and offenders on whom an extramural supervisory measure has been imposed (the extramural group). This study is also intended to provide an overview of the prevalence and nature of criminogenic needs in two sub-groups that are the subject of extra policy attention: perpetrators of domestic violence and sex offenders. Finally, the results of this study should provide an indication of the number of offenders that can take part in one of the behavioural interventions on an annual basis.

RISc, the diagnosis tool used by the probation services, has been used in order to identify the nature and extent of criminogenic needs among offenders who are eligible for behavioural interventions. The object of RISc is to estimate the likelihood of recidivism (defined as a new conviction) and to assess the static and dynamic criminogenic needs that underlie this risk. RISc comprises twelve sections which each intend to assess one of the criminogenic factors: (1) Offending history;

(2) Present offence and pattern of offences; (3) Accommodation; (4) Education, work and training; (5) Financial management and income; (6) Relationships with partner, family and relatives; (7) Relationships with friends and acquaintances; (8) Drug misuse; (9) Alcohol misuse; (10) Emotional well-being; (11) Thinking and behaviour; and (12) Attitudes. Together, these sections form the overall score indicating the risk of reconviction. RISC also provides an estimation of the risk of danger (to the offender himself or his environment) and the instrument provides an impression of the extent to which an offender can be influenced by behavioural interventions designed to reduce the risk of recidivism (responsivity).

For the purpose of this study, it was possible to use a database obtained from the Dutch Probation Service [*Reclassering Nederland (RN)*], containing all RISCs completed by the three probation services (the Dutch Probation Service, the Salvation Army [*Leger des Heils*] and the Addiction Probation Service of the Netherlands Institute for Mental Health Care [*Stichting Verslavingsreclassering GGZ Nederland*]) between November 2004 and May 2006. Data from OMDATA, an information system from the National Office of the Public Prosecution Service [*Parket-Generaal van het Openbaar Ministerie*] made it possible to ascertain which of the offenders from the RISC database, based on their criminal cases, could be eligible for behavioural interventions. This involves 4,478 offenders with a prison sentence of four months or more or who were under a supervision order (their sentence was subject to special conditions, in most cases some form of supervision).

In general, on each RISC section, a criminogenic problem is consistently present, to a greater or lesser extent, for 30% to 40% of the offenders who are eligible for behavioural interventions. The exception to this rule is formed by the following sections: Thinking and behaviour (79.0% of people have a criminogenic problem in this area), Education, work and training (62.7%), Relationships with partner, family and relatives (47.2%) and Attitudes (45.3%). The fewest problems would seem to occur with regard to accommodation: 20.5% of the study group has problems with housing. However, this picture is almost certainly distorted by the fact that this section is not completed for prisoners who will not be released in the foreseeable future. This applies for almost one-third of the study sample (1,392 people).

According to RISC, slightly less than one-third of offenders who could be eligible for participation in behavioural interventions based on the settlement of their criminal cases have a low risk of recidivism (29.0%). More than half (51.0%) has an average risk of recidivism. The group with the highest risk of recidivism is 18.6%, which means that almost one in five respondents is considered to have a high risk of recidivism. It was not possible to calculate a RISC overall score for 1.3% of offenders, because either too much information or crucial information was not available on RISC (for the scoring rules, see the RISC manual).

The Dutch Ministry of Justice and the probation services have a special interest in domestic violence (Kuppens, Cornelissens & Ferwerda, 2006; Lower House, 2002). Because of this, the nature and extent of criminogenic needs in a group of domestic violence offenders have been analysed separately. This group consists of 1,409 people. These offenders may not all be eligible for participation in behavioural interventions based on their sentences, but may have had various sentences imposed on them.

On virtually all RISC section, perpetrators of domestic violence have strikingly few criminogenic problems. The only sections where criminogenic problems are pre-

sent in more than half of the study group are the sections Relationships with partner, family and relatives, and Thinking and behaviour (73.8% and 76.0% respectively). On the other sections, the proportion of domestic violence offenders who have criminogenic problems varies from approximately 20% to approximately 40%. According to the RISC diagnosis, more than two-fifths of the perpetrators of domestic violence have a low risk of recidivism (42.5%). Based on RISC, almost half of offenders can be placed in the category with a medium risk of recidivism (47.4%). The group consisting of offenders of domestic violence with a high risk of recidivism represents 8.9% of the total group. A RISC overall score could not be calculated for 1.2% of offenders.

As in the case of perpetrators of domestic violence, sex offenders form a specific group for ministerial policy and the probation services. Therefore, for this group as well, the nature and extent of criminogenic needs are described separately. The sex offender group consists of 497 people. These offenders may not all be eligible for participation in behavioural interventions based on their sentences, but may have had various sentences imposed on them.

As regards the scores of the sex-offender group on the RISC sections, it is striking that, on virtually every section, a large group does not have any criminogenic problems. With the exception of the section Thinking and behaviour, some 60% to 80% of sex offenders do not have problems on each RISC section respectively. The only section on which more than one-quarter of sex offenders has more or less serious criminogenic problems is Thinking and behaviour (63.4%).

According to RISC, more than half of sex offenders has a low risk of recidivism (57.1%). Almost two-fifths of sex offenders has a medium risk of recidivism (37.0%). Just a small proportion (4.4%) of sex offenders can, based on RISC, be placed in the group with a high risk of recidivism. A RISC overall score could not be calculated for 1.5% of offenders.

In order to ascertain the extent to which offenders who are eligible for behavioural interventions (N=4,478) vary from offenders who are not eligible for behavioural interventions (N=2,265), various analyses were performed. The group that is not eligible for behavioural interventions consists of offenders with a short remaining prison sentence (less than four months) or no remaining prison sentence and no possibility for the implementation of probation supervision. Offenders who are eligible for behavioural interventions have a remaining prison sentence of at least four months or a different punishment with special conditions, which enables them to participate in behavioural interventions under the supervision of the probation service.

The scores of the two offender groups were compared to see whether the distribution of the presence and absence of criminogenic needs in the two groups differs from what may be expected when no differences exist. Results show that on all RISC sections the distribution of scores is different to what may be expected when no differences are assumed. A further analysis of the results shows that on all of the RISC sections offenders who are eligible for behavioural interventions have more problems than offenders who are not eligible for behavioural interventions; they score less often in the 'absent' category and more often in one or both of the 'present' and 'present to a serious extent' categories.

As could be expected based on the comparisons of the section scores for both groups, the distribution for the RISC total score in the group that *is* eligible for in-

terventions is also found to deviate significantly from that of the group that is not eligible for interventions. In comparison with the group that is not eligible for behavioural interventions, the target group for the Reducing Recidivism policy programme has a low risk of recidivism less often and more often a medium or high risk of recidivism.

On almost all of the RISC sections, the distribution of the presence and absence of criminogenic needs is significantly different for perpetrators of domestic violence (N=1,409) and perpetrators of other offences (N=5,334; this concerns offenders with various sentences) than can be expected when no differences are assumed. To summarise, it can be concluded that the perpetrators of domestic violence have fewer criminogenic problems in a large number of respects than other offenders, but that this is not the case in the field of relationships with partners, family and relatives, alcohol use and thinking and behaviour.

The distribution of the RISC overall score between the perpetrators of domestic violence and the perpetrators of other offences is also significantly different than can be expected when no differences exist between both groups. In comparison with the perpetrators of other offences, perpetrators of domestic violence more often have a low risk of recidivism and less often a high risk of recidivism.

On all RISC sections, the distribution of the presence and absence of criminogenic problems among the perpetrators of sex offences (N=497) and the perpetrators of other offences (N=6,426; this concerns offenders with various sentences) is significantly different than can be expected when no differences existed between both groups. With regard to all of the problem areas identified by RISC, fewer problems apply for sex offenders in comparison with other offenders. The distribution of the RISC overall score for sex offenders and for the perpetrators of other offences is also significantly different to what can be expected when no differences are assumed. In comparison with the perpetrators of other offences, perpetrators of sex offences more often have a low risk of recidivism and less often a medium or high risk of recidivism.

There are several limitations to this study. One important shortcoming is the fact that, at the time of the present study, it is not yet known what RISC's inter-rater reliability is. Nor has RISC been validated yet, which means that it is not yet known whether this instrument's sections and overall score actually measure what they are intended to measure. While data are absent on validity and reliability, interpretation of the study's results must occur with due caution. Another limitation is the fact that this study uses an existing database instead of data collected specifically for this study. As a result, it is not possible to generalise the results of this study to the total intervention target group. However, with almost 4,500 offenders in the study group, the results are quite robust — even if it is not really possible to ascertain to what extent they can be generalised. The chance is small that a future study will generate different results for a group similar to the group examined in this study. Despite this, the results described in chapters 2 and 3 must be regarded as an *indication* of the prevalence of criminogenic problems among the various offender sub-groups that are eligible for behavioural interventions.

Despite the caution necessary when interpreting the results of this study, based on the starting points of the Reducing Recidivism policy programme, the study does

yield a 'promising' overall picture: possibilities for behavioural interventions for criminogenic problems are present in virtually every offender from the target group of the Reducing Recidivism policy programme. The provision of interventions focusing on changing offender characteristics that are related with offence behaviour is, after all, one of the programme's pillars. By tuning interventions to the criminogenic needs present in the target group for the Reducing Recidivism policy programme, it will be possible to achieve the greatest possible effect on recidivism.