

Summary

Monitor of Aftercare for Former Prisoners Developments and first results

Background, aims and research questions

Recidivism by former prisoners shows a high rate: well over sixty percent of the former prisoners are sentenced again for a serious offence by the court within four years and almost fifty percent of the former prisoners are locked up in a penitentiary institution (PI) again within four years. In order to reduce recidivism, the approach focusing on the reintegration of former prisoners is one of the cornerstones of government policy (TK 2007-2008, 24 587, no. 299). This approach has been laid down, inter alia, in the Programme of Comprehensive Approach to Aftercare (*Programma Sluitende Aanpak Nazorg, PSAN*). The PSAN aims at improving the reintegration of former prisoners into free society. The objective of PSAN is to ensure that, through effective cooperation among the partners in the chain, including the Department of Justice, municipalities and other partners, former prisoners will have a *valid identity card*, *accommodation* and an *income* at the moment that they are released from prison. In addition, the programme aims at ensuring that, at the moment of their release, it is known whether the former prisoner has any *debts*, and that a plan for debt assistance, if necessary, has been drawn up. Finally, the prisoner's need for *care* must be established, and if the prisoner does need care, this care must be provided or prepared for. The Monitor of Aftercare for Former Prisoners has been developed to assess the state of the reintegration of former prisoners as far as identity card, accommodation, income, debts and care are concerned.

The object of this monitor is first of all to identify to which extent (former) prisoners have an identity card, income, accommodation, debts and contacts with care institutions at the time when they enter a PI, at the time when their sentence has been served, and at the time when they have been back in free society for six months. Additionally, the objective of the monitor is to describe how the situation in these areas of life develops during the course of detention and in the first six months after detention. The third objective is to describe the relationship between problems in those areas of life and social-demographic background characteristics (such as gender and age), and characteristics of the detention (such as the term of detention and the detention history). With regard to the changed situation in the areas of life mentioned above, consideration is also given to the relationship with characteristics regarding the execution of the aftercare policy within the PI, such as the term within which the prisoner is screened. Finally, a further objective of the monitor is to determine which data and sources are available to help answer the research questions, and what limitations the available data may exhibit. These objectives may be translated into the following research questions:

- 1.1 To what extent do prisoners have an identity card, income, accommodation, debts and contacts with care institutions at the time immediately preceding the imprisonment?
- 1.2 To what extent do prisoners have an identity card, income, accommodation, debts and contacts with care institutions at the time immediately after the imprisonment?

- 1.3 To what extent do prisoners have an identity card, income, accommodation, debts and contacts with care institutions six months after the imprisonment?
- 1.4 To what extent is there an accumulation of problems in the different areas of life immediately preceding, immediately after and six months after the imprisonment?
- 2 To what extent is there a change in the problems in the different areas of life immediately preceding, immediately after and six months after the imprisonment?
- 3.1 Which social-demographic characteristics and characteristics of the imprisonment are related to the problems in the various areas of life?
- 3.2 Which social-demographic characteristics, characteristics of the imprisonment and aftercare characteristics are related to the changes in the problems in the various areas of life?

Research method

In this first measurement of the Monitor of Aftercare for Former Prisoners, a cohort is followed which consists of former prisoners who left a PI between 1 July 2008 and 31 December 2008 and who were registered as a resident of a Dutch municipality. This cohort totals 15,356 individuals. The research group consists mainly of men and over one half of the research group is younger than 34 years of age at the time of release. Almost one half of the research group was locked up for less than a month. *Only* 17.2% of the former prisoners served more than six months, the majority of which was locked up for less than a year. Finally, it appears that for almost 65% of the former prisoners, it was not the first time that they were inside a PI since 1996.

In order to describe the situation of these prisoners in the five areas of life at the start of their imprisonment, we use the data recorded in the Digital Platform for Alignment of Aftercare (*Digitaal Platform Aansluiting Nazorg, DPAN*). All prisoners belonging to the target group of the aftercare policy are screened by social services employees (*Medewerkers Maatschappelijke Dienstverlening, MMD'ers*) during the first days of their detention. This screening consists of interviewing the prisoners with respect to their situation in the different areas of life as it was before the start of their imprisonment. The information obtained on the problems experienced in these areas of life is recorded in a basic file, which is used to inform the municipality where the prisoner will go after his imprisonment. The DPAN file is closed by a social services employee at the end of the imprisonment. In the so-called release file various questions are completed on the situation presumably existing after the imprisonment. This information is used to determine the situation immediately after the imprisonment. For the description of the situation of former prisoners in the different areas of life six months after imprisonment, this first measurement of the Monitor of Aftercare for Former Prisoners makes use of recordings of three municipalities, i.e. Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Eindhoven. A total of about 25 per cent of the former prisoners go to these municipalities. A disadvantage of the use of information on former prisoners from three different municipalities, and therefore from three different sources of information, is that it is difficult to compare the data.

Results

Screened versus non-screened prisoners

There is no information available in DPAN on the situation in the areas of life for more than 25% of the prisoners (27.3%, N=4,188). For 969 of these prisoners, this is due to the fact that they were locked up in an institution without a social services employee. This was not a regular PI, but a detention centre for foreign nationals which had been rented on a temporary basis. Furthermore, there appeared to be no information for 213 individuals due to administrative reasons. For the other prisoners who were not screened, observations were made of the characteristics which were different from the characteristics of prisoners that had been screened. It is striking that the non-screened prisoners were locked up for a considerably shorter term than the screened prisoners. Almost three quarters (74.1%) of the non-screened prisoners were inside for less than a month and 38.4% even less than ten days. 35.4% Of the screened individuals were imprisoned for less than a month.

Situation in the different areas of life immediately preceding and immediately after the imprisonment

- Before the imprisonment, 83.7% of the prisoners had an identity card, immediately after the imprisonment 83.6%.
- 75.8% of the prisoners had an income before the imprisonment. 46.3% of the prisoners with an income before the imprisonment had an income from employment, 31.5% received a social assistance benefit and 13.6% received an invalidity benefit under the WIA (Work and Income according to Labour Capacity Act) or the Wajong (Disablement Assistance Act for Handicapped Young Persons). Immediately after the imprisonment 58.6% of the prisoners had an income.
- Before the imprisonment, 82.7% of the prisoners had accommodation, immediately after the imprisonment 82.3%. Before the imprisonment, most former prisoners were living in a rented house or with relatives. After the imprisonment more individuals lived with relatives and in temporary accommodations through social services.
- The most frequently occurring problem in the different areas of life is debts. 70.2% Of the prisoners had debts before the imprisonment. About one third (33.6%) of the prisoners with debts had a debt of 10,000 Euros or more.
- With regard to care, we have identified the percentage of prisoners who has contacts with a care institution. This is not what the PSAN aims at, as the PSAN wants to provide an overview of the need for care of prisoners and to provide care to those who need care. However, there is no information available yet on the prisoners' need for care; on the other hand, there is information on contacts with a care institution. It appears that 27.7% of the prisoners had contacts with a care institution immediately preceding the imprisonment. No information is available on the existence of debts and contacts with a care institution immediately after the imprisonment.

Well over 80% of the prisoners had a problem in at least one of the five areas of life. Most of the prisoners with problems (almost 30%) only had a problem related to debts. As far as the situation immediately after the imprisonment is concerned, this research provides information on problems relating to the identity card, income and accommodation. Immediately after the imprisonment, almost one half of the former prisoners has at least one problem in one of these areas. Immediately before the imprisonment, almost 40% of the prisoners had a problem in at least one of these three areas of life.

Change in the problems in the areas of life

The figures regarding individual changes in the problems are available for the possession of an identity card, income and accommodation. 13.4% Of the 1,203 prisoners who did not possess an identity card before the imprisonment, received an identity card during detention. 28.6% Of the prisoners who had an income before the imprisonment, lost their income during detention. 22.6% Of the prisoners who had no income before the imprisonment, had an income immediately after the imprisonment. 94.5% Of the prisoners who had an accommodation before the imprisonment, still had an accommodation that they could use after the imprisonment. 35.7% Of the prisoners who did not have an accommodation before the imprisonment, acquired an accommodation during detention.

These results must be interpreted with care. The results in respect of the change were based on data from DPAN. The problems before imprisonment were probably underreported, as the data are based on what the prisoner has told the social services employee. It appears from practice that prisoners do not always indicate that they had a problem in one of the areas of life before the imprisonment. It is difficult to identify the situation six months after the imprisonment in respect of an identity card, income, accommodation, debts and care and, as a result, it is impossible to show the change in the first six months after the imprisonment.

Relationship between background characteristics and problems and changes in the areas of life

The group who makes use of a temporary accommodation through social services (*Maatschappelijke Opvang groep, MO-groep*) has had more problems in the areas of life before the imprisonment. These are homeless people who quite often cause nuisance in the public areas by tramping about or because of their degenerate condition, or who are involved in criminal activities. Additionally, there are more problems among prisoners without a registered partner. It furthermore appears that women are more often in debt and in contact with a care institution before the imprisonment than men. With a view to problems after the imprisonment, it is striking that prisoners who were not born in the Netherlands, are less likely to have an income after the imprisonment than prisoners who were born in the Netherlands. It is also remarkable that for prisoners who have been inside more often, there is an increased chance of them not having an identity card, not having an accommodation, being in debt and having contacts with a care institution. The relationship between the background characteristics and changes in the problems for the former prisoners shows that the longer the term of imprisonment has been, the greater the increase in the chance of their losing their identity card, income or accommodation. It is also true that if they do not have these things before the imprisonment, the chance increases that they will get it during the imprisonment.

Situation of prisoners six months after imprisonment per municipality

In order to provide a picture of the situation in the different areas of life six months after the imprisonment, the data from Amsterdam, Eindhoven en Rotterdam have been applied. As these municipalities have each recorded their data in their own way, a choice was made to describe the situation in the relevant areas of life for each municipality separately. The differences between the municipalities in their way of recording makes it difficult to make comparisons between the municipalities, and it is therefore clearer to describe the outcome for each municipality separately. The municipality of *Eindhoven* records the situation of former prisoners with regard to income, accommodation and care on the day of their release. In addition, information is recorded on action plans in which prisoners with problems in the various areas of life are included after detention. 75.9% of the prisoners in Eindhoven had

an income before the imprisonment. Immediately after the imprisonment this income is 63.9% according to DPAN and 93.1 according to the municipality. This difference can probably be explained by the fact that at the end of the imprisonment it is not yet clear to a social services employee whether a prisoner has an income. 81.3% of the prisoners from Eindhoven had accommodation before the imprisonment. Immediately after the imprisonment 87.1% of the prisoners has accommodation according to DPAN and 80.4% according to the municipality. Before the imprisonment, 37.4% of the prisoners from Eindhoven had contacts with a care institution, immediately after the imprisonment 44,1%. For 28 individuals of the 57 former prisoners who were included in the action plan in Eindhoven, the action plan is still running six months after detention. For 29 individuals the action plan was completed, and for almost half of them the action plan was completed successfully. Most action plans were focused on finding employment.

In order to identify the situation of former prisoners who return to *Amsterdam* six months after detention, the data of the Municipal Health Service (*Gemeentelijke Gezondheidsdienst, GGD*) and the Department for Work and Income (*Dienst Werk en Inkomen, DWI*) of Amsterdam have been used. The GGD records information on the individuals who have contacts with Public Mental and Health Care (*Openbare Geestelijke en Gezondheidszorg, OGGz*). DWI keeps records of individuals who have been in contact with DWI in the past. After six months of detention, out of the OGGz group, 90.7% of the individuals have an income, 84.6% of the individuals have accommodation and 95.0% have contacts with a care institution. Six months after detention, 79.2% of the prisoners known at DWI have found accommodation and 49.4% of them owe the municipality money.

The city of *Rotterdam* does not have specific information on the situation six months after detention in respect of an identity card, income, accommodation, debts and care. In Rotterdam, actions are registered which are started only if a prisoner indicates that he has a problem in a specific area. We do not have any information on the situation after detention of individuals who indicate that they have not experienced any problems. Approximately 60% of the former prisoners in Rotterdam have no income on the day of their release and 86.6 had debts before the imprisonment. The actions which were started are primarily aimed at income and accommodation. Approximately 70% of the prisoners is included in two or more actions. Six months after detention, more than half of the actions have not been concluded, partly due to administrative reasons. 20 to 30% of the actions have been completed successfully. This means that the objective of the actions has been met.

Limitations

This first measurement of the Monitor of Aftercare for Former Prisoners has a number of limitations. In the first place, the problems existing in the areas of life immediately preceding the imprisonment were probably underreported, as the data are based on what the prisoner has told the social services employee. It appears from practice that prisoners do not always indicate that they had a problem in one of the areas of life before the imprisonment. This problem may be solved by adjusting DPAN. In the new version of DPAN, which has been planned for the autumn of 2010, the municipality is asked to describe the prisoner's situation. In that case, the information on the situation before detention is no longer based exclusively on the prisoner's comment, but also on the data of the municipal recording systems.

A second limitation of the research is that information on the situation at the end of the imprisonment is limited. DPAN does not keep records of debt problems and the care need and contacts with care institutions, if any, immediately after the imprison-

ment. This means that no conclusions can be drawn in respect of these two areas of life on the situation of prisoners immediately after detention.

Furthermore, it appears that it is very difficult for social services employees to indicate whether prisoners have an identity card, income or accommodation at the end of the imprisonment. It often happens that social services employees do not know whether prisoners have an identity card, income or accommodation on the day of their release. The prisoner may, however, have made appointments for the day of release or a few days later, in order to make arrangements for these issues with the municipality. Strictly speaking, there is, in that event, no identity card, income or accommodation yet on the day of their release. As a result, the figures on the problems of the situation immediately after detention will probably be higher than they actually are. DPAN will be adjusted in this respect as well, so as to ensure that starting with the new release of DPAN it will be possible to acquire more accurate information on the situation immediately after detention.

The third limitation is that for some prisoners there is no information available. Part of the prisoners (27.3%) belonging to the target group of the Aftercare policy are not screened in the PI. This means that for this group there is no information available on the problems in the areas of life immediately preceding and immediately after the imprisonment. For the monitor it is important that all prisoners are screened, and that the files are properly completed and registered.

The last limitation of this research is that it was difficult to compare the data provided by the municipalities, and that it was, consequently, impossible to provide a proper over-all impression of the situation of former prisoners six months after detention. When new measurements are made within the framework of the Monitor of Aftercare for Former Prisoners, more municipalities will be involved, in order to – ultimately – be able to make a more uniform description of the situation of former prisoners at the time when they have been in free society for six months. We will contact municipalities which are already making use of a registration system to describe the situation in the areas of life, as well as municipalities which are not recording information on their former prisoners yet. Presently, it is primarily the larger municipalities that are maintaining a recording system. In order to get a clear picture of the entire population of prisoners, it is important to describe the situation of prisoners going to smaller municipalities as well.

Future

This report presents the results of the first report of the Monitor of Aftercare for Former Prisoners. In spite of the limitations, this research identifies the characteristics of the population of prisoners in the five areas of life which are the focal point of the Programme of Comprehensive Approach to Aftercare. This provides an insight into the circumstances of the prisoners within the Dutch prison system. This first report provides, among other things, information on the different situations in the five areas of life at the start of the imprisonment and upon release from prison. The positive or negative changes cannot (yet) be allocated to the efforts of social services employees or contact persons of the municipality. At the very best, it may be determined, after various measurements of the Monitor of Aftercare for Former Prisoners, whether the harm of the imprisonment can be limited and whether the basic conditions for reintegration in respect of the identity card, income, accommodation, debts and care can be provided.

It is our intention to carry out the monitor once a year in order to get a clear picture of the execution and the development of the PSAN. For the time being, the monitor will be carried out in the same way as it was implemented this time. This means

that DPAN will remain the main source of information to provide an overview of the situation immediately preceding and immediately after the imprisonment, and that the situation six months after detention will be described on the basis of municipal data. With a view to the limitations referred to above, some adjustments will be made to the monitor. These adjustments have to do with the adjustment of DPAN and the gathering of information in the areas of life six months after detention in several municipalities. The adjustments to DPAN have been scheduled for the autumn of 2010. These adjustments will ensure a more reliable registration of the situation before and immediately after detention. We expect to be able to use the data from the adjusted DPAN for the third measurement of the Monitor of Aftercare for Former Prisoners.

As soon as the monitor provides reliable information on the areas of life immediately preceding imprisonment, immediately after imprisonment and six months after imprisonment, a link will be made with the recidivism monitor of the WODC. This will enable us to find out to what extent the prevention or solution of problems in the areas of life - identity card, income, housing, debts and care - is related to a lower recidivism rate.