

# Summary

## Background of the investigation

When juveniles between the ages of 12 and 18 commit a serious crime, the juvenile court judge may decide that he or she needs treatment to prevent the crime from being committed again. A so-called 'Placement in a correctional institution for juvenile offenders' measure (PIJ Measure) will, in such cases, be imposed on the juvenile. The juvenile is placed in a correctional institution for juvenile offenders (JJI) with the aim of reducing the chances of recidivism (protection of society) and to treat the juvenile (aimed at behavioural problems and/or psychological problems).

There are frequently incidents within the JJI's involving groups of juveniles that appear not to be suited to being accommodated in a living group. This is due in part to their personality disorders (serious problems with authority, extreme need for autonomy, serious active and passive aggression problems, use of instrumental violence, manipulative skills and the fact that they cannot easily be influenced), a limited development of conscience and a very low motivation as regards treatment. The behaviour of these juveniles seriously jeopardises the pedagogical group climate. These juveniles are regularly transferred as a result of the negative influence they exert on the development of their fellow group members and as a result of the fact that the interventions offered do not, or only barely, have the intended results. They are therefore also referred to as carousel juveniles. Their stay in the living group, the current group size within a JJI and the day programme are not sufficiently in line with the care requirements of these juveniles. Staff are, moreover, incapable to adequately supervise and treat these juveniles. The problems of these carousel juveniles were analysed further in the autumn of 2006. This resulted in a pilot at two JJI's, namely Den Hey-Acker and De Sprengen, with a specific ward for carousel juveniles, also referred to as the *Individuele Trajectafdeling* (Individual Process Ward or ITA).

On the instructions of the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC), PI Research conducted an investigation into the possible effects of the ITA

## Aim of the investigation and formulation of the issues involved

The aim of the investigation is to acquire knowledge of the possible effects of the ITA for juveniles in respect of whom a group approach within regular treatment wards has proved unsuitable. The intention is to achieve, with the aid of the ITA, a better degree of success with respect to the development of the juveniles, and more safety and calm in the groups and for the staff involved. The investigation should produce knowledge and insights on the basis of which the Minister of Justice can decide on the future of the ITA. For this purpose, the following main questions have to be answered.

1. What does an ITA entail, and does it provide promising or effective possibilities
2. Is the ITA in accordance with or contrary to the Youth Custodial Institutions (Framework) Act, and if so, in what ways?
3. How is the ITA implemented?
4. Are the objectives at the level of the juvenile being attained? Are ITA juveniles transferred back to the regular groups and do they fare better than juveniles that have been transferred or who could not be placed in an ITA?

5. Are the group targets being attained? What is the security and the group climate like in the ITA and regular groups when compared with the situation before the introduction of the ITA?
6. Are staff targets being attained?

The first two questions form part of the plan evaluation, which investigated the characteristics of the approach and its active components. The other questions are answered within the context of the process evaluation, which investigated how the ITA approach is being implemented and to what extent this implementation corresponds with the original 'paper' plan, and which assessed the results for the juveniles, the groups and members of staff.

## **Structure of the investigation and working method**

The investigation was conducted in the period of December 2008 to August 2009. Various sources of information were consulted during the term of the investigation. Relevant written material was studied for the purpose of the plan of evaluation, including the ITA plan of approach, scientific publications, notes and websites. An image of the intended target group, the programme objectives and the intended implementation of the ITA approach was created on the basis of this document analysis. Information was also collected on the intended target group and approach during interviews with key figures and treatment providers. Furthermore, literature was studied to trace the active factors (*What Works* criteria) of the approach to juveniles who display antisocial or delinquent behaviour.

Information was obtained from the two pilot institutions, De Sprengen and Den Hey-Acker, as well as from other JJI's, for the purpose of the process evaluation. Interviews were conducted with members of staff, juveniles and key figures. The practical implementation of the ITA approach was the central focus of the interviews with those directly involved in the pilots. Interviews were also held with members of staff and juveniles of two control institutions, Harreveld and Doggershoek, mainly to obtain insight into the treatment of carousel juveniles in regular wards. Various registration data were also requested. Data from the TULP system were requested in respect of juveniles who were registered for placement in an ITA. Moreover, the files of eleven juveniles who had been placed in an ITA were studied. Finally, data were requested from JJI's where ITA juveniles stayed before being placed in an ITA, with respect to incidents, staff turnover and staff absenteeism

## **Findings**

### **The ITA in theory**

#### *The intended target Group*

The intended ITA target group consists of boys who have been convicted of a serious (violent) crime and in respect of whom a PIJ Measure has been imposed. As a result of their serious personality disorders they are difficult to maintain in a group, and are consequently often transferred. The personality disorders are mainly expressed in serious problems with authority, an extreme need for autonomy, serious aggression problems, the use of instrumental violence, a lack of susceptibility to being influenced, good manipulative skills and a lack of psychiatry in the narrow sense. The boys are not very motivated as regards treatment, and the risk of recidivism is high. In addition to older PIJ detainees, younger detainees who are subject to a PIJ Measure also qualify for placement in an ITA.

#### *Intended preconditions*

The Youth Custodial Institutions (Framework) Act (BJJ) serves as the legal basis for the implementation of custodial sentences in JJI's. The ITA procedure has been laid down in paragraph 3 of the Regulations on the Selection, Placement and Transfer of Juveniles. A number of conditions have to be satisfied in order to qualify for placement in an ITA: the juvenile will have to take part in joint activities for at least six hours on weekdays and for at least four hours a day on weekends. The

juvenile requires extra supervision as a result of psychiatric or personality disorders. This is also the reason why the juvenile cannot temporarily stay in an institution with a general regime. After all, placement in an ITA is intended for stabilisation and treatment of the juvenile.

Solid preparation that takes into account the preconditions will increase the chance of a successful implementation of the ITA approach. A number of preconditions have been mentioned in the plan of approach. An important precondition concerns the formation of a selection and advisory committee, which is charged with issuing advice with respect to requests for placement of juveniles in an ITA. The committee will also be charged with providing advice and information to the selection official concerning the progress, the extension of stay and the through-flow and outflow of juveniles in an ITA. For the purpose of guiding juveniles to an ITA in a structured manner, a check-list has to be drawn up on the basis of which an assessment can be made as to whether the juvenile belongs to the intended target group. Another important precondition relates to personnel active in an ITA. The plan of approach not only describes the ideal team composition, but also indicates the competencies that ITA personnel should have, what training they should have followed and which consultative structures are important. It is furthermore important that regular evaluations take place (once every six months) in order to determine whether the ITA is still the best place for the juvenile. Finally, it may be necessary to acquire new inventory, there should be an extra activities/living area, and serious thought should be given to safety in an ITA.

#### *Intended approach*

The care offered in an ITA consists of three elements; basic care, education and individual treatment. The pedagogical climate within an ITA is based on the Social Competency Model. Various behavioural therapeutic interventions, such as the use of feedback cards, dividing the day programme into phases and the application of rewards, privileges and freedoms is used to restore balance between duties and skills. Cognitive therapeutic interventions aimed at a juvenile's moral development are also used. For the purpose of individual treatment, an analysis of the crime and a risk assessment are also performed. Treatment focuses mainly on reducing the risk factors and strengthening the protective factors. For the determination of the treatment targets, efforts are made to take into account not only the juvenile, but the system as well. The treatment targets depend on the juvenile's individual characteristics and needs. For the purpose of the proper implementation of the treatment plan, each juvenile has a designated mentor with whom he has a good working relationship. During treatment there will be continuous attention on the process of motivating the juvenile. A stay in an ITA consists of six phases: the inflow phase, which lasts at most seven days, and phases 1 to 5, which each last an average of three months. The juvenile will acquire increasingly more freedoms and privileges as he passes through phases 1 to 5, such as taking meals with the group or recreation moments in the living room. In an ITA, the juvenile's own room forms the primary living area. Work with respect to the juvenile's development is carried out during his stay in the room. In the plan of approach, a day programme that is uniform in outline was chosen. The day programme consists of a number of fixed components (including a room component, Cross Institutional Room Time, living room periods, personal care (hygiene), room cleaning duties, meals, exercise, an activities component), within which it is possible to provide custom solutions for each individual juvenile.

#### *Effective methods and techniques*

The *What Works* literature presents several characteristics of effective interventions. In addition to generally active factors, specific active factors are distinguished for juveniles displaying antisocial or delinquent behaviour. A comparison of these general and specific active factors with the ITA approach shows that the ITA approach can be considered potentially effective. For example, there is a clear structure (clear targets, planning and phasing) during stay. As the juvenile progresses through his treatment, the degree of steering and control will decrease and he will acquire increasingly more

privileges and freedoms. Each juvenile is provided with a customised solution. Supervision and treatment is not only geared towards the intellectual and practical skills of the juveniles, but the risk factors and protective factors are also taken into account. During individual treatment, or treatment in small groups, work focuses mainly on the development of practical and social skills, the development of the juvenile's conscience, and on strengthening the protective factors. For this purpose, members of staff make use of behavioural-therapeutic techniques such as feedback cards and material rewards. There is attention for motivating the juvenile, there is attention for the crimes committed (crime analysis), and the importance of a good relationship between patient and treatment provider is acknowledged. On paper, there seems to be a multi-modal approach: the intervention takes place simultaneously at multiple living areas. Finally, there is attention for well-trained staff; the ITA employees have to attend a number of training courses and other courses and are required to have certain competencies.

### *Principles of effective interventions*

The ITA gets high marks in three of the six principles that are at the basis of effective intervention, namely the needs principle, the responsivity principle and the professionalism principle. The risk principle is only complied with in part. The ITA approach is not in line with the integrity principle and the context principle. The *What Works* literature shows that programmes that endorse these principles are generally more successful and more effective in their approach to antisocial and delinquent behaviour. The effectiveness of placement in an ITA is related to the juvenile's (criminogenic) risk factors, which are considered responsible for the occurrence and maintenance of the juvenile's criminal behaviour (needs principle). The responsivity principle is met by seeking alignment with the juvenile's intellectual and practical capacities and by continuously encouraging the juvenile. There is also sufficient attention for the requirements set in respect of the ITA employees (professionalism principle). There is, however, insufficient attention for the integrity principle in the plan of approach. There are some shortcomings in the ITA's theoretical substantiation and accountability. And finally, the context principle is not complied with for as long as the juvenile is inside a JJI. The first steps towards society are not made until the last two phases of the ITA process.

### **The ITA in practice**

#### *The target group reached*

The twenty juveniles placed in an ITA in the period of January 2008 to March 2009 are on average a little over twenty years of age. The group exclusively concerns young men, often of foreign descent. The investigated files (eleven in total) show that a large number of these detainees had received a PIJ Measure for violent crimes. Many of the juveniles are also guilty of theft. The majority had been transferred to another institution at least four times before being placed in an ITA. Most of these youths have a behavioural disorder and a personality disorder, and socio-psychological and drugs and alcohol-related problems are frequent as well. The most prevalent risk factors are previous violent behaviour and evasion of supervision/intervention, stress and limited coping skills, negative opinions, and problems managing anger and aggression. Two protective factors apply to the majority of the eleven boys, namely a close bond with an adult and a positive focus on school or work. This image corresponds with the image outlined by the interviewed ITA employees. Several of the group leaders at De Sprengen indicated that the problems of the juveniles were more severe than they had anticipated.

The target group reached largely corresponds with the intended target group. It did turn out that, during the period under investigation, no younger detainees (the youngest was 18) who were subject to a PIJ Measure were as yet placed in an ITA. The target group reached mainly displays behavioural disorders, personality disorders and psychosocial problems.

### *Implementation and realised preconditions*

Following a preparation period of one year, Den Hey-Acker started to implement the ITA approach in January 2008. De Sprengen started in March 2008, following a short preparation period of three months. Generally speaking, people are reasonably satisfied with the ITA implementation. Both institutions do mention De Sprengen's short preparation period, and the fact that it consequently missed a large part of the preparation, as an impeding factor. The implementation of ITA at De Sprengen was therefore under significant time pressure and the fact that De Sprengen started later meant that Den Hey-Acker from the start did not directly have an alternative ITA available. The fact that both institutions went through different preparation processes meant that both elaborated the day programme in their own way. Another impeding factor was the inadequate manner in which juveniles were informed as to what placement in an ITA constitutes. An information brochure was published during the course of the pilot. Factors that facilitated the implementation process at Den Hey-Acker include a motivated team with enthusiastic people, solid cooperation between the various disciplines and a gradual inflow of juveniles. At De Sprengen, the availability of a sound scenario, good coordination of the process and a team with a positive attitude made a positive contribution.

During the preparation phase, both institutions were busy drawing up a number of preconditions. These comprise, for example, the activities of creating support for the ITA approach, recruiting employees, educating and training new employees, rebuilding and adapting the institutions in accordance with the ITA requirements, including the realisation of an extra living room, and the formation of clear consultative structures. At both institutions, the supervision team mainly consists of men, most of whom followed senior secondary vocational education (MBO). At the time of the interviews, De Sprengen was experiencing a personnel shortage. The supervisors of both ITA's followed a number of training courses that are referred to in the plan of approach. De Sprengen did not have enough activity areas available at the start of the implementation of the ITA, which meant that the day programme could not immediately be implemented according to plan. The provisions for fire safety were not yet entirely in order either. Consultations regularly take place at both ITA's. It has become clear that the consultative structures at both ITA's do differ from each other. Den Hey-Acker follows the plan of approach; De Sprengen opted for a somewhat different implementation.

The intended advisory committee has been established. A registration form was developed during the course of the pilot, which indicates which information and documents are required by the advisory committee in order to be able to provide advice with respect to the placement of a juvenile. An advice format was also developed in which the committee will formulate its advice. A supplement to the ITA plan of approach was written by the JJI sector Directorate in February 2009. The reason for this supplement was that there was a lack of clarity at the institutions concerning the intended ITA target group. Guiding juveniles towards an ITA proceeds in accordance with the intended procedure. The inflow of juveniles generally progresses according to plan. The number of registrations does lag behind expectations. This means that the capacity available at both ITA's is not used to the full extent.

### *Approach realised*

As regards the approach implemented in practice, it turns out that it is different at both ITA institutions. At Den Hey-Acker, phasing corresponds with the phasing contained in the plan of approach. Based on the project documentation, nothing can be said of the specific elaboration of the targets the juveniles have to achieve and the freedoms and the privileges the juvenile acquires in each phase. De Sprengen deviates from the intended phasing. Following the inflow phase, the juvenile only goes through four phases instead of five, and each phase lasts about six months instead of the three months originally intended. Substantively, the phases do largely correspond to the original plan. Both ITA institutions start realising the resocialisation of juveniles at an earlier stage than intended. The ITA

at De Sprengen also puts more emphasis on teaching self-awareness and problem-awareness than set out in the original plan.

Both ITA's use the Social Competency Model in daily practice. Music therapy, creative therapy and psychomotor therapy are used regularly. Medication is often used for regulating the juveniles' aggression. A business-like attitude in dealing with the juveniles has proved necessary.

It is not always possible in practice to implement the day programme as intended. The manipulative behaviour of some of the juveniles plays a role in this context at Den Hey-Acker. There is insufficient staff to properly structure the educational component; it is therefore not always possible to entirely meet the wishes of the juveniles as regards education. There is little variation in the day programme and the components with planned activities turned out difficult to organise in view of their size. De Sprengen is reasonably successful at sticking to the day programme. However, there is at De Sprengen also a limited offer of activities and there are few options for work-related training. It was initially difficult for both institutions to draw up individual programmes; during the course of the pilot the institutions were better able to gear the day programme towards the specific juveniles involved. It regularly happens that juveniles are not motivated to participate in certain activities, which means that they stay in their room in such cases.

#### *Incidents, sickness absence and staff turnover*

The carousel juveniles registered for an ITA come from 11 JJI's. Data on incidents, sickness absence and staff turnover were requested from these JJI's. To the extent the relevant data were provided, a distinction was made for the relevant wards where the juveniles came from between the period that they stayed in this group and the period that they did not stay in this group.

The average number of incidents per month is higher at several JJI's when juveniles registered for an ITA are present at the ward, while at other JJI's the average number of incidents per month was actually lower when juveniles registered for an ITA were present. It would therefore seem that the presence of registered carousel juveniles does not influence the number of incidents. This image is confirmed by the information obtained from interviews with the treatment providers. The number of incidents was different from that of other wards, but the incidents of the past were more intense and had a greater impact. The question of whether the presence or absence of the ITA juveniles is of influence on the level of sickness absence and staff turnover cannot be answered unequivocally. The general picture of the situation fluctuates to such an extent that no statements can be made in this respect. There are also many other factors, such as seasonal influences and the working atmosphere between co-workers, that can influence these variables, these factors were however not part of the investigation.

#### *Targets attained by the juveniles*

The targets for the juveniles set out in the files are formulated quite generally. No statement can be made on the basis of the files with respect to the extent to which they have actually been attained. The interviewed treatment providers are, however, moderately positive about the results achieved.

During the period of the investigation several of the juveniles in the pilot left the ITA for another destination. The reasons therefore included expiry of PIJ processes, placement in the adult circuit and placement in the Pieter Baan centre. None of the juveniles was placed back to a regular treatment ward or resocialised in society during the period of the investigation. None of the ITA juveniles was transferred to another ITA, or to a regular treatment ward, during the investigation either, which is positive. There are data available from one ITA institution concerning the phase in which the juveniles found themselves at the time of the investigation (February 2009). It was hard to determine this exactly because juveniles are often placed back a phase, for example as a result of an incident, a sanction or if they return late from leave. Of the five juveniles who were staying in the ITA in De Sprengen in

February 2009, three were in phase 3, one was in phase 2 or 3 and one boy was in phase 1. The latter is remarkable because, at that time, the relevant boy had already been in the ITA since February 2008 (one year).

## **Conclusion**

This investigation analysed the ITA approach on the basis of knowledge of the active factors and components of interventions for antisocial and delinquent juveniles. Pursuant to the above, it can be concluded that the ITA is reasonably promising in theory. The description of the ITA partly corresponds with the six principles of effective interventions, and the intended approach within an ITA has the necessary elements that are demonstrably effective ('active'). Three of the six principles are complied with in full. Gains can be made in the substantiation of the choices made in the plan of approach. Currently, the plan of approach does not make a direct link between the object, the target group and the approach. It cannot currently be deduced that the desired reduction of the risk of violence or recidivism of carousel juveniles can be realised due to or as a result of the ITA approach. A sound theory requires insight in the causal links in the chain of "target group – intervention – objective". Moreover, theoretical substantiation must be provided with respect to which mechanisms are responsible for the intended effects, and on which grounds or assumptions the procedure is based. The plan could also devote more attention to possible interventions that could be deployed as needed.

The second conclusion is that, in practice, the implementation of the ITA approach progresses partly as set out in the plan of approach. The characteristics of the target group reached generally correspond well with that of the intended target group. During the investigation period, however, no younger detainees subject to a PIJ Measure were placed in an ITA. Moreover, as regards the problems of the target group reached, it may be noted that psychiatric problems are frequently present. The implementation of the programme, both in terms of content and organisation, did not always progress as intended. Where the ITA approach, in theory, largely corresponds with the principles of effective interventions, this is not always the case in practice. It also proved impossible to create two comparable wards, meaning that we cannot really speak of "the" ITA. Differences between the programme as described and the programme as implemented can undermine a successful approach, because certain components, which are supposed to effectively contribute to the results, are not or not entirely implemented in accordance with the original intention.

No conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the collected data concerning the influence of ITA juveniles on the rate of absence due to illness and staff turnover. At two of the seven institutions, the number of incidents at some wards was higher in the period in which ITA juveniles were present. To what extent this was exclusively caused by the presence of the ITA juveniles cannot be established. No statements can be made at this time about the extent to which the ITA contributes to successful resocialisation or re-placement in a regular treatment ward. The extent to which the targets for the individual juveniles are attained cannot be established on the basis of the research data. However, no juveniles have been transferred since the start of the ITA approach, which can be considered as a positive result.

## **Points for attention**

The investigation presents a number of points that have to be taken into account if the ITA is to be continued.

At the time of the investigation, the capacity available of both ITA's (eight juveniles per ITA) was insufficiently used. If a decision is made to implement the ITA approach in a structural manner, it is important to further assess the reasons for the fact that the inflow of juveniles is lagging behind the

original expectations. Does this mean that there is an insufficient need for such a ward, or are there other factors that play a role?

At the time of the investigation, the only detainees subject to a PIJ Measure who were placed in an ITA were older detainees. Some of them were already at the end of their PIJ Measure. This means that they did not go through the entire process as intended. The extent to which their stay in the ITA was successful is therefore difficult to assess. In order to gain insight into the effects of a stay in an ITA, it would be desirable for the juveniles to go through the entire process. A certain approach and term were chosen on the basis of a certain vision, which will be invalid if the juveniles do not go through the entire process.

Some ITA employees were insufficiently aware of the seriousness of the problems of the juveniles. A number of juveniles were insufficiently aware of what staying in an ITA consists of and what would be awaiting them there. The provision of sufficient information to both future personnel and the target group is of great importance for successful implementation.

Structural implementation of the ITA approach requires that other preconditions are also realised. This means ensuring a sufficient number of employees and sufficient possibilities for offering juveniles an individual offer.

The approach and implementation of the ITA approach is currently only uniform in part at both institutions. This makes it impossible to speak of "the" ITA in general. If a decision is made to introduce the ITA approach structurally, it would be desirable to align both ITA's with each other more than is currently the case.

The current investigation was only partly successful in making a statement on the extent to which the targets for juveniles, the groups and for members of staff were achieved. A follow-up investigation would be desirable. As long as both ITA's are not uniform and the ITA approach has not yet been fully crystallised, it would not be desirable to perform an effects investigation. Systematic collection of data concerning the target group, the interventions and the results of the approach could be started at both ITA's. The results of a study of this data could subsequently be used for further development of the ITA approach.