

SUMMARY

Introduction

This study focuses on the question whether the subjective chance of arrest of youth offenders and youngsters who display anti-social behaviour in the Dutch town of Tilburg has increased as a result of the deployment of a package of measures that has been developed at the national level.

In 2009, the Action Plan Increasing Chance of Arrest¹ was drawn up. This approach is part of the Youth Crime Action Programme² of the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice (2007-2010), and within this programme it is part of the project 'Timely Intervention'.³ The plan consists of 26 measures to increase the chance of arrest. These measures have been identified on the basis of a literature study and interviews with experts from the field. The measures have been tested in three pilot municipalities, one of which is Tilburg. Since the start of the pilot in Tilburg, six youth groups have been involved in the approach. On behalf of this evaluation, three youth groups have been selected. This selection was based on the length of time the group had been included in the approach, the type of group, the ages of its members, the project leader and the measures of the action plan that were applied.

The study shows that the measures of the approach in Tilburg have been deployed in such a way, that they are probably effective. However, a number of improvements can be made with regard to the way the measures are being carried out, which could lead to the optimisation of the effect.

Method

The study has been conducted by means of a theory-driven evaluation. This method is described in detail in chapters 1 and 3. In short, a theory-driven evaluation means that an explanation is formulated, which has been tested against relevant knowledge from scientific literature, of how, with regard to which target group and under which circumstances a programme is supposed to work (the reconstruction of the programme logic). Subsequently, in practice it is tested whether the programme is carried out in accordance with this reconstruction. If this is the case, the approach is probably effective.

¹ Plan van Aanpak Verhogen Pakkans.

² Programma Aanpak Jeugdcriminaliteit.

³ Vroegtijdig Ingrijpen.

The programme logic is reconstructed by means of a plan evaluation. In this study, the plan evaluation entailed the studying of available documents on the approach, carrying out group conversations with the project teams of the selected youth groups, and a literature study. In each phase the programme logic was further reconstructed and tested. Subsequently, the process evaluation was carried out. In order to do this, the available documents on the execution of the approach have been studied and interviews have been held with the individual executive parties. Information has also been gathered on the output of the measures. Together, this led to a clear view of the execution of the approach in Tilburg. This was compared to the conceptual model and in this way, it has been determined whether the Tilburg pilot can be called successful. In addition, its success and failure factors have been identified.

The programme logic reconstructed

The programme logic of the approach as it is being deployed in Tilburg, has been reconstructed in the plan evaluation and rendered in a conceptual model. Strengthening the social capital of the neighbourhood where the youth group is displaying anti-social behaviour or criminally active, is at the basis of this model. Subsequently, this puts into effect three mechanisms, which in part mutually reinforce each other. These mechanisms are:

- Removing the anonymity of youngsters and increasing the visibility of their behaviour;
- Higher readiness to report from the side of residents and professionals;
- Intensification of actual enforcement (with regard to observed or reported (criminal) behaviour).

The measures of the approach contribute to strengthening social capital and/or starting the process of one or more of these mechanisms. Together this leads to increasing the subjective chance of arrest.

Deployment in practice

In practice, in Tilburg the measures are largely carried out as anticipated in the reconstructed programme logic. This means that the execution contributes to putting into effect the mechanisms of the conceptual model, and by means of these mechanisms it contributes to a higher chance of arrest. However, not all measures are carried out (in accordance with the programme logic). The result is that the mechanisms are probably not optimally put into effect. Currently, the chance of arrest is particularly increased by means of removing the anonymity of youngsters and increasing the visibility of their behaviour.

Success factors with regard to deployment are: the involvement of the ‘Care and Safety House’⁴ as partner in the approach; embedment of the approach in the regular work activities of the executive partners; and a close cooperation relation between these parties. The Care and Safety House has means to follow and support youngsters and to involve relevant chain partners; embedment of the approach in regular work activities means that the continuity of the approach is guaranteed (however, it also leads to occasional pressure on the capacity); and the close cooperation relation means that those involved know each other well and know how to find each other when this is necessary.

Points for improvement mainly concern the execution of the approach in accordance with the programme logic. So far, with regard to a number of measures little progress has been made in Tilburg. In particular, this applies to the following measures: Moroccan ‘neighbourhood fathers’/neighbourhood prevention scheme, measures that are focused on increasing the readiness to report and the use of summary jurisdiction. With regard to the use of camera surveillance, following the most troublesome youngsters within a youth group and strengthening the social capital of a neighbourhood, the conditions under which these measures can be effective are not always taken into account. In addition, a number of risks can be identified concerning the effectiveness of the approach. These risks are:

- Involving youth work as a source of information for the municipality and the police; this could damage the trust relationship between youth workers and youngsters;
- Insufficiently distinguishing between youngsters in a youth group who have committed serious offences and youngsters who do not belong to the ‘hard core’, which may lead to incriminating the latter group.

Conclusion

The execution of the approach in Tilburg is expected to result in a higher subjective chance of arrest among those groups of youth offenders and youngsters who display anti-social behaviour to which the approach is applied. The nuisance caused by these youngsters and the number of crimes they commit, have decreased. It turns out that the type of youth group does not clearly influence the result of the approach. The socio-economic status of the neighbourhood, the values local residents share, and the extent to which the approach is carried out in accordance with the programme logic are more decisive for the effect.

This result can be further optimised by carrying out all measures in accordance with the programme logic and by taking into account the points of interest and risks that are described in the study.

⁴ Zorg- en Veiligheidshuis.

The approach is very suitable to be adopted by other municipalities that have to contend with inconvenience and crime of youth groups. It is, however, important that the measures are coherently implemented. Together, the measures put into operation the mechanisms of the conceptual model, and together these mechanisms lead to a higher chance of arrest. Putting into operation only one or only a number of measures is expected to be less effective.