Los van drank
Procesevaluatie Haltafdoening Alcohol
Summary
The so-called Halt Settlement Alcohol (Haltafdoening Alcohol in Dutch) has been applied since 2006. This intervention focuses on young people between twelve and eighteen years of age who have committed either an APV offence1 or a criminal offence while being under the influence of alcohol. After the police have referred the young offender, the intervention often includes several talks with Halt staff and an educational project of approximately six hours at an addiction treatment centre. The parents of the youngster are not only present at the Halt talk(s), but they participate in a parent meeting which is organized by the addiction treatment centres as well.

The Halt Settlement Alcohol has been implemented in the Dutch pilot regions of Flevoland, Gelderland, Gooi & Vechtstreek, IJsselland, Limburg Noord, Oost-Brabant and Twente. The former Dutch Ministry of Justice has shown some interest in expanding the Halt Settlement Alcohol to other Halt regions as well, provided the intervention is effective. This must be assessed on the basis of an evaluation of the effects of the intervention. In order to be able to assess the effects of the Halt Settlement Alcohol correctly, it is a prerequisite for the Halt Settlement Alcohol to be implemented rather uniformly in all the regions. That is why a process evaluation was carried out, which focused on the question to what extent the Halt Settlement Alcohol was implemented as intended. At the same time it could be analyzed whether the quality criteria of the Dutch Accreditation Committee for Behavioural Interventions (Erkenningscommissie Gedragsinterventies in Dutch) were observed. This report can be regarded as an account of the process evaluation, which was based on the following research questions:

1. Is the intervention applied to the intended target group? Do the police refer the right target group to Halt? (Do the police refer all young offenders who could be eligible for the programme?) and does Halt refer the right target group to the programme organized by the addiction treatment centres? What, if any, problems occur? Do unintended selection effects occur in practice?
2. To what extent is the parents’ and youth’s motivation taken into account? Are any efforts made to enhance their motivation?
3. Have any participants dropped out and if so, what are the drop-out rates? Under what circumstances and for what reasons? Does the group of drop-outs share any specific characteristics?
4. Do staff who implement the Halt component of the programme and staff who implement the educational project component coordinate their activities or do they work together? If so, what does this entail in practice? How do the parties involved value the cooperation? Are problems identified and if so, what kind of problems?
5. Is the Halt Settlement implemented in practice as described in the project plan? Was the original plan adhered to, and if not, why not?
6. Are there any differences among the treatment centres with respect to the implementation approach and if so, what do these differences relate to?
7. To what extent do the parents participate in the programme? If they do not participate, why not?
8. How does the intervention work in practice and is this in line with the assumptions underpinning it? What elements are effective according to those involved?
9. How do staff and participants value the intervention?
10. Are there any bottlenecks which hamper or hinder implementation? If so, what are they?
11. In what respects should the implementation be adapted in order to attain a ‘sound implementation’?

The study made use of a range of research activities, including a literature search and document exploration, expert interviews and interviews with regional representatives of the police, Halt Bureaus and the addiction treatment centres. Also, a further analysis was made of the target group of young offenders for whom the Halt Settlement Alcohol is designed and who are referred to the programme in practice. In addition, both the addiction treatment centre staff and the young people and their parents were asked their opinions on some aspects of the Halt Settlement Alcohol. The opinions of the group of young offenders were compared with the answers they had given in the evaluation forms which they had filled out after having completed the educational project. Finally, some educational project meetings for the young offenders and parent meetings were observed, in order to assess whether the way in which the programme was implemented in practice was in line with the regional action plans.

The Halt Settlement Alcohol is an intervention in the making. The intervention originally started in the Achterhoek (a region in the province of Gelderland). Some elements from the Limburg Noord region were added and the scope was gradually widened to seven pilot regions. To enable other Halt regions to develop a more or less uniform Halt Settlement Alcohol, the so-called Checklist Haltafdoening Alcohol was developed (Bovens, 2009).
This checklist offers new regions a framework, based on the action plans of the seven pilot regions, for shaping the intervention.

National experts were asked what elements of the Halt Settlement Alcohol programme were effective. Relevant information concerning alcohol abuse, interaction among the young participants themselves, and involving the parents and securing their cooperation were mentioned. According to regional police officials and Halt and addiction treatment centre staff as well, interaction among the young participants themselves was an effective part of the programme.

Aspects which need more consideration in the Halt Settlement Alcohol programme include the sometimes long period of time between the offence committed and the intervention, and the fact that the journey between the place of residence and the place where the meetings were held was sometimes quite long.

An important element of the process evaluation consisted of determining whether the intended target group was actually referred. The checklist and regional plans loosely define the target group, as a result of which virtually every ‘Halt candidate’ between twelve and eighteen years of age met the definition. It also turned out that every region used contraindications that differed from the ones in the checklist. Furthermore, in several regions the police did not refer all young offenders, because of special regulations in the regional enforcement laws or because they thought the referral procedure was too cumbersome. Moreover, in certain regions criminal cases were mainly dealt with by Judicial Case Consultation (Justitieel Casusoverleg or JCO in Dutch), and so young candidates were not referred to the Halt Settlement Alcohol programme.

This process evaluation shows that the way in which the Halt Settlement Alcohol programme was implemented in Gelderland was not copied in exactly the same manner by the other six pilot regions. There were some local variations, a couleur locale. The following differences were found:

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<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Differences</th>
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<tr>
<td>Enforcement regulations</td>
<td>There was no uniform list of law articles.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The APV articles were not identically phrased.</td>
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<td>Processes</td>
<td>There were different programme managers or there was no programme manager at all.</td>
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<td>(continued on page 18)</td>
<td>Police were not certain as to when to refer people (on the basis of Tobias or LOF).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sometimes potential referrals were sent to JCO instead</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The letters of invitation to parents differed across the regions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Parent turnout rates varied across the regions.</td>
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The enforcement regulations, the regional lists of APV and criminal law articles on the basis of which young offenders can be referred to the Halt Settlement Alcohol differed, causing interregional legal inequality. Strictly speaking, there is even intraregional legal inequality, because our study shows that police officials referred (or not) on their own initiative. In some regions inequality was reinforced by the practice of referring criminal cases involving alcohol consumption by young offenders to Judicial Case Consultation. Some other regions, in contrast, acted on the principle that as many referrals as possible should be made to Halt Settlement Alcohol if alcohol consumption played a role in an established APV or criminal offence. In any case, more and more people are saying that a distinction should be made between programmes for young APV offenders and criminal law offenders, and between twelve- and thirteen-year-olds and those fourteen years of age and older in the Halt Settlement Alcohol. It is striking however, that the Limburg Noord region, as the only region that uses this distinction, was considering to stop using it, because they wanted to carry out as few individual counselling programmes as possible and to hold as many group meetings as possible instead.

Regarding the process, this study shows that the programme was not uniformly implemented in all regions. Basically, the police provide the referrals, Halt takes care of the intake meetings with the young offenders and their parents, and the addiction treatment centres offer the educational projects for the young offenders and the parent meetings. Every region had its own way of doing these things, however. The police, as primary force behind the number of referrals to Halt Settlement Alcohol, deserve extra attention. In some regions the police made many referrals, in other regions the number of referrals stagnated or decreased. Our study shows that in regions where many referrals were made the procedure was clear to the police and the necessity of the Halt Settlement Alcohol was widely propagated. Regular sessions with respect to police expert training, organized by Halt and the addiction treatment centres, might contribute to a larger number of referrals. In this context it is important to invest seriously in explaining the Halt Settlement Alcohol programme and in simplifying the police procedures right from the
beginning. The latter should of course be done in cooperation with the Public Prosecutor Service and the municipalities, which are responsible for enforcing the local bylaws. In any case, the different processes had few consequences for the dropout rates among the young offenders, because dropout was rare. The different processes did however lead to fluctuations in parent turnout rates at the parent meetings; these rates varied from 30 percent to 100 percent. It is tentatively concluded that the reasons for these differences can be traced back to the way in which the parents were invited by letter and whether or not parent meetings were planned simultaneously with the educational project for the young participants.

In general, the young participants and their parents were positive about the Halt Settlement Alcohol. The young participants found little fault with the coaches and moreover, they indicated they had learnt a couple of things from the programme; they were giving more thought now to their own alcohol consumption. The parents also had a predominantly neutral to positive attitude towards the parent meeting and its contents.

Interviews with coaches held after having observed some of the educational projects made it clear that these coaches each had their own way of carrying out the educational project; some tried to make the meetings pleasant and loosened the reins, while others preferred more serious meetings with strict(er) rules of behaviour. Some coordination by means of a working instruction seems to be necessary here. The interviews have provided more suggestions for optimizing the meetings, e.g. providing information about amendments to the Licensing and Catering Act (Drank en Horecawet in Dutch) that will be implemented in the foreseeable future, and the use of a breath sample test to better assess whether young people are under the influence of alcohol.

Not every region used all the modules recommended in the checklist. Also, many regions used modules they had developed themselves. The checklist thus seems to have become a ‘common denominator’, which leads to the conclusion that the intervention needs to be uniformized more in order to be called ‘the’ Halt Settlement Alcohol. This could be done, for example, by means of a national script. In this script the Halt Settlement Alcohol will be worked out in detail and the final result will be a working instruction including exemplary documents (letters and modules to be used) for all parties involved.

All in all, we can conclude that it is possible to carry out an effect evaluation. The scale of the effect evaluation should be taken into consideration, however: should all seven pilot regions be included or should a selection be made? It is not clear what effects are measured exactly when pilot regions with different working procedures participate. For an effect evaluation to be adequate, uniformity with regard to the following elements is required, at least in the regions to be studied:
We will now outline three scenarios with different effect evaluation designs. These scenarios are all based on the assumption that control regions are available, however. An additional condition for all three scenarios is that non-pilot regions are not allowed to start the intervention until further notice, because this might reduce the chances of having appropriate control regions available.

**Scenario 1: First uniformize the intervention and then carry out the effect evaluation**

This scenario proceeds from the assumption that an effect evaluation will indeed be carried out in the seven pilot regions, as was originally intended. One requirement is that all the regional interventions be brought together in the national script, which among other things has been based on the findings of the process evaluation. This will affect the processes concerning the intervention and the modules of the educational project. We assume that it will take approximately one year to complete this process, after which a shortened process evaluation will be carried out again to determine how uniformly the regions work. Then the effect evaluation will be carried out.

**Scenario 2: Focus on growth regions and use their experiences to optimize the intervention**

This scenario concentrates on the Oost-Brabant and Twente regions, because in terms of numbers these regions offer the possibility to carry out an effect evaluation. This scenario can be more easily implemented than scenario 1. However, it comes with certain conditions.

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<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Minimum conditions for the pilot regions to be studied</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Processes</strong></td>
<td>Bring into line referral criteria and processes, regarding both police and Public Prosecutor Service for all regions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Provide police with expert training regularly.</td>
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<td>Bring into line the number and nature of Halt talks for all regions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Use identical letters of invitation to parents / young people in all the regions.</td>
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<td>Schedule parent meeting simultaneously with the first meeting with the young participants.</td>
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<td><strong>Target group</strong></td>
<td>Bring into line the target group definition for all regions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bring into line the contraindications for all regions and observe them.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Content of the educational project</strong></td>
<td>Make the content of the educational project identical. - Set the number of youth meetings in the centres at two meetings of a fixed number of hours.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>Develop a working instruction for coaches, including demands on the coaches’ attitudes and minimum requirements regarding motivational dialogue techniques.</td>
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It is important, for example, that both regions adapt their interventions to the national script which needs to be developed first. If it turns out that the Twente region is not able to implement the national script straightaway, it is possible to carry out the effect evaluation in the Oost-Brabant region only, because of the (high) number of referrals in this region. The findings of the effect evaluation can then be used to further develop and optimize the intervention in order to be officially accredited.

**Scenario 3: Two regions which subject their interventions to an effect evaluation**

This scenario also focuses on the Oost-Brabant and Twente regions. These regions continue to implement the Halt Settlement Alcohol each in their own way; the Halt Settlements in these two regions are thus regarded as separate interventions. Then an effect evaluation of these two interventions will be carried out.

**Notes**

1. An offence against a municipality's General Local Bylaws (Algemene Plaatselijke Verordening in Dutch).
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Summary
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