

Review

Assessment of Police Cadet Junior

Background and objectives:

- The aim of the report is to assess the Western Copenhagen Police's Police Cadet Junior programme, a crime prevention project targeting 12-14-year-olds.
- The project initially targeted children whom professionals and service providers working with children view as being at risk of or vulnerable to ending up in criminal circles. This was later changed to an application-based selection procedure.
- In the programme, children participate in a number of activities with police officers with the aim of strengthening their sense of self-worth, citizenship, prosocial values, understanding of the consequences of crime and their focus on education and job opportunities.

Research design:

- The report is based on police data on 150 children who participated in Police Cadet Junior in 2015-2019.
- The description of Police Cadet Junior is also based on field notes from one of the programmes as well as interviews with five children.

Findings:

- 18 per cent of the children who participated in Police Cadet Junior were registered as having been involved in police cases etc.¹ *before* their participation in the programme.
- 13 per cent of the children who participated in Police Cadet Junior were registered as having been involved in police cases etc. *during* their participation in the programme.
- 37 per cent of the children who participated in Police Cadet Junior were registered as having been involved in police cases etc. in the first 12 months *after* their participation in the programme.
- Over time there is a tendency towards a rising share of the children getting involved in police cases etc. This is expected due to the well-documented relationship between age and crime.
- An analysis of the age-crime curves for different cohorts of children who get the opportunity to participate in Police Cadet Junior at different ages does not indicate that the programme has a crime prevention effect.
- However, we cannot exclude the possibility that the participating children who are at risk of² would have increased their involvement in crime to a greater extent in the absence of the programme.
- During the interviews, some of the participating children expressed that they had improved their refusal skills and ability to handle conflicts. They indicated that they liked the relationship with the other participants and the police officers and that they gained an insight into and respect for police work. Some children indicated that they gained a better understanding of the consequences of crime. However, these results may not be representative of all the participating children and cannot be generalised.

¹ Police cases etc. cover criminal cases and other police cases where the children are either charged with, suspected of or encountered in relation to the case.