

Review

The Youth Crime Board Meeting - evaluation of the Danish Youth Crime Board

Background and objectives:

- In 2018, the Danish Parliament passed a political reform addressing serious youth crime. As part of the reform, the Danish Youth Crime Board (*Ungdomskriminalitetsnævnet*) was established in 2019.
- The objective of the Youth Crime Board is to prevent youth crime by appointing targeted individual preventive actions for young individuals aged 10-17 who are suspected of (10- to 14-year olds) or who have received a custodial sentence (15- to 17-year olds) for having committed violent offences or other serious offences.
- The Youth Crime Board consists of a judge, a police employee with insight into crime prevention and a municipal employee with insight into social support for vulnerable children and adolescents. The Board has the authority to determine if a referred child/adolescent is to be enrolled in a prevention and rehabilitation programme (*forbedringsforløb*), to impose an immediate reaction (*straksreaktion*) on the child/adolescent, to decide on a combination of the two or to decide on no action. Subsequently, the municipal authority is responsible for implementing the Board's decision.
- This report is the first of six parts of an evaluation programme and focuses on assessing the Board meetings.

Research design:

- The study is based on the following quantitative and qualitative data:
 - 1,035 cases handled by the Youth Crime Board from January 2019 to August 2020 (these cases involved 1,025 children/adolescents),
 - information from an individual reading of 100 sample cases,
 - a questionnaire answered by professionals, such as Board members,
 - interviews with professionals, and
 - interviews with children/adolescents who had their case handled by the Board.

Findings:

- 84 per cent of the children/adolescents whose cases were reviewed by the Youth Crime Board were boys.
- The number of children/adolescents aged 10-14 and 15-17 were approximately the same.
- The majority of the children/adolescents were of Danish origin. However, descendants from non-Western countries were represented particularly in the group of 10- to 14-year olds.
- Around a quarter of the 1,025 children/adolescents were placed in out-of-home care prior to the Board meeting.
- The study also found that the majority of the cases were referred due to violent offences.
- In 71 per cent of the cases a prevention and rehabilitation programme was imposed, in 1 per cent of the cases an immediate action was decided, in 2 per cent of the cases both a prevention/rehabilitation programme and an immediate action were enforced and for 27 per cent no action was imposed.
- Out of the 100 sample cases, more than half of the children/adolescents were receiving at least one preventive measure through the Danish Social Services Act at the time of the Board meeting and 29 were identified as having a psychiatric diagnosis, primarily ADHD or ADD.

- The majority of the interviewees – across occupational groups – expressed that they perceive the Youth Crime Board as relevant and meaningful in most cases. They expressed that the Youth Crime Board contributes with a greater focus on the crime perspective in the cases, compared to when a case is handled by the municipalities. In addition, the Board is found to ensure that the municipal authorities implement the necessary measures.