



National reports of knowledge-based interventions for preventing juvenile delinquency within social care

A scoping review of publications from the Nordic countries

SBU POLICY SUPPORT | EVIDENCE ASSESSMENT TO SUPPORT DECISION MAKERS IN SWEDEN

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Summary

Background

Even if only a small fraction of children and young people who commit crime engage in criminal behavior over time, the risk of recidivism is high once a pattern of criminality becomes established. Interventions to prevent the development of reoccurring criminal behaviors among children and young people (i.e., juvenile delinquency), is imperative. Accessible interventions should be based on the best available knowledge in order to efficiently prevent juvenile delinquency. Several stakeholders, agencies, and authorities on national level contribute to the development, dissemination, and implementation of knowledge-based interventions. Increasing access to knowledge-based interventions is essential and recognised as a top priority within the Nordic countries in their efforts to prevent juvenile delinquency.

Purpose and target group

The purpose of this report is to review reports published by agencies and authorities on national level in the Nordic countries, assessing knowledge-based interventions for preventing juvenile delinquency. The report further aims to highlight differences and similarities in the reports specific to each country and recommend suitable domains for sharing Nordic experiences.

National reports assessing knowledge-based interventions

SBU has identified a total of 30 national reports assessing knowledge-based interventions published in the Nordic countries based on a set of predefined criteria. The identified reports, as well as differences and similarities between Nordic countries, are presented in a digital and [interactive map](#). The identified reports include a wide range of interventions, directed to different sub-groups of individuals, provided in different contexts with different preventive aims. The reports also vary in type of knowledge that has been included and assessed, as well as type of conclusions drawn about the efficacy of the interventions.



Differences and similarities between the Nordic countries

A summary of some of the observed differences and similarities between Nordic countries are provided in Table 1.

Potential domains for Nordic experience sharing

SBU has identified two overarching domains suitable for sharing Nordic experiences, based on differences and similarities in national reports assessing knowledge-based interventions for preventing juvenile delinquency.

Addressing knowledge gaps

The first domain involves addressing knowledge gaps and contributing to the development of knowledge regarding effective crime preventive interventions at the national level. This could involve adopting a more systematic approach to developing methods and models for the implementation and evaluation of promising interventions. SBU recognises the need to integrate perspectives related to childrens' rights, particularly vulnerable groups, and the presence of coexisting issues into the knowledge development process. Examples of knowledge gaps identified by SBU based on the Nordic reports are:

- interventions aimed to prevent recidivism for children who commit serious crimes,
- interventions intended to be provided within institutional care, and
- interventions aimed to prevent the emergence of juvenile delinquency directed to the whole population or sub-groups of the population regardless of risk factors on individual level.

Contribute to dissemination of knowledge-based interventions

The second domain involves contributing to the wider and coordinated dissemination of knowledge-based interventions. For instance regarding:

- the possibility to coordinate the dissemination of knowledge-based interventions on national level in order to better guide professionals in social care,
- the opportunity to broaden the scope of how preventive approaches are defined, and

- the challenge of balancing the importance cross-sectoral collaboration for intervention success without collaboration replacing accessibility to evidence-based interventions.

Methods

The project has not been conducted according to the standard SBU methodology, but instead adopted an explorative and iterative approach with respect to the search process, selection, categorisation, and choice of domains for sharing experiences within the Nordic countries. The work has been carried out in close collaboration and dialogue with experts and representatives from Sweden and the other Nordic countries.

Table 1 Summary of some observed differences and similarities between Nordic countries.

Examples of differences and similarities based on the Nordic reports	
The preventive aim of the intervention for a specific population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interventions preventing the development or establishment of juvenile delinquency for high-risk individuals are most common across the Nordic countries. • Interventions preventing the development of juvenile delinquency, directed to the general public or the whole population are only mentioned in reports from Denmark and Norway.
Target age group for the intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interventions targeting young people or adolescents are most common across the Nordic countries. • Interventions targeting parent of young children (<6 years) are only mentioned in reports from Norway and Sweden.
Context in which the intervention is provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interventions provided in out-patient care and social services are most common across the Nordic countries. • Interventions provided in institutional care are most often mentioned in reports from Finland and Norway. • Interventions provided within the context of civil society are most often mentioned in reports from Denmark and Finland.
Aspect of the intervention perceived to facilitate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most common interventions across the Nordic countries are those who target family relationships, parenting skills, and skills and abilities of the youth in question. • Interventions providing education and job-related opportunities are most often mentioned in reports from Denmark.

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Table 1 continued

Examples of differences and similarities based on the Nordic reports	
Whether the report was published before 2019 or after	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of identified reports were published prior to 2019. Denmark has the highest proportion of reports published prior to 2019.
Type of knowledge reviewed and method for synthesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most common approach across the Nordic countries involved a systematic review of studies evaluating the efficacy of interventions. The most common approach to synthesise data regarding the efficacy of interventions was narrative. Meta-analysis as a method for synthesise data where only used in reports from Norway and Sweden. Assessing the relevance of data to Nordic conditions where more common in reports from Denmark and Finland.
Type of conclusion drawn by the authors of the report regarding the efficacy of interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In all countries, the most common conclusion is a description of the necessary conditions for an intervention to be successful, i.e. effective. The most commonly occurring prerequisite mentioned across the countries are the need for cross-sectional collaboration. Conclusions about the significance of context occurs most often in Norway, conclusions addressing the significance of targeting specific subgroups occurs most often in Denmark, and conclusions regarding interventions being ineffective or counterproductive occurs most often in Sweden.

Project group

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