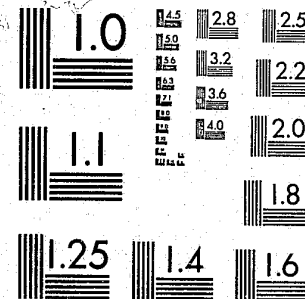


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**XXVIII**

A STUDY OF THE ALLOCATION OF TIME  
IN THE PROBATION AND AFTER-CARE SERVICE  
IN THE NETHERLANDS

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Ministry of Justice The Hague - Netherlands

1979

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ACQUISITIONS

A STUDY OF THE ALLOCATION OF TIME  
IN THE PROBATION AND AFTER-CARE SERVICE  
IN THE NETHERLANDS

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The Hague, 1 April 1979

Research and Documentation Centre - Ministry of Justice

A STUDY OF THE ALLOCATION OF TIME IN THE PROBATION AND AFTER-CARE SERVICE  
IN THE NETHERLANDS\*

Probation and after-care in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the responsibility of caring for people coming into contact with the criminal law is allotted to a special social work agency. Unlike those in the English-speaking countries, this service is not organised separately for probation on the one hand and parole and after-care on the other. Thus the service is active on behalf of offenders from their initial contact with the police up to and including after-care (if they are convicted). This period can be divided up into phases: early intervention at the police office, pretrial detention, detention, presentence reports for the courts and counselling during after-care. Assistance to clients is important in all these phases, but in addition services are rendered to the judicial authorities, mostly by making presentence reports for the court and also in connection with conditional release if the offender has been sentenced to a longer term (about nine months). Clients usually come into contact with the probation and after-care service because the Public Prosecutor or Examining Magistrate asks for a presentence report. In practically every case the client has the right to choose whether or not he remains in contact with the agency. To sum up, the agency assists the clients and also makes (presentence) reports to the judiciary.

Probation and after-care in the Netherlands is mainly carried out by three large private organisations, which are 100% grant-aided by the Ministry of Justice. The largest of these is the Probation and After-Care Association; rather smaller is the Salvation Army's Probation and After-Care department, and finally probation and after-care is also undertaken by the Consultation Bureaus for Alcoholics and Drug Addicts. These three organisations are combined in the Association of Probation and After-Care Organisations.

The organisations consist of probation and after-care teams. In the teams, case-work is carried out mainly by qualified social workers. A team is headed by a team-coordinator and supported by one or more experts, (psychologists, psychiatrists etc.).

\* (see note page 10)

### The Study

In 1975 the Association of Probation and After-Care Organisations asked the Research and Documentation Centre of the Ministry of Justice to conduct a survey on probation and after-care work. The survey was to be carried out in three phases, namely:

- the way in which the probation officers divide their time,
- the attitudes and opinions of the officers, and
- a study of clients.

The overall aim of the survey was to contribute to the efficiency of the work and the case-load determination.

The first phase of the research has now been completed and a report made.

### The Sample

The survey was conducted among a quarter of the workers of the organisations named above (n = 275).

The sample was selected on the basis of proportional distribution, the criteria being the size of the three organisations, the size of the teams and the size of the towns in which they work (large towns in the west of the country set against the remainder).

After a pilot survey, a list of all the probation officers' various activities was drawn up.

The main survey was carried out over a period of two weeks (ten working days), during which time the probation officers, with the aid of the list, made a daily record of their activities, writing down in chronological order how much time was devoted to each. They also noted down the number of meetings with individual clients.

At the end of the two weeks, the probation officers themselves, with the help of research workers, drew up a list of activities, using the information they had collected, giving the total time spent per activity (see annex I.).\*

### Results

The results are presented according to the time spent by all officers (excluding office staff, including trainees, team coordinators and experts).

\* see for a description of the method and procedure of developing the instrument for time recording: M.J.M. Brand-Koolen, A. Coster, L.C.M. Tigges, Experience gained with a time-study, Research and Documentation Centre, Ministry of Justice, The Hague, 1979

per activity, the time spent by the full-time probation and after-care officers (social workers), and the length and frequency of meetings with clients.

The probation officers were also asked to indicate to what extent they find some of the various activities relevant, satisfying, or mentally fatiguing. These results will also be presented.

### 1. Average allocation of time: all officers (n = 275)

The figures quoted below represent the actual working time i.e. the time noted, excluding sickness or leave.

The actual working time can be divided into six categories, which are listed separately below.

#### - Contacts with clients

Contacts with individual clients can include such things as receiving clients, telephone conversations with clients, visits to clients and accompanying clients to court or other institutions.

The time necessarily spent in waiting and travelling in connection with these activities is included in the given times.

All probation and after-care officers spend on average 28% of their total actual working time on contacts with individual clients, including waiting and travelling time (6%). It is striking that the probation officers rarely accompany clients on visits to the legal authorities, or to employment or housing offices and the like: only 2% of the total time is spent in this way.

#### - Contacts and activities on behalf of clients

In addition to contacts where the client himself is present, probation workers also undertake a number of activities for the direct benefit of the client in his absence. These activities include such things as receiving or visiting members of the client's family, receiving or visiting victims, writing to, telephoning or visiting people or institutions, and making practical arrangements such as collecting clothing or doing something in the client's house. Again, waiting and travelling time is included in the given figures.

11% of the total working time is spent on activities and contacts on behalf of the client. A good two-thirds of this work consists of telephone calls to officials other than court officials, studying documents relating to the client and preparing work on the client's behalf. Very little time is spent on receiving visits on behalf of the client from third parties, e.g. relations, victims, or representatives of organisations. This also applies to visiting persons or authorities on the client's behalf, outside the office.

- Activities with client's families and groups of clients.

Probation officers spend 3% of their total working time on these activities which include treatment or counseling of clients and their (family) relations or the treatment in a group of clients.

- Compiling Reports

These include both external reports, such as presentence reports for the courts, early intervention reports, and parole reports. It includes also, for the sake of own files, the making of evaluation reports.

All reports take up 11% of the total time, just over half (6%) being taken up by external reports, notably presentence reports.

- Work supervision, team discussions and other internal and external meetings.

Apart from work supervision and discussions, the teams also attend team discussions, consultations (with experts), external meetings and conferences. Altogether discussions and meetings take up 26% of the total time; 21% for internal discussions and meetings and 5% for external meetings and conferences.

- Miscellaneous activities

This category includes the most divergent activities, such as dealing with domestic and organisational matters of the team, study and reading the literature, attending courses, talking to colleagues, coffee and tea breaks, etc. These activities take up 22% of the probation officers' time. This time is equally divided between the three sub-categories (study and reading, talking to colleagues and other activities).

The table below provides a picture of the way in which the officers as a whole allocate their time.

Table 1. Distribution of time between activities in 6 categories (all officers)

activity	proportion of time (%)
- contacts with clients	27.6
- contacts and activities on behalf of clients	10.7
- activities with client's families or groups of clients	3.2
- compiling reports	10.6
- work supervision, team discussions, other internal and external meetings	26.1
- miscellaneous	21.8
	100.0

2. Average allocation of time: full-time social workers (n = 113)

Full-time social workers spend more time on contact with clients, contacts and activities on behalf of clients, their families and groups of clients and writing reports, than do the teams as a whole. They spend less time on work supervision, team discussions and other internal and external meetings and miscellaneous activities.

The differences shown in the results can be traced back to differences in job and duties. The team coordinators and experts spend more time on work supervision, consultations and meetings, and on miscellaneous activities (e.g. organisational activities), whilst more of the social workers' time is spent on case-work and writing reports.

Table 2. Distribution of time between activities in 6 categories (full-time social workers)

activity	proportion of time (%)
- contactswith clients	32.9
- contactsand activities on behalf of clients	13.1
- activities with clients' families or groups of clients	3.9
- compiling reports	12.9
- work supervision, team discussions, other internal and external meetings	18.8
- miscellaneous	18.4
	100.0

Further results show that time is allocated differently in the cities in the west of the country than in other areas.

In the other areas, full-time social workers are found to spend more time on contacts on behalf of clients and on writing reports. In the cities, the results show that more time is spent on various types of meeting and consultation.

### 3. The duration and frequency of contacts with clients

In two weeks the full-time social workers had an average of 2.7 contacts with clients per day. The average duration was 43.5 minutes. Over half of the contacts with clients came under the category of after-care (i.e. the phase of assistance following trial and imprisonment, if any). About 20% of the clients were still in the presentence report phase.

The frequency of contacts is highest in the presentence report phase, the frequency in the after-care phase being considerably lower.

### 4. Relevance, satisfaction, mental burden

All the officers stated to what extent they find a number of activities relevant, whether these activities often give satisfaction, and whether they

find the activities often mentally fatiguing.

The overall picture is that contacts with clients' families and groups of clients are seen as being most relevant, are often mentally fatiguing, but are also often felt to be satisfying. Contacts with clients are also seen as being relevant, also fairly often give satisfaction, and are less often felt to be mentally fatiguing. Contacts on behalf of clients score lowest on all three points. They are considered to be relevant, but less so than all the other activities: they are rather less often satisfying, and are considered to be less often mentally fatiguing.

A striking feature of the results is that activities which involve contact with judicial officers and authorities are considered to be often mentally fatiguing.

### Discussion

For the benefit of the future policy-making it would seem desirable to view the results of the survey on time allocation against the background of the objectives that the Probation and After-Care Service sets itself.

These objectives can be defined as rendering assistance to clients and rendering services to the judicial authorities. Direct assistance to clients and activities connected with services to the legal authorities together take up around 60% of the total time available (including internal reports on interviews and travelling time). The remaining time does not directly benefit the client, but is allocated to all types of meetings, work supervision and miscellaneous activities.

If we take a closer look at the contacts for the purpose of rendering assistance, we see that these take place mainly in the form of interviews at the office. In general little time is given to accompanying clients to court, etc. or activities on behalf of clients.

This probably means that the rendering of assistance is directed more to relational matters than to material ones. This question will be dealt with more fully in the next phases of the survey.

Activities connected with rendering services to the judiciary can be divided into a number of separate activities. The probation and after-care service



spends little time on direct contacts, such as attending court, visiting judicial authorities, etc. In general, contact with the penal system is limited to the writing of presentence reports and the necessary enquiries.

As regards the relationship between rendering assistance, rendering services and other work, the ideal time allocations expressed by the social workers, were as follows.\*

The general impression given by social workers' replies to the question as to how they would ideally divide their time is that they would like to give more time to their clients. This is not surprising: contacts with clients (and their families) were considered the most relevant of their activities. The question is where the extra time is to come from. At first sight, going by the figures, it should come out of the time spent on 'miscellaneous activities' (excluding study and reading the literature).

In addition there are two more categories to which the social workers would like to devote less time: the compilation of both internal and external reports, and the various forms of work supervision. However, at the same time both reporting and work supervision are deemed relevant.

In relation to this, it would seem useful for the probation and after-care service to ask itself whether it is right that nearly 40% of the time available to social workers is not used for the direct benefit of the client. Here we refer specifically to the support-activities, like work supervision, team discussions and other meetings, as well as the miscellaneous activities, mainly in the nature of management activities. It is obvious that supervisory activities and discussions are necessary to the extension of social work, and that they are certainly functional in the execution of the other work, yet the question still arises as to whether about a fifth of the total time bestowed on these activities is not rather on the high side for full-time social workers. This question is even more to the point when set against the

\* In the 2nd phase of the survey, not yet published, the officers were asked how they would ideally allocate their time.

background of the differences between teams, which were found to be considerable.

With regard to 'miscellaneous activities' one could ask again whether almost a fifth of the total time is not on the high side as well.

Although we are not in the position to say what the overall wishes of the officers are in regard to rendering services to the judiciary, we do know that they would like to give less time to compiling reports (both internal and external). We have already noted that contact with the judiciary is fairly limited. Though contact is maintained by means of presentence reports, there is virtually no contact with judicial authorities, in the presence of the client, or otherwise. It is probable that this reflects a certain reticence on the part of the probation officers to make such contacts; particularly since they generally find them mentally fatiguing. Since the Probation and After-Care Service in the Netherlands recently expressed a definite preference for working within the penal system, it would be worthwhile to determine what activities could be developed in order to bring about better contact, and thus, probably, easier relations between the probation and after-care service and judicial authorities.

As regards one specific area of their work, contacts with clients and the forms these should take, the opinions of the full-time social workers seem to lie in general along the same lines as the objectives of the Probation and After-Care Service. These contacts are the main aim of the service, and certainly merit having more time allocated to them. It would not require much effort on the part of the policy-making bodies within the Probation and After-Care Service to encourage changes in that direction. According to the probation officers, this could be achieved by devoting less time to the miscellaneous activities and also possibly to work supervision and the compilation of reports. With regard to work supervision, more efficient organisation could probably be considered, given the variety of forms of consultation which exist. Whether the time presently spent on compiling reports could be reduced, is a difficult question to answer.

Another important question is the place and function of the activities undertaken on behalf of clients.

Comparatively little time is spent on these activities; in relation to other activities they are considered to be less useful, and less satisfying. But

one can still consider whether these activities could be extended and how far. For the question is, whether a better balance should not be struck between relational and practical assistance. To make the right decision on this point one will need to examine the aims and expectations of both the client and the probation officer.

#### Future research

The research reported here attempted to create a picture of the situation regarding the allocation of time in the Probation and After-Care Service in 1978. As stated earlier, this survey will be followed by two more surveys which will examine more fully the views of the probation officers and clients on the work itself. Only when these two further research phases have been completed will it be possible to make an overall analysis of the working methods of the Probation and After-Care Service in the Netherlands and the way in which it realizes its objectives.

\* A summary of the report: Het reclasseringswerk: de tijdsbesteding - een onderzoek naar de tijdsbesteding en het functioneren van reclasseringsteams -, Onderzoek en beleid no. 9, Staatsuitgeverij, 's-Gravenhage, 1978.

#### Annex I.

##### List of Activities: Probation and After-Care Service

For the collection of data on allocation of time

Research and Documentation Centre  
of the Ministry of Justice,  
Probation and After-Care Section  
September 1977

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

### Introduction

The aim of this list is to gain insight into the activities of probation officers and the time which they spend on these activities. The list was compiled with the help of a large number of workers in the Probation and After-Care Service.

### Completion of the list

The list will be issued at the beginning of the period in which the daily record of activities is to be made. It should be read carefully, so that the daily record can be kept with a view to filling in the categories at a later stage. The list should be completed in the presence of the research workers, who will give assistance. Time on the form is to be given in hours (or  $\frac{1}{2}$  or  $\frac{1}{4}$  hours where applicable), throughout the two recorded weeks. The total time will therefore be about 80 hours.

### Layout

The list is divided into six sections, the first two of which are further divided as follows:

- I. Contacts with clients
  - A. At the office
  - B. Visiting clients outside the office
  - C. Accompanying clients elsewhere
- II. Contacts and activities on behalf of clients
  - A. At the office
  - B. Outside the office
- III. Activities with clients' families or groups of clients
- IV. Compiling reports
- V. Work supervision, team discussions and other internal and external meetings
- VI. Miscellaneous

Where it was deemed necessary, notes about the section and/or activities concerned are given on the left-hand page. Activities marked 'x' in sections I and III are the contacts with clients, the duration of which should be noted (daily) in the daily record (below the dotted line) (see: annex II.).



Working time

Both normal working hours and overtime should be counted as working time. This does not include the lunch hour, but does include tea and coffee breaks. Time spent at college by trainees, or social workers undergoing parttime training, should not be included. Time spent in the office in pursuance of such studies should however be included. All time spent on other courses should be noted in full.

Overtime should only be noted if in theory it is time for which the officer can be compensated in the form of leave or pay (even if this has not actually been taken up).

If the two week survey period includes any bank holidays, such as Christmas, these should be indicated as leave.

List of activities: Probation and After-Care Service

Contents:

	Time spent
I. Contacts <u>with</u> clients	<input type="text"/>
II. Contacts and activities <u>on behalf of</u> clients	<input type="text"/>
III. Activities <u>with</u> clients' families or groups of clients	<input type="text"/>
IV. Compiling reports	<input type="text"/>
V. Work supervision, team discussions and other internal and external meetings	<input type="text"/>
VI. Miscellaneous	<input type="text"/>

NOTES I

1. - This includes all contacts with individual clients, whether or not clients' relations are also present. Thus it includes contacts where the husband or wife of the client is present. However if the central issue of a particular contact is to render assistance to the couple or the family, (as in the case of family therapy), such time should be noted under section III.
  - Contacts with clients are all contacts where the client him/herself is present, plus writing to and telephoning clients. Contacts on behalf of clients, but in the clients' absence, should be noted under section II.
2. Visiting clients outside the office, outside consulting hours, e.g. visiting bars regularly used by alcoholics and addicts in order to keep up contact with the management of the bar and the addicts.

Some working units hold consulting hours outside their own offices in order to make their services more accessible, because they cover large areas. Time spent at such alternative premises should be entered in this section.
3. Waiting and travelling time includes time spent at home on call (for example, when on call for early aid), insofar as this time is paid, or the officer can be compensated for it.

I. Contacts with clients alone or with other family members<sup>1)</sup>

A. At the office

- x - receiving clients
- x - writing to clients
- x - telephoning clients
- x - waiting at the office (e.g. during consulting hours)

B. Visiting clients outside the office

- x - visiting clients at home
- x - in prison/detention centre
- x - in medical institutions
- x - at the police station/court building
- x - outside consulting hours<sup>2)</sup>
- x - visits to clients elsewhere, (specify).....
- x - waiting/travelling time<sup>3)</sup>

C. Accompanying clients/client present

- x - to the Public Prosecutor/Examining Magistrate/lawyer
- x - to court
- x - to persons or institutions, concerned with employment, education, (employer, local employment office, school)
- x - to persons or institutions concerned with housing (landlord, hostel, house agent)
- x - to institutions, concerned with financial assistance (social security office, bank)
- x - to welfare institutions (incl. sister-organisations)
- x - to medical services (G.P., hospital, psychiatrist, etc.)
- x - to other people or institutions, (specify).....
- x - waiting/travelling time

Time spent

NOTES II

- 1)
- External and internal reports should be noted separately under section IV.
  - Time spent studying clients' documents in connection with work supervision should be entered in section V.

Time spent

II. Contacts and activities on behalf of clients  
(in the absence of the client) 1)

A. At the office

- receiving members of clients' families, etc.

- receiving victims

- receiving other people (specify) .....

- writing letters to judicial officials of behalf of clients

- writing to other people on behalf of clients

- telephoning to judicial officials on behalf of clients

- telephoning other people on behalf of clients

- studying documents relating to clients

- planning of and preparation for activities on behalf of clients



II. Contacts and activities on behalf of clients  
(in the absence of the client)

B. Outside the office

Time spent  
Time spent

- visits to members of clients' families, etc.
- visits to victims
- visits to judicial officials on behalf of clients
- visits to court (without clients)
- visits to people or institutions concerned with  
employment/education (employer, employment office,  
school)
- visits to people or institutions concerned with  
housing (landlord, hostel, house agent)
- visits to institutions concerned with financial  
assistance (social security office, Bank)
- visits to welfare institutions  
(incl. sister-organisations)
- visits to medical services  
(G.P., hospital, psychiatrist)
- visits to other people and institutions  
(specify) .....
- practical arrangements, such as fetching clothes,  
doing something in clients' houses
- waiting/travelling time

NOTES III

- 1) This does not include contacts with clients where the presence of a partner or children is more or less accidental (i.e. if the client's relationship to the partner and/or children does not form an essential part of the assistance).

Time spent

III. Activities with clients' families/groups of clients

x - interviews with families at the office or elsewhere<sup>1)</sup>

- preparation, planning, discussion afterwards, etc.<sup>1)</sup>

x - interviews with groups at the office or elsewhere

- preparation, planning, discussion afterwards, etc.

x - giving information to groups  
(potential clients, e.g. in prison)

- preparation, planning, discussion afterwards, etc.

- waiting/travelling time

Time spent

IV. Compiling reports

- early intervention reports

- initial and supplementary presentence reports

- release on parole reports, home background reports,  
leave reports

- other external reports on clients (specify).....  
.....

- writing up reports on interviews with clients, making  
evaluations, etc., for own files/keeping records

- other (specify).....  
.....



NOTES V

- 1) Team discussion: discussion of general matters, questions of policy, internal working methods, questions of organisation, general aspects of assistance. This includes both plenary meetings and internal committee meetings.
- 2) Work supervision: this centers on individual guidance of social workers by the team coordinator, a work supervisor or methods coordinator. Work supervision can also take place in groups of two or three social workers where clients of the respective social workers are discussed in turn. Consultation between supervisors and discussion of draft background reports etc., are also regarded as work supervision.
- 3) Consultation: this can take place individually or in groups of social workers, as long as the point of the consultation is to enlist expert advice.
- 4) Discussions: group discussions in which progress relating to clients is discussed.
- 5) Team training/interviews: meetings where the working methods of individual team members are discussed, more or less under the guidance of a practical instructor or a specialist, but not necessarily for the benefit of particular clients.
- 6) External meetings within the penal system refers to meetings with, for example, the Police, the Public Prosecutions Department, etc..

V. Work supervision, team discussions and other internal and external meetings (incl. preparations and writing up minutes)

Time spent

- team discussion<sup>1)</sup>
- work supervision<sup>2)</sup>
- consultation<sup>3)</sup>
- discussions<sup>4)</sup>
- team training/interviews<sup>5)</sup>
- external meetings, consultations, visits<sup>6)</sup>
- waiting/travelling time

NOTES IV

- 1) Odd minutes, put to no special purpose, come under miscellaneous
- 2) Remaining and combined travelling time is all the travelling time not noted elsewhere.

VI. Miscellaneous

Time spent

- discussion with social worker colleagues, clerical work
- keeping caseload records, progress reports, etc.
- giving information (e.g. to schools), public relations, receiving visitors
- personnel matters, e.g. interviewing applicants
- handling domestic and organisational matters
- other clerical work
- keeping up with specialised literature
- reading documents/post (excl. clients' documents)
- attending occasional courses, conferences, etc. incl. travelling time
- training-related study
- remaining and combined travelling time<sup>2</sup>
- coffee, tea, etc.
- sickness
- leave
- other (specify).....

## Annex II

One page from the daily record in which the probation officers noted their activities and the time spent on these activities.

Date: .....

[illegible]

Duration of contacts with clients


Number of individual clients



Total time external reports

11



**END**