



Summary

Advisory report *Jeugdbescherming in de toekomst* (The future of child protection)

Council for the Administration of Criminal Justice and Protection of Juveniles (RSJ)

The RSJ subscribes to the notion that a substantial reform of the current child protection system is necessary. The future scenario published by the government shows that the system is currently failing to provide timely and suitable support for children and parents, and fails to take sufficient account of the child's family context. This future scenario paints a vision of a future in which children and parents will be able to count on better support and protection. This is a positive development, and the future scenario provides plenty of inspirational starting points for reform of the child protection system. At the same time, however, the RSJ believes that four key issues in this future scenario need further attention.

Four issues in the future scenario deserve further attention

1. The RSJ is of the opinion that the future scenario could be clearer about how the proposed structural changes contribute to addressing the lack of timely and suitable support for children and parents.
2. As far as the RSJ is concerned, the youth policy of the future should be based on children's right and human rights. This is essential, as it would clarify what the government must do and what it is allowed to do to promote the protection of children. It would also dictate that the circumstances of children and families should be treated with the greatest respect.
3. In order to safeguard the protection of legal interests and equality before the law, the RSJ believes that the central government, and not the municipalities or the regions, should be responsible for mandatory child protection interventions.
4. Based on interviews with children and parents, the RSJ has identified the following three recurring points for attention, which could be elaborated in further detail in the future scenario:
 - Children and parents feel insufficiently seen and heard when it comes to the implementation of child protection.
 - Child protection decisions should be based on timely, independent and high-quality investigations.
 - The legal position and legal protection of children and parents.

Four recommendations for the future scenario regarding child and family protection

1. Clarify how this future scenario addresses the problem

The future scenario should be clearer about how the proposed structural changes contribute to addressing the lack of timely and suitable support for children and parents.

2. Put children's rights and human rights front and centre

- Make realising and safeguarding children's rights and human rights the point of departure for policy decisions on suitable support for children and families.
- Incorporate measures to combat child abuse into the future scenario.
- Keep referring to mandatory interventions as 'child protection'.

3. Make the central government solely responsible

- Make the Minister for Legal Protection or another minister at the Ministry of Justice and Security responsible for mandatory interventions.
- Embed the transition from voluntary to mandatory interventions in legislation and propose national policies that adhere to uniform and predictable working methods.

4. Make the perspective of children and parents the guiding principle

- When elaborating the scenario, pay attention to the question of how children and parents could be made to feel seen and heard.
- Use the scenario to outline ways to safeguard timely, independent and high-quality investigations and advice issued to the court without causing any delays to urgently needed decisions.
- Use the scenario to elaborate the legal position and legal protection of children and parents.

The RSJ notes that certain key topics are currently in the process of being investigated and/or elaborated further. The RSJ would be happy to advise on these topics at a later stage.

The advisory report (in Dutch) can be consulted on the RSJ [website](#).

