



Summary of the Ombudsman for Children's Annual Report

Do what is necessary



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“The enforcement of children’s rights is too non-committal and lacks consistency. These shortcomings are clearly evident in the wellbeing of children: research has shown that they rate their quality of life lower than in previous years. This is an alarming indicator of how we, as society, treat children. Investing in the environment in which they grow up is therefore urgently needed.”

Margrite Kalverboer – Ombudswoman for Children

The Ombudsman for Children ensures that children’s rights are observed in the Netherlands and in the Caribbean Netherlands. Not only by the government, but also by organisations in the field of education, childcare and healthcare, for instance. The best interests of the child and the influence that the child should have on measures affecting them are paramount. The UNCRC, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, is always the underlying principle for our work.

The full 2025 Annual Report can be found at www.kinderombudsman.nl

Message from Margrite

“If I were the Ombudsman for Children, I would get the police to knock on every door and take a look inside to check if it is safe there, since parents behave very differently outside the house than they do in the house.” This is what an 11-year-old girl said. She and her mother had been abused by her father at home for years. Another girl who had experienced domestic violence added: “You should not always believe parents.” Both girls said that they had never received the help they so desperately needed.

These cries for help still have a great impact on me. Children put the finger on the sore spot: our system is not properly designed to involve them directly in decisions that affect their lives. Children want to have a say, even if it is about distressing things. In our practice, we still frequently see that the child’s own needs are not always taken into account. What we should be doing is seriously involving children in matters that are important to them.

I often speak with children in the work that I do. After all, it is the Ombudsman for Children’s statutory task to prioritise the wellbeing, development and voice of children and to ensure these are given due weight in legislation and policy. In these conversations, their strength really stands out. Children, like the girls mentioned in the example above, know exactly how to put their

finger on the sore spot. They also think in terms of solutions. They do not simply accept what is not possible. Adults could learn from them. As Ombudswoman for Children, I try to follow that example as best I can: putting my finger on the sore spot and looking for what can be done so that it works for children.

Systematic improvement

Over the past year, I saw many painful and distressing things. How children are faring with youth social care services, for example, or how difficult life is for children growing up in poverty. But I have also seen what can be done by embedding children’s rights systematically in legislation and policy so that these rights are always respected by everyone, at all levels of decision-making and implementation.

As Ombudswoman for Children, I am committed to permanently improving the position of children. This is possible and we are increasingly successful in doing so. This became tangible reality in 2025: the Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA), which was launched in December 2024, has now found its way among politicians and government bodies. In October 2025, for instance, the Senate adopted a motion stipulating that a Child Rights Impact Assessment must be carried out on all new legislation and policy in youth social care services, to assess whether children’s rights are being safeguarded. This is a very important step towards a situation in which all legislation and policy affecting children’s rights are assessed. In my work as Ombudswoman, I also seek to ensure that children are asked more often what they need for their wellbeing and development.

Our investigations

I regularly conduct investigations on my own initiative to see to it that adults who make decisions that impact children take children’s rights into account in those decisions. In 2025, I investigated how children grow up in poverty (Opgroeien in Onzekerheid – Growing up in Uncertainty) and how children who grow up with domestic violence (Niemand hielp mij – Nobody helped me) are faring. Both studies are based on analyses of data that we collected over the past ten years. Over the past few years, more than 10,000 children and young people have told us about their wellbeing and quality of life. In 2025, we subsequently looked specifically at the children who had indicated that there was not enough money at home or that there were quarrels and domestic violence. What became apparent? If children report low life satisfaction, then their quality of life is very poor. These children can pinpoint exactly where their pain point is: they experience a lack of affection, an extreme amount of stress and insecurity, partly because their parents are unable to offer support or set a good example, often due to their own stress. Our research gives strength and sway to the voice of children.

This Annual Report provides information on the activities undertaken by the Ombudsman for Children over the past year to ensure that all parties who represent children’s interests, or who should be doing this, work towards a society in which children’s wellbeing and development takes a prominent place. Because this is something that children have a right to!

Margrite Kalverboer
Ombudswoman for Children

What did the Ombudsman for Children do in 2025?

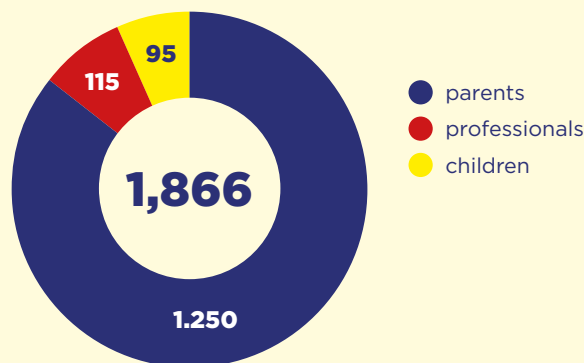
The Ombudsman for Children ensures that children's rights are observed in the European and Caribbean Netherlands. The key focus in this is always the wellbeing and development of the child. The UNCRC, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, is always the underlying principle used by the Ombudsman for Children. We provide advice upon request or unsolicited, explain children's rights and conduct research where necessary.

We work together with children and young people. In this way, we highlight what matters to them and how they experience their situation. We aim to ensure that all children's rights are respected. Children must be able to grow up in safety, be able to develop to their full potential and be treated equally. Their opinions matter.

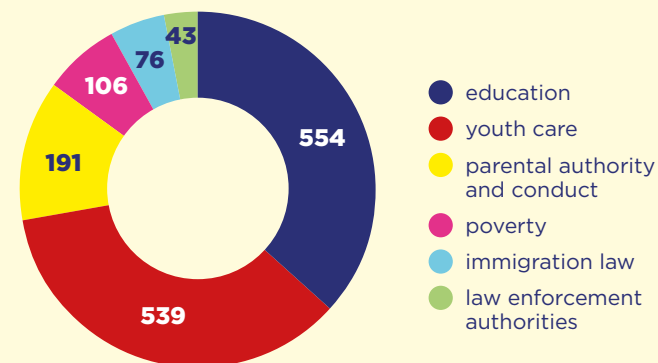
There is already greater awareness for children's rights, but there is still work to be done. This is why we continue to urge governments and organisations to put the primary focus on children's interests. Children have the right to have a say in this and to be a factor.

Facts and figures

Requests received



Requests dealt with



9 letters of concern



The Ombudswoman for Children wrote nine letters of concern to a minister or state secretary to draw attention to a children's rights issue.

13 lectures and presentations



One of these was delivering the Rede van Fryslân (Speech of the province of Friesland). In this speech, the Ombudswoman for Children specifically addressed the situation of children on the Frisian mainland and on the Wadden Islands.

9 summaries of reports



In 2025, the Ombudsman for Children contributed nine summaries of reports in the journal AB Rechtspraak Bestuursrecht (AB) (Administrative Law case law).

54 interventions

In 54 of the 1,861 requests dealt with, the Ombudsman for Children had to intervene.

157 closed cases

In 157 cases, the Ombudsman for Children closed the case because a solution was found or because the submitter of the request no longer responded.

Asylum laws, children in asylum centres and the situation of Ukrainian children

The Ombudsman for Children anticipates additional problems for children in asylum centres due to the new Emergency Asylum Act and the reintroduction of the two-tier status system. The measures are in conflict with children's rights. In an urgent letter dated March 2025, the Ombudsman for Children and the National Ombudsman warned that the introduction of these measures would have harmful effects on children, families and society as a whole.

In September 2025, the Ombudswoman for Children also wrote to the House of Representatives stating that the situation for children in asylum centres must now urgently be improved. The Ombudspersons had already stated in 2023 that emergency crisis accommodation is unsuitable for long-term stays and jeopardises the dignity of children and adults. Now, two years later, the situation had not improved.

Children still live in unsafe conditions and their parents are unable to help them. This is detrimental to children's development. Poor hygiene, interrupted education and many relocations exacerbate the problems, also in the long term. The Ombudswoman for Children therefore calls for better access to education and healthcare and for more stability.

Similar shortcomings have also been seen among Ukrainian refugee children. They stay at unsuitable reception locations for long periods of time, do not get adequate support and receive education that is below their level of ability. Complaints about privacy, facilities and forced relocations are increasing. The Ombudsman for Children and the National Ombudsman raised the alarm about this in December 2025.

Meanwhile, the introduction of the European Migration and Asylum Pact is approaching. This should accelerate procedures and increase solidarity, but it also raises questions about the protection of children. The Ombudspersons are investigating the impact and will continue to monitor compliance with children's and human rights.



“The Dutch government is falling alarmingly short and this raises the question of how seriously the government takes the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) when it comes to children who have fled to the Netherlands.”

Margrite Kalverboer

Topics

Child Rights Impact Assessment

The Child Rights Impact Assessment is a key point for further consideration for the Ombudsman for Children. This assessment is a tool designed to help policymakers keep children's rights at the forefront at all times when developing legislation, regulations and policies. The aim is to safeguard children's development and wellbeing in all proposals that affect them. Ultimately, this should ensure that the best decisions are always made for children and their parents.

In 2025, we provided various ministries and organisations with information on the Child Rights Impact Assessment. The Ombudswoman for Children also assessed a local authority's new youth policy, drawing on the Child Rights Impact Assessment, and she shared her findings with the local authority. The Ombudswoman

for Children also wrote a letter for a committee debate, in which she called for the Child Rights Impact Assessment to be incorporated into the policy compass.

In June 2025, the Ombudswoman for Children sent a letter to the Ministry of Justice and Security and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, in the run-up to the debate on youth protection and youth support as various children's rights are under pressure and current policy is inadequate. In the letter, the Ombudswoman for Children therefore called on all ministries to encourage the use of the Child Rights Impact Assessment, thereby preventing new legislation from having a negative impact on children.

In August 2025, the State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport stated in writing that they would use the Child Rights Impact Assessment when amending legislation and regulations concerning secure youth care.



Topics

Education: more children staying at home and concerns about school transport

In 2025, we also focused on various problems and pitfalls in education. The Ombudswoman for Children sent a letter to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in May, in which she expressed her concerns about appropriate education. Despite all the efforts made, many children with disabilities still do not have access to integrated special needs education, even though they are entitled to it.

Furthermore, the already high number of children who stay at home and receive inadequate education or none at all, continues to rise. In addition, inclusive education is still not reality for everyone who is entitled to it. The number of children with a disability who do not attend school therefore continues to rise. In addition, there are more and more children receiving specialised education.

The problems with school transport are also growing. The Ombudswoman for Children therefore called on politicians to reorganise the school transport system. From now on, it should be regarded as a form of care, including the associated rights. At the request of a local councillor, the Ombudswoman for Children also responded to a local authority's new school transport bye-law. In her response, she stated that the bye-law did not put the child at the forefront. In her view, the Child Rights Impact Assessment must also be used here.



“It is essential that the education system really does become inclusive for all children, regardless of background or personal characteristics. We must see to this together. For all pupils with a disability who are now excluded, but also for pupils without a disability who are not given the opportunity to grow up in an inclusive environment”

Margrite Kalverboer

Topics

Children's rights online and concerns about vlogging families

Children's lives are increasingly taking place online and the difference with the offline world is blurring. Online, children are facing problems such as bullying, harmful content and unequal opportunities. In 2025, one of the things the Ombudswoman for Children drew attention to was children involved in family vlogging. We had previously already addressed online children's rights in the publication *Als je het ons vraagt (If you ask us)*.

In a letter to the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, the Ombudswoman for Children supported the government's strategy on online children's rights, but also voiced criticism. A clear financial justification is lacking. There are no specific time lines and the cooperation between departments is inadequate. The strategy should also be more responsive to diversity in age and gender identity, and give a clearer description of how the government promotes equal access to digital facilities.

In addition, the Ombudswoman for Children called for making use of the Child Rights Impact Assessment for new legislation and regulations,

as well as for better online supervision. Support for parents is important in this regard, but the government, the education sector, civil society organisations and the private sector also have a role to play in ensuring a safe online environment for children.

In 2025, two policy initiatives on digital children's rights were submitted. The government responded in a letter setting out plans for a safe digital world, in which children have the same rights as they do offline. This will include an EU-wide review of age verification, making data deletion easier and improving digital literacy education. The Netherlands is also campaigning in Europe against digital services with addictive features.

In April 2025, the Ombudswoman for Children expressed concerns about the wellbeing of children involved in family vlogging. She called for an investigation. Where necessary, legislation on child labour should be amended, using the Child Rights Impact Assessment. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment responded positively to this in June. An investigation will be conducted and stricter legislation may be introduced. The Working Hours Act (*Arbeidstijdenwet*) can be amended, fines can be increased and more attention can be devoted to mental health. Efforts are also being made to provide better information to parents, in collaboration with the Ombudsman for Children.



“I see the risks for children in vlogging families as being very broad. A great many children's rights are affected. We should not wait until something goes wrong, but actively ensure the protection and enforcement of children's rights online.”

Margrite Kalverboer



Topics

Housing

The Ombudsman for Children is of the opinion that children should not be punished for their parents' behaviour. In these cases, the court may decide that certain conditions apply to an eviction, such as ensuring that suitable alternative accommodation is available. However, the court is dependent on information from other organisations. It is not the court's role to gather this information.

In answering a preliminary ruling on the meaning of Article 3(1) of the UNCRC (best interests of the child) in evictions, the first instance judge referred to the report *Als de overheid niet thuis geeft* (*When the government fails to act*) by the National Ombudsman and Ombudsman for Children. In this report, we wrote that the best interests of the child must always take precedence in evictions.

In November 2025, the Supreme Court made an important decision on the preliminary ruling on the meaning of Article 3(1) of the UNCRC in evictions. The Court ruled that the best interests of the child are a 'primary consideration' and therefore always take precedence. This does not mean that it will always be the deciding factor. A landlord must also be able to guarantee a safe living environment for local residents, for instance.

According to the Supreme Court, the court has a duty to investigate whether there are any children living in the property and what their interests are. When providing alternative accommodation, more may be expected of a housing association than of a private landlord. The Supreme Court considers child homelessness to be "socially unacceptable" and states that it is not the landlord who must ensure that children do not lose their homes, but that this is first and foremost the responsibility of parents and the government.

In addition, the Supreme Court also recommends that in every notice for termination of a tenancy agreement, consideration should be given to whether children are involved. This is an important step towards improving their legal position. The Ombudsman for Children is pleased with the Supreme Court's ruling and considers it to be a turning point.

“Everything that we do or do not do in the environment in which children grow up has consequences for them. It is only with that broad, child-centred perspective that we can do justice to their rights - and to their future.”

Margrite Kalverboer

Appropriate healthcare after turning 18

Marie* is 17 and will turn 18 in a few weeks time. She requires a lot of care because of her mental health issues. Marie is happy with her living situation in a residential group with almost constant supervision. The local authority funds the residential group under the Youth Act (Jeugdwet). When Marie turns 18, she will no longer be covered by this Act. The local authority had previously already determined that, from then onwards, the Long-term Care Act (Wet langdurige zorg; Wlz) would be the most appropriate care act for her. A care office would then arrange the funding.

Marie's parents submitted a Wlz application to the CIZ (Care Needs Assessment Centre) with the help of the youth protection officer involved. Marie's needs level was too low for her to be able to stay in the residential group.

The organisations involved agree that she cannot live with her parents without support, but they shifted the responsibility to each other. The local authority indicates that they are no longer responsible because Marie has now been assessed and given a Wlz needs level. The youth protection officer said she could not do anything as Marie will no longer be under her charge after her 18th birthday. The CIZ stated that an appeal was still possible, but that processing this would take two to three months. The National Ombudsman and the Ombudsman for Children believe that Marie should not be the victim of the strict division between the funding of care for young people and adults. This is why we asked the relevant care office to start providing care immediately and not to wait until the funding was finalised. Funding can be sorted out afterwards. The care office addressed this and within a week Marie received the care that she needs.

The Ombudsman for Children also conducts investigations on their own initiative. This takes place, for example, when we receive multiple reports about a particular issue. In 2025, three reports were published.

Growing up in uncertainty

In September 2025, the Ombudsman for Children published the study *Opgroeien in onzekerheid (Growing up in uncertainty)*. This study showed that the wellbeing and development of children who grow up in poverty remain under serious pressure despite numerous initiatives such as school breakfasts and support in the purchase of a bicycle, laptop or sports membership.

The study was based on data from five editions of the survey *Als je het ons vraagt (If you ask us)* conducted between 2016 and 2024. The results showed that one in 15 children aged 8 to 18 indicated that there is not enough money at home. The study identifies the development of the quality of life using 14 environmental conditions from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, supplemented by a rating that children gave their own lives.

Not much is changing for children living in poverty. They consistently give their lives a lower score than their peers who do not have financial worries at home. It is alarming that

“We do not have much money and we had to move a lot in the last five years because of this. We now have to move again because the landlord wants to sell the house and we cannot afford to buy it. I am also worried about being able to study and getting a driving licence because I will have to pay for everything myself and I really do not have the money to do that.”

17-year-old girl

these children score exceptionally low on environmental conditions that are crucial to their development. Their quality of life is so low that their wellbeing and prospects for the future are at risk and their children's rights are under serious pressure.

The Ombudsman for Children concludes that current policy is falling short and calls on authorities to draw up an all-encompassing anti-poverty policy aimed specifically at children. The Ombudsman for Children also wants authorities to talk to children growing up in poverty, ask them what they need and, where necessary, provide financial support to their parents.

Nobody helped me

Eight in ten children who grow up with domestic violence receive no help. This was shown by the Ombudsman for Children's study *Niemand hielp mij (Nobody helped me)*. The study investigated the negative impact of quarrels and domestic violence on the wellbeing of children. Children who feel unsafe at home are entitled to timely and appropriate help and support. However, help is often lacking or inadequate. Children who experience this feel negative about their life. They often face multiple problems and rate their life satisfaction as very low.

The study was based on data from three editions of the survey *Als je het ons vraagt (If you ask us)* conducted between 2020 and 2024. The results showed that approximately one in twelve children aged 8 to 18 experienced quarrels and domestic violence. Domestic violence includes any physical, psychological or sexual contact that is threatening or violent, such as hitting, verbal abuse or neglect, but also constant exposure to quarrels. The Ombudsman for Children called for urgent action by Youth Protection and Veilig Thuis (advice and support in cases of domestic violence and child abuse) to address these problems. For years now, they have been unable to adequately protect and support children.

The Ombudsman for Children emphasises that professionals must provide a safe place where children can talk about what they are going through and learn what a normal upbringing entails. Moreover, all Dutch people can make a difference for children who feel unsafe at home by talking to them when and if they are worried.



Analysis



Hidden in plain sight

In the Netherlands, it is becoming increasingly difficult for LGBTQIA+ children to grow up safely and freely. This is evident from our analysis *Verborgen in het volle zicht (Hidden in plain sight)*. This analysis showed that rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, such as the right to protection and access to services, are not being adequately observed for these children, which has a negative impact on their identity development. The Ombudsman for Children made the analysis in 2025 in preparation for research by the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children. Discussions were held with 17 LGBTQIA+ children and 12 special interest groups. Existing research was also examined.

The analysis covered seven themes: identity, vulnerability, safety and protection, family environment and contacts, education, health and participation. Despite efforts by the government and organisations, the situation for people who identify as LGBTQIA+, including children, is deteriorating. They feel unsafe and are bullied,

threatened and sometimes attacked. Services do not always meet their needs, professionals find it difficult to talk to them and teaching materials are often non-inclusive. As a result, children feel overlooked.

The analysis led to an urgent letter to the Parliamentary Committee for Education, Culture and Science with seven recommendations: give these children a voice, invest in professionals, raise awareness, promote inclusive teaching materials, use the Child Rights Impact Assessment, improve transgender care and stop unnecessary interventions on intersex children. The urgent letter and analysis were sent on 11 December. A motion was subsequently proposed and adopted, requesting the adoption of the recommendations and a report in 2026. The minister now has to respond to this.

“When you have just come out, it is uncomfortable when everyone reacts negatively and no one offers support or guidance.”

16-year-old girl

How can the Ombudsman for Children help you?

The Ombudsman for Children helps children who have questions about children's rights, feel that their rights are not being protected, or wish to make a complaint.

How can you find the Ombudsman for Children?

The official name of the Ombudswoman for Children, Margrite Kalverboer, and her team is Ombudsman for Children. You can find us under that name on Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and LinkedIn.



The website is [kinderombudsman.nl](https://www.kinderombudsman.nl)

How can you contact the Ombudsman for Children?

By email

You can email us on ombudswerk@kinderombudsman.nl. You may do this anonymously or using another name.

By phone

You can also contact the Ombudsman for Children by phone from Monday to Friday between 12 noon and 5 pm on 0800 8765432. From the Caribbean Netherlands you can call us between 6 am and 11 am on +31-708506995.

By letter

You can also send a letter to the Ombudsman for Children, Freepost number 10870, 2501 WB The Hague. No stamp is required.

