

# PROCESS EVALUATION BEHAVIOURAL INTERVENTION RESPECT LIMITS



REGIOPLAN  
BELEIDSONDERZOEK



PROCESS EVALUATION  
BEHAVIOURAL INTERVENTION  
RESPECT LIMITS

- summary -

Authors:  
Lianne Bertling MSc  
mr. drs. Willemijn Smit  
dr. Maartje Timmermans

With the cooperation of:  
Bertine Witkamp MSc

Translation:  
Juliette van Dijk MA

Regioplan  
Jollemanhof 18  
1019 GW Amsterdam  
Tel.: +31 (0)20 - 5315315

Amsterdam, February 2016  
Publication no 15049  
Narcis no: OND1359165

© 2016 Dutch Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) of the Ministry of Security and Justice.  
All rights reserved. No part of this report may be reproduced and/or published by print, photocopy, microfilm,  
digital processing or in any other form by any other means, without the prior written consent of the WODC.

## SUMMARY

### Background and objective process evaluation Respect Limits

Respect Limits (RL) is an outpatient individual behavioural intervention for boys, aimed at recognising and respecting sexual boundaries. The target group consists of boys between twelve and eighteen years old who have not previously been convicted of a sexual offence. The objective of RL is to prevent reoffending of boys who have displayed unacceptable sexual behaviour. To achieve this objective, the training focuses on influencing attitudes and cognitions that underlie unacceptable sexual behaviour. In addition, offence-related skills are improved, in order that the boys increase their self-regulatory capacity and learn to deal with group pressure or other forms of social influence. RL is offered in three variants (10 sessions, 15 sessions or 20 sessions of 1.5 hours each). Which of the three available variants (ranging in duration and intensity) applies depends on the boy's learning ability and the degree of offence supportive attitudes and/or skills deficits.

The intervention was developed by Rutgers (centre of expertise on sexual and reproductive health and rights) and is carried out under the responsibility of the Child Care and Protection Board (*Raad voor de Kinderbescherming*, RvdK). In November 2012, Rutgers started with the execution of Respect Limits. During the research period, the RvdK did not renew the contract with Rutgers.

In 2012, the intervention was recognised by the former Accreditation Committee for Behavioural Interventions of the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice. Within five years after the moment of recognition, the efficacy of the intervention must be demonstrated. Three years later the intervention's effects need to be examined. A prerequisite for efficacy and effectiveness is that the programme is carried out as intended (so-called programme integrity). To investigate this, a process evaluation of RL needs to be conducted. Regioplan was commissioned by the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) of the Ministry of Security and Justice to conduct this process evaluation, which took place in the period May 2015 to January 2016.

The five main questions to be answered in the study were:

1. To what extent is the behavioural intervention RL carried out according to the instructions?
2. If there are bottlenecks in the way the behavioural intervention RL is carried out, what are the reasons?
3. What are the barriers and facilitators in the implementation of the behavioural intervention RL?
4. How do the organisations concerned judge the behavioural intervention RL and what are their experiences?
5. What can be concluded from the results of this process evaluation about the feasibility of an efficacy study and effect evaluation?

## Design of the study

In the process evaluation a multi-method and multi-informant approach was used. This means that the data were collected on the basis of different research methods and different informants. The RL officials (one manager, two instructors/supervisors and seven trainers) were interviewed about the implementation of RL, the extent to which RL is carried out according to the instructions, which bottlenecks have occurred in practice, how they judge RL and the cooperation with the RvdK. The behavioural specialists and child welfare investigators (five behavioural specialists and five child welfare investigators) were questioned about the RL advice process and the community service coordinators (five) were questioned about the cooperation with Rutgers and the execution of RL. In addition, three judges were interviewed on the decision process whether or not to impose RL. The registration system of Rutgers provided us with information about the influx/drop out rate, characteristics of the boys, victim and offence information, motivation to participate and the extent to which boys and parents are satisfied with the RL guidance and training. In addition to the data from the registration system, we conducted a brief case file study at RL. The files of the RvdK were analysed with the aim a.) to determine the extent to which the reached target group meets the criteria for RL (n=46), and b.) to map out the potential target group based on the LIJ 2b instrument (n=64).<sup>1</sup> With regard to a number of aspects the RvdK applies additional and/or other inclusion criteria than described in the instructions of Rutgers, because at the time of writing the instructions of Rutgers the LIJ had not yet been fully developed. In the case file study, the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the RvdK have been used, because these are the criteria that are applied in practice. Finally, observations of video recordings provided the opportunity to inspect the real time execution of RL. These observations were used in addition to the data from the interviews and registration systems.

## Results

### *RL target group*

In the period between 1 November 2012 and 7 August 2015, a total of 46 boys enrolled. Thirty boys participated in RL variant 1 (shortest programme), fifteen boys in variant 2 and one boy in variant 3 (longest programme). With the exception of one boy, all the boys have fully completed the training. In the same period, in 24 cases the parent(s) of the boys attended a parent session and the evaluation session. In addition, in sixteen cases parent(s) participated in the parent module. At the start of the training the average age of the boys is 15.8 years. Virtually all boys have the Dutch nationality. With regard to the cultural background of the boys, it is known that more than half of the boys come from a Dutch family (n=25) and over a third from a non-Western family (n=16). With regard to the latter group, the Moroccan cultural background

---

<sup>1</sup> The National Set of Instruments Juvenile Justice System (*Landelijk Instrumentarium Jeugdstrafrechtkenen*, LIJ).

occurs most often. Half of the boys live with both parents and three out of ten boys live with their biological mother only. A third of the boys are enrolled in a basic or advanced vocational pathway of pre-vocational secondary education (*vmbo-bb* or *vmbo-kb*) and 17 percent are enrolled in vocational education and training (*mbo*). None of the boys have had previous convictions for sexual offences.

A third of the boys were prosecuted for (among other things) sexual assault; followed by one out of ten boys who were prosecuted for intercourse with someone under the age of twelve, sexual abuse of a child or rape. It is known that in a small majority of the cases, the offence was committed in a group context; in the other cases there was only one perpetrator. In nearly all cases the victim is a girl or a woman and in most cases the victim is acquainted with the boy (acquaintance, neighbour or fellow pupil).

Of the enrolled target group one boy meets all the inclusion criteria. In addition, two other boys seem to comply with these criteria based on known data. However, the J-SOAP-D scores<sup>2</sup> of these boys and their motivations to participate in RL are unknown. In addition, on the basis of the exclusion criteria a small proportion of enrolled boys would not have been eligible to participate in RL. The only participating boy who meets all the inclusion criteria does not score on the exclusion criteria of RL and therefore, he is the only person to be fully eligible to participate in RL.

#### *Potential RL target group*

The size and characteristics of the potential RL target group were investigated by studying the cases at the RvdK in which the outcome of the LIJ indicates RL, but no RL advice was given, or RL was not imposed. Based on known data, 24 boys seem to meet the RL inclusion criteria. However, the J-SOAP D scores of only four of these boys are known, therefore it is hard to determine whether this group actually meets the RL inclusion criteria. A large part of the boys of the potential target group, however, are excluded on the basis of the exclusion criteria. Within the studied potential target group psychosocial problems and/or underlying psychopathology or severe behavioural problems occur significantly more often than in the enrolled target group, and therefore participation in RL is prevented or RL is insufficient.

The considerations whether or not to advise RL have been discussed with child welfare investigators and behavioural specialists. In the discussions it was noted that the LIJ alone is not well equipped to make a good assessment to advise RL. In practice, the interviewed child welfare investigators and behavioural specialists often regard the J-SOAP D score as a decisive indicator (providing added value), instead of the scores on the attitude and skills domains of the 2b instrument, because in their opinion J-SOAP D is able to provide good insight into (risky) sexual development. Moreover, it has been observed that after a sexual offence has occurred parents often involve

---

<sup>2</sup> Juvenile Sex Offender Assessment Protocol D-score.

voluntary assistance. Child welfare investigators and behavioural specialists make a comparative assessment whether or not in the given situation RL provides added value. It was also noted that the RvdK observes that the problems are not confined to sexuality. In these cases, according to the RvdK, it is obvious to advise an intervention that covers different areas for special attention.

Finally, interviews were held with judges about the reasons why an RL advice does not necessarily lead to an imposition. Due to characteristics inherent in sexual offences, these cases are difficult to prove. Usually acquittal is the result or the case in question is dismissed. A judge may also come to the conclusion that no pedagogical added value is to be expected of RL, given the long period that has elapsed since the commission of the offence.

#### *RL execution (programme integrity)*

To a large extent, RL is carried out as intended. When the contextual factors are concerned, execution deviates from the management instructions on three (small) aspects. The role of instructors and supervisors has been combined and the role of regional coordinator is the responsibility of the manager instead of the trainers. In addition, in the case of one executive trainer, the requirements to maintain the trainer licence were not met (due to illness). Finally, the assessment interviews of the trainers with the manager took place by telephone rather than face to face. With regard to the execution of RL it is noted that only in a few cases an exception is made to the intended duration and intensity of the training and the application of the proposed methods of the core module.

#### *Experiences*

Both the community service coordinators and the trainers experience that most of the boys are (intrinsically) motivated to participate in RL. The results of the motivation thermometer filled out by the boys confirm this positive picture. This high motivation can be explained by the fact that it is part of the RL inclusion criteria. The community service coordinators and trainers also notice that the parents of the boys are generally motivated to participate and support their son.

From the questionnaires they fill out at the end of the training, it appears that both the boys and their parents are very satisfied with the support offered by the trainer, the duration of the training and the assignments. In general, the interviewed trainers and community service coordinators are also positive about RL. The trainers are especially pleased that the training is well-organised and structured. What strikes both trainers and community service coordinators as positive is that according to them the boys really grow in their development due to the training.

#### *Obstacles to the execution*

Employees of Rutgers mention five bottlenecks in the way RL is carried out. First of all, reporting on behalf of RL takes a lot of time, longer than planned for. In addition, trainers observe that the boys sometimes fail to understand or



misinterpret the questions on the lists they have to fill out. Completing the success thermometer can also be tricky for (some) boys, because sometimes they cannot think of a specific example of a risky situation with which they have been confronted in the past week. According to one of the trainers, boys often give socially desirable answers to the questions of the motivation thermometer. The third problem is related to the content of the training. According to trainers, not all work methods are equally workable/applicable in practice. In addition, some trainers think it is a pity that the RL programme is rather strict and that, compared with the old Sexuality Learning Sanction (*Leerstraf Seksualiteit*) there is less room for them to use their own creativity or methodologies. The fourth bottleneck concerns the quality requirements that the trainers must meet. It was noted that the required training and support is disproportionate to the (small) number of trainings given by trainers. The last bottleneck concerns the target group of RL. It is observed that a modified version of RL is desired for young people with mild intellectual disabilities, because for these youngsters it takes a lot of time to get things clear. Child welfare investigators and behavioural specialists support this last point of view. Furthermore, child welfare investigators and behavioural specialists express a need for follow-up days to enlarge competences in the area of J-SOAP D training and vice cases. The bottlenecks suggested by community service coordinators are mostly related to the training process. Some community service coordinators experience that trainings are often interrupted by holidays of trainers. In addition, the long period between the offence and the start of RL is mentioned as a bottleneck. Last, one community service coordinator notes that he feels scruples about sharing privacy sensitive information, such as the summons, with the trainers.

#### *Feasibility efficacy study and effect evaluation*

An efficacy study should provide insight into the extent to which programme objectives of the intervention are met. In terms of context and execution of the intervention, the programme is carried out as intended, which means it is possible to conduct an efficacy study. Moreover, all data of the pre- and post-measurement are available. The pre- and post-measurement consists of a questionnaire 'What you feel, think and do' filled out by the boy at the start of the first training session and at the end of the evaluation session (last meeting). This questionnaire consists of items about attitudes towards sexual coercion, self-regulation, sexual interaction competence, perceived parental support, perceived parental supervision and social desirability, and therefore connects to the RL programme objectives. A side-note should be made regarding these data: from the interviews with trainers it appears that sometimes the boys misinterpret or fail to understand the questions, or give socially desirable answers. In the post-measurement, the trainer fills out the checklist once again and in addition, he assesses the extent to which the boy has the knowledge and skills to refrain from unacceptable sexual behaviour. During the pre-measurement the trainer assesses the extent of insight the boy has into the factors that led to the offence, the extent of insight the boy has into the role of negative influences from his environment and group dynamics,

and the extent to which the boy is motivated for behavioural change. However, a major bottleneck for the feasibility of the efficacy study is that the participants of the target group only to a limited extent meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria. With regard to RL advice and indication, the programme integrity is insufficiently guaranteed. Another bottleneck is that (as yet) no follow-up measurement has occurred with regard to the majority of the enrolled target group.

The focus of the effect evaluation is on the final objective of RL. In the effect evaluation it will be examined whether RL participants sexually reoffend less often than juvenile sex offenders who have not participated in RL. A bottleneck of the effect evaluation is the composition of a control group that is comparable with the experimental group. This relates to the aforementioned bottleneck regarding RL indication and advice. With regard to this issue, matches on background characteristics of the enrolled target group and offences committed provide opportunities.

## **Conclusion**

Of the enrolled target group only one boy – with regard to whom there was no reason to exclude him on the basis of the exclusion criteria – meets all the RL inclusion criteria. Nearly forty percent of the enrolled target group scores low with regard to general recidivism risk (*algemeen recidiverisico*, ARR) and dynamic risk profile (*dynamisch risicoprofiel*, DRP). This means that a group of less severe offenders enrolled in the programme than was intended. There are only three boys in the potential target group under study who meet the inclusion criteria and with regard to whom there appear to be no reasons to exclude them on the basis of the exclusion criteria. It can be concluded that the enrolled target group meets the inclusion criteria only to a limited extent. Simultaneously, the potential target group is not unjustly excluded, for the extent to which this target group scores on the exclusion criteria is higher. With regard to the potential target group under study, there is a substantially greater frequency of psychosocial problems and/or underlying psychopathology or severe behavioural problems.

With regard to RL advice and indication, the programme integrity is insufficiently guaranteed, and this has consequences for the feasibility of the effect evaluation. The fact is that the prospective research population is too small. Moreover, it is difficult to compose a control group that is comparable with the experimental group on behalf of an effect evaluation.



**Regioplan Beleidsonderzoek**

**Jollemanhof 18 (6e etage)**

**1019 GW Amsterdam**

**T 020 531 531 5**

**E [info@regioplan.nl](mailto:info@regioplan.nl)**

**I [www.regioplan.nl](http://www.regioplan.nl)**