

Supporting Parents at Risk of Child Maltreatment: 20 Years After the South Holland Supportive Parenting Experiment

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Early-childhood home visiting programmes

- Early-childhood home visiting (ECHV) programmes are typically targeted at low-income families
- Examples: the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) programme (Olds 2006; Heckman et al. 2017; Jungmann et al. 2015; Sandner 2019; Mejdoubi et al. 2015; Robling et al. 2016) and the Preparing for Life programme (Doyle 2020; Coy and Doyle 2024)
- Although low-SES is a strong indicator of physical neglect, which includes lack of clothing, food, and housing (Proctor and Dubowitz, 2013), it is far weaker in predicting physical and emotional abuse (Barnett et al 1997; Knutson et al. 2005; May-Chahal and Cawson 2005; Hussey et al. 2006; Sedlak et al. 2010)

The Supportive Parenting programme

- Supportive Parenting (SP) offers six 90-minute home visits by a trained nurse, between birth and the second birthday
- Survey-based targeting: families at risk of experiencing parenting problems

Content and costs of SP

- SP visits:
 - Help parents understand children's developmental stages
 - Help parents reflect on their own childhood experiences and form realistic parenting expectations
 - Support parents to balance parenthood with their social, personal, and professional lives
- The narrow focus of SP leads to lower costs: while the Dutch version of NFP costs € 16,000 per family, SP costs € 2,000 per family.

IPARAN screener questionnaire

Item	Responses (scores)
1. I expect that I will receive enough support from my partner in the care of our child(ren)	1. always (0), 2. often (0), 3. sometimes (.5), 4. never (.5)
2. I am very worried about raising this child	1. always (0.5), 2. often (0.5), 3. sometimes (0), 4. never (0)
3. During the last nine months I have felt unhappy about expecting a baby	1. always (0.5), 2. often (0.5), 3. sometimes (0), 4. never (0)
4. As a child I generally felt safe in the vicinity of (one of) my parents/carers	1. always (0), 2. often (0), 3. sometimes (1), 4. never (1)
5. I feel that the relationship between my parents/carers was often violent when I was a child	1. yes (1), 2. no (0)
6. I feel that my parents/carers hit me too much as a child	1. yes (1), 2. no (0)
7. Looking back at the last three years, I suffered serious mental problems (for a while)	1. yes (1), 2. no (0)
8. When I have/had an argument with my partner, we sometimes come/came to blows	Yes (1), No (0)
9. I should actually drink less alcohol/take fewer drugs	1. yes (1), 2. no (0)
10. A good upbringing involves smacking children regularly	1. yes (1), 2. no (0)
11. I was forcefully subjected to an unpleasant sexual experience before I was 16	1. yes (1), 2. no (0)
12. I feel very accepted by my family	1. always (0), 2. often (0.1), 3. sometimes (0.2), 4. never (0.3)
13. I can get so angry that I lose control	1. always (1), 2. often (1), 3. sometimes (0), 4. never (0)
14. I feel very much at home in the area where I live	1. always (0), 2. often (0.1), 3. sometimes (0.2), 4. never (0.3)
15. I would like to have more people around me on whom I could fall back for support	1. always (0.3), 2. often (0.2), 3. sometimes (0.1), 4. never (0.0)
16. I find it easy to ask for help or advice when I need it	1. always (0), 2. often (0.1), 3. sometimes (0.2), 4. never (0.3)

The South Holland Supportive Parenting Experiment

- All 9,458 families residing in the catchment area received the IPARAN screener questionnaire 5 days after birth
- Enrolment between October 2001 and November 2022
- 1,437 were eligible
- We linked RCT participants to Dutch administrative data for long-term follow-up

Programme eligibility and participation

	Screener		Ineligible		Eligible		RCT Participation	
	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers
	A. Administrative data							
Age at birth	31.661	34.241	31.758	34.193	31.433	34.360	31.900	34.620
	[4.400]	[4.884]	[4.218]	[4.659]	[4.798]	[5.394]	[4.463]	[5.434]
Proportion with college degree	0.234	0.214	0.249	0.236	0.197	0.160	0.250	0.215
Proportion employed	0.818	0.968	0.853	0.978	0.733	0.945	0.754	0.944
Proportion cohabiting	0.910	0.927	0.936	0.944	0.848	0.881	0.856	0.884
Observations	4846	4762	3409	3380	1437	1382	500	484

Balancing table

	Full Sample	
	Control Mean	Treatment - Control
A. Administrative data mother		
Age at birth	32.221 [4.340]	-0.664* (0.399)
College degree	0.287	-0.076** (0.039)
Employed	0.923	-0.004 (0.039)
Cohabiting	0.876	-0.041 (0.032)
Observations	258	242
B. Administrative data father		
Age at birth	34.940 [5.460]	-0.659 (0.494)
College degree	0.241	-0.054 (0.037)
Employed	0.932	0.026 (0.021)
Cohabiting	0.908	-0.048 (0.029)
Observations	249	235

	Full Sample	
	Control Mean	Treatment - Control
C. Administrative data child		
Birth month	7.047 [3.728]	-0.108 (0.327)
Not firstborn	0.562	-0.012 (0.045)
Male	0.593	-0.006 (0.044)
Observations	258	242
D. Survey data		
Family score	2.534 [1.642]	0.190 (0.141)
Observations	258	242
AAPI total	5.791 [0.888]	0.053 (0.082)
Observations	254	230
BIPPPI total	11.987 [9.326]	1.005 (0.927)
Observations	246	222

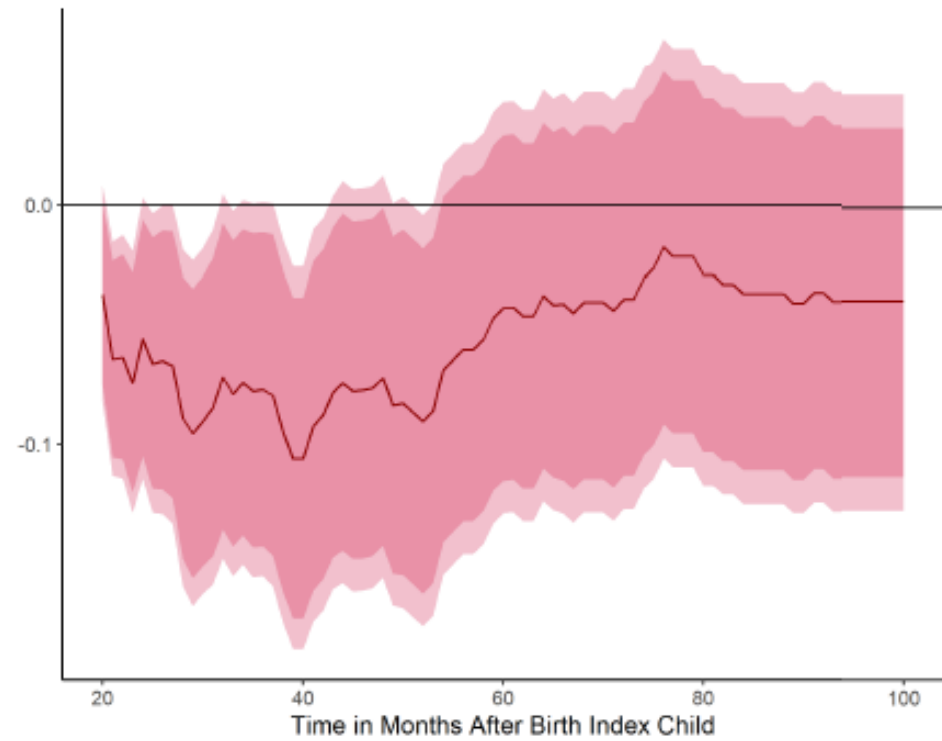
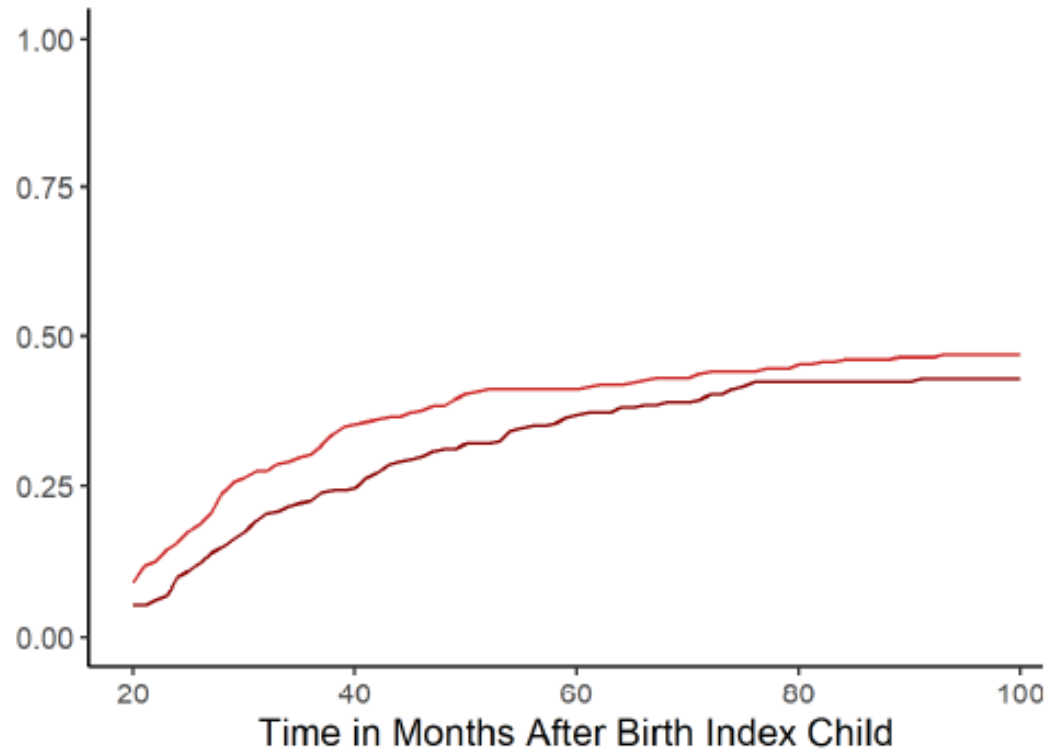
Summary results (OLS estimates)

	Control Group Mean (1)	Treatment - Control (2)	p-value (3)	RW p-value (4)	N (5)
Parenting Attitudes	6.50 [1.08]	0.18 (0.1)	.095	.123	430
Birth Interval	47.3 [16.6]	3.2 (1.4)	.022	.089	500
Hours Worked	38,901 [14,649]	-3,636 (1,452)	.012	.059	500
Income	1,001,294 [596,208]	-17,4822 (50,906)	.001	.010	500
Social-Emotional	8.38 [1.61]	0.28 (0.14)	.042	.099	445
Educational Enrolment	0.492	0.024 (0.045)	.588	.594	500

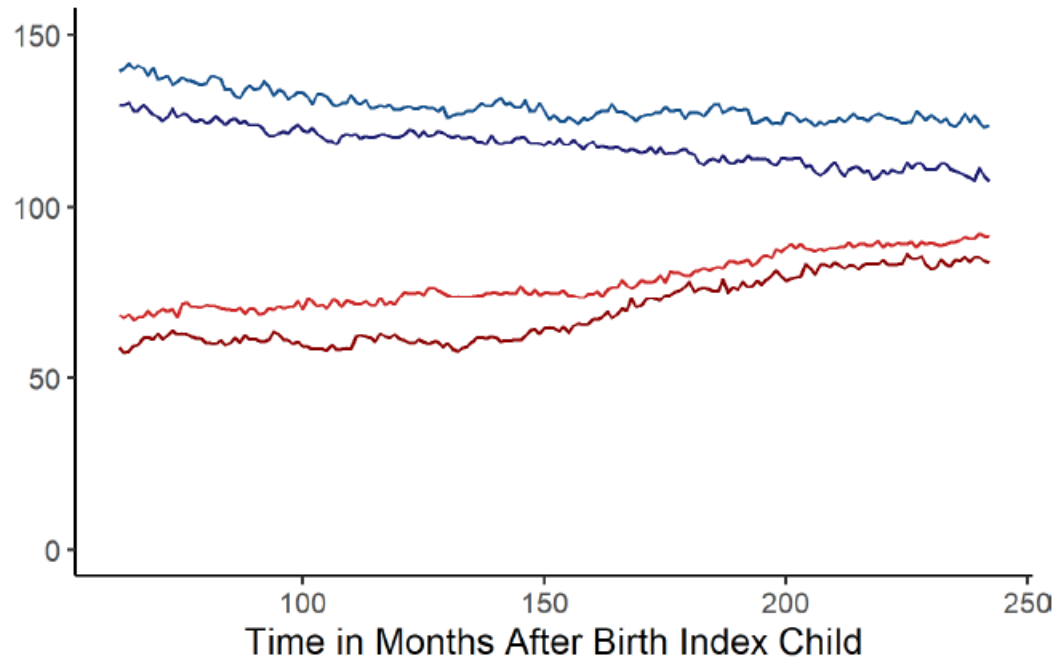
OLS estimates for parenting attitudes

	12 Months			24 Months		
	Control Mean	Treatment - Control	N	Control Mean	Treatment - Control	N
Inappropriate Expectations	6.269*** [1.513]	0.290** (0.142)	448	6.260*** [1.550]	0.115 (0.150)	434
Inability to be Empathetic	6.004*** [1.893]	0.135 (0.187)	440	5.927*** [1.965]	0.151 (0.187)	438
Belief in Punishment	5.921*** [1.457]	0.059 (0.131)	449	5.957*** [1.438]	-0.001 (0.133)	434
Role Reversal	7.041*** [1.684]	0.042 (0.155)	447	7.039*** [1.664]	0.210 (0.151)	438
Oppressing Independence	7.116*** [1.903]	0.445** (0.178)	444	6.879*** [1.898]	0.389** (0.183)	433
Total	6.495*** [1.080]	0.176* (0.105)	430	6.437*** [1.035]	0.176* (0.102)	426

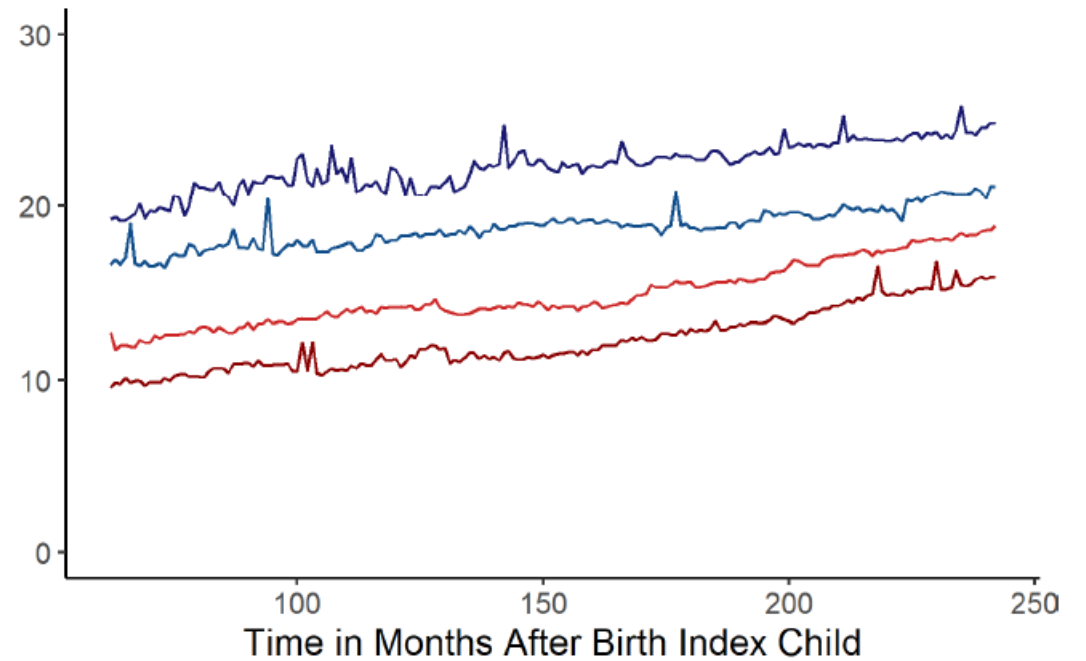
Results for birth interval



Hours worked and hourly wage

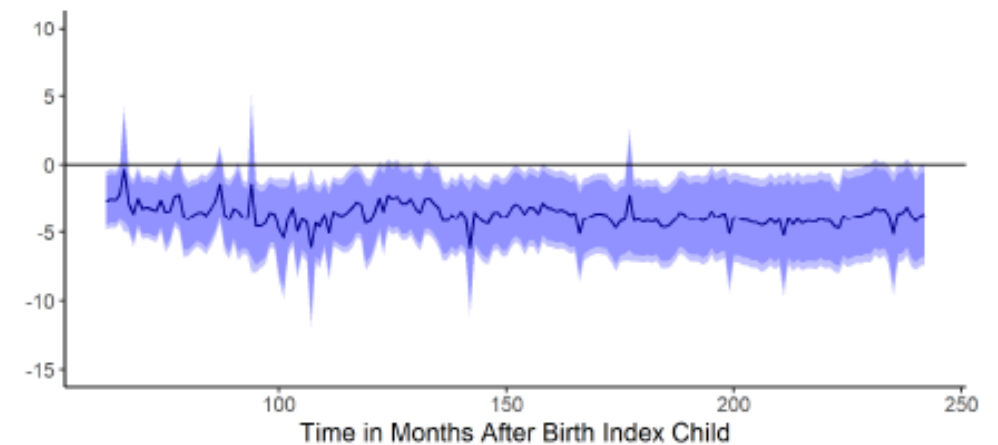
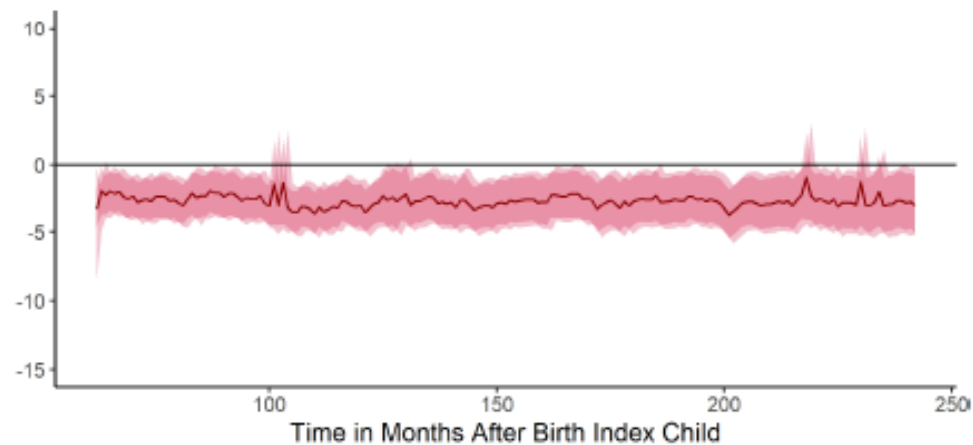
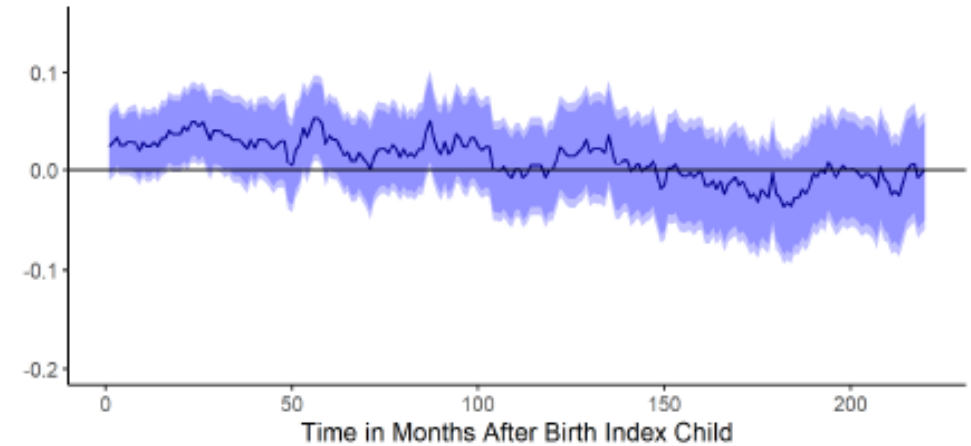
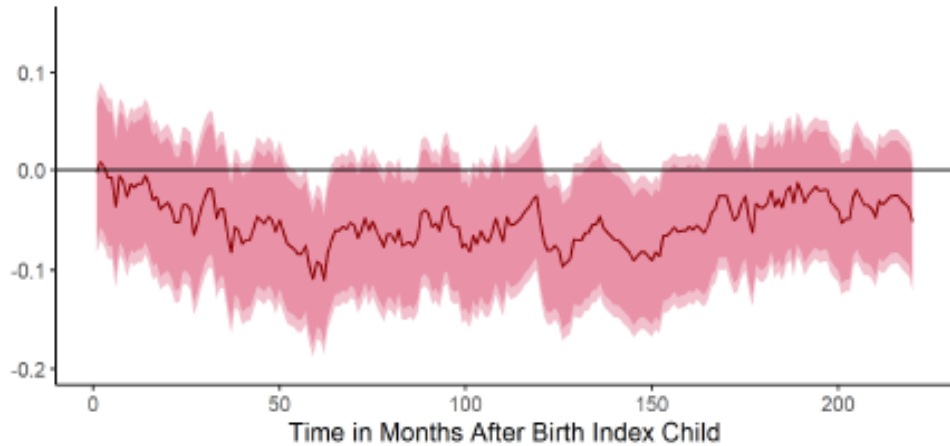


Control Group (Fathers) Treatment Group (Fathers)
Control Group (Mothers) Treatment Group (Mothers)



Control Group (Fathers) Treatment Group (Fathers)
Control Group (Mothers) Treatment Group (Mothers)

Results for hours worked and hourly wage: OLS estimates for mothers and fathers



Child socio-emotional development at 12 months

	Eat (1)	Sleep (2)	Active (3)	Contact (4)	Mood (5)	Total (6)
Control Group Mean	9.357*** [1.656]	8.366*** [2.759]	8.969*** [2.399]	9.514*** [1.218]	8.286*** [1.823]	8.379*** [1.612]
Treatment - Control	0.180 (0.148)	0.324 (0.245)	0.236 (0.213)	0.107 (0.107)	0.244 (0.155)	0.284** (0.137)
Observations	446	449	446	438	431	445
R-squared	0.003	0.004	0.003	0.002	0.006	0.009

Conclusion

- SP is a medium-intensity intervention aimed at preventing parenting problems, regardless of socioeconomic status
- We find that SP:
 - improved parenting attitudes
 - increased birth intervals
 - reduced working hours
 - improved child socio-emotional development
- Point estimates are $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ compared with those found for NFP
- We find no evidence of effects on educational enrolment in the high-ability upper secondary education track