

my MUM and dad
argued a lot



EMOTIONAL LITERACY
in children & young people

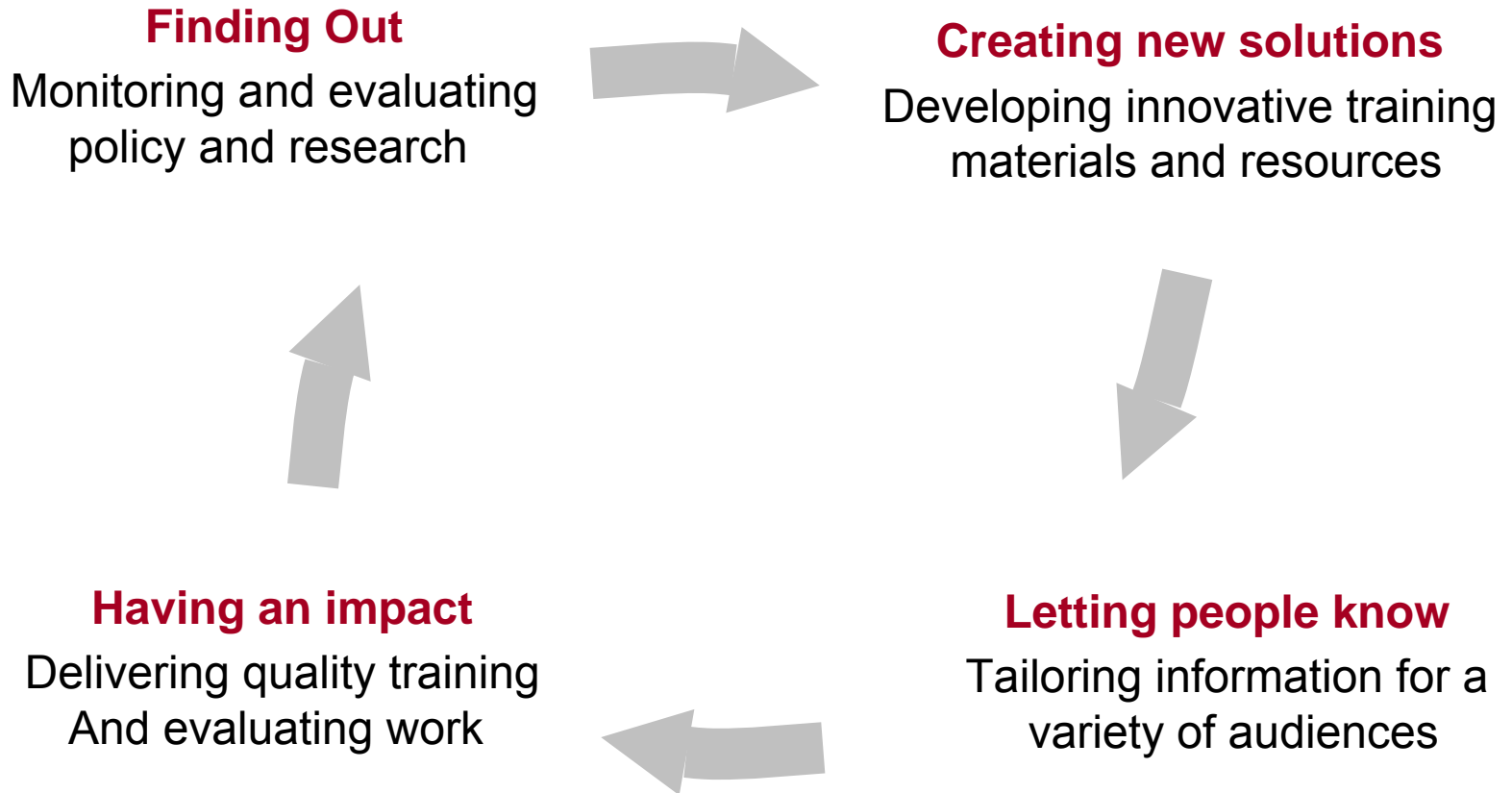
CHILDREN IN WALES
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Parent interaction

Key messages

- The quality of the relationship matters most – more than the skills alone to communicate and resolve the conflict.
- It is the loss of positive emotional interactions rather than the emergence of negativity that is linked with loss of satisfaction in the relationship.
- Support, affection, humour, warmth and interest in each other, increase relationship satisfaction and help to offset the negative fallout from conflict



The parents' relationship and how it affects children

- Many parents whether living together or not – coping with conflict in their relationships.
- The quality of children's lives is heavily influenced by their parents' relationship – children recognise this more than parents.
- Parental conflict influences how parents parent, and how children expect their parents to behave towards them.
- Children respond to conflict in different ways – even siblings in the same family – as they try to cope with parental conflict.



Children's responses to parental conflict

- **The troublesome child** – becomes aggressive and difficult
- **The sad and troubled child** – develop emotional problems and becomes withdrawn and quiet and may be overlooked
- **The parent child** – tries to comfort and support his parents or siblings



Destructive conflict

- Physical violence
- Verbal aggression
- Heated rows full of contempt and criticism
- The 'silent treatment'
- When one partner withdraws
- When the conflict between parents is about the child or children



Types of conflict

- **Destructive conflict:**

unresolved and harmful

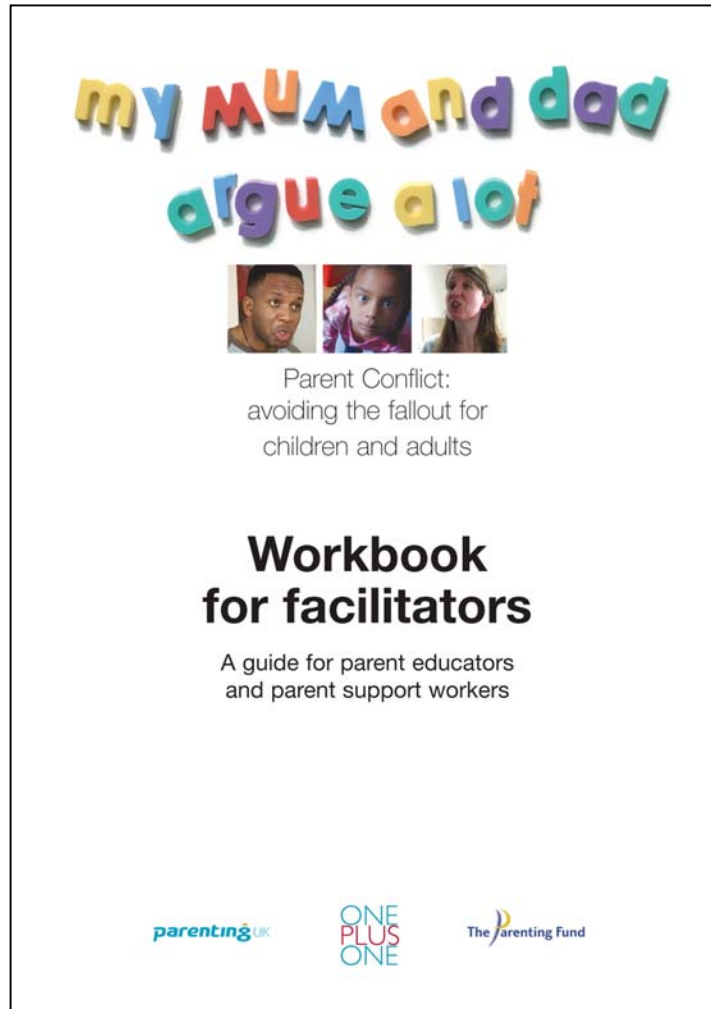
- **Productive conflict:**

unresolved but can move on not harmful

- **Creative conflict:**

resolved and beneficial

Developing quality resources





2

BECOMING PARENTS

3

PARENTS NOT PARTNERS

4

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

ZONE
1

BEING PARTNERS

Your relationship

The big issues

Communicating - the key to happiness?

Managing differences

Your relationship and the children

Good relationships matter to children

Conflict is part of family life, but...

How children react to tension and rows

Managing your differences with the children in mind

Thinking about the future

Zone 1 - Being Partners > Your Relationship And The Children



How children react to tension and rows

Children respond to conflict in different ways - it depends on their emotional make-up, how old they are, whether boys or girls, whether there are other people to talk things over with and the history of conflict in the family.

There are three typical types of response. Here some parents remember what they did when their mum and dad argued:

The troublesome child:

"I was an only child so when my parents were not getting on it was desperate. They didn't have big fights... more incessant squabbling. I remember feeling that I had to get them to stop and notice me. If we were out, running off was a good way to get them to start noticing that I was there."

Diverting mum and dad's attention is an effective way to stop them from conflict. When children become naughty or aggressive it's easy for parents to see they are upset.

The child who's no trouble, but distressed:

"When rows started I would run up to my room which was at the top of the house. If I shut the door and hummed to myself I couldn't hear them. But then I would stop and if I couldn't hear them I would start worrying that they might have gone and left me."

Some children do the opposite - they try to keep a low profile and to be extra 'good'. A child who is withdrawn and quiet may be no trouble to their parents but may be sad and upset inside.

The parent child:

"My dad left when I was 12. Things had been tense for quite a while and my mum said she was relieved that he had gone and so was I in a way. But it would start all over again when he rang up or visited. Afterwards she would burst into tears. I would make her a coffee and try to cheer her up but I would feel guilty. She said that if it wasn't for me she would not have to see him."