



# **Cardiff Parent Power: Empowering Families, Transforming Communities**

Cardiff University × The Brilliant Club  
*Dr Anna Váradi*

# Introduction & Aim of Talk

- Overview of Cardiff Parent Power (CPP)
- Why **parents matter** in higher education
- Scaling grassroots impact

# Parent Power Mission

## Parent Power - Theory of Change



### Mission

Parent Power empowers parents to campaign for changes that will improve educational opportunities for their children.



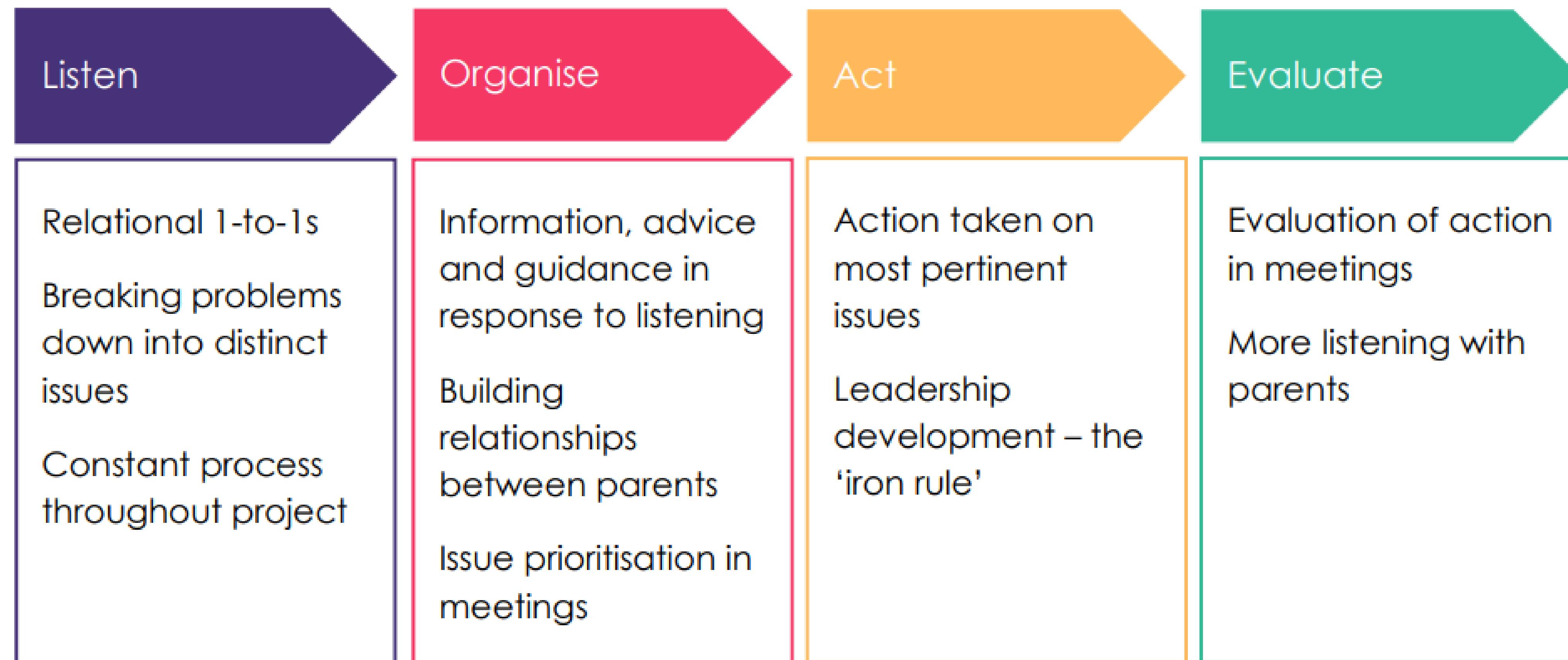
# Tackling Education Inequalities

## – Why Parents?

- Unequal university access - including in Cardiff
- Example: Lisvane 80% vs Cathays North 23.7%
- Parents' influence = 4 months' extra progress on average\*
- Parents guide post-school choices
- Large gaps in HE knowledge/resources

\* Education Endowment Foundation

# The Parent Power Model



# Setting up Cardiff Parent Power

- Launched in February 2022
- Initial focus on *Grangetown* & under-represented families
  - 4 local schools involved
- Cardiff University: funding + information
- The Brilliant Club: community expertise
- *Grange Pavilion: community hub*



# Parent Campaigns

1. Contextual admissions
2. Work experience opportunities
3. School/university engagement
4. Widening Participation campaign

# Contextual Admissions campaign

- Parents pushed for clearer admissions info
- Implemented by Cardiff University

## Giving communities power: Developing contextual admissions with parents

Charlotte Hallahan, Nia Oatley and Asha Noor explain how engagement with the community can help a university develop an admissions policy that takes account of context



COMMENT | 14/05/24



**Charlotte Hallahan**

Charlotte Hallahan is Senior Policy and Communications Officer at The Brilliant Club



**Nia Oatley**

In October last year, a Cardiff parent group successfully campaigned for Cardiff University to improve how it shares information on how students can apply for contextual admissions.

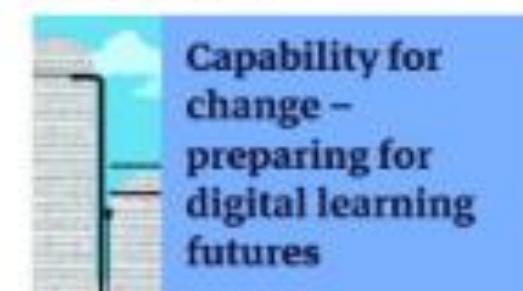
This was a fantastic win for Cardiff Parent Power, a group of parents and carers who work to enact educational change in their local areas and will have a positive impact on how the university engages with Cardiff families going forward.

There are currently significant disparities in access to university study, with students from low-income backgrounds less likely to progress to higher education than their peers.

Less advantaged students are still 14 times less likely to proceed to higher



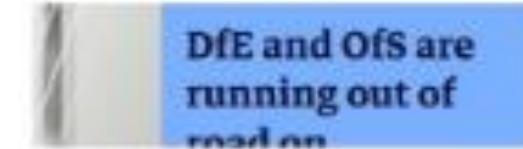
### Latest articles



Capability for change – preparing for digital learning futures



Effective regulation requires a degree of trust



DfE and OfS are running out of road on

# Work Experience campaign

- Won **expanded access** to CU Engage Work Experience
- Conference at the **Senedd**, sponsored by Vaughan Gething (80 young people, 40 parents)
- NHS, South Wales Police, and other employers offering placements



# Bespoke HE Visits

- Cardiff University Law School (mock trial & seminar)
- Bespoke Cardiff University Campus Visit
- Open Day Bristol
- Parents becoming HE champions





Parental rating of  
Cardiff University Trip



of surveyed parents  
agreed the trip was  
positive and they gained  
knowledge about the  
university



of surveyed parents  
agreed that they felt  
better prepared to  
support their child to  
make a decision about  
university after the trip

# Impact on Parents

- **Parents go from learners → leaders**
  - Leadership group established in 2024
- Parents co-create strategy input
- Parents leading campaigns, writing advocacy letters, and taking on public speaking engagements

# Challenges and Lessons

- Spreading the word across communities
  - Build trust first
- Balancing information vs organising
  - Mix training and action
- Sustaining consistent engagement
  - Keep engagement flexible

“ Parent Power Cardiff has been amazing. It has given me the confidence to ask the questions I've always wanted answered but have been too nervous to ask. The team have really put us at ease and not made us feel like our questions are silly. They have listened to us and nudged us in the right direction to make changes for the challenges we face. I really like that I'm part of a community of like-minded individuals who all just want to support their children to access higher education- or at least have the opportunity to access higher education, if that's what they want. ”

Kelly Attard, Cardiff Parent Power





Diolch am wrando  
Thank you for listening