

Relationships Matter

Information About a New Study

What the Study is All About

However good a relationship may appear, most couples experience difficulties at some time or other and some relationships break down completely. Relationship problems, separation and divorce can be very painful and upsetting for everyone concerned, so the Department for Children, Schools and Families has asked us to find out about the kind of support and help people might want when things go wrong.

We know that relationships can come under pressure at certain times, such as when a baby is born, when children leave home or if there is ill-health or unemployment in the family. But we don't really know about all the events and situations that can cause relationships to go wrong because many people don't talk about their worries or ask for help. So we need to find out more about what poses the greatest threats to couples in all kinds of relationship and at different life stages. We also need to know whether there are services that might help different people at different times and the best way of making these easily available.

That's why we are inviting people of all ages and in all walks of life to help us with this important study during 2009. This is a unique opportunity for everyone who has been in a relationship and understands the problems people can face to help shape new services for adults and for children. Between now and July we want to hear particularly from people whose relationship has broken down - people who may be thinking about splitting up, or are in the process of separating from a partner or have separated already, or been divorced. We are particularly keen to know about the problems couples face when they have children, so would like to hear from mothers and from fathers.

What We Would Like You to Do

There are several ways you can help us. You can decide which you prefer. We are hoping that if you have access to the internet you will be willing to fill in a questionnaire online. We would like to talk to some people, in confidence, either by telephone or face-to-face, at a time to suit them. We will also be holding some meetings around the country for people to come along. The Relationships Matter web page has information about the study, access the e-survey and other contact information. We will be adding to the web page in the coming weeks. You can also give your views about new Government proposals to provide more support for couples and for children. We will post topics on the web page during 2009 and invite responses from people who visit it.

Everything you tell us will be in strict confidence. No-one will ever be personally identified, we will never give your details to anyone else, and you can remain anonymous if you wish.

What Happens to the Information

At different times during 2009 we will be looking at the information people have given us and will use this to tell the Department for Children, Schools and Families what sorts of relationship difficulties people have told us about and the kinds of help they need. At the end of December we will write a report about the study. This will help the Government to make sure that, in future, people are able to get the right help at the right time for them.

About the Research Team

We are a small team of six very experienced researchers based at Newcastle University and the Family and Parenting Institute in London. The Study Director is Professor Janet Walker. We have talked to lots of people in the past about their relationship worries and about the impact of relationship breakdown on them and their children, and we know this is a very personal and sensitive area. We are always understanding when people share their concerns and we will always try not to be intrusive at any time. The information people like you can give us is very important for ensuring that the right help is available for couples in the future.

What Happens Next

We very much hope you will decide to help with this important study. Please contact us as soon as possible and tell us the best way to get in touch with you. You can email us, or write to us or you can telephone. If you have any questions about the study or about how to take part, just contact us and we'll be happy to answer them. If you change your mind and decide not to take part at a later date, you can withdraw at any time.

How to Contact Us

If you are willing to fill in the e-survey now, just go to <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/ihp/relationshipsmatter/>

You can also visit the Relationships Matter blog at <http://www.familyandparenting.org/relationshipsComments>

email us at Relationships.Matter@newcastle.ac.uk

write to us at Relationships Matter, PO Box 1260, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE99 2FQ

phone us on 0191 222 7963 and talk to Jane, who will put you in touch with one of the researchers