

Relate Cambridge calls for relationships to be put at heart of local NHS

New campaign calls for the NHS to recognise the link between relationships and health, improving health and wellbeing and reducing pressure on the public purse

Relate Cambridge is calling on local government to put relationships at the heart of the NHS so that more people in Cambridgeshire living with long term health conditions can access relationship support. This comes as a report released yesterday by national charity Relate finds that the link between relationships and health is too often ignored in the NHS, and new polling suggests that the effects of living with health conditions are putting pressure on people's relationships.

A YouGov poll found that around 1 in 4 people with a life-limiting health problem or who are disabled said their condition has impacted negatively on relationships they have or have had with partners (24%), friends (25%), family (23%) or colleagues (33%).*

Despite clear evidence that good quality relationships can prevent, delay or minimise the effects of health conditions, only half (51%) of those with a life-limiting health problem or who are disabled and have received professional support said it has taken their relationships into account effectively. A further 21% said they feel the support they received hasn't considered their relationships at all.

Relate Cambridge sees this as a missed opportunity to improve lives and reduce pressure on the public purse, so is backing the launch of Relate's national campaign called 'The Best Medicine'. The campaign aims to show that relationships are critical to our health and wellbeing and calls on local health policy makers.

Elaine Taylor (Relationship Counsellor) at Relate Cambridge, said: "It can be a long road when you're living with physical or mental health condition, and couple, family and social relationships are a vital part of making the journey better. Yet when we need our relationships most, the effects of having a health condition can pile on the pressure.

"That's why Relate Cambridge is calling on local health policy makers to put relationships at the heart of the NHS. We want excellent relationship support to be made more accessible at the point of diagnosis and beyond. There are 15 million people living with long term health conditions in the UK,** a number of whom will live in Cambridgeshire, so please sign our petition today to show your support."

Whilst excellent relationship support is out there, Relate's poll found that 91%* of people with a life-limiting health problem or who are disabled aren't aware of it. Relate Cambridge can help people with many different health conditions such as stroke, cancer and depression to maintain strong relationships.

Relate Cambridge wants health policy makers in the area to change lives, recommending that:

- Health and Wellbeing Boards make relationships a core part of their work.
- Directors of Public Health collect data about relationships locally.
- Clinical Commissioning Groups and local authorities undertake a 'Family Test' when considering local policies and commissioning.

To find out more about The Best Medicine campaign and to sign the petition visit www.relate.org.uk/thebestmedicine.

Relate Cambridge can help people whether they are struggling to deal with a diagnosis and the fallout, need help telling others what is happening, or are supporting someone else. Relate's trained counsellors provide impartial and non-judgmental information, support and counselling for all stages of the journey. To contact us at Relate Cambridge for further information call 01223 357424.

Relate Cambridge's tips for keeping relationships rich during poor health:

- **Don't bottle it up:** It can be tempting to skirt around the issue with friends and family in case people get upset, but open communication is really important.
- **Expect change:** Realise that the dynamics of your relationships may change, particularly if a partner or family member is taking on the role of 'carer'. Don't make assumptions about how this will make you both feel.
- **See the person not the illness:** Remember they are still the person you knew and loved before. Some of their behaviours may be symptoms of their condition so try to separate these and not to take them personally.
- **Make time and space for intimacy:** In a couple relationship, try to separate yourself from the patient/carer role now and again to allow time for intimacy with your partner. Perhaps create a special room in the house where these roles no longer exist and you can spend quality time together.
- **Remember everyone is different:** Health conditions affect people in different ways and what works for somebody may not be the same for everyone.
- **Consider counselling:** It's tempting to keep a 'stiff upper lip' but talking to somebody impartial about how you feel and putting mechanisms in place to cope with the changes in your relationship.

ENDS

[View a full copy of the report](#)

[View the executive summary which includes local and national recommendations](#)

For all media enquiries - please contact Elaine Taylor on **01302 347712**

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www.relatecambridge.org.uk

Relate Cambridge – supporting relationships at every stage of your life

*Total sample size was 2,221 adults, 672 of whom had a long term health problem or disability. Fieldwork was undertaken between 27th February - 2nd March 2015. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+). All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc.

** Taken from the Department of Health Long Term Conditions Compendium of Information, Third Edition, 2012.

Notes to editors:

- The Best Medicine campaign is being supported by a host of charities including Mind, The Stroke Association, Alzheimer's Society, Prostate Cancer UK, Breast Cancer Care, the National Aids Trust, Body and Soul, Headway, The James Whale Trust for Kidney Cancer and The Mental Health Foundation.
- Relate champions the importance of strong and healthy relationships as the basis of a thriving society Relationships are under increasing pressure – breakdown costs the UK an estimated £46bn each year.
- Relate provides impartial and non-judgmental support for people of all ages, at all stages of couple, family and social relationships.
- Over a million people every year access information, support and counselling from Relate but it's clear many more would benefit from Relate services.
- Relate's couple counselling work delivers an estimated £11.40 of benefits for every £1 spent.
- Relate's services extend beyond relationship counselling to family counselling, counselling for young people, sex therapy and informal courses and workshops and are offered through a network of around 1,700 counsellors across the country.
- Relate celebrated its 75th birthday in 2013.
- For more information and advice visit: www.relate.org.uk.