

News release

Relate Cambridge prepares for New Year peak in calls

Local relationships charity Relate Cambridge is preparing for a peak in calls this New Year as relationship tensions between families and couples come to a head over the festive period. This comes as leading national charities; Relate and Relationships Scotland publish their *Happy Families?* report which shows that step-family relationships and families with young children are under particular pressure.

Relate Cambridge received a 71% increase in calls in January 2016. The charity says this is a trend they see every year and staff are bracing themselves for another busy January.

Meanwhile, the *Happy Families?* report found that 41% of people with a child under 19 said money worries were a strain on their relationship, compared to 26% of those without a child under 19.** And 26% of parents with a child under 19 reported household chores as a strain on their relationship compared to just 16% of those with no child under 19. Among parents of very young children, however, this jumped up considerably: almost a third (32%) of parents of children aged 0-5 identified household chores as a relationship strain.

Happily, the report, which analyses a survey of more than 5,000 UK adults and is sponsored by family solicitors Simpson Millar, also found that more than eight in ten people (81%) reported a good relationship with their mums and three quarters (75%) reported a good relationship with their dads. However, relationships between step-parents and step-children aren't as plain-sailing. For example, 61% of step-parents reported good relationships with their step-children in contrast to the 91% who reported good relationships with their own children.

Relate counsellor, Elaine Taylor at Relate Cambridge, says that these pressures can become intensified during the Christmas period, contributing to a surge of people seeking relationship support in the New Year. She said: "The new report shows that money worries place a particular strain on the relationships of couples with children under 19 and that for parents of under-fives, household chores are a real pressure point. With the added financial burden of Christmas and the work that goes into preparing the home and tidying up afterwards, it's no wonder that rows and tears during this period are common.

"These findings also indicate some of the challenges families can face following the breakdown of a relationship and blending families. Step-mums can feel pressure to be maternal and are more likely to face rejection from their step-children, and step-kids can find themselves caught between biological parents and new family members. Christmas can be a time when all these issues come to the surface. If you're experiencing any difficulties, we'd urge you to contact Relate Cambridge at the earliest possible stage."

Relate isn't the only organisation which sees a peak in calls in the New Year. Simpson Millar also get much busier and find this is when a lot of divorces are initiated: Peter

Morris, National Head of Family Law at Simpson Millar, added: “The seasonal spike in enquiries is a reality for professionals dealing with relationship breakdown. There are in fact two spikes, peaking after winter and summer holidays. This is not to say holidays *cause* divorce; it just shows a correlation between divorce and the post-holiday seasons. Help is out there and all responsible family lawyers would encourage couples experiencing relationship breakdown to contact Relate whatever the season.”

Happy Families? is the second in a series of reports from a major piece of research by Relate and Relationships Scotland. Over 5000 UK adults were surveyed as part of *The Way We Are Now* study, providing a unique window into the current state of the nation’s relationships. To read the report in full, please visit <https://www.relate.org.uk/policy-campaigns/publications/happy-families>

Here are Relate Cambridge’s tips for keeping the peace this Christmas:

- **Take it slowly.** If it is the first Christmas in a new family set up then remember that you have to allow time for adjustments to settle in. Don’t expect everything to be ideal - manage your own expectations and disappointments.
- **Plan ahead.** Getting some of the jobs done ahead of time means everyone will be less stressed, and planning the festivities as a family is likely to make sure everyone feels like their hopes and expectations are being listened to. In particular, talk to your partner in advance about where you plan to spend Christmas so it’s not a shock to anyone come Christmas Eve.
- **Don’t overspend.** For a lot of people this Christmas money will be tight, so try not to succumb to the pressure and spend more than you can afford. Splashing the credit card on presents might be fun but getting yourself in a mountain of debt is not a good way to start the New Year. Money worries put huge strain on relationships – it’s not worth it in the long run.
- **Talk to your children.** If you are a single parent, talk to your child about who they want to spend time with over the holidays. Christmas is important to children but they can easily feel divided and guilty about who they spend time with and worried in case anyone is left on their own. Do talk to your ex-partner first though to determine what they are doing. Asking the children first can lead to disappointment, and remember, depending on the age of the children, they may not be able to make such decisions.
- **Plan something special.** If arguments are likely over the festive period, have a few special events that everyone knows about so you have things to look forward to. It might be decorating the tree, or hanging the stockings up. The important thing is that you agree that these things will go ahead, and everyone makes the effort to get along.
- **Don’t spoil the step-kids:** If you have step-children staying at Christmas, do treat them like part of the family but not like special guests. Relationships take time to build and making the step-children into VIPs may appear insincere or upset your own children.

- **Go easy on the booze.** We all like to toast Christmas with a nice glass or two, but if there is any tension in your family then steer clear of too much alcohol; it will only aggravate the situation.

Relate Cambridge offers a range of relationship support services, including individual counselling, family counselling and mediation, which can help people to break up in the least painful way possible. Call us on 01223 357424 or visit www.relatecambridge.org.uk for more information.

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For all media enquiries contact Elaine Taylor on 01302 347712

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www.relatecambridge.org.uk

Relate Cambridge – supporting relationships at every stage of your life

***This data refers to calls made to the Relate Centre’s phone line. All of the data compares December 2015 to January 2016.*

***All figures are taken from The Way We Are Now– an annual study of the relationships of over 5000 people across the UK by Relate and Relationships Scotland. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 16+). YouGov is a member of the British Polling Council. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Any inaccuracies or errors in the further analyses of these data are the sole responsibility of Relate. The Way We Are Now is an annual report into the state of the nation’s relationships by Relate and Relationships Scotland. This year, the report is divided into a series of mini reports covering Work, Sex, Partners, Family, Friends and Disability which will be published throughout the year. The Happy Families? report is the second in the series to be released. For publication dates of upcoming reports, please contact the Relate media office.*

-ENDS-

All figures are taken from The Way We Are Now– an annual study of the relationships of over 5000 people across the UK by Relate and Relationships Scotland. The sample size for the East of England was 654. The study was carried out by YouGov. Fieldwork was undertaken between 18th June and 7th July 2016. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 16+). YouGov is a member of the British Polling Council. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. This press release summarises information collected from online polling undertaken by YouGov of a sample of over 5,000 people aged 16 and over, weighted to account for representativeness. Any inaccuracies or errors in the further analyses of these data are the sole responsibility of Relate.

To see the national figures, please read the full report or contact the Relate media office. Statistics are available for other regions of the UK but the differences are not statistically significant.

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Notes to editors:

- Relate and Relationships Scotland have released *The Way We Are Now* report to raise awareness of the importance of relationships for individuals and society. We are working together to let people know how relationship support can help people of all ages, at all stages of their relationships.
- Relationships are under increasing pressure – breakdown costs the UK an estimated £48bn each year.
- Relate champions the importance of strong and healthy relationships as the basis of a thriving society.

- 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 its 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 Cambridge celebrated its 70th birthday in 2015.
- For more information and advice visit: www.relate.org.uk.
- Relationships Scotland's network provide relationship counselling, family mediation, child contact centres and other family support services across all of mainland and island Scotland. Their work supports individuals, couples and families experiencing relationship difficulties. Around 20,000 people have contact with our services each year.