

Relate Cambridge sees spike in calls for help as families reflect on their summer holidays

Relate Cambridge has seen a sharp rise in the number of people contacting them by phone and online, as children go back to school this September.

The number of people contacting Relate's national phone line for the first time and through online live chat in the first week back at school increased by 13%, compared with the first week of the summer holidays. The number of unique visitors to Relate's national [website](#) also increased by 9% in the same timeframe. This is in line with previous years, when the charity has seen a spike in the number of people seeking relationship support in early September.

People are often looking for help with their couple and family relationships following the long summer holiday. Spending more concentrated time together can sometimes leave families concerned about their relationships. There can also be anxieties for both parents and children around children starting the new school year, especially if a child is starting a new school or has been previously unhappy at school.

Relate counsellor Elaine Taylor said: "Like early January, which is Relate's busiest time, September is a time of the year when people naturally assess their relationships and many people look to Relate for help. The long holidays often make people realise that they need to seek help for issues they may have been trying to ignore. Like New Year, this is a good time to take positive steps to help your relationships, even if you've decided that a relationship may be coming to an end."

Elaine continued: "If you are considering separation, Relate can help you to work out what's best for you and your family and to reduce the impact on your children. We can also advise on how to approach those difficult conversations, such as telling your children that you are separating. If you've had a tough summer, the most important thing is to seek help as to your next steps."

Relate Cambridge has these tips for parents who might be concerned about their relationship:

- **Talk honestly.** Let your partner know that it wasn't the summer you were hoping for, and that you would like to discuss your relationship. Try to do this at a time when you are not too tired and stressed, and when you can talk in private.
- **Seek help.** Relate can offer support for couples who are having difficulties, even if you have already decided to separate. We can help you work out what's best for you and your family.
- **Take things slowly.** September can be a difficult time of the year for families, and children and parents often feel stressed and anxious, especially when we go back to work or school after a break. Try not to make any major decisions in a hurry, and give you and your family time to adjust to a new routine.

- **Check in with your children.** Children pick up on more than we realise, and it's important to check on how they're doing, especially if there was tension or arguments over the summer. Remember this is a difficult time of year for them as well as they get used to being back at school, so put time aside to see how they are getting on and reassure them that any issues you're having don't reflect on them.

One in three UK families with dependent children is affected by separation*. Mums and dads can visit www.relate.org.uk/separation for guidance on managing the practical and emotional realities of separation, including a short video from Paula Hall called 'Kids and separation'. People can also call 01223 357424 to find out more about our services, like face-to-face counselling, courses for parents and children and young people's counselling. The website also offers parents who are worried about their relationships with their teenagers the chance to chat to a Relate counsellor online for free.

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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

End notes

*Increase in clients contacting Relate's national helpline number and using Relate's online 'Livechat' when comparing the first full week of the summer holidays (30.07.14 – 06.08.14 inclusive) with the first full week of the Autumn term (03.09.14 -10.09.14 inclusive).