



Invest in Relationships

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Summary

This report by Relate and the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) explores the influence of cost on relationships, the issue of cost as a barrier to counselling, and the clear social justice need of making counselling and therapy available to everyone irrespective of their circumstances and ability to pay.

The research referred to in this report includes:

- A review of published evidence
- Nationally representative polling administered through a YouGov omnibus survey; sample size: 5,000 UK adults – May 2018
- Survey of Relate website users; sample size: 2,140 – June 2018

91%

of Relate website users and the majority of the general public (68%) said that relationship counselling should be available to everyone who needs it, regardless of their income and ability to pay

94%

of the general public agreed that strong and healthy relationships are important for physical and mental wellbeing

87%

of Relate website users on lower household incomes said they felt they and their partner would

41%

of Relate website users on lower household incomes said they had sought relationship counselling but either didn't go ahead or dropped out early due to the cost

21%

of Relate website users on incomes of below £16,379 said mental health issues were placing pressure on their relationships compared to 12% on higher incomes.

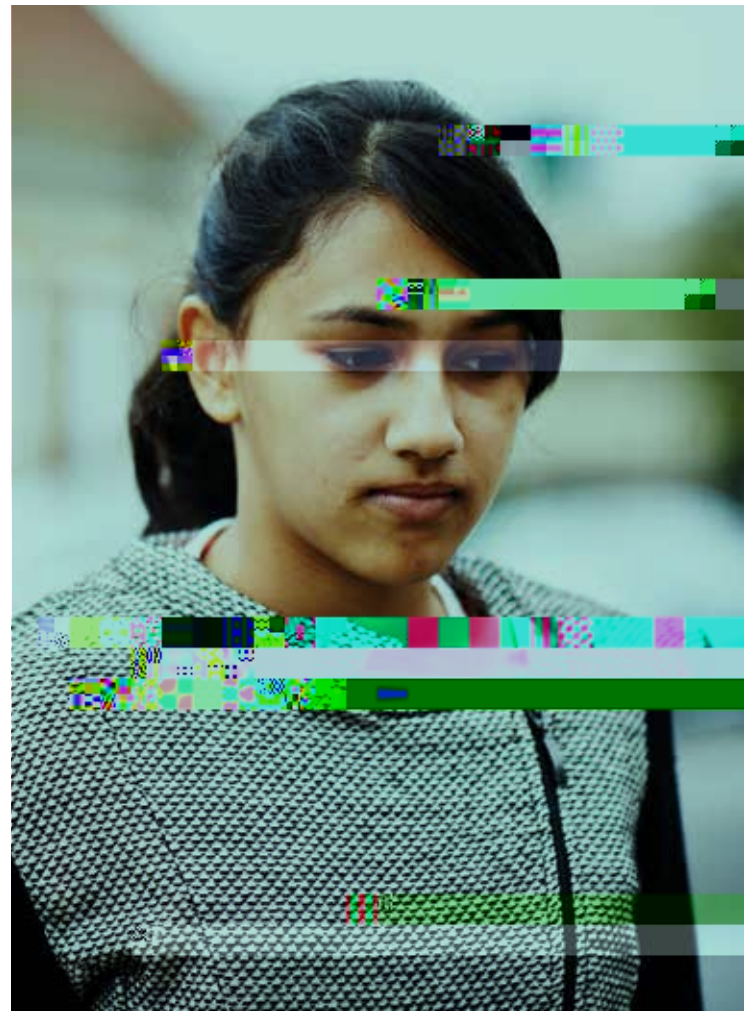
The current picture

Couple and family relationships are vital for everyone in society, and are foundations of individuals' health and wellbeing, as well as important for children's long-term life chances.

Most relationships come under pressure at some point. Relationship support (counselling and therapy) can play a crucial role in helping people to improve their relationship's quality and stability.

Eighteen percent of people (2.87 million people) in adult couple relationships are in distressed relationships¹. This is linked to depression and anxiety², and people who live in distressed and troubled relationships are three times as likely to experience mental health problems as people who do not experience such relationship distress³.

In a sample of more than 42,000 children seen



Research shows that adults in poor-quality and distressed relationships are much more likely to be affected by mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, which in turn can also affect mental health.

Evidence shows that poor quality parental
has a negative impact on children's mental health

Living with financial pressure can place strain on relationships, leading to relationship distress, couple conflict and relationship breakdown. In fact, finances are the most common source of conflict in relationships⁹.

Financial hardship is a key factor leading to relationship problems¹⁰, predicting lower relationship satisfaction and quality¹¹, higher psychological distress¹², and increased risk of relationship breakdown¹³.

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Relate practitioners have reported increasingly seeing couples who delay accessing support or do not finish courses of counselling due to money worries. Relate Centres have also reported an increase in the number of couples who are unable to make any, or only a limited, contribution to access services.

In the survey of Relate website users on relationship counselling, when asked if they would consider attending relationship counselling if they and their partner were experiencing relationship



As we have seen, the cost of relationship counselling can be a significant barrier to accessing help for couples and families on lower incomes. Two-thirds (66%) of Relate counsellors identified the limited availability of free relationship support as a barrier that inhibits more referrals or signposting between relationship support and debt advice.

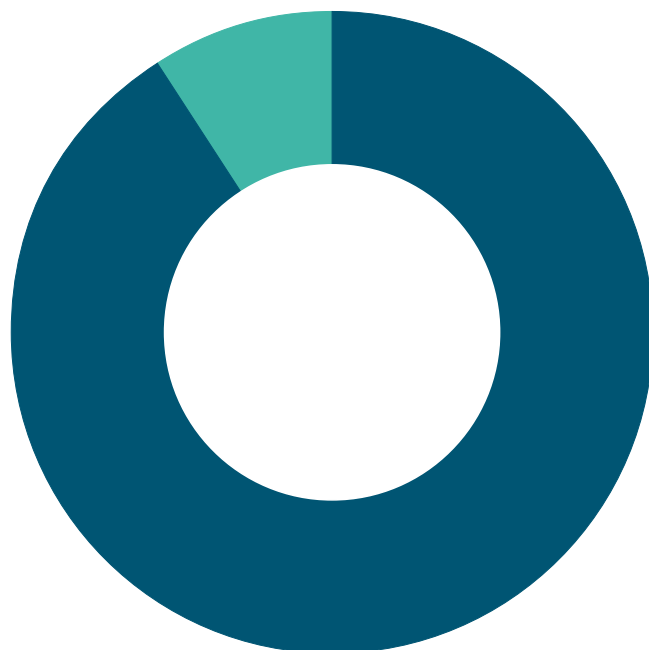
At present, the relationship support sector's ability to provide free or subsidised support rests largely on the resource it is able to draw in from clients'

according to income where possible and can sometimes use other contracts or grants to provide counselling for those on lower incomes.

However, this is not always widely available and, where it is, families and referring agencies are not always aware of this. The fact that the majority of clients pay a fee for counselling means that the actual and/or perceived cost of services can

incomes, and especially those in debt¹⁹.

Relate's recent relationship counselling survey of its website users showed that 65% of respondents agreed that if they were experiencing relationship



Targeting low-income families

Relationships are a clear social justice issue, as they are so closely entwined with our wider capabilities and life chances.

There is clearly a strong argument for the Government to increase funding for relationship support to ensure everyone has equality of access regardless of income, but how is this to be achieved in practice?

One option is for the Government to trial schemes to ensure access for those who are unable to pay such as relationship support credit schemes targeting at risk groups through GPs and other

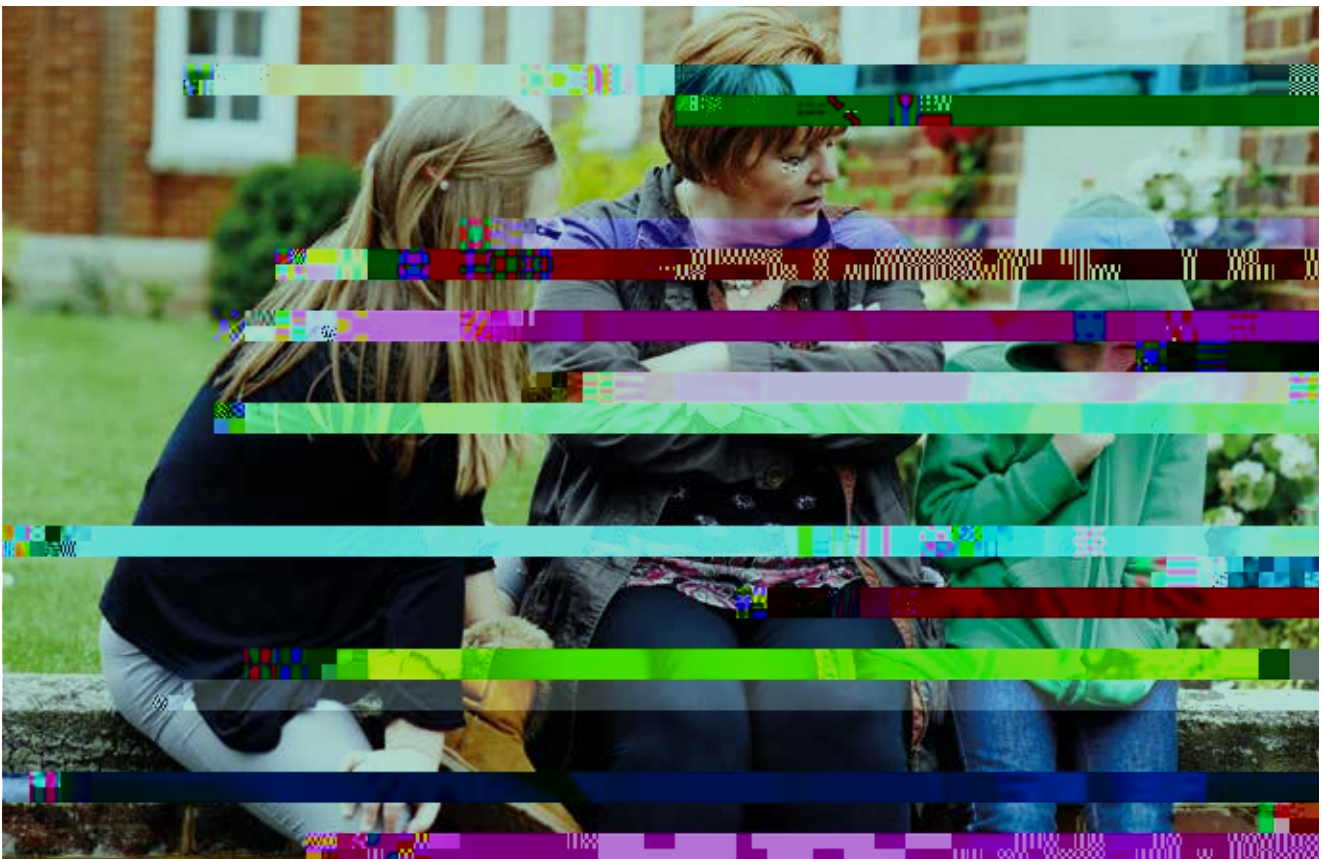
allow vouchers of up to £200 per couple to be redeemed against relationship support providers accredited by the Government through a quality

reassurance to couples and local referral agencies.

Another potential solution would be to pilot the such as Live Chat, webcam counselling and telephone counselling.

A further approach would be to develop and trial solutions that bring together services that people on lower incomes and who are experiencing relationship distress, may be likely to want to access. Given the clear link between relationship

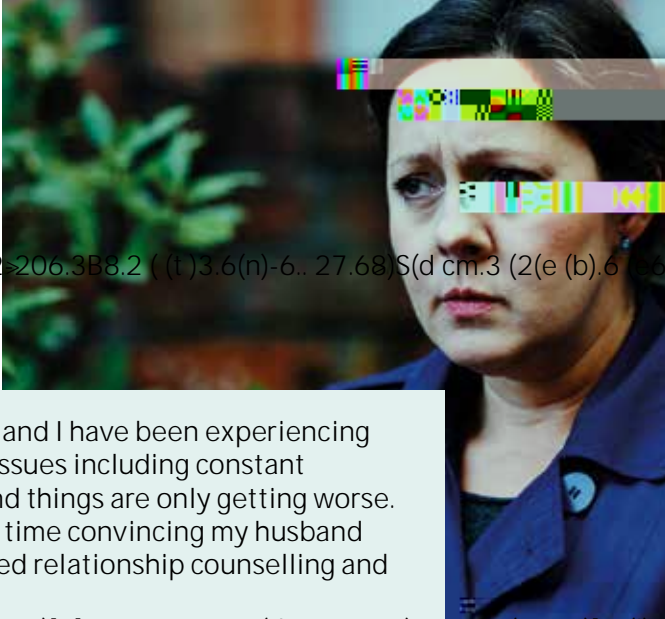
housing, funding could be provided to enable the development of holistic services that integrate the



The Relationships Foundation's 'Cost of Family Failure Index' in 2018 estimated the annual cost to Government of family or relationship breakdown to stand at £51 billion, up from £37 billion 10 years ago.

counselling mean that money spent on providing counselling services will be recouped through improved public health, leading to less reliance on public services such as the NHS. Additionally, children will experience better outcomes, leading to reduced costs to the state associated with

quality family relationships and inter-parental



“My husband and I have been experiencing relationship issues including constant arguments and things are only getting worse. I spent a long time convincing my husband that we needed relationship counselling and

problems between us because my husband felt the whole process had been a waste of time. We tried accessing support via our GP



Footnotes

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- 4 Wolpert, M. (2017) Outcomes for children and young people seen in specialist mental health services, <http://www.newsavoypartnership.org/2017presentations/miranda-wolpert-updated.pdf>
- 5 Cooper, M. (2009) Counselling in UK secondary schools: A comprehensive review of audit and evaluation data. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research* 9(3), 137-150
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- 8 Spielhofer, T., Corlyon, J., Durbin, B., Smith, M., Stock, L. & Gieve, M. (2014). Relationship Support Interventions Evaluation. Department for Education
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