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Good marriage still at the heart of Good Childhood

Hot on the heels of the recent Good Childhood report comes Marriage Week UK (7th-14th February), a chance for people up and down the country to celebrate “Good Marriages” which lie at the heart of most strong families.

Although figures recently released in the British Social Attitudes survey¹ suggest that only 4 in 10 young adults believe in marriage, the fact is that by the time they are 40, 75% of them will have married - and two thirds of those who married will stay that way for the rest of their lives.

“We have a strange attitude to marriage in the UK”, says Dave Percival, Coordinator of Marriage Week UK. “On the one hand we disparage or fear it, loving to knock it as an institution, yet privately we long for the closeness that a truly committed partner brings. That’s why we believe Marriage Week offers the opportunity for couples everywhere to celebrate the fact that they have made a lifelong commitment to each other!”.

Commenting on the Good Childhood report Dave Percival says, “The report draws attention to the selfishness of adults in our attitudes to children. At its roots marriage challenges selfishness by placing commitment to ones partner as the central value – it’s about faithfulness and exclusivity – and about sticking together through the challenging times of life such as having children. It’s no surprise that two out of three children whose parents separate before their fifth birthday will have un-married parents. Most couples who are truly committed want to declare their love in front of their family, friends and community – that’s what getting married is about!”

Up and down the country people will be celebrating marriage week in different ways both privately as couples, and in public. In Poole on Saturday, visitors to the town centre may be surprised to find a market stall encouraging young people to think about marriage, and encouraging them to think about Relationship Education.

The 5th National Relationships Conference will be held this week on Tuesday in London². The Relationships Foundation will present clear evidence from academic research that, equipped with the right skills, more couples can achieve their goal of a long term relationship. Their report has looked at what’s happening in the UK at present, and will present a compelling case to expand the provision nationally. “Without national provision, properly funded by Government, many young people are getting no support to help achieve one of their key life ambitions – it is a surprising omission for a government that nominally aspires to creating equality of opportunity for all young people” said a spokesman for the conference.



Several organisations are using the opportunity of Marriage Week to launch new products, including “Couple Checkup”³ – an online relationship inventory suitable for couples at any stage of a relationship to get real insight into the strengths of their relationship, and the areas where they will benefit from further growth.

Couples planning to marry will benefit from several new initiatives launched this week. Care for the Family will be launching www.prepareformarriage.org.uk - a fun filled site for the 20-30's with a serious message. In London Westminster Diocese are releasing “Engage”⁴, a new programme for couples planning marriage, and the Church of England will be publishing “Welcoming Marriage”⁵, a guidebook for all clergy aimed at ensuring all couples approaching the church for a wedding get the best possible welcome and experience.

At its heart though, Marriage Week is about ordinary folk celebrating the ordinary things in life that make it special. A new song by musician Paul Bell captures the idea completely “We are making a love to last a lifetime... I don't mind if it takes a little time”⁶. Across the nation people will be celebrating how good marriage still is, and if they are short of ideas, there's loads at www.marriage-week.org.uk .

Marriage Week UK celebrates the diversity and vibrancy of marriage as the basis for family life in the UK. It is timed to include Valentine's Day (7th –14th Feb 2009) and has been held every year since 1997.

ENDS

Editors Notes

For further information contact Dave Percival, coordinator of Marriage Week UK, and founder of www.2-in-2-1.co.uk . Tel: 07802 660524; email: dave@2-in-2-1.co.uk

¹ See British Social Attitudes 25th Report at <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/bsa/docs/BSA-25-Report.pdf>

² See www.relationshipsfoundation.org for further details, or contact Louise Urqart on 01223 341288 . Conference speakers include Maria Millar, Conservative spokesman on the Family, and Annette Brooke, Lib Dem spokesman on Children, Schools and Families.

³ Released jointly by Prepare Enrich and 2-in-2-1. See <http://www.2-in-2-1.co.uk/others/couplecheck.html> or <http://www.prepare-enrich.co.uk/couplecheckup.htm> to access the inventory, or contact John Deagle on 023 80216003 or at prepare-enrich@scft.org.uk

⁴ See <http://www.rcdow.org.uk/pastoralaffairs/default.asp?id=111> for further details

⁵ For further details from Church House Publishing see <http://www.chpublishing.co.uk/feature.asp?id=2394599>

⁶ See www.paulbellmusic.com for info on Paul Bell and public access to the song. See <http://www.paulbellmusic.com/download.php?download=what-i-call-romance&permission=mw-pr1> (for press only, not for publication) to download the song