

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 HOURS TUESDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2009**

## **INVESTING IN RELATIONSHIPS**

Young people are being denied equality of opportunity by the failure to provide them with the skills and practices to sustain long term couple relationships, says a conference in London today. The failure to sustain long term relationships impacts not only their own sense of wellbeing, but blights the lives of their children, and significantly impacts the economy.

A conference today, addressed by MPs Annette Brooke and Maria Miller and a senior official of DCSF, will be discussing a draft report from Relationships Foundation, a Cambridge based think-tank, which makes the case for a big expansion in relationship education for couples. A survey shows that currently only around 25% of couples getting married have any kind of any structured help and much of that is very basic. There is little help offered to couples at other stages in their relationship. Many couples, whether marrying or not, need systematic help with key issues, such as resolving conflict, debt and money issues, in-laws, and keeping the spark going.

The report argues that the Government should significantly increase support for recruiting and training people to provide couple relationship education and publicising available help. Research shows that participating in Couple Relationship Education can help couples achieve satisfying and stable long term relationships by strengthening vital skills and behaviours, and preparing them for stresses ahead. The authors believe that investment in couple relationship education could make a significant contribution, along with other key measures, such as parenting support, in helping to avoid breakup in relationships. This in turn would make a not insignificant contribution to the £37bn annually which family breakdown is costing the public purse in Britain today <sup>1</sup>.

Michael Trend, Executive Director, says: "a modest investment in helping to set-up and fund relationship education services in the UK could make a real difference in the lives of many couples and families by giving them a better future and contributing to greater family stability. We now spend a great deal of time and money in looking after our bodies and

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<sup>1</sup> Relationships Foundation's new pamphlet 'When Relationships Go Right; When Relationships Go Wrong' will be available at the conference or on request to [info@relationshipsfoundation.org](mailto:info@relationshipsfoundation.org) .

other forms of self-help; it seems logical that we should also want to invest in our own special relationship".

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