

Effective Policy & Commissioning for better Relational Health

APPG for Sustainable Relationships
6th November 2012

Unpicking 'Public Health'

- The science and art of
 - preventing disease,
 - prolonging life and
 - promoting healthy behaviours
- through the organised efforts and informed choices of
 - society,
 - public and private organisations,
 - communities and individuals

Relationship breakdown matters

- Only 55% of 15-year olds still living with both of their birth parents
- More likely to have a TV in their room than a father in the house
- Outcomes for adults and children tend to be better if there is relationship stability: medically, educationally, economically, mentally
- Population-wide trends are not heading in the right direction

'Perfect Storm'

1. Attachment is an unalterable, important human need: how it forms in individuals matters
2. Greater family instability for young children means more children growing up with serious attachment issues
3. Erosion of cultural systems/structures that help couples clarify, form, and maintain strong commitments, further increasing instability.

Public Health Emergency

- What public health gains could an attention to relational health deliver?
- What does ‘promoting healthy behaviours’ mean in this context
- What needs to be organised and what kinds of choices should be put in front of people
- Messages government sends, what it measures and what services should be commissioned?

Life and death

- Holt-Lundstad, Smith & Layton's meta-analytic review of 148 studies: how much do social relationships influence risk for mortality?
- 50 per cent increased likelihood for survival for those with stronger social relationships.
- Influence of social relationships on risk for mortality *comparable with* smoking and *exceeds* obesity and physical inactivity.

‘Good’ Relationships influence:

- Risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, stroke and obesity
- Alcohol consumption: improving couple relationships has potential to reduce physical & mental health problems from alcohol misuse
- Incidence of Metabolic Syndrome
- Children’s health, specifically children’s obesity

Building 'health' – what & how?

- By couples adding to their good habits and reducing bad habits: addressing
 - Negative interactions,
 - 'Unhelpful' attitudes and expectations,
 - Conflict management,
 - Communication,
 - Friendship
 - Commitment.

Doing things together...

MATT



'Are you sure that was beach volleyball?'

Making the effort to communicate...

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*'48% of me wants to stay up,
but 49% of me intends to go to bed'*

‘Informed choices’

- We need the full gamut
 - preventive relationship education using an enormous range of means
 - web-based eg One Plus One’s Couple Connection
 - tacked onto ante- or post-natal offering through programmes such as Let’s Stick Together
 - opportunistic interventions like One Plus One’s Brief Encounters
 - through to specialist counselling and therapeutic services

Messages and Measures

- Coalition's Best Kept Secret
- Public Health Outcomes Framework
- Quality kitemark displayed wherever people can access relationship support
- IDS: 'Local councils must measure stability'
- Commission couple support, not just CBT



Breakdown is not inevitable

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*'We've been married for 34 years. It was
a sham wedding that went wrong'*



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