

All change

As many of you will know 2008 was a year of change at the Relationships Foundation. Firstly our newsletter has finally got a name - Connect

Michael Trend, has taken over as our new Executive Director from Michael Schluter. Michael Trend, formerly MP for Windsor, had an early career in journalism, editing among other publications the magazine *History Today*. In the early 1990s he moved from being Chief Leader Writer of the *Daily Telegraph* to the House of Commons; for three years he was also the Director General (chief executive) of the Conservative Party. He retired from Westminster in 2005 and no longer has any party political affiliation. Michael Schluter said of Michael Trend's arrival at RF: 'I am delighted with this appointment. As an experienced manager and communicator, and with his detailed understanding of the political process, Michael is excellently qualified to lead the Relationships Foundation at a time of growing awareness that public policy impacts on every aspect of people's wellbeing.'

When asked what his vision was for RF in 2009 Michael said: 'There is such a wealth of material and experience at the Relationships Foundation that the main emphasis must be on developing a

communications strategy at the heart of our work. I also want to congratulate Michael Schluter on being appointed CBE in the New Year Honours List. We are all delighted that Michael has been rewarded for his long and dedicated service.' Michael Schluter has moved to be Chairman, Relationships Foundation International with a mandate to spread relational thinking around the globe. He has already travelled to Australia, Singapore, the US and Africa in the past couple of months.

Tim Adams, has left the Foundation to return to work in Oxford with IFFS. Tim spent three years with us here at RF playing a pivotal role. Many will have come into contact with Tim when he was responsible for communications. He also spearheaded our fundraising efforts, enabling the work to expand during his time here. We wish Tim and his family all the best as they settle into Oxford.

The fundraising aspect of Tim's job has been taken over by Wendy Grafton. Wendy comes from a consultancy background and will be working part-time for RF while continuing her work for another local charity.

Michael Trend will be speaking at a breakfast meeting in Oxford in February. If you want to attend or host a similar event please contact Wendy on 01223 341277 or w.grafton@relationshipsfoundation.org

Events and Resources

Relationships Education Conference

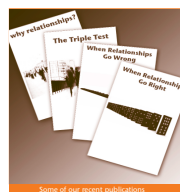
Following a recommendation at the last Relationships Education Conference in 2007, Relationships Foundation and 2-in-1 have been compiling a report which looks at the available research evidence, surveys current practice on the ground, and makes practical proposals. Our findings to date will be presented to the conference in a format that seeks to hear and take on board a wide range of views and experience, so that we can articulate clear and widely-supported proposals.

This one-day event will bring together leading thinkers, practitioners, and policy makers, to explore how to promote and support healthy couple relationships, so as to benefit families, the community and wider society.

For information on all events, email us at events@relationshipsfoundation.org

How do we solve the current economic crisis?

Have you been discussing the causes and solutions to the current economic crisis? Would you like some input from Dr Michael Schluter and Jonathan Rushworth? Contact Marilyn on 01223 341264 to discuss a possible speaking engagement.



Some of our recent publications

Publications

We have recently published *Why Relationships?* and *The Triple Test* which are available to download from the website. When *Relationships Go Right* and *When Relationships Go Wrong* - a special double edition - will be available in the next few weeks. Publications on the global financial crisis and our proposed Family Day Bill will follow in the spring. Sign up for our free monthly email to know when our publications are available and please let us know what you think, where improvements could be made and topics for future work.

Produced by Louise Wright

Connect



RELATIONSHIPS
FOUNDATION

Time for The Triple Test

With the arrival of the new Executive Director, Michael Trend, it's been a busy time at the Relationships Foundation. In November we launched *The Triple Test*. We put a 'Big Idea' to the political parties and the public: that policy development, proposals for legislation and government action should all be subject to a triple test - economic, environmental and social.

The current economic crisis has exposed the weakness of focusing solely on the economy. Because most public policy is viewed through the economic lens, when the economy falls, everything is seen to fail. Now more than ever we need to evaluate policy, legislation and government action against the triple test. We should see the crisis as giving us a chance to rebuild on three firm foundations, leading to a stronger and more durable society.

In a speech on January 5, 2009 David Cameron, alluding to Bill Clinton's famous campaign slogan, seemed to embrace the Triple Test. He said, 'So it's not just the economy, stupid. It's everything, stupid. Yes it's the economy - but it's also society and it's also the environment.'

The social aspect of 'The Triple Test' is fundamentally about relationships. Public policy is never neutral and we believe that policy makers and implementers should always test their proposals not only to ensure, as far as is possible, that these do not damage existing relational links, but also to see if ways can be found to encourage people increasingly to connect with each other in the public sphere.

The economic crisis leaves us, like all charities, operating in a difficult financial climate, but the situation makes our work all the more relevant.

Money as social glue

We are now half way through our series of work on wellbeing. Last year we completed a major piece of research on the impact of finance on relationships and wellbeing. We presented the findings of this research at separate seminars run for the three main parties and were encouraged by the attendance and feedback. ■

In the process of publishing much of this material in short pamphlets on issues such as debt, tax and housing. The first of these looks at the costs when relationships go wrong - about £37 billion a year, and the benefits when relationships go right. Check out the website for this and other pamphlets.

Time as the currency of relationships

We are progressing well on our work on time, relationships and wellbeing. Loneliness and isolation are increased by the lack of time for those who might otherwise provide support. Trust and security deepen in the course of prolonged positive experience in a relationship. Love and care take time to express practically. Time deprivation is now a key concern regarding the welfare of children.

There are many reasons why our time can come under pressure - long commutes to work, requirements to work unsocial hours, or time costs imposed through organisational change. Consequently, there are many ways in which public policy influences the time we have available for family and community activities. As material prosperity grows, the politics of time is likely to be as important as money.

Supportive relationships

We will shortly begin work on the final part of our wellbeing series - relational support. This refers to the network of supportive relationships that helps to sustain us throughout our lives. It includes physical, emotional, financial and spiritual support. We all need relational support, but increased mobility, pressures on people's time, and relationship breakdown have led to dramatic changes in patterns of family and community life and left many people without adequate support networks. Our work will provide a missing analysis, explaining the process by which relationships lead to improved outcomes, and will provide a rationale for supporting marriage and the family.

Those without a healthy network of supportive relationships, both individuals and families, tend to place a disproportionate burden on local services such as the police, social services, schools, the health service, and housing associations. But where relational support is strong it is recognised as improving health, educational achievement and the likelihood of employment as well as bringing a reduction in anti-social behaviour, recovery from addiction, dealing with homelessness and improved parenting. ■

Relationships in a recession

We asked one of the RF's trustees and one of our advisory board members to comment on how the current economic crisis was affecting relationships within their workplace and where relational thinking might help in 2009.

Mike King is a member of our advisory board and senior executive of Ogilvy, the leading London-based branding consultancy.

'In twenty-first century Britain, a mobile population, a culture of endless hours at work driving or being driven by personal ambition and an insatiable appetite for wealth means that work is not only where we will spend the vast majority of our waking life, but also where we will tend to form our key personal relationships. This, in turn, means that work and its immediate environment is where we will conduct much of our social life, feel most tangibly part of a community and where our personal identity will appear, to us at least, to be in sharpest focus.

This blurred mix of social and work life is underpinned by years of seemingly unstoppable growth, profit, personal buying power and general success. Indeed, this whole heady mixture is all the majority of working people under forty have experienced.

But this is all about to change and you can already see the disillusionment and the beginnings of fear written on faces.

Those who have experienced recessions before will recall the workplace fall-out from large redundancy programmes. Fear is quickly followed by loss of trust, shame and guilt, abandoned friendships in fractured communities; and the people left behind, struggling to work in a social mechanism where cogs and lubricant and more have gone missing.

Such blows to the relationships of already drained spirits and emotions often preface depression and worse. It is surely in this environment that those who promote, foster and enable relationships rooted in more stable, dependable and caring communities can and must flourish.



It is now that the RF needs to shout and be heard by our business leaders. It is now that all those who have to pick up the pieces of our broken society should be able to turn to the RF for a vision of a relationally healthier world.'

James Perry is one of our trustees and MD of COOK, a family owned frozen food business. COOK is a young, fast growing retail and manufacturing business with relatively high leverage.

'Reducing sales projections to reflect the economic downturn leads to a need for overhead cuts, which include a headcount pull. We thought that redundancies and so on would be destructive to relationships.

Our experience has been the opposite. Of course, there is the human tragedy of redundancy and we have participated in that. But the bigger picture is that we are not alone in this boat. And as we seek to create a new reality where we can safeguard the interests of all stakeholders, we are finding that relationships are being strengthened (except with banks).

Before, businesses throughout the supply chain were doing just fine thank you very much. It wasn't broken, so it wasn't being fixed. The outcome was that we hardly knew many of those with whom we had a significant trade. Now, everyone wants to talk. Everyone is worried and they want closer relationship. We are all weaker, and so we are all more dependent on one another. We can now do deals in minutes that we wouldn't have got the time of day for before the downturn. Hard conversations are being had, but people are receptive and understanding of the need to have them.

We are working harder. All our plans have been ripped up and we have had to start again. But in doing so, we are breaking new ground together. Teams have established closer dynamics.

It is invigorating, exciting and challenging. Flexibility is key, as is fairness of spirit. It is wrong to pull the rug in one's own direction to exploit weakness, but it is right to challenge an unfair status quo. Judgement and wisdom are more relevant than before.

So our experience is that recession has been a great time for relationships. ■

That fella in Bella

Michael Clark came to the Relationships Foundation in 2000 and is Chief Executive of Keep Time for Children. Below he discusses an exciting new campaign for 2009.

Michael why do they call you the 'fella in Bella'?

My work with Keep Time for Children, an initiative of the Relationships Foundation, has in the past included interviews with *Your Family*, the *Early Learning Centre* magazine, and the women's magazine *Bella*. Such appearances keep my own children and some RF staff entertained, but it is an important aspect of our work speaking directly to parents.

Apart from appearing in glossy magazines what else have you been up to in 2008?

It has been a busy year for KTC. We have been engaged in two major pieces of research both of which are in the home straight.

Our Relationships Education and Advocacy Project has sought to make the economic and social case to government for investing in relationships education programmes. We have made detailed recommendations as to how any funding could be effectively allocated and are hosting a conference in London on February 10, 2009 with leading politicians, practitioners and researchers to discuss our preliminary findings before releasing a full report. [Please get in touch with the office if you would like to attend the conference.]

We have also just completed a piece of research on the impact of working time on family wellbeing. Workers in Britain work some of the longest hours in Europe and family relationships are clearly suffering. Long hours is only part of the problem though as we are also working more unsocial hours and more weekends. The evidence suggests that this has a negative impact on couple



Michael Clark

relationships and the relationships between parents and their children. We hope to use this research to lobby for better employment rights for parents in particular.

I believe you recently had a modest success with the government?

You could say that. With the economic crisis deepening, Lord Mandelson, newly returned to government, ordered a review of policies that his department is responsible for. The press accurately reported that the extension of the right for parents to ask for flexible working - which our campaign had pushed for over the past two to three years - might be lost. We immediately lobbied Lord Mandelson and were encouraged to receive a response ensuring us that the legislation would not be permanently shelved. Then in December the government announced it would, after all, go ahead with the extension to flexible working in April 2009 as planned. We will continue to do our best to make sure this legislation reaches the statute books.

What's new for 2009?

We are re-launching KTC in the spring with a revamped website. Our main focus will be to promote and support the campaign for the Family Day Bill which we, with others, are campaigning to get before Parliament. Our research has revealed that three out of four working families experience some weekend work; in over half of these - 2.41 million families - at least one parent is working regularly at weekends, the very time when children are not at school and in need of active parenting. More than one in five working families has at least one parent who regularly works both weekend days.

Whilst this may help low paid workers to make ends meet, it can have the effect of substituting material poverty with relational poverty for their families, especially those with school age children. Our response is to help prepare a Family Day Bill which provides parents of children under the age of 16 with the right in law to a weekend day off every week. We have already begun consulting with MPs and are encouraged by the feedback we have received. As you can see, the Keep Time for Children campaign continues to develop its vitally important work. ■

The Relational Company

Given the comments above, the recent work of Michael Schluter and Jonathan Rushworth, a retired city lawyer, is all the more pertinent. They have been considering aspects of current company structure, looking at what companies are for and their responsibilities. They recognise the tension between seeking profit and economic efficiency and protecting long-term relationships in society.

Their paper (available on our website) suggests that the quality and pattern of the relationships between all stakeholders relying on the company for their wellbeing, whether shareholders, employees, suppliers, customers, financiers or the local community, is not being properly addressed by current operating trends. They have proposed an alternative model, the Relational Company, along with a **Relational Charter** which could be adopted by such companies.

The current crisis shows just how necessary this kind of thinking is. We will be presenting their work to Parliamentarians and business leaders. If you want Mike and Jonathan to speak to a group you are connected with please get in touch.

The Relational Charter covers ten main points:

- 1 Transform the goals of the company
- 2 Undertake proper training in the relational purpose and ethos of the company
- 3 Promote dialogue between all significant stakeholders
- 4 Encourage direct ownership of shares

- 5 Reward shareholders who take a long-term interest
- 6 Protect the family and community interests of employees
- 7 Demonstrate that the contributions of all employees are valued
- 8 Maintain company financial stability
- 9 Ensure suppliers are treated fairly
- 10 Consider impact on wider relationships