

News in brief

Staff Changes



Nicola Templeton and Phil Caroe

In July, Phil Caroe moved on from the Communications team to work with East of England Development Agency (EEDA). Phil joined the Relationships Foundation in September 2004 and worked on brand development,

including creating a new website, blog, email bulletin and brand guide.

Nicola Templeton and her family will be returning to Melbourne, Australia, in November. For over two years Nicola has worked as the Communications Adviser for Relationships Foundation, Keep time for children and Keep Sunday Special. During this time she has increased our media profile significantly and we are happy that she will remain involved in supporting and encouraging the work of our associated organisation in Australia, Relationships Forum.

Resources

Rethink – our free monthly email

In the wake of a number of stories about TV companies misleading viewers, the latest issue of Rethink is on the theme of truth. We are all constantly making editorial choices about how to filter and present information to people, but if these choices are designed to mislead they are likely to erode trust and damage relationships.

Download from our website or sign up to receive future editions by email.

Launch of *well-being* report in Westminster

In April, we launched *Thriving lives: which way for well-being?* In contrast to recent studies — which only look at personal happiness — the report places a new significance on relationships as a key influence on our well-being. We are now looking at how to translate these ideas into public policy. The report is available to download for free on our website, or you can order a hard copy for £5.

More resources are available online, check our website for the latest downloads.
www.relationshipsfoundation.org

International partnerships

In June, Dr Michael Schluter attended the New Hampshire Democratic Candidates Debate as the guest of Dale Kuhne. He briefly met Barack Obama, presenting him with a copy of *Thriving lives: which way for well-being?* Further discussion has followed on the application of relational ideas.

In August, Dr Schluter made another visit to Australia to meet with senior politicians, journalists and policymakers in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. Dr Schluter also enjoyed a worthwhile visit to the Maxim Institute in Auckland.

Finances

Draft figures for the year indicate a small surplus on our financial year ending 31 August 2007, although this includes some funds earmarked for our well-being project. Full figures will be presented in our next newsletter, once the audit is completed. Our budget for the coming financial year is £300,000.

Details of which projects make up this budget are in our business plan, copies of which are available from Tim Adams on t.adams@relationshipsfoundation.org ■

Counting the social cost

Just as environmental campaigning has forced businesses to prove their green credentials, so the growing concern about our society is encouraging them to take their social impact seriously. One factor that holds them back is the lack of an agreed framework for measuring and reporting social outcomes. As previewed in our last newsletter, we have been working on this and have developed some relationship-based principles that we hope will point to a closer understanding of social impact and suggest better ways of working to benefit and build society.

A copy of the report *Relational Approaches to Social Sustainability* is available on our website or by contacting us.

Weblog

Keep an eye on our blog, 'First thoughts' for the latest news and comments on relational issues in the media. The blog also gives you the opportunity to add your own thoughts and comments to ours. ■

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RELATIONSHIPS FOUNDATION

think relationally

Challenging the focus of public policy

Our latest report *Stating the Obvious: the case for integrated public policy* calls all governments to develop public policy that integrates the social and environmental as well as the economic.

Written in collaboration with Relationships Forum — our associated organisation in Australia — the report argues that, as the middle ground of politics is now courted by both left and right, public policy has become dominated by the language of productivity and growth in GDP. Policies are assessed, primarily, in economic terms, often with insufficient regard to their environmental and social dimensions. Lead author Paul Shepanski writes: 'the government's role should

embrace interests that stretch beyond the purely fiscal, to concerns for the well-being of relationships at home and in the broader community, to protecting the beauty of our natural surrounds, to providing quality education and healthcare for our children and theirs.'

The report was a featured news story and *Opinion* piece in the Sydney Morning Herald on 26 September. Two days later, *Opinion* comments were given by Joe Hockey, the Federal Minister for Employment and Workplace

Relations, and Lindsay Tanner, the Australian Labor Party's Shadow Minister for Finance. If you'd like to read these articles, please visit the following page of our website – www.relationshipsfoundation.org/obvious

A three-dimensional approach to public policy

Commenting on the need for an environmental and social dimension to public policy Paul Shepanski said: 'It is only recently that policymakers have recognised the real needs of the natural environment and have sought the tools necessary to address that crucial sphere of life in their assessments.'

'And most significantly, what of our relationships? What of our relationships with those we love and who love us...of course, many of these relationships are the realm of personal responsibility, but the actions of government do have a profound effect.'

Achieving well-being

This publication comes hot on the heels of our earlier report *Thriving lives: which way for well-being?* which we launched in Westminster, to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Sustainable Relationships. In *Thriving lives* we challenge the common obsession with personal 'happiness' and argue that our understanding of well-being not only needs to be rooted in a broader view of positive personal experience but also needs to consider the individual's ability and motivation to act in ways that benefit other people. In addition, the report proffers suggestions on how public policy could be framed to encourage and strengthen our key relationships. ■

Both reports are available to download for free from our website, or can be ordered from our office for £5.

Paying parents to be parents...

Posted by: Nicola Templeton Posted on: 19 September 2007

I must admit to being envious and intrigued by a new incentive scheme being piloted in New York. The scheme offers poor families cash payouts to look after their children. "What?! Paid to care for your own kids?!" I hear you cry. But why not? If parenting is so valuable to society, then why not pay people who are struggling on low incomes and enable them to take more time for their children? Wouldn't it help them and be a way society can affirm the importance of parenting...

Read more blog posts on our website – www.relationshipsfoundation.org

Frontline view



Marion Janner & Buddy

Marion Janner is an Rnetwork member and founder of Star Wards. A project of the charity Bright, Star Wards has spearheaded 75 ideas to encourage better relationships and improve inpatients daily experiences and treatment outcomes on acute mental-health wards. The charity is already working with 150 member wards, nationwide, even though it is less than two years old. As an ex-service user, Marion understands the loss of key relationships — partner, children, pets, home and work — that occur once a patient is admitted.

How were you led to found the Star Wards initiative?

A few years ago I was sectioned under the mental health act and some of the time kept on special observation in a locked ward. It was a pretty crushing experience. However, two of the nurses were always approachable — despite my sometimes challenging behaviour — and this enabled me to convert my experience into one that was healing and beneficial.

After I was discharged, I wanted to encourage the hospital to promote activities that would encourage conversation and relationship building. The previous year, I had been a patient at The Priory. People there would chat at meals, play games together, tend plants in the garden and do art classes. This contrasted with my more recent experience where people frequently sat alone, had meals in silence, and activities were not so readily available.

Why do you think Star Wards has taken off so quickly?

It's probably because it doesn't hit staff over the head; it's aimed at validating their work and efforts to support patients. The ideas are simple, practical and easy to implement. And it's very dynamic. It's not about prescribing specific things to tick boxes, rather it is totally reliant on the initiative of acute practice wards and the participation of service users.

Was it a case of being in the right place at the right time?

For the launch in October 2006 the answer is: Yes! The Mental Health Tzar, the National Director of Mental Health, and Cherie Booth QC hosted the launch of Star Wards, so right from the start the charity was fortunate to enjoy a reasonably high profile. It also seems to have tapped into the zeitgeist in acute care.

Is there something Star Wards offers that has simply not existed before?

Star Wards provides a validating framework, a means of staff gaining recognition for work they are doing — from their colleagues and themselves. They receive a morale boost

and then often go on to set their own goals and priorities through staff and patient steering groups.

What part do relationships play in patient care and recovery?

A healthy and safe environment is vital for people to recover. If people have enough to do — constructive activities that encourage relationship building — it's less likely that people will become frustrated and hit someone, especially if they know and respect them. Originally, I thought it was about having things to do in the day. But I realise now Star Wards has an important part to play in creating safer wards.

In what ways has Star Wards created and facilitated relationships?

Star Wards has definitely contributed to improved relationships between patients and staff. And staff report better relationships with each other. We are yet to have evidence of patient-to-patient relationships. We have been supported by the Chief Executive of Happy, Henry Stewart, who ran a session at our annual conference. He got us all to say what we liked about each other. There's real value in this kind of exercise as people see things in us that we don't. I think it's important to practice a culture of explicit appreciation!

How would you like Star Wards work to continue and grow?

I would like staff to feel valued and appreciated and good about themselves — with the end result that they feel motivated to do their jobs better and have a real sense of achievement in their work. ■

You can find out more about Star Wards at www.starwards.org.uk

Join the Rnetwork

The Rnetwork is a group of people committed to building a more relational society. You can become a member by committing regular financial support of at least £5 per month (or £2.50 for those on low incomes) to Relationships Foundation. We also award honorary membership to people doing exceptional work to build relationships in innovative ways.

As well as opportunities to network with each other, members also receive a free introductory book and discounts on events and resources from Relationships Foundation. So if you haven't yet joined, why not give us a call today or join online at www.relationshipsfoundation.org/Rnetwork



Putting the family first

Lesley and Richard Phillips entered the garden centre business 12 years ago, when the owner of Russells Garden Centre, in Birdham, West Sussex, was looking for someone to run the centre's tearoom. Lesley took on the management of the tearoom and, after a year, the owner offered Richard and Lesley the opportunity to buy the whole business. Like many garden centres across Britain, Russells has been open for business 7 days a week. The day before we met them, however, Lesley, Richard and their staff were enjoying their ninth consecutive Sunday free of work. What led them to make the surprising decision to close on Sundays?

"The decision came after the birth of our baby girl, Amelia", Lesley explains. "Initially we thought we wouldn't have to change the garden centre hours at all, that we would both share the care of Amelia without difficulty. However, it was hard to do — one of us was at work whilst the other was with her. We never had any shared family time."

"Staff must have time off — especially shared time with their families — it makes for happier employees"

Long hours, early mornings, late nights and weekends: it was a pattern they had known and worked in the preceding years. Lesley and Richard had raised their sons, James 17, and Adam, 14, taking it in turns to be with the boys whilst the other one worked. "It was very difficult. The restaurant demanded a lot of my time. Initially, my mother helped by looking after my youngest son, but with seven-days-a-week opening there were some very fractious times."

Richard would often have the children and then bring them to meet Lesley for lunch at the business. She recalls feeling 'very torn' because instead of enjoying lunch with her children, her head was full of all the jobs she needed to do.

The birth of Amelia brought a willingness to change, one that neither had previously thought possible. "We were convinced of the need to make things different this time around."

The Phillips decided to talk to their staff — many of whom are parents — and gather their views. Their staff told them how difficult it was to find reliable, safe childcare on Sundays; that they couldn't plan or attend family events, even a picnic on the beach, because of Sunday working.

This all resonated personally with the Phillips. "In the past, our family get-togethers always had to happen at Russells," Lesley explains. "But I found it very hard to have catch-up conversations with my brothers and sisters and their partners because my mind was always on the job — I was always having to keep aware of the work I was overseeing."



J Lesley, Richard, and Amelia Phillips & Staff at Russells Garden Centre

Following the staff meeting, Lesley and Richard decided to close their business on Sundays, keeping the garden centre open for the remaining six days of the week. And it's a decision they believe has paid off.

"Staff care and support has always been a priority — their health and happiness is important. Staff must have time off — especially shared time with their families — it makes for happier employees. Relationships are important to us. Most of our staff have been with us for more than two years. We remember their birthdays and share important events together. Now, we all come in for work on Mondays feeling refreshed and ready for the week ahead. We all benefit from the rest. I could never have imagined what a good decision it would be."

As they began notifying their customers of the new opening hours, they were surprised by the 'overwhelming response' they received. Customers have congratulated them, written to them and notified the press of their decision. The Phillips are now local champions for their decision to put families first and keep Sunday special.

The positive feedback the Phillips have had rings true with a recent survey we have done in partnership with GfK NOP. The poll showed that 81 per cent of people believe that protecting Sunday as a 'family day' is a good idea and almost three quarters of people (73 per cent) said it would not bother them at all if large shops shut on Sundays, as long as local convenience stores were open. This is a staggering 22% increase from when the same questions were asked three years ago.

"People are crying out for a break... they want family time back"

Responding to the NOP findings Lesley said: "Had you told me this before we started campaigning, I would have been surprised by this response. But now, I'm not. We've had such positive reactions from people."

Dr Michael Schluter, Executive Director of Relationships Foundation, commented: "People are crying out for a break, a release from the pressure of working each day of the week. They want family time back, they want their Sunday back and are not simply interested in shopping." ■