

A photograph of a man and a woman laughing together outdoors. The man, on the left, has a beard and is wearing a purple polo shirt and light green trousers. The woman, on the right, has short blonde hair and is wearing a black cardigan over a floral dress. They are both smiling broadly and looking towards each other. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a building.

relate  
the relationship people

# Changing relationships, changing lives

Annual Review 2015/16

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# Andrew Ketteringham

## Chair of Relate Board of Trustees

I'm delighted to welcome you to Relate's latest Annual Review. We've achieved so much in the past year: from a 20% increase in visitors to our website, to the Government announcing a new Healthy Relationships Fund at the launch of our *All Together Now* report.

In the face of huge societal and technological change, Relate continually strives to help more people in more ways that work and I'm very proud of the progress we're making. How our clients are accessing our services is changing, which has encouraged us to keep reaching out to people in new ways. As well as working to make our face-to-face counselling as accessible as possible, we also provide an extensive and crucial range of online support through our website. Relate.org.uk attracted 1.5 million visitors this year, and our self-help section in particular means we're helping people instantly at times that suit them.

Our improved webcam and email counselling has also allowed us to reach more people in rural areas as well as people working abroad, such as those in the military.

As the world around us changes, relationships of all kinds remain central to the fabric of our society and individual wellbeing. Relate exists to support people around the country to have healthy and strong relationships. With over 75 years' experience behind us we hope that we can continue to be here for another 75 years and more.



“Relate continually strives to help more people in more ways that work and I'm very proud of the progress we're making.”



## Professor Sir Cary Cooper, CBE President of Relate

Each year I take pride in reading Relate's annual report on the nation's relationships, *The Way We Are Now*. Every time this report is published, more than 6,000 people are surveyed to find out what our relationships mean to us, and that's not just our couple relationships. The survey covers all relationships from the home to the office.

I always take a particular interest in people's work-life balance. Most of us enjoy good relationships at work. However according to the survey from 2015 the stress we experience at work is affecting our relationships at home, and family responsibilities can be difficult to juggle with work. Not everyone is supported to manage work and home commitments, and many people continue to feel pressured to work more than they want to. It's concerning that one in four employees aged under 35 agree that the ideal worker is available 24/7. With many of that age group having young children it seems likely that balancing work and family will be a struggle.

Sadly the UK may have a particularly long way to go in addressing these issues, but I hope that Relate can play a part in helping employers take action to address them.



“Not everyone is supported to manage work and home commitments, and many people continue to feel pressured to work more than they want to.”

## Chris Sherwood

### Chief Executive of Relate

In my first year as Relate's Chief Executive I've made it my goal to visit as many Relate Centres as possible. It's been inspiring to spend time with so many colleagues in all corners of the country and to experience first-hand just some of the targeted services we offer. Relate is very well known for adult relationship counselling, but we also help people in many other ways.

For example, Relate Bedfordshire and Luton and Relate Northumberland and Tyneside have been working with local councils to strengthen the relationships of parents in their areas. Through government funding for family-centred services that ultimately tackle disadvantage and deprivation, 400 hours of couple counselling will be delivered in Bedfordshire and Luton, and, in Newcastle, nine hours of relationship support is delivered each week plus an 'on demand' service in Gateshead.

This year has also seen Relate London North East tackling the issue of young people in gangs. Their work focuses on improving relationships between young people and their families, with the aim of moving them away from gang culture.

This is just a snapshot of how Relate provides relationship support across the country. Relationships are at the heart of everything we do, as individuals and society, and it's very exciting to be leading a charity which is dedicated to improving relationships in so many different ways.



“It’s very exciting to be leading a charity which is dedicated to improving relationships in so many different ways.”





# **Who we are and why we're here**



# Who we are and why we're here

Relate is the UK's largest charity providing non-judgemental relationship support and counselling to individuals, couples and families.



Relate is full of passionate people committed to providing high quality relationship support to all who need it, and behind this lies a proud history and evidence to support what we do. We've made a huge difference to hundreds of thousands of people's lives.

**Our vision is a future in which healthy relationships are actively promoted as the basis of a thriving society.**

**Our mission is to develop and support healthy relationships by:**

- helping couples, families and individuals to make relationships work better;
- delivering inclusive, high quality services that are relevant at every stage of life;
- helping both the public and policy makers improve their understanding of relationships and what makes them flourish.

**“Our vision is a future in which healthy relationships are actively promoted as the basis of a thriving society.”**

A staggering 2.87 million people across the UK are living in relationships which would be described within clinical practice as distressed. This equates to 18% of married or cohabiting couples and 1.4 million UK families.

Poor quality relationships have a detrimental impact on people's physical and mental health with many struggling to access the support they need. We provide vital services to support families whose relationships are under pressure. Our relationship expertise helps prevent loneliness, depression, abuse, homelessness, debt and many other life-shattering events that can arise when relationships aren't good.

Evidence shows that our services achieve significant improvements in relationship quality and overall wellbeing, with 86% of clients feeling confident about their relationship after counselling.

Our work is varied – we help people to find love, cope with separation and divorce, improve their sex lives, break up in the least painful way possible, overcome infidelity, rebuild trust, regain intimacy and much more besides.

We believe that no problem is too small and encourage people to seek support for their relationships at the earliest possible stage, even when times are good.

Relate’s couple counselling saves the state an estimated £11 for every £1 spent.

Relationships, and the way people conduct them, are changing. As the UK’s leading relationship support charity, it’s our responsibility to ensure that our services evolve to reach people when, where and how they need them.

Counselling, therapy and more recently mediation have been central parts of Relate’s service offer and will continue to be so, but we also see that the growth of our information, education and support services will enable us to help more people in more ways that work. Embracing technology is key to this.

“Evidence shows that our services achieve significant improvements in relationship quality and overall wellbeing.”



“Relate’s couple counselling saves the state an estimated £11 for every £1 spent.”

### Philip’s story

“ Mary and I have been together for six years. I was married before and have three sons aged 14, 16 and 20. Mary has a son, Andrew, aged 20.

After living together for five years, we were both aware that our relationship was not going well. We both wanted it to work but didn’t understand each other. In retrospect, I can see that we weren’t really listening to each other, and decided we needed help.

We went to Relate and expected to attend a couple of sessions but the counsellor said we needed therapy over a longer period. We also needed the time between sessions to put into practice what we’d learnt.

We realised that spending more time together would not solve our problems in itself; we needed to learn how to communicate better. We learnt how to avoid interrupting each other, making accusations, point scoring and to find the right place and time for difficult conversations.



Counselling also enabled us to explore our previous experiences and what these brought to our relationship, in terms of our expectations of each other as well as practical implications as a blended family. Life is still not straightforward but we’re better equipped to face the highs and lows together. ”





# How we've helped



## How we've helped

Relate and its Centres across the country offer a whole range of life-changing relationship support. Face-to-face counselling, therapy and mediation are a vital part of our work, and we continue to grow our digital support services to help more people in more ways that work for them.

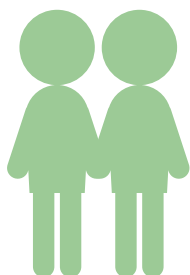


### Our face-to-face services

#### Counselling, therapy and mediation

These services provide support for people at times of relationship distress, transition or change. Our offer includes sex therapy, family counselling, adult relationship counselling, children and young people's counselling and family mediation.

**70,139**  
couples and  
individuals attended  
**adult relationship  
counselling**



**4,025**  
couples and individuals  
attended **sex therapy**



**7,582**  
children and young people  
received **counselling** via  
schools and dedicated programmes



**4,650**  
people attended **family  
counselling and mediation**





## Training and education

Our education services support people to develop the life skills needed for good quality relationships and to promote wellbeing. This includes self-help tools focused on improving relationships, alongside online and face-to-face skills development for couples, families and professionals.

# 13,294

people used our **education services** to improve their relationships



### Amanda's story

“ My partner and I had been together for five years and had been trying to have a baby for some time. But, by the time I eventually became pregnant, he said he'd changed his mind, no longer wanted a child and ended the relationship. I was still pleased to be pregnant because I was in my late thirties and could feel my biological clock ticking. But I was frustrated that I was going to be a single parent, a situation I would not have chosen. I felt angry and abandoned.

I wanted help to tackle my strong feelings, and a friend encouraged me to try Relate because other friends had had positive experiences, so I made an appointment.

Counselling was a help from the start. My counsellor understood me and gave comfort through confirming and justifying my thoughts. The counsellor was impartial and didn't take my side; she helped me work through my emotions and explore my ex-partner's point of view. This approach helped me understand my ex-partner and address the anger I felt.



Without counselling, I fear that I would have struggled emotionally to cope with my situation and fallen into depression. In contrast, I've been able to put the past behind me, enjoy being a mum and look forward to a future with my daughter, who is now two years old.



“Our education services support people to develop the life skills needed for good quality relationships and to promote wellbeing.”

## Our digital services

The way people access Relate services is changing. Technology plays an increasingly important role in our services, allowing us to reach out to more people in ways that suit them.

### Website

**1.5m +**  
website visitors



### Online information and self-help

This element of our service offers support to people to access the right information when they need it. We offer a broad range of information, from general advice and guidance about relationships to trusted expertise about areas including sex, family life, parenting and separation.

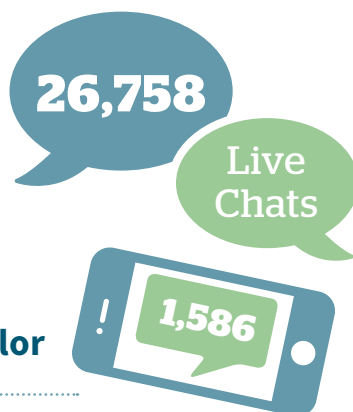
**89,753**  
people have used our  
self-help services online



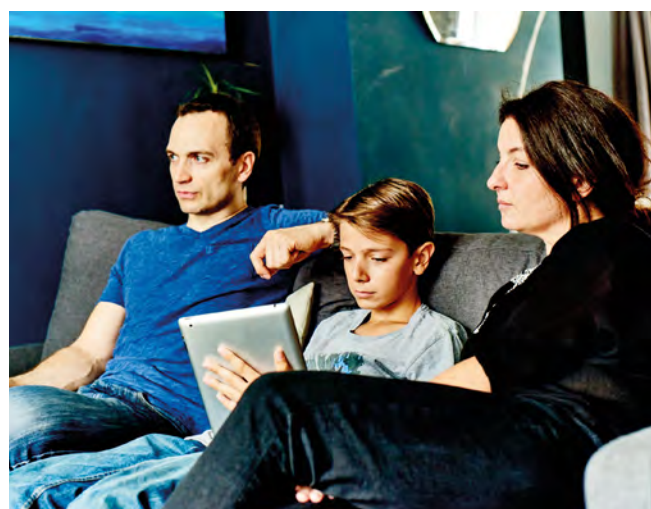
### Digital support services

**26,758**  
have used our  
Live Chat service

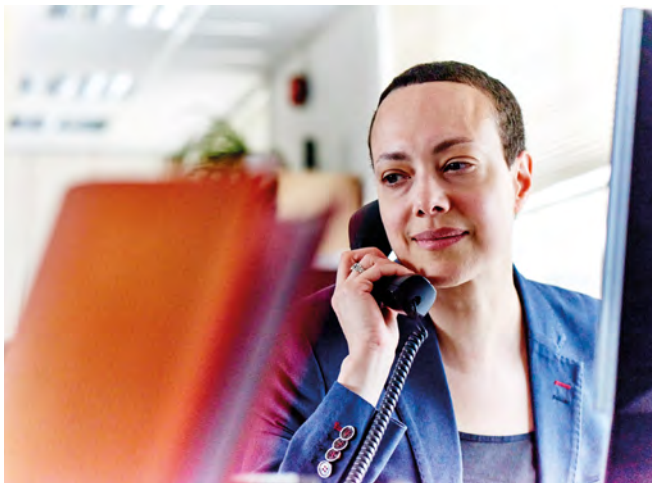
**1,586**  
have used  
Message a Counsellor



“The way people access Relate services is changing.”







**National phone network**  
**0300 100 1234**

The Response telephone network, staffed by a team of Consultants, is our national phone network set up to deliver a high quality and consistent service to all callers. Response is the 'front door' to everything we offer, helping people to access our services across the country.

**277,418**  
calls received by our  
**national phone network**



**Emma's story**

“ I regret my decision to stay with my ex-partner for as long as I did. Looking back, our relationship only worked when I was sad. He was very kind and loving and supported me when I was sad or unwell, but wasn't so great when I was happy. We started leading very separate lives as he didn't enjoy seeing my friends or family and he didn't even enjoy going out for walks with me. He would get so grumpy or moody and so I started going out by myself as it was easier. I missed having someone who would enjoy things with me and share in my fun and happiness and not just support me when I was sad. I was young when we first got together and so based my decision on attraction more than what I actually needed from a relationship. I loved him very much but felt the relationship wasn't right and I needed the extra support from Relate to end the relationship. I used the Live Chat service which allows you to speak to a counsellor for free online. I had a good experience



and went on to attend face-to-face counselling. If I hadn't attended Relate's counselling sessions and found the strength to leave I would never have found happiness and found a relationship that works all the time and not just in sadness - and I am now engaged to be married to my new partner. ”





# Our year



## Our year

A lot has been achieved this year. Here are just some of the highlights.



### Relate Lecture with Iain Duncan Smith

In February, the Right Honourable Iain Duncan Smith MP, then Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, spoke at the Relate Lecture held in Whitehall. At the same event we launched our report *All Together Now* which set out our vision for how support for good quality relationships could be strengthened over the next 10 years. Mr Duncan Smith also announced the very welcome news that funding for relationship support will be doubled over the next five years.



### Our reports

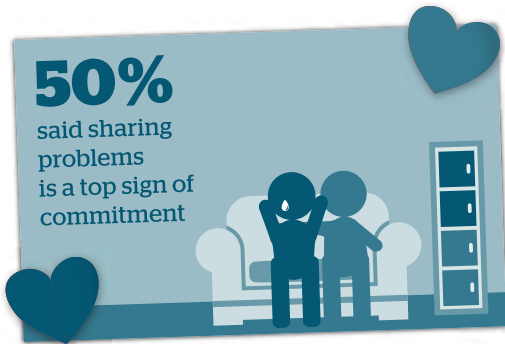
We carry out research to understand and improve the quality of relationships in society. The results of our research help inform and improve the delivery of our counselling and support services, and shape our policy priorities for our influencing work. This year we produced research reports exploring our vision for the future of relationships as well as examining how pre- and post-separation support can be improved.

### What's Love Got To Do With It

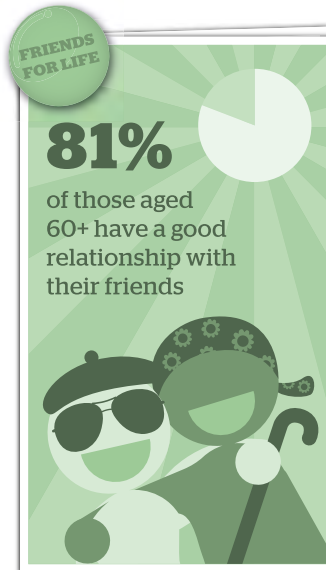
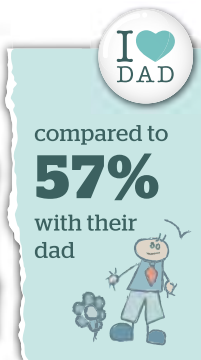
In July 2015 we launched a new collection of essays: *What's Love Got To Do With It*, 14 ideas for putting relationships at the heart of policy featuring contributions from leading thinkers from across academia, think tanks, politics and the voluntary sector. The launch was held in the House of Lords and was chaired by Baroness Tyler of Enfield with speeches from Mr Duncan Smith, Dr Jon Cruddas MP, John Glen MP and the Liberal Democrat Peer, Lord Willis of Knaresborough.

**The Way We Are Now**

This survey is one of the largest of its kind, representing the views of over 6,000 people and over 450 relationship support practitioners. *The Way We Are Now 2015* report offers a rich and varied insight into the home lives, working lives and sex lives of people across the UK. Key stats from the report:



“A rich and varied insight into the home, working and sex lives of people across the UK.”



**Breaking Up is Hard to Do**

Commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – and launched with the ministers for relationship support and family justice from both the DWP and the Ministry of Justice – this report explores the current provision of support before, during and after separation. The report makes 13 recommendations for how we could move towards a more joined-up system. Underlying them all is a vision of a wraparound system of support for family relationships before, during, and beyond separation, which places the person, not the agencies which provide support, at the centre.

This matters because fractious family separations and enduring conflict can be very detrimental to children’s wellbeing and development. So it’s an important policy priority to ensure families can access the support they need to ensure family relationships before, during, and after separation are as collaborative and harmonious as possible.

“Enduring conflict can be very detrimental to children’s wellbeing and development.”

**All Together Now**

This report, again commissioned by the DWP, analysed the current ‘marketplace’ for support for relationships and highlighted the need for a much better, more joined-up system of support for good quality relationships. It sets out an ambitious and extensive, yet also realistic, compelling, and evidence-based vision for how support for good quality relationships could be strengthened over the next 10 years – and sets out a comprehensive action plan and recommendations for policy makers as to how this vision could be achieved. Our vision in this report is that support for good quality relationships to be taken beyond the current confines of a narrow, specialised market for support.







### New Relate book on sex and intimacy

In August we launched our latest book, *The Relate Guide to Sex and Intimacy*, which explains that just thinking differently could work wonders for the nation's sex lives. Relate's research has shown that less than half of UK adults say they are satisfied with their sex life (45%) and 51% say they have not had sex in the past month. People often put so much pressure on themselves to have 'amazing sex' that they end up avoiding it altogether or don't notice what is good about their sex lives. Our guide covers the lifespan of relationships and suggests a new way of thinking about sex which allows a more relaxed approach to sexual expression and improved intimacy. This was covered extensively in national media.

“Just thinking differently could work wonders for the nation's sex lives.”

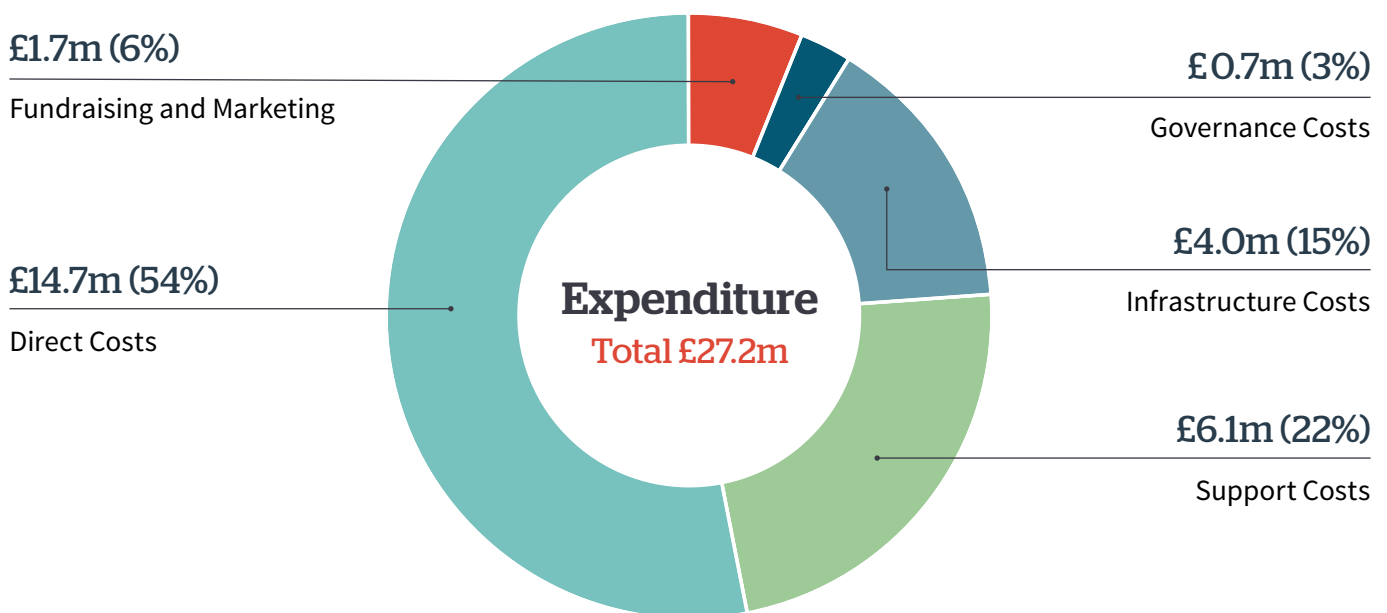
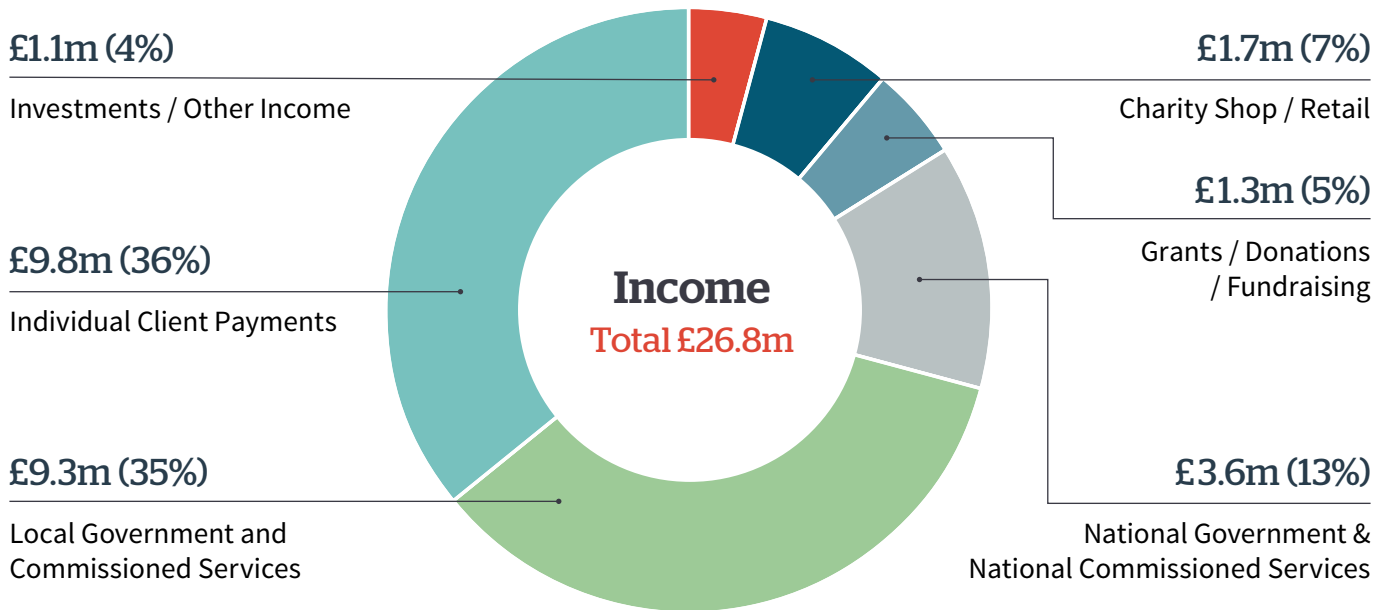


### Working in partnership

Relate continues to reach an increasing number of people from diverse backgrounds and all walks of life. One of the key ways we do this is through our partnerships with other organisations to help the people they support. These include the RAF Benevolent Fund, the Charity for Civil Servants, the Bank Workers Charity, the Army Welfare Service, the Royal Navy Royal Marines Charity, Grocery Aid and Embrace. All of these organisations have partnered with Relate in order that our services are available to their beneficiaries for no, or low, cost. These partnerships are particularly successful and help us to reach people who – due to their profession – may have additional strains placed on their family life. For example people who work in the military and are deployed overseas for significant periods. Across all of these partnerships we're proving successful in making a real difference to the lives of many more people.

# Our finances

These figures represent the whole of the Relate Federation, including the national charity and all Relate Centres.



Reporting period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016.

All figures in millions of GB pounds.



# Thank you

We can't do it without you, and would like to thank our donors, funders and contributors to our work.

Baroness Altmann CBE	J Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust
Caroline Ansell MP	John Glen MP
Army Welfare Service	Grocery Aid
Asian Family Counselling Service	Norman Lamb MP
Bank Workers Charity	Legal Education Foundation
BIG Potential	Marriage Care
Fiona Bruce MP	Ministry of Justice
David Burrowes MP	Money Advisory Service
Alistair Burt MP	Oglesby Charitable Trust
David Cameron MP	OnePlusOne
The Centre for Social Justice	PACE Health
Charity for Civil Servants	Philip King Trust
Children in Need	RAF Benevolent Fund
Comic Relief	The Relationships Alliance Network
Contact a Family	Relationships Foundation
Cranfield Trust	Relationships Scotland
Jon Cruddas MP	Resolution
Department of Work and Pensions	Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity
Caroline Dinenage MP	Patrick Sholl
Dulverton Trust	Tavistock Relationships
Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP	Baroness Tyler of Enfield
Embrace	Ufi Trust
Family and Childcare Trust	University of Exeter
Google	Lord Willis of Knaresborough

The contributors to our essay collection, *What's Love Got To Do With It?*

All those who contributed in different ways to Relate's *Breaking Up Is Hard To Do* report

The participants in the St George's House consultation in September 2015

## Thank you to our Patrons and Ambassadors for their support:

Professor Tanya Byron, *Patron*

Bel Mooney, *Patron*

Roopa Farooki, *Ambassador*

Anjula Mutanda, *Ambassador*

Andrew Selous MP, *Ambassador*

We're so proud of what we've achieved in 2015/16, but we still have more to do to reach out and help everyone who needs us.

**To help us do more in 2016/17  
please donate, volunteer or campaign for Relate.**

Call on **0300 100 1234** or  
visit **[relate.org.uk/about-us](http://relate.org.uk/about-us)**

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**[relate.org.uk](http://relate.org.uk)**