

# relate Lincolnshire reviewed

Along with other charities Relate Lincolnshire has had to review our operational performance. The days of applying for big funding are virtually over and Relate can no longer afford to rest on our reputation as the relationship people so we have to be competitive with the many other companies who provide training and counselling.

We are competing both for funding and clients and sometimes this is a difficult concept for a charity that was set up seventy years ago to help couples deal with the strains of life in the twentieth century.

We are in the twenty-first century now and have to accept that counsellors and staff no longer work on a voluntary basis – though we do have lots of people who provide an excellent service as volunteers for which we are very grateful. Last year Relate nationally saw 149, 087 clients.

In order that we can continue offering counselling and training where it is needed we introduced a payment policy in July 2008 and this included a pre-payment system. We now charge clients whose income exceeds £20K £45 per session with lower rates for those earning less or on benefits. This decision was not taken lightly but it has enabled us to balance the books more realistically even though we still provide counselling to young people at no personal cost to themselves. The one off funding we secured – such as Big Lottery Funding – was never intended to fund our core services and these costs have to be met elsewhere. Relate Lincolnshire does not receive any government funding and we have to meet with partner organisations with a viable proposition in order to secure their business.

If Relate Lincolnshire is to survive we need to seek sustainable funding from people who respect our work and buy what we can offer. We are placing an emphasis on working with families and young people and making a real difference in the lives of those people. Relate counsellors are trained in these specialist areas and I am confident that 2009 will continue to see us recognised for the professional services we deliver and that both private and contract clients will increase.

We are hoping to install a computerised central booking system that will also enable us to expand the counselling services to include telephone counselling and even a text service.

Relate Lincolnshire will continue to be 'the relationship people' and as we expand our parameters and our expertise we hope to grow our client caseload

I have only been in post since July 2008 but have already grown to appreciate the high standard of the services provided by counsellors and trainers at Relate Lincolnshire and the excellent support of the administration staff.

Special thanks go to Janet Dixon who has worked as a volunteer at Lincoln for 10 years. We really appreciate all she does and the time given by her and the other voluntary staff.

Marilyn Merry