



PRESS RELEASE
[September 2011]
FOR IMMEDIATE USE

NATIONAL INITIATIVE PROMISES 'HAPPILY EVER AFTER' FOR MORE ENGAGED COUPLES

Engaged couples are being encouraged to take just one evening out to watch a new DVD that could help their marriage to last a lifetime.

The *Marriage by Design* DVD is part of a national initiative designed to help engaged couples create successful marriages, following research which shows that divorce rates are 30% lower among engaged couples who prepare for life after their wedding day compared with those who only plan for the big day itselfⁱ. The initiative will be launched at the National Wedding Show in London and Birmingham, in September and October, by leading family charity Care for the Family.

Around 250,000 couples get married every year in the UK, of whom only 8% plan for married life as well as their weddingⁱⁱ. One in three UK marriages fails before reaching the 15th wedding anniversary, with couples aged 25-29 the most likely group to divorceⁱⁱⁱ. Currently, marriage preparation is offered mainly to couples who get married in church, despite the fact that two-thirds of weddings are civil ceremonies. As a result, many couples fail to prioritise longer-term issues in the run up to their wedding, believing that love and the strength of their relationship will be sufficient to help their marriage stand the test of time.

Katharine Hill, Director of Family Policy at Care for the Family, says: "There's no doubt that love and commitment are vital ingredients in a healthy marriage, but there are also skills you can learn, choices you can make, habits you can put in place and rules you can follow to ensure that, together, you build a marriage that lasts a whole lifetime - not just a few years." She continues, "We'd encourage every engaged couple to turn off their phones, open a bottle of wine, and treat themselves to a special evening where they prepare for the rest of their lives together."

The *Marriage by Design* initiative addresses key issues that can make or break a marriage. It covers topics such as how to have a good argument, parenthood, and managing the household finances. Couples are encouraged to talk through how they feel about each of the issues raised. As an alternative to watching the DVD at home, couples can opt to attend a *Marriage by Design* one day event, which will enable small groups of engaged couples to talk through the *Marriage by Design* material with a trained facilitator, in a relaxed and informal setting.

"When you get back from honeymoon, real life kicks in," says Katharine. "That's not to say that the romance of the relationship suddenly disappears, but it's important to plan beyond the wedding and

be aware of how to handle the sorts of issues that can put a long-term relationship under stress. Happy and healthy marriages don't happen simply because of 'good luck'."

The *Marriage by Design* DVD costs £25 and will be available at the National Wedding Show (Stand H39 at Earl's Court, from 30 Sept – 2 Oct 2011; Stand J22 at Birmingham NEC, from 7 – 9 Oct 2011) or online at www.marriagebydesign.org.uk, where engaged couples can also discover the location of their nearest *Marriage by Design* one day event. Further information can be obtained by calling Care for the Family on 029 2081 0800.

ENDS

Notes for Editors:

- **To request a case study or arrange an interview with Katharine Hill**, Director of Family Policy at *Care for the Family*, please contact our press office:

Lisa Hillier	(01799) 529792	lisahillier@cinnamonletters.co.uk
Michelle Wilkins	(01799) 529791	michellewilkins@cinnamonletters.co.uk

- **Care for the Family** is a national charity which aims to strengthen family life throughout the UK and help those facing family difficulties. Over the past 21 years, over 350,000 people have attended the charity's events, workshops and family-building breaks. Many more families find support through its resources and other initiatives – including stepfamilies, bereaved parents, parents of children with eating disorders, families where children have additional needs, those parenting alone and those widowed young.

For more information please contact:

E	mail@cff.org.uk
T	(029) 2081 0800
W	www.careforthefamily.org.uk

ⁱ Stanley, S., Amato, P., Johnson, C. & Markman, H. 2006. "Premarital Education, marital quality and marital stability: Findings from a large, random, household survey," *Journal of Family Psychology*, 20, issue 1 pp.117-126.

ⁱⁱ Centre for Social Justice, You Gov Poll 2009. *Every Family Matters*

ⁱⁱⁱ Office for National Statistics, *Divorces in England and Wales, 2009*