



UK National Marriage Week, 10th – 16th May 2021

UK National Marriage Week is an annual focus and celebration of marriage. It seeks to highlight the benefits of a healthy marriage to society, the media and the government. Marriage Week encourages married couples to reflect on and invest in their relationship to consider what is working well, what could be improved and then act on both! It also encourages unmarried couples to consider marriage for themselves and to take that step of commitment to their partner.

This year is of course dominated by the pandemic, lockdown and government restrictions and so we are focussing on simple, stripped back marriage *and* weddings to reflect this. Obviously, nothing we suggest in this note overrides government regulation and advice (current at the time of Marriage week) and the need to take care to keep wedding groups safe. That said we have dubbed these pared-down marriages 'Naked Marriage' to reflect the real essence of this wonderful, lifelong arrangement.

There are two elements to the theme:

1. 'Naked Marriage' is the 'Essential Marriage': *Focussing on the essential elements of marriage.*

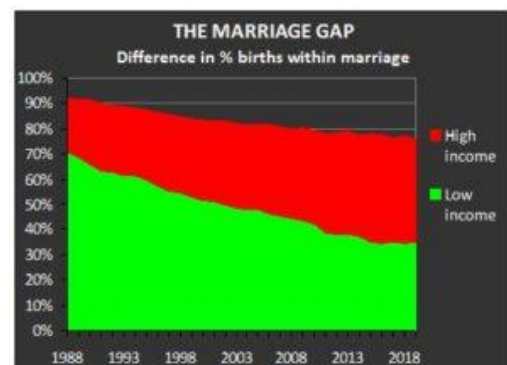
Lockdown has meant increased time with each other and for many, despite the challenges, their relationship has benefitted (read the [Marriage Foundation research](#) for more info). In order for us to continue to navigate these times, NMW2021 offers couples the opportunity to hone in on what really matters, to strengthen, grow and celebrate their marriage.

2. 'Naked Marriage' is the 'Naked Wedding': *The cost of a wedding should not be a barrier to marriage.*

We're promoting a style of wedding that focusses on the meaning of the day rather than the big expensive party. There have been many 'lockdown weddings' that have proved that a small, intimate wedding can be just as special, if not more so as the multiple elements of the big wedding, the organising, the stresses and costs are removed.

Why is a low-cost wedding important?

- a. [There is a growing marriage gap based on income.](#) Whereas in the lower income groups, 68% of parents of newborn babies in England & Wales in 1988 were married, this proportion had fallen to 35% in 2019. However, in the higher income groups, 91% were married in 1988 falling to 76% in 2019. The 'marriage gap' between rich and poor has thus almost doubled from 22% to 41%.



Marriage boosts stability, acts as a buffer against problems for children and increases levels of commitment. We'd like to see **ALL** couples and children benefitting from the advantages of marriage.

- a. Over the last 60 years, society has changed and there is no longer pressure to marry. Consequently, many couples choose to cohabit, pushing aside ideas of marriage to pay for new kitchens, holidays, etc., imagining that they need thousands of pounds in the bank in order to get married with some surveys suggesting the average cost of a wedding is £20K -£30K. This expectation is of course fuelled further by celebrity weddings and social media. This has resulted in a year on year fall in marriage rates.

This matters because among couples with children marriage is three times more likely to succeed compared with informal cohabitation. We'd like to see a reverse in this trend by changing mindsets away from the big wedding in favour of the small, 'Naked Wedding'.

'Naked Wedding' ideas:

1. Can you help us keep down the cost of a wedding?
2. Do you currently offer support to couples to help keep costs down?
3. Can your church community subsidise the cost of the wedding?
4. Can you offer a 'cake and fizz' wedding? A service, followed by an informal reception of cake cutting, speeches and something sparkling to drink, held at your premises – all at a very reduced cost?
5. Can you offer a bigger wedding package like the £1000 all-inclusive example [here](#)?
6. Can you offer a wedding with next to nothing fees like the example [here](#)?
7. Can you offer/facilitate a community wedding, where friends, family, church members/congregation all help out?
8. Can you come up with your own ideas for a 'Naked Wedding' which you could share with us?

Our aim is that as many churches and faith groups across the UK can join in with this campaign and that the 'Naked Wedding' can be promoted during Marriage Week, with churches and faith groups inviting couples to approach them about getting married.

We'd also like churches and faith groups to encourage married couples to join in and reflect on the 'essential marriage' by using the resources online including our 'Uncovered series' (exploring topics such as communication, forgiveness etc.). Couple and community events could be run by your church or faith group during Marriage Week – either online or in person, depending on current Covid restrictions.

If you can help or would like to know more, please email the coordinator of Marriage Week, Michaela Hyde: m.hyde@marriage-week.org.uk

UK National Marriage Week is a project of the charity, Marriage Foundation. You can find out more about their work on their website, www.marriagefoundation.org.uk.

You can read their briefing paper on 'Marriage as a social justice issue' [here](#) and their top ten facts leaflet [here](#).