

# WHAT IS A GROUP RELATIONS CONFERENCE?

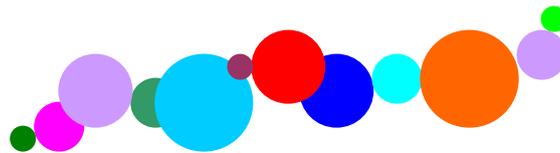
"Changing culture depends upon effective leadership. But are we confident that our leaders know how to create a sense of purpose and direction? How to win ownership for that vision from a critical mass of their people? And then how to inspire them to believe they can achieve? **Because that's the task of leadership.** That is what makes leadership different from management."

*Former Permanent Secretary, Department for Education and Employment, UK*

**"Far better than conventional training for actually changing and improving leadership ability"**

*Director of Strategy,  
TeliaSonera, Sweden*

- A group relations conference is an **accelerated learning experience**. It is designed to enable participants to understand, in greater depth, the factors behind the exercise of effective leadership and to develop further their own **leadership capacities** and the **leadership potential of others**, by generating management **goodwill** and employee **"buy-in"**, and understanding and working with their own and their organisation's **resistance to change**.
- A group relations conference is a 'real time' learning laboratory in the form of a series of **reflective spaces** where participants can analyse their leadership styles and experiment creatively in expanding their repertoire of leadership skills. Together with conference staff, they **critically examine different models of organisational functioning and appraise their leadership performance**.



## WHO IS THE CONFERENCE FOR?

Are you:

*A change agent wanting a space to reflect and challenge yourself in a world-class learning environment?  
newly appointed? feeling constrained or lacklustre in your job?  
taking or considering a big promotion? failing to get promotion?*

Participants are business professionals, entrepreneurs, managers, executives, researchers, administrators, decision-makers, activists, academics, consultants, trainers, clinicians, service providers etc. From the worlds of business, government and local authorities, the arts, consultancy, education, finance, politics, NGOs; health services and social care, justice, religious orders, lobby groups, agenda-based activisms and environmental organisations. Anyone who is interested in how they and their groups / teams can work better. Participants come from all sectors and backgrounds and from all over the world (see list of organisations and countries –page vi).

## WHY ATTEND?

Paying attention to the potential of the minds of staff **gives an organisation that extra competitive edge** needed to survive and thrive in today's turbulent economic climate. The group relations conference, as an experiential event, provides a space in which to reflect on the life of the organisation and your various roles within it. **Benefits** for organisations include:

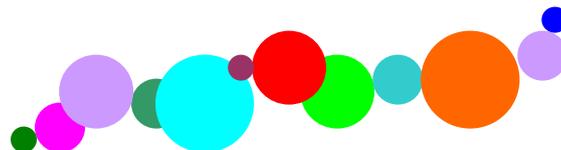
- improved **strategic thinking**;
- more **effective management** based on understanding people as individuals, as members of groups, organisations and the wider society ie in a context; and
- increased capacity to **lead, innovate and influence change** in an evolving context.

## LEADERSHIP TODAY

- **The nature of work and the organisations through which work is carried out have changed** and continue to change at an incredible rate. It can no longer be taken for granted that leaders and managers share the same vision for their organisation.
- **Hierarchies in many sectors are disappearing** and in their place there are matrices and temporary work teams which are held together by immediate, often short-term aims. New leadership and management capabilities in this context are crucial for future success.
- We are now **on the verge of the ‘thinking organisation’**. The greatest assets of any organisation are the psychological and emotional capacities of the organisation’s major role holders and the clear role relationships between them.
- Leadership is about **anticipating new realities** and management is about working out how to implement this vision. Leadership in these circumstances has to **find new ways to excite managers and staff**.
- Leadership is about forging and **sustaining a complex network of partnerships** between other sections, departments and branches of an organisation internally and also externally with other organisations: locally, nationally and internationally. The global village is here.

“ ... when I wake up every day, I can feel some **new clarity in role.**”

*Clinical Psychologist and  
Organisational Consultant,  
InTraining, Argentina*



## THE PRIMARY TASK

To study the development and exercise of authority, role and organisation, through the inter-personal, inter-group and institutional relations that develop within the conference

## METHOD

“I have never learned as much about **organisations as whole systems** as I did at the Leicester conference.”

*Director,  
Corporate Business  
Development. USA*

The group relations conference combines theoretical and experiential (learning through experience) methods of learning on the grounds that **learning is more substantial and lasts longer if all one’s senses and faculties are involved**. Hence the group relations conference emphasises both intellectual study through reading and seminars, but more, the emotional engagement that comes about through **active participation** in the events of the conference.

In addition, the conference includes the study of the role of leadership in **developing future leadership potential** for organisations from amongst existing staff/employees.

The **ratio** of staff consultants to participants is high, **about 1 : 5**

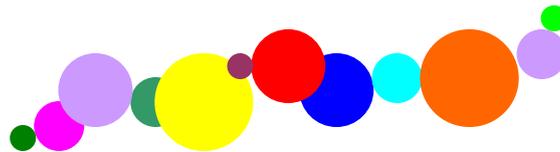
## PHILOSOPHY

“Overall the conference was the **most significant personal professional event** I have attended.”

*Vice President, HR,  
Volvo Car Corporation,  
Sweden*

- The **strategic and structural dynamics of organisations** can be studied and understood and the knowledge used.
- Group relations conferences aim to **produce leaders with creative visionary potential**, who are also sensitive to the personal and career ambitions of their managers and employees.
- Group relations conferences are unique in **elaborating the conscious and unconscious dynamics** of leadership and management in organisations.

- Group relations conferences facilitate **integration** of intellectual capacity and emotional intelligence, two major areas of human functioning, thereby **enabling leaders to work more efficiently at helping their managers to adapt** to future roles.
- Group relations conferences demonstrate **how to enable** staff/employees to work towards the same vision, modelling leadership, making the theory live.
- The conferences are intensive and allow participants to examine and **question the nature of their multiple roles** as leader / influential follower **and the place of their organisation** in its evolving context.



## VALUES

- Group relations conferences **provide learning opportunities for a new generation** of leaders and managers who seek to improve their skills in developing a vision and fostering creativity in new kinds of collaborative networks.
- Group relations conferences help participants link technology and teams to bring out the best in people, mobilising **co-operative inter-dependency** and creating **collaborative sustainability**.
- Group relations conferences **always deal with a dilemma**: how to build organisations and teams and ensure in the process that all the different views will be heard.
- Group relations conferences help participants to explore the tension between **taking risks / being accountable**.
- Group relations conferences **help people to manage themselves well**; to know about and integrate their feelings, values and beliefs with their intellect so as to maximise their own and their organisation's effectiveness.

“I never realized how easily and **how strongly groups set up defences** to avoid the painful realities about their task, their relationships with other groups and their performance.”

*Organisational Development  
Consultant, Italy*

# TESTIMONIALS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

about the annual Leicester conference and other group relations events

**“a fascinating and truly provoking event**, conducted by the Tavistock Institute team of consultants which engaged me fully with my thoughts and feelings about my organisation, my role and how I exercise my authority; and what needs to be addressed in my senior management team. Your accumulated knowledge and experience was so evident, I never for a moment doubted that we have **the very best consultation available** to us.”

*CEO in Public Housing,  
UK*

**“Once I start thinking about the conference, I realise that there is a fine web from this conference which has been layered into my life.”**

*Head of Business  
Development Asia Pacific,  
Sulzer Pumps,  
China*

**“The conference helped me to express myself in plain words, instead of professional language, as an extremely powerful tool of communication.”**

*Nurse, NHS,  
UK*

**“I learned that tensions are inevitable in organisations and certain group behaviours, eg the tendency to form silos, seem to exacerbate these tensions. Encouragement by conference staff to reach out across boundaries and be curious about what was happening in other silos, was a useful way of improving understanding and relationships.”**

*Detective Chief Superintendent,  
Metropolitan Police,  
UK*

**“Just wanted to let you know that the conference led to a lot of movement inside myself which I can't walk away from anymore... It became very clear what my passion really is and what the reasons are why I was blocking it.”**

*Manager, GIS Data,  
Alliander NV,  
The Netherlands*

**“I found it a massively empowering experience. I certainly learned a lot about myself and understand far more about how organisations work. I am confident that my learning will be invaluable in many aspects of my life and career going forward.”**

*IDEAs Programme Director,  
Welsh Assembly Government,  
Wales*

**“...I feel like I have found a place in the world, in this work, that not only offers a way in which seeing and being seen, hearing and being heard is possible, but also sustainable.”**

*Minister,  
St Martins Community Church,  
Australia*

## SOME MORE

“Leicester has made me think a **lot more** about what [organisational life] means ... and how we all respond to this and create this atmosphere – **what is externally induced and what comes from us** and how people exercise their leadership and authority including of course myself, in this environment.”

*Deputy Chief Executive,  
NHS,  
UK*

“The quality of the staff and the dynamic combination of groups – with different tasks within the conference as a temporary organisation – **provided great scope for concrete and direct learning...** I especially valued the opportunity to discover emotional links between professional and personal life experiences.”

*Head of Unit, Directorate,  
General Education and Culture,  
European Commission,  
Brussels*

“I love the organization of the conference and the physical space of Beaumont Hall...the buildings and the gardens are fabulous! I think so much of the work of learning relies on **re/membering new experiences, their physicality and re/calling their sensory-ness.**”

*Managing Partner,  
Williams O'Connell Associates,  
Canada*

“I would like to acknowledge the wonderful design that is the Leicester Conference, its tried and tested history ... providing containment and modelling authority as I and all of us experimented and grappled with ours. I certainly gained enormously and learned almost at a cellular level. I also had a **whole lot of fun with other mischief makers.**”

*CEO, Southside Partnership,  
Ireland*

“...the bottom line is that **there has to be a shared will to change and a willingness to take risks** in order to develop relatedness.”

*Deputy Director,  
Manchester Museum,  
UK*

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[tavinstitute.org](http://tavinstitute.org)  
[grouprelations.com](http://grouprelations.com)

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## ORGANISATIONS from which conference participants have come:

Cross Boundary Solutions Ltd, **UK**; Central Organisation of Industrial Employees, Denmark; Eastern Wakefield PCT, UK; Fyns Amt, Denmark; Draiocht Community Development & Training Organisation, Eire; Hay Group, **Italy**; Tavistock Clinic, UK; Instituto Europeo de Psicoterapia Psicoterapia Psicoanalitica, Spain; City of Stockholm, Sweden; Melbourne Health, Australia; International Institute for Management Development, Switzerland; Curtin University of Technology, **Australia**; CapGemini Consulting,, UK; H S Amager Hospital, Denmark; Ankerhus A/S, Denmark; Change Management Associates Ltd, UK; Portiuncula Hospital, County Galway, Eire; London Borough of Hounslow, UK; Lambeth PCT, UK; Austen Riggs Center, USA; Work; AiTC, Italy; Metropolitan Police, UK; Hopeworks, **USA**; Henderson Hospital Services, UK; Mind, UK; Manchester Art Gallery, UK; The Development Center, USA; Psychology Hospital in Aarhus, Denmark; Opportunity in Bedrijf and Opp Advies, The Netherlands; Heather Wishik Consulting, USA; Roskilde University, Denmark, Fincantieri SpA, Italy; University of the West of England, UK; VECU, The Netherlands; Northern School of Child & Adolescent Psychotherapy, UK; Hackney Learning Trust, UK; The Children's Society, UK; Visionact-Net, Switzerland; ABN AMRO Bank, **The Netherlands**; Swiss Re, **Switzerland**; Aalborg University, Denmark; Central Manchester Children's Hospitals NHS Trust, UK; Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, UK; York Refrigeration, Denmark; Vilnius University, Lithuania; Udviklingskonsulenterne, Denmark; Max Delbrück Centre for Molecular Medicine. Germany; Visa Europe, UK; King's Fund, UK; Praesternes Efteruddannelse, Denmark; National University of Ireland, **Ireland**; University of Quebec, **Canada**; University of Cape Town, **South Africa**; Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust, UK; NCVO, UK; South Essex Mental Health and Community Care Trust, UK; Tavistock Marital Studies Institute, UK; Twizler/PB Group, UK; Arhus Amt, Denmark; Zurich RE, Switzerland; DaimlerChrysler, **Germany**; Ev. Zentralinstitut fur Familienberatung, Germany; Fyns Amt, Denmark; Community Health Sheffield NHS Trust, UK; Jyske Bank, Denmark; Vejle County, Denmark; London Borough of Islington Social Services, UK; The Gray Partnership, UK; City of Vantaa, Finland; SLAM NHS Trust, UK; Schering AG, Germany; Students Exploring Marriage Trust, UK; Tel Aviv University, Israel; Institut Catala de la Salut, DAP L'Hospitalet, **Spain**; New York University, USA; Camden and Islington Community Health Services NHS Trust, UK; Clinica Psichiatrica Universita Di Catania, Italy; Wigan and Bolton Health Authority, UK; IMD, Switzerland; Behandlingshjemmet Egevang, Denmark; Ecker Center for Mental Health, USA; Royal Free Hospital, UK; De Galan and Voigt, The Netherlands; University of South Africa; CMG Telecommunications Ireland Ltd, Ireland; Karolinska Institutet, **Sweden**; Reekum Consulting and Management bv, The Netherlands; MODUL Service AB (IKEA), Sweden; Post Danmark, **Denmark**; INSEAD, **France**; C/O/N/E/C/T/A, **Austria**, Pfizer Ltd, UK; VECU Organisatiebegeleiding, The Netherlands; University of Pennsylvania Health Systems, USA; Shell Oil International, The Netherlands; St Columban's Missionary Society, Ireland; TESI Spa, Italy; Degreuz Innovations Ltd, UK; R.A.A.K. Consultancy BV, The Netherlands; Guardian Newspaper, UK; Ernst & Young, The Netherlands; Familiecentret, Denmark; Holzhauser & Partner, Germany; Suffolk County Council, UK; RMIT - Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Australia; Sc gfa-ro consultanta impex SRL, **Romania**; Ustredie prace, socialnych veci a rodiny, **Slovakia**; Seattle University, USA;; Emcon AS, Denmark; Prism Softech Pvt Ltd; India; Hebrew University of Jerusalem, **Israel**; Foster Care Associates, Scotland; Metso Minerals (Tampere) Oy, **Finland**; Deloitte Consulting, **Chile**; SAKSHI Human Rights Watch, **India**; Nuon, The Netherlands; U4EA Technologies Ltd, UK; Organisatie Advies, Coaching, Counselling, The Netherlands; Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector, UK; SACCS Ltd, UK; Novozymes, France;; Institute of Management Development and Research (IMDR), India; RZMO Hetadviesnetwerk, The Netherlands; Humber Mental Health NHS Teaching Trust, UK; AFF at The Norwegian School of Economics, **Norway**; Dr. Ingrid's Hospital, **Greenland**; Holy Trinity Parochial Church Council, Dartford, UK; National Area-based Development Program, Columbia University, USA; Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation & Development, Government of Afghanistan, **Afghanistan**; UAB Sanofi-Aventis Lietuva, **Lithuania**; Vilnius University, Lithuania; Rigshospitalet, Copenhagen University Hospital, Denmark; Bundestagsfraktion Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen, Germany; Kehityspiikki Oy, Finland; Prison Services, Israel; Roskilde University, Denmark; Tampere University of Technology, Finland; TAKS (Faroese Tax and Custom Authorities), **Faroe Islands**; Healthcare Commission, UK; HR, Region Midtjylland, Denmark; Zain, **Kuwait**; Cranfield University, UK; GTZ (German Agency for Technical Cooperation), **Mali**; Wide Eye Pictures Ltd, UK; University of Pretoria, South Africa; Escape Artists, UK; Utrecht School of Governance, The Netherlands; Stree Sanghshema Trust, India; Methodist Ladies College, Australia; National University of Singapore, **Singapore**; Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, UK; Dr Hauschka Skin Care, Inc, USA; HM Prison Service, UK; Center of Psychological and Sociological Research, **Cuba**; Sulzer Pumps Asia Pacific, **China**; Leadership Centre for Local Government, UK; Apple Computer Inc, Ireland; Universidad Peruana de Ciencias, **Peru**; Leviosa Business School, India; InTraining, **Argentina**; Norton Rose, UK; Covenant University, **Nigeria**...

## AN EXAMPLE OF A GROUP RELATIONS CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

*Either, selected people from your organisation can attend the annual 14-day Leicester conference, residential  
Or a shorter conference can be tailored to the requirements of your organisation (1 day up to 5 days), in-house, non-residential*

Time	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
9.00 – 10.30	Registration	Large Study Group II	Large Study Group III	Large Study Group IV	Whole System Event III (Plenary)
10.30 – 11.00	BREAK				
11.00 – 12.30	Opening Plenary	Small Study Group II	Small Study Group III	Small Study Group IV	Closing Plenary
12.30 – 14.00	LUNCH				
14.00 – 15.30	Small Study Group I	Inter-Group Event I (Plenary)	Break	Whole System Event I (Plenary)	Application V
15.30 – 16.00	BREAK				
16.00 – 17.30	Large Study Group I	Inter-Group Event II	Inter-Group Event III (Plenary)	Whole System Event II	
17.30 – 18.00	BREAK				
18.00 – 19.00	DINNER				
19.00 – 20.30	Review I	Review II	Review & Application III	Application IV	

## EXPLANATION OF THE CONFERENCE EVENTS

<b>Plenaries</b>	The conference opens and closes in plenary sessions. The plenaries further the process of crossing the boundary into and out of the conference and each event. The final conference closing plenary also allows for studying the process of ending relationships.
<b>Small Study Groups</b>	The Small Study Group consists of up to 12 participants working with 1 consultant. Its primary task is to learn about the dynamics of small groups and the formation of leadership and followership relationships as they happen in the group. It is an experiential 'here-and-now' event in which the behaviour of the group is placed under a high resolution microscope and the group has the opportunity to study its own behaviour as it happens, with the help of consultancy. The rationale for this is that learning, understanding and knowledge lead to change.
<b>Large Study Group</b>	The Large Study Group comprises all the participants of the conference working together with consultants. The primary task of this event is to provide opportunities for studying the dynamics of large groups and the processes of cohesion and fragmentation, myth-making and reality-testing as they happen in the group. This is an experiential 'here-and-now' event in which the behaviour of the group is placed under a high resolution microscope and the group has the opportunity to study its own behaviour as it happens, with the help of consultancy. The rationale for this is that learning, understanding and knowledge lead to change.
<b>Review &amp; Application Groups</b>	Review and Application Groups provide with opportunities to <b>review</b> and reflect on their experiences of the day and how they are taking up their different roles in the conference. Towards the latter half of the conference, these sessions will focus on <b>application</b> - how the participants hope to transfer their conference learning into their back-home organisations. This is a bridging exercise between the individual's conference learning and post-conference organisational behavioural practice and has 'here-and-now' and 'now-and-then' aspects to it. The focal question is: what are we learning in the conference ('here-and-now') that can be applied to our roles in our organisations ('now-and-then')?
<b>Inter-Group Event</b>	The Inter-Group Event is an opportunity for participants to learn about the processes and relationships that form between different groups when they are engaged on a common task. Especially relevant with be learning how to take up representative roles and negotiating and carrying authority on behalf of others. This is an event that combines experiential 'here-and-now' learning with action learning, ie. the putting into action, within the conference, sets of relationships between groups that derive from the experiential learning of the conference.
<b>Whole System Event</b>	The Whole System Event involves all parts of the conference – groups formed by the participants and groups formed by the staff - in learning about relationships between parts and wholes; managing differentials of power and influence; how to keep the whole system in mind when one is working in part of it, especially when the system is large and complex and often unknowable. The event involves 'here-and-now' experiential learning.