

# A quiet guide to advocating for relational practice

Why a quiet guide? We've called this a quiet guide to advocating because meaningful change doesn't always need to be loud. By taking time to reflect and act strategically, small, thoughtful actions can create productive momentum, invite others in, and drive sustainable change without alienating those you want to bring with you. The film is a tool to help you start making quiet waves.

The film gives us something powerful: language for work we already do. It provides evidence that this work is real, skilled, and consequential.

This is leverage.

## 1. Start by naming what has always been there

Relational practice is not new. It is simply newly visible here.

This work makes clear that relationship-centred work is a way of working and a way of being, with skills and knowledge, not instinct alone.

*“this is not incidental, this is practice” (Dr. Tigist Grieve)*

### What this enables:

- You can move conversations beyond “soft skills”
- You can describe your work as deliberate, skilled, and essential

### *A gentle prompt:*

Where in your work could simply naming relational practice shift how it is understood?

Think about

- Evaluation and evidence
- [Our report, discussion paper, film, Field Guide](#), and work from others such as [The Relationship Project](#) can help evidence your case.

## 2. Make the invisible visible - especially the costs

Relational work is meaningful, but it is not neutral.

We highlight both its rewards (pride, connection, solidarity) and its costs, including emotional labour, pressure, and responsibility for others' experiences. It also shows how this work is often under-recognised and poorly supported.

The film gives permission to speak about this openly.

### What this enables:

- More honest conversations about workload and wellbeing
- A shift from individual resilience to collective responsibility

### *A gentle prompt:*

What parts of your relational work are currently unseen, and what would change if they were acknowledged?

Think about:

- When you rest and recover from work
- Where you can draw on support after difficult interactions

## 3. Connect relational practice to what institutions already value

Relational practice is not outside institutional priorities; it underpins them.

Funders and the sector are increasingly prioritising research that is inclusive, participatory, and connected to society. This requires time, trust, and relationships.

### What this enables:

- Framing relational work as central to impact, quality, and legitimacy
- Linking your practice to strategy, funding, and culture change

### *A gentle prompt:*

How might you translate “relationships” into the language your institution already recognises as success?

Think about:

- Relationships are everywhere – map them out
- Look for pseudonyms across policies and strategies; exchange, respect, partnerships, trust, collaboration, connect, networks, etc.
- The political climate of the UK is shifting, trust in Universities and Research is failing, resisting and reversing this will require relationship building and maintenance.

#### 4. Use wellbeing as a route into structural change

One of the most generative contributions of this work is evidencing the link between relational practice and wellbeing.

It shows that wellbeing is shaped not just by individuals, but by:

- personal experiences
- material environments (contracts, time, resources)
- social systems (structures, culture)

The film's call for a "culture of care" echoes this systemic framing.

**What this enables:**

- Moving beyond self-care to organisational responsibility
- Framing support for relational work as a wellbeing issue
- Moving from resilience to resistance.

*A gentle prompt:*

Where are the tensions between how relational work needs to happen and how your institution is currently structured?

Think about

- In your workplace, what is a policy and what is simply the culture?
- What cultural norms do you reproduce?
- What might happen if you stopped?

## 5. Create spaces for shared reflection, not just advocacy

The film and the underpinning research are invitations, not instructions.

The paper ends with questions rather than prescriptions, recognising that there is no single way to do this work but invites conversation across teams and institutions.

What this enables:

- Collective sense-making rather than top-down change
- Building alliances with colleagues who recognise this work

*A gentle prompt:*

What conversations could this resource open if you used it with others, not just alone?

Think about

- Who do you want to discuss this with
- Use the film to build a coalition of the willing
- Use your collective spheres of influence to grow a movement

## 6. Hold the line between care and change

A recurring thread across both pieces is this tension: relational practitioners often absorb the burden of making systems work.

The invitation here is subtle but radical: to be hard on systems, soft on ourselves.

What this enables:

- Resisting the drift towards over-extension and burnout
- Reframing advocacy as part of relational practice, not separate from it

*A gentle prompt:*

What would it look like to protect relational practice, not just perform it?

## In conclusion

This resource doesn't tell you what to do. It helps you see what is already happening and what is possible.

Use it:

- to find language
- to surface experience
- to connect practice to power

And perhaps most importantly: to remind yourself and others that this work already matters—recognition is simply catching up.