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David Armstrong is a Principal Consultant at the Tavistock Consultancy Service, a dedicated consultancy service within the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust. His background is in organisational psychology and he has carried out action research and consultancy assignments with a wide variety of private and public sector organisations, from industry, commerce, banking, education, the health service, criminal justice and government agencies. In recent years he has worked extensively in role consultation with senior executives, in organisational development programmes and on the management of change. Trained in group dynamics he has directed and worked on programmes in this field in the UK, Europe, Israel, the USA, and Australia. His particular interests are in the dynamics of management and leadership and the value of emotional experience as a guide to organisational understanding and practice. He was a co-editor of *Working Below the Surface: the emotional life of contemporary organisations*, published by Karnac in 2004. In 2005 a collection of his papers, edited by Robert French, was published, also by Karnac under the title, *Organisation in the Mind: psychoanalysis, group relations and organisational consultancy*.

The dynamics of lateral relations in changing organisational worlds

This paper sets out to chart ways in which a number of linked but independent changes in the organisational contexts clients are bringing with them into consultancy are both drawing attention to and forcing us to reconsider ways in which we have hitherto thought about the dynamics of leadership, accountability and authority.

It proposes that one way of characterising this direction of movement is that it is focussing around the experiences, challenges and dilemmas, both conscious and unconscious, being presented by lateral relations.

The paper offers a provisional definition of 'lateral relations' and seeks to explore and test this against experiences in two consultancy assignments, in the private and public sectors respectively.

Both touch on themes of anxiety and vulnerability; in the dismantling of prior expectations and assumptions, and in the face of what might be termed the nakedness of being on one's own, with colleagues.

The concluding section of the paper speculates on ways in which these developments may both challenge and affect our more familiar organisational and group relations paradigms.