



**GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
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PRESS RELEASE

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“New, Additional Elderly Residential Care Facilities in the Elderly Care Agency, which will also relieve hospital acute bed blockage”.

The Government has a Manifesto commitment to provide more residential home facilities for Gibraltar’s elderly, for whom independent living ceases to be a viable option.

To this end, the John Mackintosh Wing of the old St Bernard’s hospital will be refurbished and converted into a new, additional residential care home. Like Mt Alvernia and the Jewish Home, it will be operated by the Elderly Care Agency, which will shortly merge with the Social Services Agency to create a new, integrated care agency called simply the “Care Agency”.

The new home is envisaged to have a capacity around the same as Mt Alvernia, and therefore represents a significant step and investment in expanding the quantity of social care services available in this important service area, for which demand is constantly increasing as our elderly folk, happily, live longer.

In the meantime, and as an interim measure while the old John Mackintosh Wing is refurbished, the Elderly Care Agency will provide around 35 additional residential beds in temporary premises at the new St Bernard’s Hospital which are currently surplus to the hospital’s requirement. These premises constitute a whole ward area in the new hospital which is vacant and not in use by the GHA. Control and use of these premises will temporarily be ceded by the Gibraltar Health Authority to the Elderly Care Agency. The interim residential care service in these temporary premises will be provided and staffed by the Elderly Care Agency, and on the same residence terms as apply in Mt Alvernia.

These interim residential care facilities will also alleviate the recent acute bed shortage that has been experienced at the Hospital, resulting in the need to postpone some scheduled surgical operations. That bed shortage is, in turn, the result of acute hospital beds being occupied by elderly persons, who could be (and in some cases have been) medically discharged from hospital, but are awaiting admission to Mt Alvernia. The GHA, and its users and staff will thus be significant beneficiaries of this interim measure.

Social Services Minister, Jaime Netto said: “The new home at John Mackintosh Wing will very significantly increase the Agency’s ability to deliver residential care services to a greater number of elderly people in need of such care, as we said in our manifesto that we would do. I am delighted that this collaboration between the GHA and the Elderly Care Agency is beneficial to both and to service users and staff of both.” Health Minister Yvette del Agua said: “The new interim arrangement whereby the ECA will provide a residential service in a disused hospital ward, will

greatly relieve the pressure on beds and staff in the medical and surgical wards, and will allow the GHA to get on with its programmed surgery without interruption due to wards being full with elderly people who are not in need of hospitalisation on medical grounds. The proposed home in the new John Mackintosh Wing of the old hospital will go a long way to addressing this problem for the longer term as well.”