



PRESS RELEASE

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New GHA Service Provision for the Visually Impaired

In keeping with another Government manifesto commitment, the GHA is pleased to announce the commencement of a new service for the Visually Impaired with the recruitment of a dedicated Rehabilitation Officer.

Mr John Cheetham comes from the Educational Service for Hearing and Vision in Hull, UK, with whom he held a senior post of Core Services Manager. He was responsible for coordinating the input of practical support within the sensory impairment disciplines of both deafness and blindness. Mr Cheetham has been professionally involved with adults and children who are blind, deaf and those who are both deaf and blind, throughout a career spanning more than forty years. During this time he has made a significant contribution to the development of established practices and protocols within these specialist fields.

Service provision for the visually impaired has until now only existed in Gibraltar in relation to school children. The new GHA development allows for a formal provision throughout the whole community for children and adults alike.

Among Mr Cheetham's principle responsibilities will be the provision of mobility training for the Visually Impaired members of the community. Services will include:

- Instruction in Braille;
- Instruction in Moon;
- Communication for the Deaf and Blind;
- Workplace assessments in order to accommodate the blind at work;
- Auditing the accessibility of workplaces, public buildings and homes to ensure suitability for the visually impaired;
- Tuition in the long-cane system;
- Training for those caring for the visually impaired

In addition, Mr Cheetham will be a training and consultancy resource for service providers including:

Healthcare professionals;
Town Planners;
Highway Department Officials;
Public Transport Operators

Mr Cheetham has also been tasked with exploring the merit of expanding the service remit into a future sensory impairment service to also include the hearing impaired.

The Minister for Health, Yvette Del Agua, has said: “although children with visual impairment are well catered for by the Education Department, adults have until now had no formal service provision. The recruitment of a full-time Rehabilitation Officer and the services he will provide, will significantly improve the quality of life of this minority but important sector of our community.”

The Gibraltar Society for the Visually Impaired have said: “we welcome the appointment of a Rehabilitation Officer in the GHA. We look forward to working closely with Mr Cheetham in addressing the existing problems encountered by the blind and visually disabled and at the same time create an awareness of such needs within our local community. His expertise will not only be beneficial to our members but to any person experiencing visual problems”.