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During Easter 12 members of the Care Agency's staff did not attend work on Maundy Thursday and failed to return to work on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> April in accordance with the terms of their employment, despite verbal and written instructions to do so.

As a result, the Agency was able to maintain a service at St Bernadette's, for the benefit of disabled adult users and their families, only by drafting staff in from other parts of the Agency at considerable expense to the tax payer, and because of the goodwill shown by many other members of staff. The Care Agency wishes to express its gratitude to those staff members who responded in order to maintain a service to adult disabled persons and their families during the Easter school holidays.

The industrial action of the staff who failed to attend work is because they demand to be entitled to school holidays, like teachers and other school employees, even though they are not employees of the Education Department, do not work in a school and were employed on terms that clearly entitle them to only the usual 25 to 30 days (depending on length of service) annual leave a year enjoyed by all civil servants. They are demanding 13 weeks leave a year and they are simply not entitled to this. The interests of service users, their families, other staff and the taxpayers of Gibraltar render their stance and actions unacceptable, and require the Centre to operate all year around.

Neither the Government nor the Agency are willing to tolerate this attempt by staff to unilaterally re-write their contractual leave entitlements. These employees have exercised their legal right to go on strike. Accordingly, they will not be paid, and they will not be allowed to return to work until they acknowledge that they are entitled only to the same annual leave as all other civil servants under Government General Orders.

The Agency wishes to apologise to the adult disabled users of St Bernadette's, and their families, for any shortcomings in the service during this industrial action.



A spokesman for the Care Agency said: - “The Care Agency exists for the benefit of its users who are disabled adult persons in Gibraltar, and their families. Accordingly, staff who are contractually entitled to only 25 working days holiday a year must work the rest of the year, even if that is during school holidays because the service to users is expanded”.