

## **PRESS RELEASE**

No: 766/2012

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> November 2012

### **GOVERNMENT'S MASSIVE IMPROVEMENTS TO MENTAL HEALTH CARE**

In its latest Press Release, the Opposition has again failed to grasp the point of the massive changes in mental health care that the Government is introducing within a few months of winning the election.

The public cannot forget the inhuman conditions in which our mental health patients were kept in KGV by an uncaring GSD Government. It took fifteen years for them to give mental health any consideration and they cared not a jot for the many problems that our patients faced. It is a disgrace for the GSD now to try to claim to have been the saviours of mental health by taking credit for a project they started a decade and a half after they came to power.

The new Government IMMEDIATELY improved the conditions of the patients and made changes to the existing plans for the new facilities. After listening to the professionals, these changes were made in order to make the facilities operationally better whilst not excessively costly. If the Government had made costly changes, no doubt it would have been criticised by Mrs Hammond or Mr Figueras for spending too much. When it improves the facilities at low cost, it is then criticised for not spending enough! This inconsistency is typical of the lack of political maturity of the present GSD Opposition. It should also be noted that the designs for the site had NOT been signed off by the previous administration, as they had not yet been approved, and that this was done by the present Minister for Health.

In addition, the GSD had given no consideration to the training of staff in Mental health. However, in September of this year, this Government funded three student mental health nurses to start their training at Kingston & St Georges University, supported by the Gibraltar School of Health Studies.

There has been another major change. The working group on mental health is now run purely by professionals whose recommendations are taken on board, whether they refer to the layout of the building or, more importantly, on the way that patients will be treated and moved through the system, all the way to rehabilitation. In sharp contrast with the last administration, there is now no political interference in this system.

Bizarrely, Mrs Hammond has compared the cost of changes to the new facility at RNH with that of the Thinking Green Conference (half of which was, in any case, paid by private sponsorship). We note that she did not compare it to the air terminal which cost over a thousand times more than it is costing this Government to restore some dignity to the patients in KGV. She also forgot that, at the same time, this Government was adding a new ward to St Bernard's Hospital.

It is disgraceful that the GSD has the audacity to challenge the Government on Mental Health after its consistent neglect of patients over sixteen years. In fact, what the GSD should do is to publicly apologise to patients and their relatives, and admit their unforgivable shame.