



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
MINISTRY OF EQUALITY, SOCIAL SERVICES & THE ELDERLY
14 GOVERNOR'S PARADE
GIBRALTAR

PRESS RELEASE

No: 457/2013

Date: 26th June 2013

BUDGET SPEECH 2013

BY THE MINISTER FOR EQUALITY, SOCIAL SERVICES & THE ELDERLY

THE HON S SACRAMENTO

Mr Speaker,

It is a pleasure to address you and set out my budget for the year ahead which follows an extremely busy and productive year. Having had the benefit of being in office 18 months I can proudly say that there has been a marked difference in the work that has been undertaken by my Ministry and my Departments. This year I have an additional portfolio that I have taken over since the said passing of my colleague and very good friend Charles Bruzon. While I do not have the years of wisdom that Charles had, I hope to continue what he started and do him proud in dealing with the Ministry for the Elderly with the same dedication and hard work that I apply when dealing with the rest of my portfolio.

This past year has mainly been spent addressing pressing social matters which were neglected or forgotten by the previous administration, forsaken by misspending on luxurious projects. The most visual of these are probably the intervention at the RHN estate and the changes at the Old St Bernard's Hospital that I will refer to in greater detail further on.

CARE AGENCY

Mr Speaker, last year I described the Care Agency as a monster, an uncontrollable beast because this is the way that both its management and staff felt. Through constant reviews of the service and working very closely with the Chief Executive and management, while of course not yet perfect, I am happy the general feeling that the Care Agency report is greatly improved and is nowadays much less of a beast. It

is felt throughout the Care Agency that it now has direction and everybody is focused on the path they need to take.

Importantly, I am told that there has been a significant improvement in staff morale; this was incredibly low when we took office, not least due to the disjointed management of the place. People tell me that they are now proud to say that they work for the Care Agency because they have the tools and are in a position to deliver.

The focus of the Care Agency now is to make it a great place to work, to deliver effective and professional services and optimise the outcomes for its service users.

The central administration of the Care Agency is now better consolidated and more cohesive. We have had a new Chief Executive since October 2012 (in an acting capacity). I have been working very closely with the CEO to improve and develop the Agency. This has also meant that the previous acting Chief Executive has reverted to her substantive role as Clinical Standards Compliance Director and has been able to lead on the training needs which have this year been delivered in an unprecedented manner and will continue to do so in the year ahead.

As stated in my budget speech last year, training for staff is an essential component in social care. Last year we increased the complement to introduce a new Training Co-ordinator post, a Training Assistant together with administrative support. This enhanced team has allowed the delivery of training and development of new and existing staff in addition to collaboration on multi-agency training.

The Care Agency is continuing to strive towards ensuring that its workforce has appropriately skilled people in the right places, working to deliver high quality care.

For the first time, the Training Team is working closely with the managers from each of the services, ensuring identified training needs which include specific subjects identified by them.

The Generic Core Training Programme continues to be held regularly in response to service demand; ensuring trainees receive the necessary underpinning knowledge to allow them to work within the Care Agency whilst they gain further practical and theoretical experience, prior to taking up employment in the Agency. The Generic Core Training Programme is continually evaluated, improved and developed based on feedback and current research. Last year a total of 65 training sessions were delivered as compared to 59 in the previous year. Furthermore, a lot of this training is now being undertaken by the Care Agency's own specialised and experienced staff thus reducing the cost of having to commission external training. The number of in-house key trainers for the past year trained to deliver training has increased to 46, the year before the figure was 24. I am particularly proud Mr Speaker that we are

now delivering our DCRT training in house whereas before this was commissioned externally we have now trained four Care Agency employees up to level 3 in DCRT. They have also undergone a train the trainer course; they are the ones who are now delivering DCRT training level 1 and level 2 to all the staff in the Care Agency. In addition this year the Care Agency has seen 14 employees achieve a level 2 NVQ qualification in Health and Social Care and 5 employees achieve A1 NVQ Assessors qualification. The Care Agency will continue to invest in its staff to undergo NVQ training as well as support care staff who may wish to apply for Enrolled Nurse training provided by the GHA.

The Care Agency is now working closely with the GHA and is sharing learning opportunities and staff from the Care Agency have attended courses provided by Kingston University organised at the GHA.

We have also been working with the Tourist Board in order to provide training for their staff, particularly life guards, to allow the continued running of the extended Disability Facilities at the beaches.

Now turning to administration Mr Speaker, in my speech last year I expressed shock when I discovered that the salaries paid to Care Agency staff were calculated by hand using the old kalamazoo system. I can confirm that these salaries which were historically done manually are now processed electronically. This has finally become a reality for all those concerned who never thought that this would materialise. The element of error has now been reduced drastically as all calculations are undertaken by the programme and staff have been released of all stress they previously endured. All necessary reports are produced by the programme and payslip advice is now in line with other Government Departments and Authorities.

Another small investment this Government has made in the administration of the Care Agency is in commissioning a database for Human Resources. This will entail the inputting of all employment and qualification details of personnel allowing information of every single of the almost 600 employees of the Care Agency. This will allow a full amalgamation of the Human Resources which had not yet materialised even after 4 years since the inception of the Care Agency. So, although though this is a small financial investment, it is a huge one for the service as working without this database has been a nightmare for the staff at Human Resources. The structure of the Human resources has slowly been regularised and is now working in better conditions than when I inherited it from the previous administration.

A new staff handbook has been commissioned. Essentially the 2 handbooks of the previous Elderly Care Agency and Social Services Agency were never consolidated and Human Resources Department continued to operate as two separate Departments until last year.

Social Services

Turning to social services, Mr Speaker a review of which is continuous. This is comprised of 4 teams: children and families, adults, drug rehabilitation and probation and disabilities. Last year saw an expansion of staff by 2 Social Workers. This year there will be an increase of a trainee Social Worker post and there has also been an innovation this year in the creation of 2 new posts of Assistants to Social Workers, these are administrative posts which provide dedicated support to Social Workers to enable the latter to better dedicate their time to social work.

The Children and Families Team

And so far as to the Children and Families team Mr Speaker, the on-going review of the Care Agency is markedly apparent in this team.

This is a service that is not without its problems given the complex and reactive nature of the work undertaken.

We have looked seriously at service delivery and service improvement to improve outcomes for children and young people who require this service. This team has in the past year, progressed from child protection to a broader safeguarding agenda. The aim is to progress this service from being a reactive one to a preventative one but this is not an outcome that can be achieved overnight.

There has been a management restructure within this team and staff are more autonomous in their decision making and better supported in terms of supervision.

As a result of yet last year's growth posts the service has been developed tremendously this past year. Not least it has assisted in reducing the case load of the other Social Workers. One of the new Social Workers appointed last year has a background in working with children with disabilities and a lot of work is being undertaken developing policies such as the provision of respite for children with disabilities.

The children's residential team has also been reviewed. In this context we are also looking at providing for children with challenging behaviour as well as for secure accommodation. This is not a simple thing to do but we are looking at it carefully so as to get it right given the importance of this facility.

Furthermore, the family team have the additional responsibility of managing court welfare which was transferred to this team at the end of last year. Management and staff have dealt with the transition and absorption of this service admirably.

This team is also looking at developing an adoption and fostering policy and we are at present undertaking a review of the Adoption Act.

There has been great emphasis on training of professional staff and Social Workers have started attending professional training courses in the UK. Furthermore, last year the Care Agency subscribed to an online professional research tool. This enables Social Workers to access the latest research and practice developments and provides them with invaluable current information.

Safeguarding children is the top of the Government's agenda. It is an absolutely fundamental principle when it comes to child protection and safeguarding. The multi-agency child protection forum is proving very effective. This forum of various Government agencies led by Social Services and includes representation by the Department of Education, the RGP and the health services.

Under this forum the Care Agency provides tier 1 and tier 2 child protection training to Government departments and the voluntary sector on a monthly basis. This past year they have delivered a record number of training and now over 650 multi-agency professionals and volunteers have been trained. This has had a tremendous effect on raising awareness on child protection issues and it is also a recognition that the responsibility for child protection does not only fall squarely on social services.

By way of service development we are in the process of commissioning the production of formal child protection procedures. This would provide a critical leap forward in the child protection agenda and will be instrumental.

On the subject of child protection Mr Speaker, a glaring hole that we discovered is the lack of regulation of vetting of people who work with children. We have acted on this in very little time and have already drafted regulations on the vetting of people who work or volunteer with children and vulnerable adults. We hope to introduce this legislation as soon as possible.

Disabilities

Turning to the Disabilities team Mr Speaker the development of the Adult Disabilities Service this past year has been remarkable. This has been attributable in great measure by 2 factors: the motivational leadership of the (acting) Team Leader and the intense training provided to members of staff.

The focus of the services provided by Dr Giraldi Home and St Bernadette's Resource Centre has changed to provide a structured enrichment to services provided to service users.

There had been a wide range of new activities introduced and greater participation in community events promoting integration. For example, this year saw the first ever sports day at St Bernadette's Resources Centre, an event that was held in conjunction with the GSLA and a programme for employment of some service users has commenced.

Mr Speaker we have set up an inquiry into the allegations of abuse and misconduct in the Dr Giraldi Home so that a line can be drawn under the allegations which have been hanging around and concern the community for far too long.

Probation

Turning to Probation Mr Speaker, this service has continued to operate from within the Care Agency, although it works very closely with the Ministry for Justice.

Over the past year the management of this service has been changed as part of the Care Agency reviews. Whereas previously this formed part of the adult team it is now headed by a Team Leader who is himself a Probation Officer. Essentially, the team has been augmented with the appointment of a further Probation Officer and a part time Probation Officer. As such, the team now consists of three Probation Officers, doubling the previous complement of 1.5 and also a Community Service Officer. This team provides a vital service to the Criminal Justice System in providing risk assessments to assist the courts in the sentencing process. In 2012 the Probation service provided 160 Pre Sentence Reports to the courts in criminal cases. Except for a small number of isolated cases, all these reports were delivered to the courts within the agreed time-scale of three weeks. This is a significant improvement from the past. We have also implemented a system of quality control to ensure that all reports meet the exacting standards of the judicial process.

The enactment of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act 2011 has had a significant impact on how the Probation Service now operates. There is a new range of community disposals that the Probation Service is expected to manage, notably Drug Treatment and Alcohol Treatment Orders. These present a real opportunity for offenders to break the cycle of substance abuse and offending that are so closely interlinked.

Another area that has seen much improvement are the Unpaid Work Requirements, formerly known as Community Service Orders. Many local organisations, public services and charities have benefited from this scheme. For example, much of the refurbishment of John Mackintosh Hall and at the Garrison Library are down to offenders completing these community sentences at these sites. I have to publicly thank the various placement providers for supporting this scheme. Community Service now enjoys a degree of credibility and confidence that it lacked in the past. A

special mention must go to our Community Service Officer who has worked indefatigably to achieve this.

A further important innovation for the Probation Service will be the use of a room within the new court building which will be used as a base for Probation Officers during court working hours. This will result in the Probation Service being able to implement a duty system to enhance the service it provides to the court with a view to expediting pending court matters.

One significant development in the Probation Service will focus on this year is the service it provides to prison. Steps have already been taken to commence addressing this, the service has made contact with an organisation in the UK and will be undertaking a training schedule over the coming year in order to better equip officers to carry out specific work with offenders in custody.

Drug rehabilitation

In last year's budget speech I highlighted the state of the Drug Rehabilitation Services as set up by the previous administration and how these were clearly failing to reach those individuals and families they were supposed to be helping. Statistics show how low the number of admissions to Bruce's Farm have been over the years. It is quite concerning given that there is a substance abuse problem in Gibraltar.

I also addressed the lack of any focussed or strategic thinking on this front. Over the past year, a clearer picture has emerged of the services and initiatives that need to be developed. I have spent a great deal of time listening to staff and all the stakeholders, particularly voluntary groups who can attest to the open door policy that I have adopted with them. This has been instrumental in shaping the thinking on what needs to be done on this front. I am pleased to say that as a result of assessing the situation this past year, this coming year will see a range of initiatives at all levels that, I am confident, will impact on the issue that as I said last year, we need to get right.

During my last budget intervention I pointed out that we needed a complete rethink on how our drug and alcohol rehabilitation services operate. Over the last year we have extended some of these services from a purely residential model to a more community based model with promising results. At most times more people have been seen within the community service than at Bruce's Farm Drug Rehabilitation Centre, many of these would have had no recourse to any help in the past. We have also made the admission processes more accessible and flexible for those wishing to access Bruce's Farm with the input of the GHA. As I speak I am reliably informed that this week will see the highest occupancy of this service in over five years. We have also facilitated the process to assist inmates at HM Prison who genuinely wish

to address their drug use and, so far, this year several inmates have been released on Parole subject to the condition that they complete a programme of rehabilitation at Bruce Farm. Since 1999 only three inmates had been able to access Bruce's Farm via this route.

However, I recognise that a lot more still needs to be done. The Drug Rehabilitation Service that this administration inherited was a stale and stagnant one which was clearly limited and not reaching out and helping those in the community in the way that it ought to. This last year has been one of taking stock, listening to the right people and identifying where the gaps in service provision lie. I recently had the benefit of visiting the UK with two senior officials from the Care Agency in order to familiarise ourselves with an established and respected provider of community based drug rehabilitation services. This is helping us to develop a clearer picture on how this model can be adapted and implemented locally. We also need to improve the current residential rehabilitation model and to this end a visit has been planned to a centre in the UK with a view to enhancing our practice, training as well as developing other joint initiatives.

In addition to the provision of facilities available Mr Speaker, I have been working on the establishment of a working group that will be tasked with producing a strategy on how to deal with the drugs problem in Gibraltar. This group will not be a stagnant paper exercise as was the case with the drugs strategy that was developed by the previous administration in 2003; it will be a dynamic project that will produce real outcomes. The committee will consist of individuals with a wealth of experience spanning a range of disciplines, including the public and voluntary sector. Crucially, it will also include past service users of the Rehabilitation Service.

It is not to say that because new committees are being set up that no strategy or policy developments have been taken place this past year.

In my speech last year, I undertook to ensure that there was a more robust approach to public awareness campaigns of drug & alcohol abuse, particularly among the youth. We have undertaken two very successful campaigns last year; during national week and over the Christmas season, alerting to the dangers of binge drinking. These involved a co-ordinated approach across various traditional and social media, television adverts and posters on busses. This was complemented by a programme of talks at comprehensive schools by the Care Agency Drugs Team Leader, the Police and former addicts. The multi -agency collaboration has produced fantastic results and this will set the bench mark for how we will conduct similar initiatives in the future. I am particularly grateful for the members of the voluntary groups who have given up their time to deliver such talks to children. I have attended some of these sessions and have personally witnessed how effective their presentations can be.

Adults

Turning now Mr Speaker to the Adult Team at Social Services .The workings of the Adult Team has been completely overhauled. By removing management's responsibility for court welfare and probation, this team are able to concentrate exclusively on the care of the vulnerable adults. In addition to the day to day referrals of vulnerable adults, the team now manage the one point entry system into elderly care. This includes domiciliary care, day centres and residential care. This means that there is a consolidated and more professional approach to elderly care.

The one point entry system for referrals, assessment and access to a range of services has proved to be very effective. Since 1st April this year alone the Adult Team have received a total of 421 referrals from people ranging from professionals working in different agencies to relatives and neighbours concerned about people living in the community. This number is increasing on a monthly basis as our community realise services are no longer stagnant but available to those who really need them.

I am pleased the new systems implemented ensure that all services are allocated in a fair and equitable way based on each person's individual health and social care support needs.

The services being provided for the elderly people in our community continue to be developed and increase at a significant and dramatic rate and this is to the credit of the Adult Team who have worked so admirably hard over the past year to completely turn this service around.

The old waiting list system of people applying for residential care at the age of 60 years when admission was based on the basis of time of application and determined solely on this regardless of any other factors such as risk of the vulnerable elderly person in the community was considered unfair and tantamount to abuse of the vulnerable elderly in the community in urgent need of admission. Some of them Mr Speaker unfortunately would die while they waited to get to the top of the list because the previous administration did not change its policy Mr Speaker. Entry into Elderly Care Services is now needs based and ensures that the most vulnerable people in our community are given priority. All people on the previous waiting list have been contacted and those requiring the services at this point have been identified and assessed. Since April 2012 a total number of 48 people have been admitted to Mount Alvernia, Calpe Ward or John Cochrane Ward and because of the review of the system Mr Speaker every single of these individuals are the one who were in most need of admission.

Domiciliary Care Services are now being provided by two providers and an additional 68 people have been granted various hours of domiciliary care. This means we are now providing domiciliary care to 168 people. In 2011 before this administration took

office a total of 43,056 hours of domiciliary care were provided. During the past financial year this has been increased to 97,702 hours. Quite an achievement within such a short space of time I am sure you would all agree.

There is now Mr Speaker an electronic database to record domiciliary care and applicants. The staff spent weeks and months trawling through boxes of papers in order to implement this because under the previous administration records were simply not organised. Now, all the domiciliary care systems have been updated and it is now possible to easily monitor who has received hours and ensure the funds granted are being effectively and efficiently administered and we are getting 'best value for money' services.

Historically Mr Speaker, a common complaint was that the Care Agency worked in isolation with very little communication with other Government Departments but this has been changed last year and a half with a holistic approach being set down. This has been further developed with a number of new initiatives being instigated and existing systems being updated and improved. This has ensured improved communication between the different agencies and resulted in an integrated approach to people's care and support. As far as we are concerned Mr Speaker this is one Government and not various individual Government Agencies.

Quick response initiatives between the Police and Adult Services is going from strength to strength with 105 people now receiving this valued service. People on this list also receive regular monthly phone calls from Adult Services in order to identify any changes to the person's social care needs or circumstances. This proactive work by my team identifies difficulties at an early stage and often prevents unnecessary admissions to hospital. Regular multi-disciplinary discharge meetings within the hospital are now attended by Social Workers Mr Speaker that is an innovation that we have introduced. There is also a new funding system in place which makes the whole process seamless. This improved multi-agency working practice minimises any potential delays in the person leaving the hospital. It is not only more cost effective and time effective but it also improves the quality of the person's life as most people want to return home as soon as possible. It is our interest Mr Speaker to ensure that these elderly people return home to a safe environment. 25 new packages of domiciliary care have been approved since January 2013 alone under this system to support patients being discharged from the hospital and enabling them to return quickly and safely to their homes.

People wish to remain independent in their homes with residential care being seen as the last resort so the significant increase in funding for domiciliary care in the last financial year has provided an incredible support to people in the community and is greatly appreciated by those in receipt of this service.

Again this year we have re-negotiated a lower rate for the provision of this service in order to be able to supply even more packages of care from our budget.

A working party under the direction of the Safeguarding Adults Multi-agency Committee has developed a 'Basic Awareness' training course for vulnerable adults and this training is being provided by the Department and is being cascaded down through different Agencies. This will ensure that everyone understands the individual responsibility to raise alert if they are concerned a vulnerable adult is at risk at home.

The importance of establishing even more robust working partnerships with key agencies is acknowledged and it is proposed that the training of new Police recruits for example in these safeguarding procedures takes place during their basic training in order for them to be fully aware of this important work and the procedures in place to protect vulnerable people the commencement of their careers.

We will continue to develop clear policies and procedures that are concise and transparent to ensure fair and equitable access to services to include a three tier system of day care that will meet the different support needs of people in the community. The effective and efficient use of day care services combined with Domiciliary Care Services will reduce unnecessary admissions to hospital with residential services being seen as the last resort as opposed to the only resort. And Mr Speaker as I mentioned in this house last week our new Elderly day care centre will be opening very shortly, this will clearly enhance the services that we can provide, but turning now to elderly residential services Mr Speaker.

Elderly care residential services

Since the one stop point system was introduced and managed by Social Services, there is a fantastic working relationship between Elderly Care Services and the Social Services Adult Team and this results in the provision of an individualised service. Mr Speaker regrettably in the past the staff at Mount Alvernia would never even share the list with the Social Workers. That thankfully is a thing of the past.

Since the commencement of a new Nursing Co-ordinator there have been some positive changes to the management of Elderly Care Services. Most significantly is the introduction of night duty rounds. This has proved extremely positive with staff.

Last year saw the increment of 1 part time Physiotherapist and 1 full time Physiotherapist Assistant. The quality and quantity of physio input was increased and having a positive impact on the health and welfare of residents.

In the next 6 to 9 months we will see the opening of the new Alzheimer's Residential Unit at the RNH Estate. This is what can only be described as a tragic inheritance from the former administration. It was obvious to me when I first visited this place that it was not fit for purpose and it was confirmed to me by the expert Engineer in dementia design that I commissioned to prepare a design brief. Previously there had been no design brief and this resulted in the construction of a place where not even a single room was suitable for an elderly person with Dementia to spend the rest of

their days. We have completely redesigned the internal layout in order that the residents, let us not forget that they are Dementia sufferers, can live in dignity. For this Government the priority is the people.

In addition, we shall shortly, in approximately the next 4 months be making available some 36 beds for people with Alzheimer's at the Mackintosh Wing of the old St Bernard's Hospital. Again, this building is another fiasco and waste of tax payer's money incurred by the previous administration. Mr Speaker, they purported this building was going to be flats for independent living for elderly people. We showcased these flats to 150 pensioners but nobody wanted them. Out of all of the people who saw them only about 4 or 5 people were interested and even then, subject to conditions. To make things worse the previous administration did not consult with the Occupational Therapists or elderly care professionals and as such the flat layout were simply not appropriate. Doors are smaller than standard and not appropriate for wheelchairs or Zimmer frames. Therefore Mr Speaker this has resulted in a complete waste of money in the initial design and has caused us to have to redesign it. This building in addition to providing beds for elderly care will also provide 5 or 6 flats for semi-independent living on the ground floor. Having dealt with the Care Agency Mr Speaker I will now turn to my responsibility as Minister for Equality.

EQUALITY

Mr Speaker the landscape in relation to equality is changing by making them more accessible. It is changing physically in relation to changes being made to various locations, by making them more accessible and it is changing as things move and policies are developed. Legislation will be amended and in some cases new laws will be introduced. I have said it before and I will say it again, equality is at the heart of this Government's agenda.

Mr Speaker, starting with the issue of disability, a lot has been achieved in the last year and a half, much of it very visible. Significantly Mr Speaker, works will be done to this parliament to make it fully accessible as part of its refurbishment. There have also been assessments of other public buildings with a view to making them accessible. Works have already been undertaken at the GSLA shallow pool, St Michaels's Cave and most recently most of Gibraltar's beaches and provision is made for public events such as concert, national day and the Three Kings Cavalcade. This Government strongly believes in a policy of inclusion.

A register of people with disabilities has been compiled and is almost complete. Significantly, work has been done in relation to a review of the current legislation and in relation to extending the UN Convention on the Rights of the Disabled.

A person who will be tasked with developing policy and Government strategy in relation to disability will commence working in my Ministry shortly, this will enable me to further progress this agenda further.

During this past year I have engaged with many groups with an interest in disability and we are working together very fruitfully. You will have heard from the Chief Minister's address yesterday the difference that this year's budget will make to people with disabilities.

Gender Equality

Turning now to gender equality Mr Speaker. This is a subject that is becoming very popular lately. Perhaps this is due to its profile being raised by having a Minister for Equality for the first time. We must however ensure that we deal with this responsibly. It is not about rhetoric or quotas; gender equality is not about having more women for the sake of it as this completely undermines the work done by women. People should be appointed on merit. What we need to ensure is that people of a particular gender where they are men or women are not placed at a disadvantage. To this end, my Department is looking into issues, so that we can develop policies

In the past year I have raised awareness of this issue, met with various women's groups and the Unions.

In March of this year I attended the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 57th Session at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. This was the first time that a Minister from Gibraltar attended this forum. The CSW is a functional Commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council and is dedicated exclusively to gender, equality and the advancement of women. I attended many meetings and side events where representatives openly exchanged their experiences, objectives and achievements.

I also recently met with Minister for Equality in the United Kingdom and had the opportunity of discussing with her various issues. I also sit on a women's steering group of Commonwealth parliamentarians and shall shortly be attending a meeting in the UK to discuss women's issues with fellow colleague parliamentarians.

Domestic Violence

An issue which is prevalent to women is that of domestic violence and I am in the process Mr Speaker of setting up a forum to deal with this issue and have already commenced speaking to interested groups.

Gay Rights

Turning now into the issue of gay rights Mr Speaker. Great strides have been made in the field of gay rights in the past year. Not least the recognition of gay people. I, as well as many of my fellow Ministers have had regular meetings with equality rights group GGR. Most significantly a draft civil partnership bill is at an advanced stage and a draft of this has been provided to GGR by way of consultation. We have also met to discuss the issue of hate crimes and hate speech in the Crimes Act.

We will continue to work together with interested parties and make progress on this front.

CAB

Mr Speaker The Citizen's Advice Bureau is a body currently tasked with promoting equality under the Equal Opportunities Act.

I have been working very closely with CAB's Manager and the Discrimination Officer over the past year in order to support them in achieving their objective. A very successful training conference was organised earlier this year. I recently met with CAB to discuss equality awareness events in the coming year and they know that they can count on my full support in this.

Gibraltar Clubhouse Project

Mr Speaker I am an advocate of working in partnership with groups and associations and I meet with many of them on a regularly basis. A perfect example of this is the tremendous work which my Ministry and I have undertaken with representatives of the Gibraltar Clubhouse Project. This project which complements the Mental Health Services offered by the GHA had been operating from the old Toc H building which I noticed on my first visit was in a terrible state of repair mainly due to excessive dampness problems and very hot conditions in the summer. As part of our working partnership, arrangements for alternative premises at Wellington Front have been made and this will give Clubhouse members a better opportunity to benefit from what is offered by the valued team while permanent premises for the project are being considered.

Finally Mr Speaker, in the same way that I did last year, I would like to acknowledge the hard work of my staff and the teams around me and their sheer determination to

make a difference because they know all too well that we serve the most vulnerable in our community. I would also like to acknowledge the valuable work undertaken by the different groups and associations that work with me, thanks to their enthusiasm and strive to work together towards common objectives. This is being achieved due to my open door policy and the establishment of solid working relationships with the representatives of these various groups and associations. It has been a pleasure working with everyone at the Care Agency who are so willing to make a difference. And I will now give them the tools and support to do so. Insofar as my ministerial team, I would like to welcome my 2 new members of staff who joined me in this past year and have already proved to be very committed individuals and above all to my Senior Personal Assistant whose dedicated assistance in the complex matters we have dealt with this year has been exceptional. They have all helped me in achieving what I truly believe is now a better service.

To conclude Mr Speaker, ours is a Government that works for its people and will help those who need it the most and it is my pleasure to work as hard as I can to achieve this.