



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR

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PRESS RELEASE

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OPPOSITION'S PRESS RELEASE IS A DISTORTION OF THE TRUTH

The Opposition's latest press release concerning a person with mental health problems is nothing more than a distortion of the truth and a typical attempt at scaremongering using vulnerable people to make political capital.

The matter relates to a person who was charged with a very serious offence at the end of 2012 and was remanded in custody at the time. Although he has attended court every 7 days since then as is usual procedure for people remanded in custody, a bail application for his release was not made until last month.

The Opposition suggest that there has been no support for this person from the mental health services. This is not the case. The mental health team have been working closely with the prison to ensure that all necessary treatment and support is provided.

Psychiatric support has been provided throughout, and given that the individual was on remand, it was not appropriate for any other professionals to become involved. There have of course been multi-disciplinary and multiagency meetings taking place to ensure that necessary services are in place at the appropriate time of his release. The mental services have been available to take him into their care on the moment of release and have been monitoring and supporting the person.

This is not a political matter and Ministers cannot interfere with decisions to prosecute. Indeed, this is not a case where there has been any undue delay by the police in providing the criminal docket. The person in question needed to go through the Court process before he could be taken in to KGV, and Ministers and professionals have been working with the family to ensure that the proper support was available and that it was possible for him to be taken under care at KGV rather than in the Community unless and until he was ready for this.

It is disingenuous to say that at a meeting with the Minister for Social Services the family were promised that a social worker would be appointed implying that this has not occurred. A social worker has been appointed and has attended multidisciplinary meetings but at this stage, because the individual is remanded in prison, no further involvement from Social Services is necessary. Social services support will of course be provided at the relevant time. The person in question is currently receiving excellent care from mental health professionals.

HM Government is not aware that the family has taken any personal legal action other than involvement with the individual's lawyers in the criminal proceedings. We are informed by Crown Counsel that the judge in this case was not angry other than to ask for the reasons for the delay, to which he seemed satisfied when a chronology was explained by the Crown. Indeed if there has been any delay in the progress in the proceedings of this matter it is on account of the defendant in court.

It is clear that the Opposition, in their eagerness to score political points, have issued a poorly researched statement and have simply got their facts wrong. The tragedy is that in so doing they have risked a vulnerable person being publicly identified.