



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
MINISTRY OF EQUALITY, SOCIAL SERVICES AND THE ELDERLY
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PRESS RELEASE

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UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Today has been designated by the United Nations as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The aim of the day is to raise public awareness that women around the world are subject to domestic violence. I would, however, like to make the point domestic violence does not exclusively relate to women, though statistics do show that they do comprise the majority of victims. As Minister for Equality, I would like to update you on developments during the year.

In order to understand the extent and the impact of the problem of domestic abuse in Gibraltar, we have started to undertake research and to gather statistical data. This has not been easy and the exercise is not complete because, save for a few departments, statistics on this subject have never been collated in the past. While we now have a better idea of the issue, it is not necessarily a completely accurate reflection and we are therefore looking at effective ways of collecting additional information in the future.

For the first time, a forum of all key Government departments and agencies in relation to domestic abuse have met with the Royal Gibraltar Police to discuss working practices in order to improve coordination between relevant departments. The forum will continue to meet at regular intervals and will also invite relevant stakeholders to work with them.

Within Social Services, working practices have changed and a new initiative has been introduced this year which has seen the development of a protocol and the creation of a database for domestic abuse. There has been investment in staff training and there have also been developments on working with victims and perpetrators. This has highlighted families in which violence is a common occurrence and where intervention is required. This initiative has also helped in the identification of families where this problem has begun to arise and support has been offered in helping couples resolve their issues. Furthermore, two social workers have undergone training so that they can deliver workshops to victims of domestic abuse and also work with the perpetrators of domestic abuse.

The Government recognises the exemplary work undertaken by the staff at Women In Need in helping the victims of domestic abuse. In the past they have had very little practical support other than premises and an annual grant. We have invested a lot of time working with them: they are actively supported by the Ministry of Equality who offer guidance, in addition to practical support, as well as having developed a professional working relationship with Social Services. Consequently, there is now much better communication and co-operation between them and Social Services and, as a result, cases are being dealt with in an improved manner.

Last week, together with the recently appointed Director of Equality and the Team Leader of Children and Families at Social Services, we paid a familiarisation visit to the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff to see at first-hand how the Government in Wales is dealing with the issue of domestic abuse at a strategic level and in particular, their policies and strategies in this area. We also had the opportunity of visiting two shelters for victims of domestic abuse and discussing with staff their experiences in running the shelters.

The Government has sought the extension to Gibraltar of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. The Government is fully behind the United Nations initiative.

There is no place for domestic abuse in Gibraltar and my Ministry, together with all relevant departments and agencies, is working to eliminate it in Gibraltar.