



PRESS RELEASE

No: 685/2016

Date: 3rd December 2016

Statement from the Minister for Equality on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Today is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. As Gibraltar's first Minister for Equality, I am extremely proud of the substantive work that has been done by our Government and the enormous progress that has been made on disability issues by my Ministry of Equality.

This work is diverse and ongoing but it is also comprehensive and holistic, encompassing changes to existing policy, and more fundamentally, the introduction of ground-breaking legislation that will make our society fairer and more inclusive.

Early on, we made it the policy of our Government that all new building projects would be accessible for people with disabilities. We have also taken it into account in major refurbishments. These improvements are for all to see. A wonderful example is the changes that we have made to something that is very important to the Gibraltarian way of life, and that is our beaches. Most of these are accessible all the way to the shore and also have the adult changing places facilities. The new bathing pavilion, as a new project, is also fully accessible as is the shallow pool that was refurbished last year.

But of course, helping people with disabilities is not just about physical access to buildings; it is about assisting across the board improving opportunities for inclusion.

Our services that provide for individuals with learning disabilities have been completely reviewed and greatly improved and of course our reviews will continue. Government has committed additional resources to services both at the Care Agency, the GHA and the Department of Education. Perhaps even more important, all Government departments now work together for better outcomes.

There has been a massive investment in training, particularly for people who work with individuals who have learning disabilities.

There are of course some very important legislative changes on the horizon. The Disability Bill will be published this month. This Bill is modelled on the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. This will lead to stronger protection against disability discrimination and above all promotes positive attitudes toward people with disabilities.



For the benefit of everyone in our society, progress and investment in our care and provision for people with disabilities has been necessary. I am totally confident that it has been the right thing to do, and it reflects this Government's commitment to Equality as a fundamental principle.