



PRESS RELEASE

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Advocacy Council for Health Service Users with Additional Needs

The first formal meeting of the newly formed Advocacy Council for Health Service Users with Additional Needs was held on Friday 13th October. Detailed presentations were heard from the Primary Care Centre (PCC) team to advise, inform, answer questions and receive suggestions on improving best practices for all who use health care services, in particular those who may require extra assistance.

The Council is formed by representatives from the Gibraltar Alzheimer and Dementia Society, Gibraltar Disability Society, Gibraltar Dyslexia Support Group, Gibraltar Hearing Impaired and Tinnitus Association, Clubhouse Gibraltar, Downs Syndrome Support Group Gibraltar, Autism Support Gibraltar, ADHD Gibraltar and Care Agency. These key groups work to advocate for members of our community who have more specific and additional needs for health care. The Advocacy Council aims to bring this extensive specialist knowledge and experience together so that the groups and GHA can work in a far more collaborative way, both with each other, and with patients and those who care for them.

Today's meeting was the first in a planned series of meetings over the coming months. These will include presentations from GHA staff in Accident and Emergency, Mental Health, St Bernard's Hospital and the School of Health Studies. While presentations may form the start of each meeting, the value will be in the discussions, questions and suggestions from all members of the Council and in the formation of close working relationships amongst all stakeholders.

Director of Primary Care, Dr. Krishna Rawal, said: "It is crucial that we provide a service that is accessible to all members of our community, with dignity and compassion. We understand that we have members of our community using our services who may require extra help, for example, when attending a counter or visiting a GP clinic. To me, the Advocacy Council represents a new chapter for the GHA and a wonderful opportunity to work closer with our patients and service users, so that we can improve and develop the services and care that we provide. We must always strive to provide the best care we possibly can and I cannot think of a better team of people to work with."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, said: "For me, it has truly been one of my greatest privileges to work with committed and passionate individuals who selflessly give of their time for the benefit of others. These groups carry out a truly important function in the work that they do; not only in that they advocate and speak for those who perhaps

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cannot speak for themselves, but they do this voluntarily in their own time, as they believe it is right. In this, they deserve our respect and willingness to engage and work together. My Ministry maintains an open door policy for all groups who can contribute to the general wellbeing of our amazing community through their commitment to the welfare of others.”