



PRESS RELEASE

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GHA backs GADS launch of Dementia Friends

The Gibraltar Alzheimer's & Dementia Society (GADS) has announced the creation of Dementia Friends, an organisation which aims to change our community's perceptions of dementia and to raise better understanding and a greater awareness of the disease in the community. Dementia Friends Gibraltar was officially launched at a packed event in the Mediterranean Rowing Club on Thursday, an initiative which was backed by the Ministry for Health and the Gibraltar Health Authority.

At the launch, GADS chairperson, Daphne Alcantara, said the Society wants to create a long term commitment and a community in which people living with dementia feel more understood and included in our society. There was also a special presentation by Ms Philippa Tree, a senior international officer of the Alzheimer's Society UK. Ms Tree will also brief staff from the GHA, the Care Agency and Social Services during her stay on the Rock.

Dementia Friends Gibraltar wants people of all ages and from all walks of life to understand a little more about dementia and to turn this understanding into action to improve the lives of people affected by dementia. Actions can range from being patient in a queue, because you have understood that people with dementia may struggle to recognise coins, to helping someone find the right bus; every action counts. Sometimes, these everyday tasks are made difficult because of the limited understanding of dementia. No action is too big or too small and, when combined, can lead to a step change in how society responds to dementia.

Mrs Alcantara said: "There are over 400 people diagnosed with dementia in Gibraltar, a number which is growing every year. We want to change the way people think, talk and act about dementia, and to get a far greater involvement from all sectors of society, not just the government, to ensure that people living with dementia feel properly integrated in our community. We want to tackle the lack of understanding that means many people with the condition experience loneliness and social exclusion - no one should face dementia alone!"

"Gibraltar is a small place and we are confident that if we all pull together, change can be achieved and we can all help improve the lives of those living with dementia in Gibraltar.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon Neil F Costa MP said he was delighted with GADS initiative to launch Dementia Friends Gibraltar. "We are extremely pleased to support the excellent initiative by GADS to encourage greater public participation and involvement



in the common effort to ensure that people living with Dementia receive the best care possible and are made to feel an integral part of our community. Dementia is one of the greatest challenges facing modern industrialised societies and the Gibraltar Government is sensitive to the needs of this sector of the community. We have a long-term political responsibility to ensure that the right policies, public investments and systems are in place to ensure elderly persons and others who may be living with this disease obtain the right medical and professional care and support.

“The recent opening of the excellent Bella Vista Dementia Day Centre and the forthcoming inauguration of the new Dementia residential facility with 52 bed capacity, which will be opening its doors in April 2017, reflect our staunch commitment to provide the best possible care for a vulnerable section of our population. It is also worth noting that all furniture within Elderly Residential Services facilities will be replaced with Dementia friendly fixtures and fittings.”

Dementia Friends Gibraltar is modelled on the UK body set up by former Prime Minister David Cameron to raise the profile of this disease across Britain in 2012.

Dementia Friends Gibraltar has also set up its own website www.dementiafriends.gi