

PRESS RELEASE

No: 583/2018

Date: 26th September 2018

Despite their new logo, the GSD continue to #let'sgetitwrong!

In their latest statement, not only have the GSD got it wrong, unsurprisingly, yet again, but they have simply chosen to regurgitate some of the same issues that they already posed as questions in the current session of Parliament and to which the Government is due to reply when the Parliament next sits.

In their latest statement, the GSD Opposition referred to the GHA's mental health services. Far from "dwindling", the number of Consultant Psychiatrists employed under the GSLP/Liberal Government has, in fact, doubled from the number in post under the previous GSD administration.

Despite the increase in staffing levels, however, no one can prevent or foresee doctors becoming ill and being on sick leave, howsoever much HMGoG and the GHA plan in advance. The GHA, however, can mitigate this entirely unexpected sickness absence by swiftly engaging the services of two excellent locum Consultant Psychiatrists to ensure that any possible disruption to patient services is kept to a minimum. The consultants' service was only interrupted by one week, with all corresponding appointments having been successfully rescheduled for the following week.

Clearly, the Opposition know very little of healthcare and its various demands and challenges and learn even less in their impatience and wilful refusal to wait for our answers. Professionals in the field of mental health are very much in demand and recruitment has proven to be particularly challenging, even when commenced in good time. After having completed a recruitment process, one of the successful candidates, who would have been in post next month, subsequently turned down the post and this has had to be re-advertised. The other successful candidate will be taking up the post in January.

As if to compound their wilful ignorance of the rules of Parliament, the Opposition mentions a case that is currently before the courts of Gibraltar. Even a cursory look at Parliament's Standing Orders will make it clear to them that it is a breach of the rules to ask questions that are currently live before the courts. Even if such a provision did not exist, surely the Opposition does not expect the Government to comment on matters that can prejudice the existing case. No doubt, if we were to answer them, and the case were prejudiced, they would accuse us of wasting taxpayers' money. The Opposition, however, can be certain that the Government will make a statement on this case at the appropriate juncture.

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We also wish to point out that in answer to some press articles this week, the psychiatric reports which were delayed have now been submitted to the courts, notwithstanding the absences due to sickness and the difficulties in recruitment.

On the matter of the Community Services Officer, Government provided full answers several months ago, making it abundantly clear that the vacancy has now been filled. If members of the Opposition followed local news they would be well aware of this development.

Commenting on the above matters, the Hon Neil F. Costa MP said: "I could not agree more with the GSD that lessons need to be learnt, although it is quite clear to me that it is their Parliamentary Members who should, firstly, if nothing else, learn the rules of Parliament. The Opposition would have cried foul, rightly, if I had issued a press statement on matters relating to questions they have asked in Parliament. The Opposition should note, however, that, unlike them, I will not breach the rules of the House and will refrain from making statements that are the subject of their questions. I really have to wonder to whom I am addressing my remarks, as the Opposition statement has been issued without citing the author. I will, therefore, tell all of them to continue to #let'sgetitwrong."