



PRESS RELEASE

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Social Work Rocks!

Tuesday 20th March 2018 is World Social Work Day. It's a day to celebrate the contributions that social workers can make to some of the most vulnerable members of society. The theme this year is 'Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability'. It is sometimes difficult to sum up exactly what social workers do because the job is so diverse and encompasses a multitude of different arenas.

This is the definition of social work given by International Federation of Social Work: "Social work is an academic discipline and profession that concerns itself with helping individuals, families, groups and communities enhance their social functioning and overall well-being. Social functioning refers to the way in which people perform their social roles, and the structural institutions that are provided to sustain them".

Social work applies social sciences such as psychology, sociology, social policy, public health, law and economics to engage with clients or service-users, and develop interventions to solve social and personal difficulties or problems, and create social change.

Social work is a profession concerned with helping individuals, families, groups and communities to enhance their individual and collective well-being. It aims to help people develop their skills and their ability to use their own resources and those of the community to resolve problems. Social work is concerned with individual and personal problems but also with broader social issues such as poverty, unemployment, housing and domestic violence.

Social workers work with individuals and families from all walks of life, to enable them to make changes and improvements in their lives. This can range from protecting vulnerable children and adults from harm or abuse, to supporting families or individuals to live their lives to the best of their ability.

Child protection is a vital part of social work. Some people can be uncomfortable with the term "child protection" and social workers now tend to use the term "safeguarding" instead. Children are unable to advocate for themselves, and depending on their age and understanding, they may also



be in a position where they have no say in what goes on in their lives. Parents may experience difficulties in parenting their children safely and consistently due to issues such as housing, lack of family support, financial instability, drug or alcohol abuse, or mental health issues. There are also families who find themselves in a crisis due to circumstances beyond their control. Social work is also about offering support, guidance and assistance to these families, as well as the more obvious safeguarding role.

There are people from many different social and cultural groups living in Gibraltar. This can bring about respect, sensitivity of other cultures and the opportunity to learn from each other. Working in a small community like Gibraltar allows social workers the opportunity to work with families in what academics would describe as a Systems Theory approach. This means that social workers are committed to the quest of achieving social welfare and social change. Systems Theory also works towards research and practice, to improve the quality of life and to the development of the potential of each individual, group and community within a society.

In a multicultural society, social workers recognise diversity in their practice and actively challenge harmful social norms, support community members to transform their attitudes and advocate on behalf of people who are unable to take action themselves. This is not always as simple as it sounds, as quite often, families do not want the intervention or assistance a social worker can provide, and communities are quite often resistant to change. However, social work is largely about tackling adversity in all shapes and forms, and is a profession that will continue to flourish and improve.