



PRESS RELEASE

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Ministry for Equality stands out for Autism

The Minister for Equality and the team at the Department of Equality have today met with some of the new Committee members of the Autism Support Group.

April is Autism awareness month and ASG have worked with the community encouraging people to wear bright colours today and stand out for autism in order to raise awareness.

The new committee were elected earlier in the month and they chose today to formally meet with Minister Sacramento and her new team by way of formal introduction of the new committee, though of course the ASG have already established a close working relationship with the Ministry for Equality, having collaborated over the years.

Over the past couple of years the Ministry of Equality has been leading the way in the development of a national autism strategy to benefit our community. The Ministry for Equality has both educated and raised awareness on autism through its 'Understanding Autism' series of lectures. These have been delivered by local and UK professionals, Gaynor Vatvani, Linda Woodcock and Colin Smith with a view to educating and training parents, professionals, NGOs and community organisations and volunteers.

The subject areas covered have included

- Introduction to learning disabilities and autism
- What is autism?
- Parental strategies on managing behaviour
- Adolescence and puberty
- Maximising communication opportunities for children and young adults with autism

The courses are delivered to everyone so as to standardise learning thereby providing consistency with the messages to people with autism.

We have also seen various initiatives introduced in the community, these having been spearheaded by the Ministry of Equality; Leisure Cinemas provide inclusive and adapted sensory cinema



screenings since November 2015, the Gibraltar Fair saw the introduction of sensory adaptation hours in 2017 where music and flashing lights were turned off for the first couple of hours and the latest initiative being the sensory events at the International Magic Festival at the end of last year. All these initiatives have permitted children and adults with autism and sensory difficulties to participate and enjoy alongside the rest of the community and have been hailed as incredibly successful by those who took up the opportunity. Importantly, it also shows the willingness of the private sector to collaborate in making their businesses more inclusive.

Minister for Equality, Samantha Sacramento MP, said: “The achievements of the Ministry for Equality and the scale of the work undertaken to promote the understanding of autism with parents, the community and professionals is unprecedented. This considerable progress promotes inclusion of people who have autism. I am very pleased with the investment we have made in the delivery of training, the feedback from everyone attending is always extremely positive and we will continue.

We work closely with our stakeholders in the development of our strategy and I am very pleased with the close working relationship that we have established with the Autism Support Group over the years. They are representative of parents of children with autism and the feedback we receive is very important, I would like to thank them for the work that they do and their support. We all have a role to play in raising awareness of autism and as community to better understand the needs of those who are on the autism spectrum so that we can interact with them better, whether at a personal or professional level.

Mr Kevin Mañasco, Chairperson Autism Support Group, said: “Autism Support Group really appreciates the effort and initiatives implemented by the Ministry of Equality and we look forward to working in collaboration to help improve the lives of those on the Autism spectrum and their families. It goes without saying that we are really appreciative of all the support shown to us to date by Minister Sacramento and look forward to working closely with her in the future”.