



## PRESS RELEASE

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### GSD itself started providing domiciliary care through agency workers

The Government is not surprised that GSD Opposition have jumped on the latest bandwagon in order to score cheap political points.

The Government and the GHA have not changed their position since yesterday’s statement. The plain fact is that the Government’s track record of investment and recruitment in the GHA speaks for itself, with staffing levels having increased by 223.5 since December 2011:

	March 2011	March 2018	Variance
Admin & Support	175	203	+28
Medical & AHPs	155	220.5	+65.5
Ambulance	34	43	+9
Nursing	389.5	482	+92.5
Industrial	115.5	144	+28.5
Totals	869	1092.5	+223.5

In relation to medical health professionals, agency workers are engaged exclusively to cover absences, such as leave and maternity, providing necessary cover in order to maintain safe clinical levels of care. The GHA has confirmed that agency workers have also been engaged to bridge the gap within the recruitment period. Once again, and to be clear, there are **no** agency workers in any substantive post.

The Opposition’s comment, that the practice of engaging agency workers can affect the quality of the service, evidences that they really have no clue what they are talking about – something that will surprise no one. In fact, agency cover is fundamental in order to maintain safe staffing levels during absences. It is quite incredible that, judging from their public statements, the policy of the Opposition seems to be that the GHA should not cover nurses who are sick and in this way place our patients in jeopardy! The Government will clearly pay the GSD no heed.

Ministry of Health, Care and Justice

HM Government of Gibraltar • Zone 1, Level 7 St Bernard’s Hospital, Harbour Views Road • Gibraltar GX11 1AA

t +350 20007011 (Centrex 2027) f +350 20059942 e ministry@gha.gi w gibraltar.gov.gi



Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon. Neil F Costa MP said: “The Government will take no lessons from the GSD on this or any other subject. They clearly do not listen to the answers that I provide in Parliament, which is also not surprising, given that they have asked me the same questions fifteen times. The high number of agency workers in the Care Agency is due to the increase in the domiciliary care provision under this administration, from £75,000 in 2002 to £2.5 million today, which means that 478 elderly persons who require care at home, receive care at home. Only last year, 239 additional members of our community are in receipt of domiciliary care. If it is the policy of the Opposition that we should employ the 152 carers directly, then they should say so, and tell the community which service they would cut to pay for the increased millions in expenditure. It should be clear that the Care Agency directly employs 233 persons and Elderly Residential Services 315; figures, which we have also provided in Parliament. The Opposition are fond of running with the hares and hunting with the hounds and our community can decide who is playing politics with the care of our patients and our elderly. As ever, I will gladly submit myself to the judgment of the good people of Gibraltar on this issue as on every other. In this respect, it is important to recall that it was when Mr Azopardi was in Government, that the GSD started the policy of providing domiciliary care, exclusively, through agency workers. How on earth can they complain about it now! A case of do as I say and not as I do.”