



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Mental Health, Social and Emotional Wellbeing in Schools and the College: Training 12-15th June 2018**

Following an extensive review of mental health, social and emotional wellbeing support systems within secondary schools and the Gibraltar College commissioned by the Minister for Education John Cortes, a series of key recommendations to further improve service provision are being developed.

Through interactions with head teachers and key stakeholders, one of these core recommendations is staff training. This is smartly aligned with NICE Guidelines (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) for social and emotional wellbeing in both primary and secondary education and provides an evidence-base framework for future work streams. It is the first time in Gibraltar that NICE guidelines are being used to inform Education policies.

The Department of Education has been working on improving understanding and support for mental health through Mr Wayne Barton, a healthcare professional seconded to the Ministry, Mrs Jackie Linares, Education Advisor, senior teachers from Bayside and Westside schools, and the Student Services Coordinator from the Gibraltar College.

As part of this work, a four-day training event will be held at the University of Gibraltar this week. A dynamic programme has been developed in collaboration with Dr Pooky Knightsmith, a UK-based child and adolescent mental health specialist and author. Significant interest has been generated, with over 260 delegates expected over the four days. The target audience includes both public and private sector educators, GHA clinicians and allied health professionals, RGP, Care Agency, Youth Service, Public Health, NGOs and charities. The student voice will also be represented with individual presentations and feedback, giving a 360-degree perspective to this important theme.

Day one will focus on sharing what works, recognising vehicles for change and working collaboratively to ensure that colleagues are provided with the knowledge, understanding, skills and policies they need to best support children's mental health, social and emotional wellbeing within the local context. Training will be bespoke and based on findings and recommendations from the phase 1 study in Gibraltar schools.



Day two is a mental health masterclass for anyone working in primary education. The day itself is intended to give non-specialist staff the skills and knowledge they need to spot and support common emotional and mental health difficulties in their pupils as well as providing guidance and ideas about how to promote wellbeing through the curriculum. Day three will follow the same format with the focus shifting to secondary education.

Day four has been created for those teachers who will use the resources developed for days two and three to deliver training to future cohorts as part of in service days and staff induction programmes (train-the-trainer concept).

Great emphasis is attached to early detection, prevention and the holistic development of the child/adolescent, thereby avoiding an escalation into mental health disorders, which unfortunately may require medical input. It is a well-established fact that there are at least three students in an average class suffering from a preventable mental health issue. Being mindful of this, training is envisaged to be thought-provoking and a catalyst in formalising further school based strategies and collaborative working. The education system can be seen very much as the platform for developing healthy citizens of the future from a physical, mental and social perspective. Phase 2 of the review within schools which focuses on primary education has recently been launched, with Phase 3 (tertiary education - university students) anticipated to commence in September 2018.

Minister for Education John Cortes said, "Government has a commitment to improving the mental health of our school population, and this training is an important step in that journey. We need to be able to help our children from an early age, in order to reduce the impact of mental health problems in their lives and those of their families. I am very pleased with the response and am very grateful to all those involved in this programme."