



# HM Government of Gibraltar

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Ministry of Health, Care and Justice

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## PRESS RELEASE

No: 215/2017

Date: 3rd April 2017

### **GHA Announces New Matron to be introduced at St Bernard's Hospital**

The Gibraltar Health Authority will advertise the new position of matron at St Bernard's Hospital. The new role will be tasked with the maintenance of adequate hygiene and cleanliness in the wards, together with high standards of care and good practice. Other core functions will be to ensure that individual patients are nursed back to health in a comfortable environment and with the right plan of clinical care for their needs.

Historically, matrons have played an important role in the Gibraltar Health Authority, although the position was discontinued in modern times and its functions absorbed by the Nurse Management Team. It has now been deemed appropriate to reintroduce the role of the matron, as patients and relatives needed someone they could relate to with a strong, approachable presence in the wards to supervise their nursing and medical convalescence needs.

Director of Nursing Services Sandie Gracia said the position of matron had been brought back in Gibraltar to further improve the patient experience and coordinate the changes in systems for enhanced and safe high-quality health care, in conjunction with the Nurse Management Team. She said: "This has been a positive move, as the patients and their relatives will have an authoritative and empathic figure they can identify with. Our health professionals will also benefit, as matrons will provide encouragement and motivation to members of the nursing team and support staff.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Neil F. Costa MP said that he was delighted at the initiative to bring back the traditional figure of the matron to a hospital environment. Mr Costa said: "With the introduction of the matron, we provide a visible and accessible presence in wards to support our clinical environment that is patient and public focussed. Not only will the matron be an asset across a whole range of multidisciplinary clinical areas, but will also provide a source of information and choice for patients, together with a reassuring physical presence that can make such a positive difference when a person is recovering from illness. Matrons will also contribute to patient management, ensuring measures to reduce length of stay and facilitate early discharge."



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 225/2017

Date: 10th April 2017

### **GHA Reforms Improve Accident & Emergency Department**

- *Two Charge Nurses deployed to A & E*
- *A&E to be streamlined to focus on accidents, emergencies and acutely unwell patients*
- *More than 500 GP appointments saved each month by new repeat prescription service*

The steadfast commitment of Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar to improve the quality and the delivery of healthcare continues with a firm focus on supporting and strengthening the emergency services. The Gibraltar Health Authority is proud to announce the first step in a series of reforms in the Accident & Emergency Department.

The reforms have begun with the deployment of two additional A&E Charge Nurses. This ensures that a highly skilled, senior member of the nursing staff leads and manages the A&E team in every shift. The Charge Nurse role is crucial, as they are the front line management on the "shop floor". They are responsible for organising and supporting the whole clinical team on each shift and ensure that all A&E patients receive high-quality, safe, compassionate and timely clinical care.

Sister Natasha Cerisola, nurse manager, from the A&E department supports that view. She said: "A&E is a very busy and dynamic Department, which needs strong and experienced leadership".

This A&E reform comes after the success of the recent Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) Courses carried out in Gibraltar for the first time. These courses were provided by the faculty from St George's Hospital NHS Trust in London, a major teaching hospital, well known as a result of the very popular UK Channel 4 TV programme "24 Hours in A&E". The intensive four-day course was hosted at the University of Gibraltar in October 2016 and again in February 2017, and ensured that our front line A&E staff are fully trained and accredited to provide gold standard clinical care.

Further, the services of A&E will be streamlined in order to allow the Department to concentrate on providing timely care for accidents, emergencies and acutely unwell patients. While A&E will continue to issue initial sick certificates for patients, where appropriate, extensions of these certificates will no longer be issued from A&E. Patients who need further sick leave will need to make an appointment at the Primary Care Centre with a GP for medical review and further sick certification. The GHA's team of GPs will make sure that those patients who may require sick certificate extensions are seen in a timely manner.

The recent launch of the repeat prescription service at the PCC saved 300 routine appointments in

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t +350 20007011 (Centrex 2027) f +350 20059942 e [ministry@gha.gi](mailto:ministry@gha.gi) w [gibraltar.gov.gi](http://gibraltar.gov.gi)



February alone and is forecast to save at least 320 GP appointments every month. Additionally, the new sick note telephone service saved 192 GP appointments in March and is forecast to save over 220 appointments every month. The combined result is an increased availability of over 500 GP appointments per month. These saved appointments mean that the excellent and dedicated clinical staff of nurses and GPs will be able to spend more meaningful time with patients at their consultations. Patients and patient welfare are firmly at the heart of the Government's reforms.

Commenting on the first phase of A&E reforms, the Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon. Neil F. Costa MP, said: "On advice from our clinical leads at A&E, my Ministry, in consultation with the GHA's Medical Director, decided to commence our reforms with the deployment of two highly competent and skilled Charge Nurses. As with all the reforms we are introducing, my Ministry and the GHA will keep a close eye to ensure its effectiveness. The reforms I have announced today are part of a wider reform process and I very much look forward to making further announcements in the next few weeks."



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 233/2017

Date: 18th April 2017

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### **Costa Announces Further Training Schemes for GHA Staff in Conjunction with UK Universities**

The Gibraltar Health Authority has reiterated its commitment to the further training development of nursing and clinical staff who work in key service areas.

The GHA is again investing in a number of bespoke education programmes in specialist areas, in conjunction with Kingston University and St George's University of London. This includes a suite of educationally-led health care development programmes, which will continue to enhance service delivery and help with the ongoing transformation of service provision.

Other key areas addressed are the critical care unit and the acute wards.

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon Neil F Costa MP, recently met with Dr Julia Gale, Head of School of Nursing at Kingston University and St George's University of London. During the course of the meeting it was agreed to offer a range of tailor-made educational activities that will reflect the needs of the people of Gibraltar.

The GHA's long running relationship with both of these UK Universities continues to help equip our current and future work force to respond in an even more robust way to the complexities in health and social care. The Government is steadfast in its commitment to further investment in specialist areas of practice and these innovative programmes will provide safe, high quality and effective care.

Dr Gale said it had been an honour to work with the GHA for many years to help develop health and social care provision. She said: "I am delighted the GHA continues to view Kingston University and St George's, University of London as their preferred educational provider. The continued investment and commitment by the GHA to transform services through the use of education will, I know, bring about a first class health and social care service for the people of Gibraltar."

For his part Minister Costa said: "We are delighted to see how ongoing professional training for our clinical staff in various specialisms will ensure the resiliency of our local workforce to safely deal with health care concerns. We are delighted to see how the GHA, through its School of Health





Studies and in conjunction with Kingston University, has designed bespoke training programmes to achieve this essential aim.”

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## PRESS RELEASE

No. 238/2017

Date: 19th April 2017

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### Donation to Rainbow Ward

The Lifesaving Sports Association has raised £8265.00 in order to purchase a handheld Abbott i-stat blood analyser, downloader and printer, which was donated yesterday to the Rainbow Ward at St Bernard's.

The Association organised several events to promote lifeguarding in order to compete internationally and to raise funds for the equipment. Some of these events included, a Fun Day held at the GASA pavilion, an Aqua-aerobics marathon and a Waterpolo marathon.

The Abbott i-Stat is a handheld blood analyser and is widely used in paediatric high dependency units and neonatal units worldwide. It has the added advantage that it is portable and can be used in inter-hospital transfers of critically ill children. The i-stat is beneficial to paediatrics and will help to improve clinical efficiency. It is simple to use and enhances patient centred care without compromising staff numbers especially during an emergency. The i-stat system requires just two to three drops of blood to deliver lab-quality results. Using the i-Stat system can significantly reduce blood requirements by:

- eliminating re-sticks due to delays with multi-use analysers,
- minimising the risk of sample clotting before or during testing,
- consolidating analytes on one cartridge.

Overall this analyser will allow early diagnosis of a potentially life threatening condition in an emergency allowing early treatment which in turn could improve the clinical outcome for the patient.

Minister Costa said 'On behalf of all the staff at the GHA, I would like to give my sincerest thank you to the Lifesaving Sports Association for this generous donation. This new piece of equipment is an asset for the Rainbow Ward and could potentially save lives.'



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 265/2017

Date: 2nd May 2017

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### **Nursing degree course interviews at GHA School of Health Studies record unprecedented numbers**

The GHA's School of Health Studies, in conjunction with Kingston University and St George's University of London (KUSGUL), has interviewed candidates for the fourth intake of a BSc (Hons) degree course in adult nursing as from this week. 2012 saw the first degree intake, and it is expected that by September 2018, the GHA will have 34 local graduates in nursing studies, all educated at the School of Health Studies ("SHS"). Mr James Viñales, Principal Lecturer of the course, has confirmed that the GHA is ensuring career progression for nursing grades in Gibraltar.

Mr Viñales noted that the SHS has made offers to 20 students for the September 2017 intake, with each receiving a £650 tax-free bursary to complete the course in Gibraltar. This is the highest-ever number of students. The three-year training programme will be fully delivered locally, with placements for students carried out throughout St Bernard's Hospital, Elderly Residential Services, Primary Care Centre, St Bernadette's, Ocean views and in the community.

The panel of examiners for the BSc (Hons) interviews include a patient who has experienced care at the GHA, a clinical nurse manager, ward sister, specialist nurse and academic members of the SHS.

Mr Viñales said: "Nurses make a huge difference in the quality of service and they provide patients with kind and dignified care at all times. A good nurse has to demonstrate compassion, courage and have strong communication skills. The students we are looking for must possess all of those qualities and more. They must also be able to understand their own limitations and have accountability for their own actions. This is a vocational profession. You have to like it, because it is tough and requires extraordinary commitment. We provide all the course materials and books, together with easy access to the SHS and KUSGUL library, journals and databases".

At the end of the training period, qualified nurses will be granted their licence to practice and inclusion in the Gibraltar Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Registration Board together with their academic BSc (Hons) nursing degree. The course is open to all resident Gibraltarians over the age of 18 who have attained 'A' Level education or equivalent and a minimum of five 'O' Levels including Mathematics, Science and English Language. There will be more interviews for the



September 2017 intake to be conducted in early July, with the advert for the BSc (Hons) to be released on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2017.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP said: “I am incredibly content with the success of the degree course in nursing and with the tremendous response from Gibraltarians who are keen on a vocational career in such a demanding discipline. Any person who may be interested should not hesitate to contact us. Our aim is to open the degree programme every year and to have locally trained nurses to the highest professional standard, with the external assessment of a UK university, so that we can continue to provide a healthcare that is empathetic, compassionate and highly competent.”

For further information on this programme of study visit <http://shs.gha.gi>



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 276/2017

Date: 4th May 2017

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### **GHA Establishes New Anonymous Complaints Hotline**

The Gibraltar Health Authority, in conjunction with the Ministry of Health, has set up an anonymous telephone hotline for members of the community and staff members to report any area of concern or complaints about the local health service.

The number to call is 20007919, where callers will be able to record a short voicemail message after a recorded introductory greeting.

The Patient Advocacy & Liaison Service (PALS) will staff the hotline and will ensure that genuine grievances are investigated and resolved.

The hotline is also available for GHA staff members to report their concerns.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon. Neil F. Costa MP welcomed the initiative. Mr Costa said: "I am confident that this hotline will become an important new facility for members of the public, and also for staff members, to highlight issues of concern or complaints on an anonymous basis. With the information that we obtain, PALS will be able to look into grievances and attempt to solve any issues that may otherwise remain under the radar.

"The purpose of the hotline is to identify problems that do not surface through the normal channels of communication, which will allow PALS, together with the relevant GHA officials, to investigate matters. Our aim is to have an extra tool at our disposal to help us solve outstanding problems.

"In a small place like Gibraltar, sometimes people will not wish to publicly make complaints. The hotline guarantees individual anonymity, and members of the public or staff members will feel reassured that they can inform us of things so that we can tackle them and come up with solutions. The telephone hotline is wholly in keeping with our overriding aim of continuously striving to improve the quality of the health care that we provide to our community."



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 290/2017

Date: 9th May 2017

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### **New medical app for GHA clinicians enhances access to pathology results**

The GHA has introduced a new medical app for its clinicians that will enable them to access pathology test results much more easily wherever they are, on their smart phones and other mobile devices, 24 hours a day. The recently introduced Modulab app is safe, easy to use, password protected, encrypted and follows best practice as applied in other locations. The app will provide additional and enhanced means of retrieving information to those methods already in existence, and will also allow the clinician to directly contact the patient simply by pressing an icon on the app.

Until now, doctors and health professionals could access the pathology laboratory information database online via a computer at the hospital or elsewhere, or via a link in email notifications. This app will provide the same information remotely while a doctor is on call or away from the hospital.

Dr Alex Menez, Pathology Services Manager and GHA Director for Information Technology Heath Watson, highlighted the great teamwork and collaboration between their departments that had brought the project to fruition. For his part, the Medical Director Danny Cassaglia said that the greatest benefit is the possibility of accessing patient results remotely as soon as these are ready, noting that it made the system more efficient, fast and intuitive.

Additionally, the app will avoid the need for follow up appointments to review blood results, thus releasing much-needed slots for the general public at the Primary Care Centre.

The Modulab app software has been developed by the laboratory systems firm Izasa, which has worked closely with the GHA to programme the service to the Authority's specific requirements.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, said he was delighted that the new medical app was now functional. Mr Costa said: "This new medical app is a great technological innovation for the GHA. We are always striving to introduce the latest advances to improve the way in which clinicians can carry out their vitally important work. I would like to thank the various professional teams at the GHA, who have been working diligently to ensure that this new system was operational as soon as possible."



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 293/2017

Date: 10th May 2017

### **St Bernard's Hospital Report Notable Increase in the Number of Major Surgeries**

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar is delighted to announce there have been no cancellations of surgical operations due to lack of beds since January 10th 2017. In the same period there has been a notable improvement in performance figures for surgery at St Bernard's Hospital. The number of day surgery procedures carried out is similar to last year, which amounts to 1061 elective surgeries.

The real improvement, however, has been in the number of major surgical cases being successfully seen to. In the first four months of 2017, the GHA has carried out 161 major surgical procedures requiring inpatient stay: nearly double the number performed in the same period in 2016. If the current trend continues, the GHA will conduct almost double the number of major surgeries in 2017 compared to 2016.

The very welcome increase in the number of major operations carried out is thanks to the increased availability of beds at the Dudley Toomey ward, enabling it to cater for an increased number of surgical patients. Through the implementation of an active bed management system including a new, full-time, qualified Social Worker based at St. Bernard's Hospital, and the recent opening of the Hillside Residential Dementia Care facility, the GHA has been able to ensure uninterrupted bed availability in the surgical ward in St Bernard's Hospital.

The Hillside Residential Home now accommodates many of Gibraltar's most vulnerable elderly residents, who will be cared for in an appropriate environment that better caters to their needs. St Bernard's can once again function as an acute hospital.

This is only the first step in improving and expanding the surgical services offered in St Bernard's to further reduce the waiting times for elective procedures.

Ms Sandie Gracia, GHA Director of Nursing said: "The GHA is fully committed to ensuring that all elective surgical patients have their scheduled surgery on their given date. This will guarantee that the clinical needs of our patients who require a planned surgical procedure are met in a timely manner."

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Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon. Neil F. Costa MP said: “I am extremely excited at the reforms and improvements currently being introduced at the Gibraltar Health Authority, led by our clinical teams. I am committed to continue to work tirelessly with the GHA to improve the quality of our care and to invest further clinical and material resources to increase surgical capacity to achieve progressive reductions in waiting times for operations.

“The Government, GHA and Care Agency are collaborating closely to ensure bed availability for major elective surgery and we are confident that through the combination of measures announced, we can ensure uninterrupted bed availability. My Ministry, in conjunction with the GHA, is now actively planning the repatriation of as many key services as possible to St Bernard’s Hospital, so that fewer patients will need to travel abroad for treatment. I would also like to, as ever, commend the incredibly hardworking GHA staff for their professionalism and dedication in devoting their best efforts to ensure excellent quality care for the community.”





## PRESS RELEASE

No: 314/2017

Date: 17th May 2017

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### **GHA Management Changes**

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar will tomorrow publish a Bill to amend the Medical (Gibraltar Health Authority) Act 1987 to provide for changes in the management structure of the Gibraltar Health Authority.

The main change, announced by the Chief Minister during last December's Parliament, is that the current statutory post of Chief Executive Officer of the GHA will be abolished. The majority of the current functions and duties of the Chief Executive Officer will be performed by the GHA's Medical Director.

This change is important for two reasons. First and foremost this strengthens and cements the policy of this Government that the GHA should be clinically led, whereby the most important decisions and roles, including the chairmanship of the GHA Management Board, are made and held not by an administrator but by an experienced consultant-level senior medical professional. Secondly, it places the post of Medical Director, for the first time, on a statutory basis, which the Government believes reflects the importance of this role. This move reflects changes that have been ongoing within the GHA since the retirement of the previous Chief Executive Officer, where there has been a gradual transfer of non-statutory functions and duties to the Medical Director and a greater involvement of the Medical Director in other decision making which in effect is a return to how the health matters had previously been structured in Gibraltar.

The Bill also includes changes to the structure and nomenclature of management posts within the GHA and the creation of a power so that such restructures may be undertaken by means of secondary legislation rather than requiring a Bill. An example of this is the change of the current Unit General Manager post of Hospital Manager, which will be replaced with the post of Operations Manager. This change will ensure that there is a clear distinction between clinical and non-clinical functions and management lines at the GHA. The Operations Manager will be responsible for facilities management, general operations and front of house at St Bernard's Hospital and will not be involved in the management of clinical staff or the taking of clinical decisions. The role of Deputy Medical Director will also become a statutory post to allow for continuity on occasions when the Medical Director is unavailable. The Deputy Medical Director will also be a member of the Management Board in his own right.

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Furthermore, the Government has included a change to the Care Agency Act in the Bill, which transfers the responsibility for Elderly Residential Care from the Care Agency to the Gibraltar Health Authority. This change better serves the needs of Elderly Residential Care patients.

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honorable Neil F. Costa MP said: “The decision to restructure the management of the GHA and, in particular, to abolish the role of Chief Executive and pass the duties and responsibilities of that post to an appropriately experienced senior medical professional was one that was not taken lightly. It’s one, however, which I am sure will have an immediate positive effect on the functioning of the GHA.

“This change, together with the other changes in this Bill, will ensure that the person taking the important decisions in the GHA and chairing the Management Board is a medical professional, and as such will have the medical knowledge and expertise necessary to put the health of patients and the community first.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 315/2017

Date: 17th May 2017

### **GHA hosts ‘Let’s Talk About...’ Men’s Health Sessions**

The Gibraltar Health Authority and the School of Health Studies are organising a series of one-hour talks on men’s health issues at the King’s Bastion Cinema hosted by Professor Ian Banks, a leading European medical authority on the subject. The ‘Let’s Talk About...’ programme will be officially launched by the Minister for Health, Care and Justice the Hon Neil F. Costa MP on May 18th 2017, ahead of the inaugural talk under the theme ‘MOTs for Men’.

The idea of these talks is to attract a predominantly male audience – traditionally reticent when it comes to engaging with health care services – for a programme of informative talks on a whole range of male health concerns, including bowel afflictions, diabetes and prostate ailments.

Professor Banks, a GP in his own right, is also the president of the European Men’s Health Forum. Each event will be open to the public, have an interactive format and include a well-known local speaker to bring added interest to the proceedings. The second talk, ‘Understanding Male Cancers’ takes place on June 22nd 2017 with the presence of a representative from the Gibraltar Football Association. This will be followed on July 20th 2017 with ‘Men and Mental Health’ with Mayor Kaiane Aldorino Lopez as special guest. The next talk ‘Being Healthy’ takes place in September 2017 and will be delivered by well-known Sports Medicine Specialist Eva Carneiro. The final talk ‘Understanding Heart Conditions’ will take place in October 2017.

Chief Minister Fabian Picardo has been invited to formally close the series.

Further, in conjunction with the seminar, a new Health Passport, which will keep tabs on vital individual health data, will be introduced to the community. It is expected that GPs at the Primary Care Centre will recommend that the ‘passport’ be adopted by patients as a basic and efficient register of a person’s health status.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon Neil F. Costa MP welcomed the GHA initiative. Mr Costa said: “We are delighted that the GHA is hosting this series of discussions aimed at men, who are generally less receptive when it comes to prevention and early detection of health issues. ‘Let’s Talk About...’ will create awareness about some of the main health concerns affecting men, thereby understanding their risk factors and how they can improve their overall health. This is



another excellent initiative by the GHA to promote good health which is vital for a happy and full life”.

The talks will be recorded by GBC and screened at a later date.



## PRESS RELEASE

Date: 22nd May 2017

No: 332/2017

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### **GHA one-step ahead of UK since reintroduction of Enrolment Training in 2013**

Gibraltar is well ahead of UK in providing leading edge training for health workers to enhance standards of clinical care. The reintroduction of in-house Nurse Enrolment Training course by the School of Health Studies in 2013, has created an opportunity for career progression open to nursing assistants in the GHA, Elderly Residential Services and the Care Agency, who have been in employment for six months.

The minimum entry requirement is 5 GCSEs, including English and Mathematics, although candidates can also follow the vocational pathway to the enrolment course by completing NVQ Level 2 in Health & Social Care, which provides them with the equivalent qualification. Externally assessed by UK university officials, it allows school leavers with a second educational opportunity for career progression in nursing, which did not previously exist. Candidates will also have to sit a Numeracy & Literacy examination as part of the selection and those who pass this stage will proceed to interview. Course materials and books, together with easy access to the skills room, library, journals and databases, are provided by the School of Health Studies.

On successful completion of the 18 month training period, nurses will be able to register and obtain a licence to practice with the Gibraltar Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Registration Board. They will also acquire an internationally recognized qualification at QCF Level 3 in Health & Social Care. Candidates who have 5 GCSE's or NVQ Level 2, together with QCF Level 3, may then be able to apply for the Degree and register with Kingston University London & St. George's University of London to undertake this programme locally.

The School is currently delivering the 4<sup>th</sup> cohort of Enrolment training since its reintroduction in 2013. A total of 47 Enrolled Nurses have successfully completed the training in recent years and became eligible to obtain registration. In February 2017, 20 candidates commenced their Enrolled Nurse course, which consists of a combination of clinical placements, simulation and theory modules.

According to Janet Lane, Senior Nurse Tutor at the SHS and coordinator of the Enrolment course and vocational training programme, nursing is a vocational profession that requires caring, compassionate and hardworking individuals. She said: "Nursing is all about strong dedication, a lot

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of hard work and extraordinary commitment. Nurses make a huge difference in the delivery of good quality of care and have to provide and deliver care that incorporates kindness and dignity at all times.”

Minister for Health, Care and Justice the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP said he was delighted by the positive response to the course by Nursing Assistants. Mr Costa said: “The aim of this programme is to ensure that nurses in Gibraltar continue to deliver safe, compassionate and highly competent care, as well as creating a quality educational pathway for nursing assistants to better themselves professionally, enhance the skills of our nursing workforce and address the continuing needs of patients across GHA facilities. The introduction of quality training to ensure that we have a local skilled workforce has been one of the signature policies of our administration, and this programme lays very solid foundations to achieve a pool of qualified health workers in Gibraltar whose dedication to professional standards and excellence is worthy of admiration. The GHA and by extension, the entire community, benefits from such advances.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 339/2017

Date: 24th May 2017

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### **GHA School of Health Studies Hold Successful Awards Ceremony at Rock Hotel**

The GHA School of Health Studies today held their Health and Social Care awards ceremony at the Rock Hotel. The event was attended by Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, School Principal Ian Peate, Dr Ron Coram and other guests.

A total of 36 GHA employees, including, Nursing Assistants, Enrolled Nurses and Professions Allied to Medicine and Practice Assessors were presented with a range of vocational awards, celebrating their academic and practice progression. Twelve staff received a conjoint award: Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) level 3 Health and Social and their Enrolled Nurse Hospital Badge.

The awards are the result of dedication to studying and a commitment to the provision of high quality, safe and compassionate patient care across the health and social care sectors.

All recipients of a certificate of achievement produced a portfolio reflecting high standards and mastery of a range of clinical skills within demanding contemporary health and social care settings. The achievements recognised at this ceremony are externally assessed by the internationally acclaimed Pearson/Edexcel, as well as by Mrs Karen Wild, Enrolled Nurse Programme of Study Senior Lecturer, Salford University UK, who provides additional independent scrutiny.

Training for enrolled nurses was re-introduced by the GSLP/Liberal Government after an absence of many years. The GHA remain committed to this programme and are now training its 4th cohort, providing an opportunity for nursing assistants to progress in their careers. Other awards also provide openings for continuing professional development, from an inter-agency and multi-disciplinary perspective.

Mrs Wild said: "I am pleased with the standard of work the pupil nurses have produced, the commitment to the profession as they are entered onto the professional register and the compassion and caring attitudes towards patient care."



Professor Peate said: “Today is about students and their families, who are here to receive awards that reflect the effort they put into their studies to provide high quality, safe and effective care, very often to the most vulnerable in society. Family, friends and the GHA are proud in being able to witness such an auspicious occasion.”

For his part Minister Costa added: “The School’s achievements are nothing short of spectacular. This was the largest awards ceremony the GHA has held with regards to vocational qualifications and the recipients should be extremely proud of their success. They have had to work and study at the same time and this requires a tremendous amount of determination and dedication. I am very proud of all of our staff and of those who are now fully equipped to excel in their work. On behalf of Her Majesty’s Government of Gibraltar, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of our staff our sincere congratulations – very well done!”





## PRESS RELEASE

No: 349/2017

Date: 30th May 2017

### Head of School of Health Studies Awarded Fellow of the Royal College of Nursing

Professor Ian Peate OBE, Head of School at the School of Health Studies, was awarded Fellow of the Royal College of Nursing (FRCN) at the opening ceremony at RCN Congress in Liverpool 13th May 2017. Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Fellows are an outstanding group of people who have made a real difference to others and to nursing. At the awards ceremony Janet Davies, Chief Executive and General Secretary of the RCN, acknowledged the work that Professor Peate has achieved in his extensive publications and his contribution to nurse education.

Professor Peate was recognised for his exceptional contribution to nursing and nurse education with the award of OBE in the Queen's 2016 Birthday honours list. The award of Fellow of the RCN (FRCN) reconfirms his ongoing role in health and wellbeing.

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is the world's largest nursing and professional body, representing over 435,000 members. RCN Fellowships are awarded to members of the RCN. These prestigious awards are given to those nurses who have made exceptional contributions to nursing and health care. This is the highest award that the RCN can bestow on a nurse.

"Being an RCN Fellow is an honour; receiving recognition by peers in this way is the pinnacle of any nurse's career," said Professor Peate. "I am privileged to work with a dedicated and highly talented team of staff at the School of Health Studies. Nursing is one of the world's most vital and treasured professions and it is wonderful to be recognised in this way. Nurses and nursing can and does have a profound impact on the lives of many."

Dr Ron Coram, Principal of the School of Health Studies, commented: "Recognition in this way also highlights the outstanding contribution and commitment by all of those working in the School of Health Studies, as they ensure that staff within the Gibraltar Health Authority are provided with high quality education and training to facilitate them to continue to offer care that meets the needs of the people of Gibraltar."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon Neil F. Costa MP, added: "I am very pleased to see that the efforts of our truly committed professionals are recognised and endorsed by highly reputable establishments, which set the pace of change and supply valuable leadership within an evolving and crucial health care profession. Ian Peate has made it his personal mission to set the



right tone towards facilitating an environment that is geared to patient care. The Gibraltar Health Authority is indeed fortunate to have such an outstanding role model for our students pursuing their careers in nursing.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 353/2017

Date: 31st May 2017

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### **School of Health Studies holds open day to promote nursing career**

The School of Health Studies (SHS) at St Bernard's Hospital will hold an open evening on June 1st 2017, when the public will be able to see the facilities at the SHS and meet with lecturers and staff between 5pm-8pm. The event will also give aspiring nurses the opportunity to learn more of what the school has to offer and discuss career pathways with current student nurses and nursing graduates from past intakes, who will be present during the evening.

Students will also perform essential nursing skills normally put into practice on the wards with the use of the school's simulation equipment. The public will also be able to use this training equipment.

The event will coincide with the release of the advert for the BSc (Hons) Nursing programme for the September 2017 intake. Application forms will be available on the day, also from Human Resources on the 5th floor St Bernard's Hospital and the SHS webpage <http://shs.gha.gi> All applications should be returned by no later than 29th June 2017, with interviews being held shortly after.

The interview includes the aspiring student undergoing a strict numeracy and literacy tests, group scenario discussion, individual mini scenarios and a panel interview. Students will be assessed by SHS staff, nurse management, qualified nurses and service users, making the process robust and transparent.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP said: "Nurses are the backbone of our health care, so selecting the most suitable candidates to meet the needs of our community and the GHA is of vital importance. We are looking forward to meeting as many members of the public and aspiring nurses as possible, to discuss training options to become a qualified, registered nurse at the School of Health Studies".



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 363/2017

Date: 5th June 2017

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### **GHA introduces new training for Early Pregnancy Assessment Service**

The Gibraltar Health Authority is pleased to announce that it will introduce a new Early Pregnancy Assessment Service for expectant mothers as from early June of this year. In support of this initiative, the School of Health Studies has introduced a midwifery training programme for nursing staff with a four-day workshop that took place last week.

The aim of the training programme is to ensure all staff across the board are up to date in current practices. A bespoke Gynaecology module has been designed to instruct staff nurses from A&E, Dudley Toomey and Day Surgery, as well as the midwives in the hospital, to enhance and reinforce vital skills in this key area of healthcare in Gibraltar.

Anna Sherliker, BSc (Hons) Midwifery from the University of Salford, Manchester led the programme.

GHA Clinical Nurse Manager Fiona McCoubrey explained that another of their objectives was to empower staff when dealing with pregnancy loss. Ms. McCoubrey explained that the training has been tailor-made to provide staff the proficiency to deal clinically with all aspects of such a difficult experience, including psychological and emotional care.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice the Hon Neil F. Costa MP welcomed Ms Sherliker to Gibraltar. Mr Costa said: "Ms Sherliker brings over 26 years' experience in midwifery practice, education and research; a breadth of knowledge that will greatly benefit our nurses. This new service has been created for all staff in the GHA, to provide high quality support for the women of Gibraltar. As a Government, we put the health of patients and the community first, and with this in mind, the Ministry for Health, in conjunction with the GHA, and all health professionals, are keen to facilitate new training programmes to improve the service our community rightly expects and deserves."



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 373/2017

Date: 8th June 2017

### **GHA Amends In Vitro Fertilisation Service to Include Female Same-Sex Couples**

The Gibraltar Health Authority has approved an amendment to its In Vitro Fertilisation Policy to include female same-sex couples in accordance with the same conditions that apply to heterosexual couples. The decision was taken by the GHA board at its last meeting.

In all cases the IVF treatment has to be recommended by a consultant gynaecologist with expertise in managing cases of infertility, after referral from a GP. The procedure also has to be endorsed by a second clinician specialised in the field.

The Policy is applicable to all Group Practice Medical Scheme entitled persons seeking treatment, subject to meeting a number of criteria. The partner to receive IVF must be between the age of 23 and 42, while the other partner must not be older than 55. The couple should also have a clinical diagnosis of infertility and be non-smokers prior to treatment, with the IVF recipient having never smoked, or having ceased smoking, at least six months prior to the application.

As in the case of heterosexual couples, there are several excluding circumstances for the treatment, such as: life-threatening illness, history of domestic violence, child abuse, drug or alcohol misuse, record of criminal behaviour and any interfering psychological/social factors.

Adoption of a child by either person does not affect eligibility.

The Policy has also been further developed so that heterosexual or female same-sex couples who have been refused access to IVF treatment after assessment by the consultant gynaecologist may now apply for a review of the decision by a Clinical Review Panel by putting their grievance in writing to the Medical Director.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, welcomed the GHA initiative: "I am very pleased to note that the GHA board amended the IVF policy so that this can now be available not just to heterosexual couples but also to female same-sex couples. This scientific technique will help many couples who in normal circumstances would have been unable to have any children to fulfil their desire for parenthood. As a forward-thinking and progressive administration we are confident that this is a positive addition to the services provided by the GHA to the entire community. I wish to thank my predecessor, the Hon. John Cortes, for having addressed this important equality question during his tenure as Health Minister. It is right and proper that in the interests of equality IVF treatment at the GHA will now be open to female same-sex couples as well."

Ministry of Health, Care and Justice

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## PRESS RELEASE

No: 377/2017

Date: 12th June 2017

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### **Cervical Screening Awareness Week**

The Primary Care Centre will be holding a cervical screening awareness week from Monday 12th June to Friday 16th June to highlight the importance of regular cervical screening for women.

During this week women aged 25-65 years who have never had cervical screening are strongly encouraged to attend the Primary Care Centre between 1:30pm and 3:30pm to obtain a cervical screening appointment for the same day or for one later that week.

A reception desk in the main waiting area will be dedicated to this event to ensure that requests for these appointments are promptly attended to.

Cervical screening tests (also called smear tests) are carried out to prevent cervical cancer, not to diagnose cancer.

Women eligible for the screening are urged to take advantage of this opportunity as screening can detect precancerous and/or abnormal cells. The detection and successful treatment of these cells usually prevents the occurrence of cancer. The most invasive cervical cancers are found in women who do not have regular screening.

Women who are menstruating (on their periods) are still strongly encouraged to request an appointment for a cervical smear, which will be made for within the next few weeks, as soon as it would be appropriate.

GHA Health Promotion Officer, Daya Dewfall, said: "Cervical screening is a vital aspect of women's health and this initiative is a positive step forward."

Minister for Health Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, added: "The Gibraltar Health Authority continues with its policy of developing clinical services to the public in all areas of healthcare in Gibraltar. We are delighted at this latest initiative for women to avail themselves of cervical cancer screening and we encourage them to take up the opportunity next week at the Primary Care Centre. The health of the community is a top priority for our administration and we will continue to invest all the necessary resources in the GHA to ensure quality health care for the public across the board."



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 383 /2017

Date: 13th June 2017

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### 'New look' Gibraltar Health Authority website relaunch

The relaunch of the Gibraltar Health Authority website [www.gha.gi](http://www.gha.gi) has taken place today. The new website has been re-designed and developed completely in-house and provides information on all aspects of the healthcare services available to visitors, patients and health professionals in Gibraltar. The revamped website also contains general contact information, guides, forms, information leaflets and other up to date health related news that patients, visitors and service users will find both useful and informative.

The website is further designed to work on multiple platforms, web browsers & mobile devices and now includes a new careers section where vacancies will be published and applicants can interact online with the Department of Human Resources <http://careers.gha.gi/>

There is an automated news feed on GHA related matters and departments can now administer the content of their sections individually.

The original website launched in July 2013 has served well for the past three years, but it needed to be refreshed and built using the latest software and technology available. Since the launch in 2013, the website has generated 289,392 Unique User Visits, 860,582 Page Views and the GHA has received 992 Cancellations of Appointments, 2483 HR Enquiries and 1356 General Enquires via the online forms.

GHA Director for IT Heath Watson said: "We have made the site more dynamic by harnessing the digital and innovative technologies available in order to provide functionality that will benefit service users and improve the way they access and interact with the GHA via our online presence."

Commenting on the launch of the "new look" website the Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP said: "We are delighted that the relaunch of the revamped GHA website has taken place. This is the latest innovation in recent months to make the health service more user friendly, to improve and enhance communication and information exchanges between the general public and the GHA administration. The new website is packed with a wealth of material and data about the important work carried out by the GHA and the many services that we provide to our community. It is another example of the culture of service and transparency that resides at the core of the GHA, which reflects our ever present ambition and political commitment to deliver a first class, modern health service that Gibraltar can be proud of. We are confident that the website

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will be used by many to obtain up-to-date information to make inquiries and to use the online resources available, as a convenient means to interact quickly and effectively with the GHA.”

You can also follow the Gibraltar Health Authority on Social Media platforms, Facebook and Twitter.

Website: [www.gha.gi](http://www.gha.gi)  
Facebook: [facebook.com/ghaweb](https://facebook.com/ghaweb)  
Twitter: [twitter.com/GHAWeb](https://twitter.com/GHAWeb)





## PRESS RELEASE

No. 393/2017

Date: 15th June 2017

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### **MSc in Leadership and Management for Healthcare Practice – Gibraltar Health Authority’s School of Health Studies**

The School of Health Studies, working in partnership with the University of Salford, will be running a three-year part time MSc in Leadership and Management for Healthcare Practice. This Master’s level programme will be run in Gibraltar, commencing September 2017, with staff from across the Gibraltar Health Authority (GHA) enrolling on the programme.

This is a practice-related course that is aimed at health care professionals who wish to develop the knowledge, skills and qualities to be an effective health care leader. This leadership and management course will build upon and develop the confidence of staff to try new and creative approaches to the workplace, deal with complex leadership situations and provide effective patient and service outcomes.

Dr Ron Coram, Principal of the School of Health Studies commented: “Implementing quality improvements that are locally led, patient-centered and clinically driven, is how contemporary health and social care has to be delivered. Responding to local needs, this Masters course will help GHA staff to transform patient and service outcomes at a local level.”

Dr Lesley Lappin, a 'Q' Fellow of The Health Foundation working in Multi Professional Post Graduate Studies at the University of Salford, is the Programme Leader. Dr. Lappin said “I am delighted to be working with staff from across the GHA. The calibre of applications received has been excellent. Staff from the University of Salford will be facilitating development and encouraging participants to become effective leaders and supporting them to explore the challenges and opportunities required to influence local policy that impacts on patient and service outcomes.”

This is the second Master’s level programme that the GHA have provided. Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP noted that he was pleased to be working in partnership with University of Salford who are ranked as one of the world’s international universities with a proven track record of providing programmes of study for a range of health and social organisations, locally, nationally and internationally. Minister Costa said: “We acknowledge



that effective leadership and management does not happen by chance and helping our staff to develop and hone their leadership and management skills will have palpable outcomes for the delivery of safe and effective patient care. This Masters is a bespoke programme that will recognise the unique needs of staff and the people of Gibraltar, that will develop project management skills, as well as developing the skills required to manage change in dynamic and ever changing health care settings.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 409/2017

Date: 26th June 2017

### **GHA introduces enhanced community mental health services to include after hours and weekend support**

The Gibraltar Health Authority is delighted to announce that as from 19<sup>th</sup> June 2017, the Community Mental Health Team introduced a phased enhancement and extension to their service provision, through the introduction of an 'outreach support team'. This team will offer an additional tier of support for community patients outside normal hours.

Although still at embryonic stages, the new extension to the service will see the phased introduction of a number of new initiatives aimed exclusively at improving the quality of life for patients and carers in the community and will continue to develop as the service grows.

The new components will ensure that a more robust support network is available to patients after-hours and will be a welcome addition to the existing on-call team. Some of the services that will be available will include, a nursing after hours on-Call service, (17:00-08:00hrs; 7 days a week, including Bank Holidays), improved discharge packages, incorporating more supportive structures for people moving back into the community from Ocean Views Hospital, improved supervision and management of patient caseloads that require more input or monitoring, increase in frequency of home visits and checking compliance with medication. Following the necessary training, a mental health support line will be available to our known patients/carers incorporating a combination of phone and physical presence and, where necessary, linking with the excellent team at Club House to offer advice and support. It is anticipated that these innovations will have a positive impact in reducing the need for admissions or length of stay in hospital and add resilience to a community centred approach to mental health.

Ocean Views Manager, Christopher Chipolina welcomed this initiative, stating: "These reforms will ensure a more robust out of hours support network and will be a welcome addition to the existing on-call team aimed exclusively at improving the quality of life for patients and carers in the community."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa added; "I am extremely pleased with the introduction of the 'Outreach Support Team'. These innovations will provide



greater support to some of our society's most vulnerable members. There are further improvements in the pipeline, such as the support line, which will not only be available to patients, but their families and carers too. Professionals from the GHA, working together with Clubhouse and Samaritans, will be available to offer caring, compassionate and expert advice round the clock."



Deputy Chief Minister

## PRESS RELEASE

No: 459/2017

Date: 24th July 2017

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### **Government of Gibraltar Assists Local Samaritan Group**

The Deputy Chief Minister, Dr. Joseph Garcia and the Minister for Health and Care Neil Costa, have on behalf of the Government, assisted the newly established local group of Samaritans. A cheque was presented to the group's chairperson Mrs Marielou Guerrero and the money will be used to cover some of the costs of coaching Samaritan trainers and volunteers.

Mrs Guerrero thanked the Government for the cooperation received for their Samaritan initiative.

Mrs Guerrero said: "On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank the Gibraltar Government for their enthusiasm and support for our Sams project, which I believe will be of great benefit to many and complement existing community services and other charities. The Sam Helpline 116123 will be a Freephone number, totally untraceable, so people can speak about whatever problems are causing them distress in the knowledge that it is anonymous and absolutely confidential. We do not advise, judge or tell them what to do; we are just there to actively listen and thus help them to sort themselves out.

"I would especially like to thank Deputy Chief Minister, Dr. Joseph Garcia and Minister Neil Costa, who have been absolutely brilliant in their prompt actions to assist us in setting up the service."

For his part the Deputy Chief Minister said: "We are delighted to be backing the local section of the Samaritans Group. This is a very worthy cause and the Government is pleased to be associated with and to closely collaborate. The Samaritans carry out sterling work in helping persons experiencing emotional difficulty with their friendly listening service and provide a shoulder to lean on. It is truly commendable that there should be people who give of their own time on a wholly altruistic and voluntary basis to help and support others undergoing problems and to get back on their feet again."

The Minister for Health and Care Neil Costa said: "I would like to congratulate Mrs Guerrero and the Board of Trustees for a worthwhile initiative, which will greatly assist individuals going through troubled times and complement existing social, health and community services, as well as all those who have volunteered to help run the Samaritan service."



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 460/2017

Date: 25th July 2017

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### **PCC Appointment Availability is Top of Agenda for Creative Healthcare Solutions**

The Government is constantly reviewing the appointment systems at the Primary Care Centre and strives to ensure that nobody needs to wait for long periods of time to make appointments when they are feeling unwell. Patient feedback is always welcome; community and patient input is vital to achieving the high standards of care to which the GHA aspires.

There have been a number of different systems in place in recent years to improve appointment availability, from advance bookings on the first working day of every month to open access to appointments at all times. The current system of booking an appointment 48 hours in advance is the most successful system to date. The Government, however, is committed to continuous improvement and reforms are currently being implemented in order to provide better access to appointments and to improve the administrative process to reduce the proportion of patients who need to queue in any way to make an appointment. The two biggest successes in this regard have been the repeat prescription system and the sick certificate telephone service introduced this year. Since March, these two reforms have saved over 700 GP appointments a month; almost the equivalent impact of employing an additional GP.

Appointment availability is a key challenge that the PCC faces daily. Over 55,000 telephone calls are received every month from patients, mainly seeking appointments. More than 12,000 appointments are provided each month and each General Practitioner at the PCC sees up to 40 patients every day. To cope with this demand, between 0815 hrs and 0900 hrs as many as 8 clerks answer telephone calls and up to 5 clerks work at the counter to help patients who attend the PCC in person. For patients who are unwell on the day, over 300 emergency and book on-the-day appointments are available.

This level of demand requires a great deal of thought to manage, as availability of appointments must be balanced with patient safety. Our GPs dedicate much energy and enthusiasm to their consultations and are required to make accurate diagnoses and prescribe correct medications 40 times a day. It would not be appropriate, right or safe, to try to provide more appointments simply by asking the GPs to see more patients.



Additionally, there is a lot of work that is done behind the scenes that places extra demands on GHA resources. GPs are community doctors and also provide services outside the PCC, such as home visits, baby clinics, elderly care and care for prisoners. These are some of the most vulnerable members of our community and their care is a vital part of the overall service provided through the PCC. Not surprisingly, there may be days when appointment availability is reduced slightly as a result.

Primary care nursing and allied health professional teams also carry out enormously important clinical work, including dressing clinics, diabetes and blood pressure clinics, urgent treatments, district nurse visits, rehabilitation therapies, speech and language and occupational therapy, to name but a few. All of these services are in place to run in synergy with the GP clinics and are also part of the daily demand that primary care teams manage with great success.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon Neil F. Costa MP, said: “The commitment of my Ministry is to always improve services by listening to our patients and our clinical staff and implementing further modern and creative solutions to healthcare. Improving appointment availability and accessibility at the PCC is at the top of the agenda for these solutions. For the past several months we have examined ways to improve the telephone system to manage missed appointments, so that there is an equitable balance for those who attend the PCC in person. We are also carrying out efficiency drives in the administration side of the PCC, in order to free up the clerks to spend more time dealing with patients face to face.

“All of the reforms introduced over the last few months, including the repeat prescription system and the sick certificate telephone service, were suggested and implemented by lead clinicians, as I am wholeheartedly of the view that clinicians are best placed to improve services to patients. I am immensely proud of all members of the PCC team, who arguably carry out some of the most complex and integrated elements of medical care and deliver this daily to every member of our community from the youngest to the most senior. No system will be ideal when it is this complex and extensive. I can assure our whole community, however, that we strive, continuously, to provide the highest quality of primary care every day and we will continue to reform, to improve and to listen”.



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 465/2017

Date: 26th July 2017

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### Young Gibraltar students win award in UK enterprise finals

A group of Gibraltarian students from Westside and Bayside Comprehensives have won the Delta Airlines 'Pursuit of Opportunity Award' at the recent UK finals of the Young Enterprise competition in London. The young entrepreneurs developed the 'Link +' wristband with a secure chip integrated into its underside, containing personal medical information that can be easily scanned via smartphone app by authorised personnel in case of medical emergency. Their company, Link IT, has set up a working collaboration with the Gibraltar Health Authority and St John's Ambulance, as the wristband will assist doctors and first responders attending an emergency to obtain a patient's essential information and thus provide safe medical treatment.

Link IT spokesman Henry Archer said: "We are very happy with the progress we have made as part of the Young Enterprise competition and have used this as a starting platform from which we are currently developing our company.

"We look forward to seeing the benefits our work will have in the community and we are very grateful for the support of the GHA, St. John's Ambulance and the pharmacies we will be working with to get our product to the public."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, congratulated the Gibraltarian team on their achievement. "The GHA is extremely proud of the success obtained by our young entrepreneurs at the UK finales of this prestigious award. Link IT has produced an exciting product, which will assist our frontline medical staff in cases of emergency, when having access to a patient's correct medical history can make all the difference. Their achievement is a source of pride not just for the GHA, but for the community as a whole."





## PRESS RELEASE

No: 531/2017

Date: 12th September 2017

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### **Government Fulfils 2015 Manifesto Commitment to Medical Registration**

HM Government of Gibraltar has over the past few years embarked on an ambitious programme to reform the regulation of doctors in Gibraltar. In doing so the Government has fulfilled its manifesto commitment to introduce licensing by the General Medical Council of the UK and maintain the highest standards of medical practice. Among other benefits this ensures that, just as in the UK, all Gibraltar doctors will undertake an appraisal every year with a trained independent appraiser and must have their licences revalidated every five years.

The programme has been very successful and all GHA doctors and most doctors in the private sector have already undergone their appraisals. The local regulatory body, the Gibraltar Medical Registration Board, notes that more than 90% of all fully registered and practising doctors have now been licensed by the General Medical Council.

However, three doctors are unable to obtain a licence for the technical reason that they are unable to establish a connection with a Responsible Officer as required by law. In order to support these doctors the Government has invited the Independent Doctors Federation, a GMC-approved provider of appraisal and revalidation services, to offer its services to those Gibraltar doctors who would benefit from it. The Independent Doctors Federation provides these services exclusively to doctors in the private sector and is familiar with their particular demands and needs.

The Independent Doctors Federation, including a Responsible Officer, will shortly visit Gibraltar, and all doctors working in the private sector who are currently without a Responsible Officer are invited to meet with them. They will be explaining their services and happy to answer questions. Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar and the local regulator of doctors, the Gibraltar Medical Registration Board, continue to offer their support and assistance to all doctors in their efforts to obtain their licences, as they have done since the origin of the reforms. Doctors who need advice or guidance with regard to their registration and licensing are invited to contact the office of the Board.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F Costa MP, said: "To improve the standards of medical care in Gibraltar is a permanent Government objective and our partnership with the General Medical Council of UK for the licensing of doctors practising in Gibraltar is a

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fundamental element of this. I would like to thank my predecessor John Cortes for his excellent work during his tenure as Minister for Health in progressing the relationship with the GMC. In my view, these reforms will establish a framework that will maximise the highest of standards for the medical profession in Gibraltar.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 543/2017

Date: 15th September 2017

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### GHA introduces patient 'Flagging' System

The Gibraltar Health Authority continues to improve services to its patients and it has now introduced a computerised 'flagging' system at St Bernard's Hospital and the Primary Care Centre. The system will immediately notify GHA staff, including clinicians and administrative staff, of any serious medical condition or disability as soon as an individual's electronic health record is accessed. This key function of the electronic health record will provide staff with immediate medical information to assist them to deliver swift care and support to those individuals who may require special assistance.

Head of Primary Care and Deputy Medical Director, Dr Krish Rawal discussed these improvements: "I am extremely pleased with the implementation of the flagging system, which will alert staff of any serious medical condition or disability as soon as a patient presents himself/herself at any clinic or counter. This will not only improve communication between staff and patients when using GHA services, it also means staff will be aware of a patient's medical details if a patient requires emergency or other assistance. It is my belief that we should be maximising the use of our electronic systems to make patient care better in every way. This is a perfect example."

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP added: "I am very happy with the launch of the flagging system. It is our aim to make the members of our community feel comfortable and at ease when accessing health care. Communication between patients and staff is vital to achieve this and this new system provides a crucial electronic function, whereby staff will immediately be made aware of important medical issues, and of any special assistance required, in a discreet manner, especially in situations where an individual is attending a counter, at the Primary Care Centre or St Bernard's Hospital. The medical conditions presently being flagged relate to hearing impairments, dementia and learning disabilities for the primary care electronic system. For those attending the A&E Department, there are electronic 'flags' for patients who are at an increased risk of infection such as cancer patients and those taking immune system suppressing medications. We will monitor this excellent scheme and may well add extra flags in the future"



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 547/2017

Date: 18th September 2017

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### **School of Health Studies Welcomes New Nursing Students to Commence Nursing Degree**

Twelve new student nurses are to commence their nursing degree with the School of Health Studies in conjunction with St George's, University of London and Kingston University London. The School of Health Studies provides the BSc (Hons) Nursing degree. Students who will be undertaking the three year full time degree will be taught and assessed in Gibraltar.

Lecturer Mrs Noleen Jones says: 'Prior to being admitted on the course students have to meet stringent admissions criteria. They have to undergo a range of selection processes in order to demonstrate that they have the right attitude and aptitude to be successful in this demanding and challenging course of study. Our key concern is the safety of patients as well as providing a course that is fit for purpose.'

Head of the School of Health Studies, Professor Ian Peate, said: 'The School of Health Studies has a proven record of producing high quality, competent and confident practitioners. We work very closely with our clinical colleagues ensuring that students are provided with support to complete the course and to gain as much experience as possible in all fields of nursing.'

Principal of the School of Health Studies, Dr Ron Coram, welcomed the new student body and said: 'This is a challenging and demanding Degree from a number of perspectives; it is emotionally, intellectually and physically taxing. The School of Health Studies are here to provide students with the support that they need to be successful in their academic endeavours.'

After commencing the course students will spend, over the three year period, 50% of their time in clinical practice working with clinicians and caring for people, with the remainder of the 50% of the course allocated to theoretical learning where they will be able to learn the theory and apply it to practice. Students are assessed and tested in a number of areas on a continual basis. Assessment in theory and practice considers knowledge, skills and attitudes, ensuring that as the student progresses throughout the course they are meeting the required standards. If successful over the three year period, students can apply for entry on to the professional register.

The Degree provides students with the specialist knowledge and hands-on clinical skills that are



required to become a registered adult nurse with the Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visitors Registration Board Gibraltar and to make a positive difference to people's lives. Learning takes place on a wide range of health and care environments, including hospital wards and community settings. Staff from the School of Health Studies and clinicians will help to guide students as they hone their skills in safe and supportive surroundings. Examples of placements include: medical and surgical wards; critical care, accident and emergency, operating theatres; district nursing, health visiting, the Primary Care Centre, maternity, learning disability and children's nursing.

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon. Neil F. Costa MP, said: 'I am very pleased to welcome the new students to this three year degree programme; our students today will become our staff nurses of tomorrow. The programme focuses on academic learning in collaboration with other health and social care professionals, in order to enhance inter-professional and team working to ensure that the patient is central to all that is done. The Government is steadfast in its continuing commitment to invest in locally-educated student nurses. This is the fourth nursing degree to be offered in Gibraltar and we are extremely proud of the quality of the student experience in the classroom and in the clinical areas. I wish the new students much success as they begin the first day of the rest of their professional careers.'



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 553/2017

Date: 21st September 2017

### **St Bernard's A&E Undergoes Major Expansion for Better Patient Care**

A comprehensive refurbishment at the Accident and Emergency Department in St Bernard's Hospital has been completed, along with an expansion project to streamline patient care. In addition, the capacity of the minor injuries unit, (as it is also known), has been increased so it can now provide medical attention to five patients at a time, instead of two, as was previously the case. These changes have already resulted in considerable reductions in waiting times.

The A&E extension has been equipped with the latest infection control furniture, together with three extra stretchers, a new ceiling and flooring, oxygen masks, new call bells and other features. Additional nursing staff has also been assigned to the unit, together with the recruitment of a new experienced A&E senior consultant, who will be responsible for the overall management of this vital Department.

As part of the A&E overhaul, GHA policies and protocols have been updated to standardise treatment for all patients, to improve clinical outcomes and ensure that patients receive the highest possible standards of medical care.

Dr Albrecht Kussner, Associate Specialist at A&E said: "Our Emergency Department is now treating 100 patients a day, a considerable increase from when the Hospital opened in 2005, where an average of between 50 and 60 patients were being treated daily. The A&E remit has also widened since. We now run busy daily dressing clinics, administer intravenous medical treatments for patients who previously required admission, along with specialist assessments for patients returning from tertiary Hospitals. This extension reflects an increasing demand for our services. Three more cubicles have been added to the Minor Injuries area. A new nursing station with computer access to medical records and monitoring equipment, plus ample storage for wound care materials, are now part of this new five-bedded area. Furthermore, three additional rooms were added to the Department, allowing for expansion and reconfiguration of our premises."

Director of Nursing, Sandie Gracia declared: "A measure of success of the transformation within the Accident and Emergency Department is that the people of Gibraltar can see and feel the improvements being made within their health care facilities. The new and improved Minor Injuries

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area and Infusion room will provide extra capacity in a busy Department to help staff see and treat patients more effectively. For the staff it is reassuring that we have the backing of the Government to put practical plans developed by Nurses and Doctors into place to improve upon patient care and clinical outcomes.”

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, said he was delighted at the completion of the A&E refurbishment and the greatly improved service that was being provided to the community. Mr. Costa said: “We are constantly looking at ways in which to enhance patient care and to deliver the best possible patient experience. The A&E Department is often the community’s first point of contact with St Bernard’s Hospital and we set out to continuously achieve the dual aim of delivering high quality, compassionate healthcare and also to improve even further the current average waiting times. The GHA will continue to work in conjunction with our dedicated clinical staff, patients and their families, to achieve an ever improving health care service.”



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

No: 555/2017

Date: 25th September 2017

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### **GHA and Unite the Union Announce Regularising of Posts**

The Ministry for Health, Care and Justice, the GHA and Unite the Union are delighted to announce that after close collaboration and as part of our positive industrial relations, we have managed to successfully regularise a total of 81 nursing and industrial positions.

The 81 positions that have been regularised are as follows:

- 13 Nursing Trainees who successfully completed their 6 Nursing Assistant Training Programme have been employed as Nursing Assistants.
- 17 Bank Nursing Assistants' contracts have been varied to full time substantive appointments.
- 5 Domestic Services staff members have been promoted to Supervisor – Domestic Services after being acting in post for over 3 years.
- 23 Part-time General Operative Domestic's employment contracts have been varied to full-time employment following the GHA recruitment process.
- 16 Supply General Operative Domestic's employment contracts have been varied to part time substantive appointments following the GHA recruitment process.
- 7 Supply General Operative Labourers' employment contracts have been varied to full time substantive appointments after being on continuous supply employment for over 2 years.

The Ministry for Health wishes to thank the Hon Joe Bossano MP and colleagues from the Economic Development and Employment Company for their support in regularising the above posts. The newly appointed members of staff are also to be thanked for their cooperation and positive contribution to the GHA. Last but not least, the Government wishes to express its appreciation to Unite the Union, its Chairperson, Convenors and Shop Stewards for their continued partnership.

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F Costa MP, said: "I am very pleased with the extraordinarily positive steps my Ministry and the GHA have taken to regularise the employment positions of many of our dedicated, committed and hardworking staff. It was most certainly the right and proper action to take to reflect our appreciation of our employees and to

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properly welcome them into the GHA family. I also owe a debt of gratitude to my colleague, Joe Bossano, the Minister for Economic Development, for his patience and advice and Unite Officials for having brought all of these positions to my attention and for working so closely with my teams and I to make this a reality. I wish to thank everyone for their patience and for allowing us to conduct these discussions in a positive spirit of understanding and collaboration.”

For his part Victor Ochello, Senior Regional Officer of Unite the Union, stated: “The regularisation of these posts into substantive appointments is a great achievement for those concerned with a dramatic positive impact on job security and terms and conditions. Unite will always strive to improve upon its members circumstances and we are satisfied that we have been able to do so within the GHA. It would be amiss if I were not to thank our extensive network of Workplace Reps and Lay Member Officials in supporting and assisting the organisation in achieving its aims.

“It takes two sides to negotiate and to this extent I would also like to highlight that were it not for the very positive partnership that Unite has entered into with Minister Neil Costa and the GHA Management, which has been critical to arrive at this outcome, I dare say that we would now be contemplating alternative options in order to meet our members concerns.

“We look forward to further positive outcomes in the GHA, and whilst we are on the right track in addressing our members’ concerns, we have only just begun the journey.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 576/2017

Date: 2nd October 2017

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### Important Milestone for School of Health Studies Student Nurses

Fourteen students from the School of Health Studies have completed their 3 year programme of study, culminating in the award of Bachelor of Science with Honours in Adult Nursing. Four students have received a first class honours degree awarded by St Georges and University of London and Kingston University London.

The role and function of the School of Health Studies is to offer a range of educational activities. The programmes are forward-looking, anticipating not only today's expectations but tomorrow's demands. The School of Health Studies are dedicated to advancing the health and well-being of individuals and communities and are delighted to be able to announce these outstanding results from the biggest ever cohort of registered nurses completing their course at the Gibraltar Health Authority.

Professor Ian Peate, (Head of School), congratulated not only the students who have achieved outstanding degree classifications, but also all of the staff at the School of Health Studies and all clinicians who have contributed to this success.

All 14 students have been successful in being offered employment with the Gibraltar Health Authority. Mrs Sandie Gracia, Director of Nursing Services was thrilled with the achievements and welcomes the staff nurses as they take up their posts.

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Mr Neil F. Costa MP, said: "I wholeheartedly congratulate all the students on their achievements and on this important milestone and I look forward to welcoming them into our GHA family. This locally delivered and assessed programme further demonstrates the Government's desire and on-going commitment to look locally in preparing and sourcing our health care workforce. I am looking forward to celebrating their achievements at the Rock Hotel on 3rd November 2017 when their graduation ceremony will take place. The provision of high quality, safe and effective nursing care is demanding. Staff require a great deal of foresight, innovation and creativity, and a strong grasp of the sciences and the latest technologies. Our staff are able to demonstrate all of these traits and abilities. I wish them all the best with their new careers".

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## PRESS RELEASE

No: 591/2017

Date: 4th October 2017

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### **The Garden Of Serenity: In Memory of All Pregnancy Losses and Stillborn Infants**

The GHA has announced a series of improvements to the care of women using Maternity services. After a consultation with the community and staff, it was identified that there was a greater need for a service for women who suffered miscarriage and pregnancy loss. As a result, the GHA enacted a programme of works, which has culminated in the development of a new service.

A designated private area within the maternity unit has been refurbished to allow women to receive appropriate investigation and care and holistic support during these difficult emotional times. GHA's midwives have received additional training in the management of miscarriage and pregnancy loss. New guidelines, including those for the Accident and Emergency Department, have been developed to improve care. In addition, specialist neonatal pathologists from St Georges Hospital London will support the service.

Comprehensive local information has been developed for women and their partners, after consultation with women who have experienced such loss. This will be available in written form and is accessible on the GHA website. Further, there is a dedicated book of remembrance for all early pregnancy losses before 20 weeks in the early pregnancy unit. Women and their partners will be able, if they wish, to acknowledge their loss in this special book of remembrance.

The GHA has invested in the development of a memorial garden within the grounds of the hospital. In the garden, there are marble plinths where small plaques can be attached with the details of those babies lost after 20 weeks gestation.

The Ministry of Health and GHA would also like to thank the Zammit Group of Companies for kindly donating the furniture in the Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit.

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, said: "Losing a baby can only but be a deeply personal experience that affects everyone in different ways. Sadly, miscarriages are not uncommon. This service has been developed to provide the best standard of care for women and their partners at this most difficult time in their lives, by ensuring the care they require is provided in the most efficient, empathic and compassionate way possible.



“Services to further enhance the routine care of pregnant women have commenced. A new role, called the liaison midwife, has been created to provide early information and support to women after they have completed registration at the Primary Care Centre. The liaison midwife will be present at the PCC three days a week on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays between 9am and 1pm, which will coincide with the opening times of the pregnancy registration department. The liaison midwife will also be able to advise, and if required, make urgent referrals to the consultants at St Bernard’s Hospital. These arrangements will reduce the need for women to contact the maternity unit by telephone prior to booking an appointment, as the liaison midwife will provide them with comprehensive information about their pregnancy. The designation of a liaison midwife within the Primary Care Centre is an important public health step in supporting women to ensure they have a healthy pregnancy.

“My Ministry, the GHA & Midwives recognise that during this very emotional time in a family’s life, it is very important that there is a private area where acknowledgment is given to all those infants who have passed. The midwives hope that the Garden of Serenity will, in some small way, help parents through an emotional and overwhelming time in their lives”.



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 612/2017

Date: 16th October 2017

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### Advocacy Council for Health Service Users with Additional Needs

The first formal meeting of the newly formed Advocacy Council for Health Service Users with Additional Needs was held on Friday 13th October. Detailed presentations were heard from the Primary Care Centre (PCC) team to advise, inform, answer questions and receive suggestions on improving best practices for all who use health care services, in particular those who may require extra assistance.

The Council is formed by representatives from the Gibraltar Alzheimer and Dementia Society, Gibraltar Disability Society, Gibraltar Dyslexia Support Group, Gibraltar Hearing Impaired and Tinnitus Association, Clubhouse Gibraltar, Downs Syndrome Support Group Gibraltar, Autism Support Gibraltar, ADHD Gibraltar and Care Agency. These key groups work to advocate for members of our community who have more specific and additional needs for health care. The Advocacy Council aims to bring this extensive specialist knowledge and experience together so that the groups and GHA can work in a far more collaborative way, both with each other, and with patients and those who care for them.

Today's meeting was the first in a planned series of meetings over the coming months. These will include presentations from GHA staff in Accident and Emergency, Mental Health, St Bernard's Hospital and the School of Health Studies. While presentations may form the start of each meeting, the value will be in the discussions, questions and suggestions from all members of the Council and in the formation of close working relationships amongst all stakeholders.

Director of Primary Care, Dr. Krishna Rawal, said: "It is crucial that we provide a service that is accessible to all members of our community, with dignity and compassion. We understand that we have members of our community using our services who may require extra help, for example, when attending a counter or visiting a GP clinic. To me, the Advocacy Council represents a new chapter for the GHA and a wonderful opportunity to work closer with our patients and service users, so that we can improve and develop the services and care that we provide. We must always strive to provide the best care we possibly can and I cannot think of a better team of people to work with."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, said: "For me, it has truly been one of my greatest privileges to work with committed and passionate individuals who selflessly give of their time for the benefit of others. These groups carry out a truly important function in the work that they do; not only in that they advocate and speak for those who perhaps

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cannot speak for themselves, but they do this voluntarily in their own time, as they believe it is right. In this, they deserve our respect and willingness to engage and work together. My Ministry maintains an open door policy for all groups who can contribute to the general wellbeing of our amazing community through their commitment to the welfare of others.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 622/2017

Date: 18th October 2017

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### **Minister Costa delighted with positive response to new Matron Service introduced at GHA**

The Gibraltar Health Authority has successfully reintroduced a modernised and clinically-reinforced matron role in order to raise clinical standards at St Bernard's Hospital and to enhance quality care to patients. The move has been widely welcomed by health users and professionals alike, as matrons play a key role in assisting the Clinical Nurse Managers to integrate a consolidated approach to best practices.

The two new matrons are Natasha Cerisola and Jolyn Gonzalez, who have been tasked with the responsibility of developing and maintaining GHA policies and protocols and to maintain high standards of care delivery across the board, along with patient safety and satisfaction in all areas of the GHA.

Other duties include ensuring that GHA rules are adhered by staff, mentoring staff, streamlining lines of communication with patients and the observance of high standards of hygiene and infection control procedures in wards. The Matrons will also oversee the systems of accountability and responsibility that govern the conduct and performance of nurses, providing professional guidance through changing working practices.

In terms of relations with the community, Matrons will listen to family concerns and act as advocates for patients and relatives, as strong and approachable figures with whom they can clearly identify. Other core functions will be to ensure that convalescing patients are nursed back to health in a comfortable environment and to coordinate the right plan of clinical care for their needs.

Historically, Matrons were highly respected figures with a 'hands-on' approach, who played an important role in the Gibraltar Health Authority. Although the position was discontinued in modern times, and its functions absorbed by the Nurse Management Team, the reintroduction of the position has been deemed desirable in order to improve our patients' experience.

#### **Successful Matrons**

Natasha Cerisola completed her studies as staff nurse in 2003 and worked in A&E until 2014, when



she was promoted to the position of Sister. She is an Adult Life Support instructor and recently completed an Advanced Trauma Nursing Course in London which provided valuable experience in Emergency Care.

Jolyn Gonzalez has been nursing for 17 years, having trained in England and gaining experience in Intensive Care and Coronary Care for five years before returning to Gibraltar. Previously the Sister at the ITU, she has worked there for the past 12 years. She completed a Masters in Critical Care last year.

Natasha said: “Old Matrons were very well respected and we feel honoured to be carrying the title again.”

Jolyn said: “We can learn from all that is good from the past in order to improve clinical care in the present and look forward with confidence to the future.”

Director for Nursing Services, Ms Sandie Gracia, added: “The reintroduction of the Matron role is a positive move in the right direction of providing a visible and accessible presence in the ward that will ensure that all clinical care provided is patient focused. Both Jolyn and Natasha’s personalities, values and clinical experience, makes them exactly the right people to enable us all to see things through fresh eyes, and, most importantly, those of the patient.”

For his part Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP said he was extremely pleased with the new Matron service at the hospital. Mr Costa said: “Our considered initiative to reintroduce the Matron at St Bernard’s Hospital after a long absence has had a highly positive impact on the delivery of health care in the wards. It is already having a beneficial effect on the overall patient experience. The Government is proud of the manner in which we have been able to provide the foundations for career progression at the GHA, for training and development of staff in all areas. Gibraltar can be proud of having its health service, with magnificent professionals who are devoted to the needs and well-being of patients and performing a first class job for the community.”





## PRESS RELEASE

No: 626/2017

Date: 23rd October 2017

### **PwC to Support Improvements in the Gibraltar Health Authority**

A group of health care specialists from leading UK consultancy firm PwC is currently conducting a review into the Gibraltar Health Authority with the aim of finding ways to generate more value for money for the community. The exercise is mainly focusing on aspects of financial and corporate governance and the management of contracts for services provided to the GHA.

GHA managers led by Medical Director Dr Danny Cassaglia, in conjunction with the Ministry of Health, Care and Justice, are already taking action to drive forward reforms PwC has proposed. PwC will use their wealth of experience of working with health organisations in the UK to help the GHA develop new structures and processes, which can deliver best practices in these areas.

“We will look to make recommendations around best practice systems and processes to help the GHA make more efficient use of resources and support the continued improvement in patient care. We will build on the good work already being undertaken recently by the GHA itself to achieve these objectives”, said Yvonne Mowlds, Partner at PwC.

Further, PwC will conduct analytical work around the prescriptions spend to fully understand why the cost has steadily increased in recent years and compiling better data and processes in respect of contract management for clinicians. Following the evaluation, PwC will report to the Minister for Health, Care and Justice, with recommendations that the GHA leadership can take forward.

Medical Director, Dr Daniel Cassaglia said: “The new GHA leadership team now has a unique opportunity to take advantage of the of the extensive experience of the PwC team and put in place the measures required to achieve clinical excellence, optimise the patient experience and ensure that we are able to provide a high quality standard of care and best use of health technologies of proven value.”

The Honourable Minister Neil F. Costa MP said: “The Ministry of Health is determined to ensure best practice in all corporate and administrative systems that are required to deliver a first class health service to the community. We want to achieve maximum value for money and efficiency in respect of the investment we make each year in the GHA. To this end, we have contracted the support of an expert auditing firm with extensive healthcare expertise to look into the mechanics of how we operate our health care provision in Gibraltar. Our objective is to provide the best

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possible health care at the best value for money for the taxpayers. I look forward to the recommendations, so that we can put them into action to the benefit of our community.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 649/2017

Date: 6th November 2017

### **Gibraltar Health Authority's (GHA) School of Health Studies and Kingston University, London and St George's, University of London Graduation Ceremony for the Award of the BSc (Hons) Nursing (Adult) and BSc Healthcare Practice**

A graduation ceremony for the presentation of BSc (Hons) Nursing (Adult) and BSc Health Care Practice took place on Friday 3rd November 2017 at the Rock Hotel. The hosts of this event were the School of Health Studies and the Gibraltar Health Authority (GHA). The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F Costa MP, attended together with the Executive Dean and Pro Vice Chancellor, Professor Andy Kent Kingston University, London and St George's University of London. In addition, the Principal of the School of Health Studies, Dr Ron Coram, presented the School of Health Studies awards.

Professor Ian Peate, Head of the School of Health Studies said 'The School of Health Studies has an established record of producing competent and confident practitioners. We work very closely with our clinical colleagues who help to ensure that students are offered support to complete their studies and to gain as much experience as possible in all fields of nursing'.

The award of BSc (Hons) in Nursing (Adult) is the culmination of three years' hard work for all the graduates who have obtained their Degree.

Mrs Noleen Jones, School Lecturer commented 'I have worked with, and supported, these students over the three-year programme. This has been three years of commitment, dedication and hard work and what they have achieved they should be immensely proud of'.

Mr James Viñales, Principal Lecturer said 'This group of students have not only had to produce academic work of a high standard to demonstrate their ability to study at degree level, they have also had to do this whilst managing their day job. They have shown tenacity and determination and it is right they should be commended in receiving their award'.

As is the case with all academic courses, the pace has been demanding as students have to undertake examinations, pass assessments and learn clinical skills that are essential in a fast

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changing and demanding health service. Of the 14 graduates that completed the BSc (Hons) Nursing (Adult) programme, 4 achieved 1st Class with Honours; this is an outstanding achievement.

In addition, there were 7 graduates achieving the BSc in Health Care Practice.

Dr Ron Coram, Principal of the School of Health Studies said 'This is a challenging and demanding Degree, from a number of perspectives; it is emotionally, intellectually and physically taxing. The School of Health Studies and our clinical partners have provided students with the support that they require to be successful in their academic and practice undertakings'.

The Honourable Neil F Costa, Minister for Health said 'I am immensely proud and pleased, as are the Government, to see how our students' efforts have been transformed into the award of a health care degree. Working and studying at the same time requires a considerable amount of motivation, effort, sacrifice and commitment. In order to reach the very high standards laid down by the nursing profession, there has to be perseverance and diligence. For those newly qualified nurses, graduation becomes the first day of the rest of their professional career. On behalf of the Government, may I take this opportunity to wish all graduates much success for the future, as well as offering them our very warmest congratulations'.



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 674/2017

Date: 14th November 2017

### **GHA enters into agreements with two U.K Transport Service Providers for Sponsored Patients**

Following a tender process, the Gibraltar Health Authority is pleased to announce that it has formally engaged in contractual agreements with two UK transport companies, to provide services to sponsored patients and their appointed escorts, when travelling to London for treatment or, to attend medical appointments.

Seven established transport service providers were invited to tender, of which two were successful, namely, 'Raj Car Services and 'Greyhound Cars'. The contracts were signed last Friday, 11th of November, at Gibraltar House in London. Both contracts will run for a minimum of twelve months.

The two service providers will offer transport to sponsored patients and their escorts, from Gatwick and Heathrow airports, to their accommodation. Upon arrival at the airport, patients and their escorts will be met by their designated driver. The service will also be available for the return home, when patients and their escorts will be driven from their accommodation to their departure airport. The Gibraltar Health Authority's Sponsored Patients Department will be in contact with the transport providers and sponsored patients or their escorts to make arrangements.

Darion Figueredo, General Manager at St Bernard's Hospital, said: "The services provided by 'Raj Car Services' and 'Greyhound Cars' are an important one for our sponsored patients and their escorts. The tender process was comprehensive, and, our objective, was to ensure that our patients and their escorts will be provided with a professional and secure service at fair and competitive prices."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, added: "To travel abroad to receive medical treatment can be a worrying time for patients and their escorts. It is our duty to do all we can to reduce any stress and to make our patients' experience as comfortable as possible. I am also pleased to learn that the best service providers also offered the most competitive prices. It is important that we consider optimum value for money for our community when entering into any agreements."



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 692/2017

Date: 23rd November 2017

### **New Cafeteria opens at Ocean Views**

A new cafeteria at Ocean Views Mental Health Hospital was officially inaugurated on the 23rd of November 2017. The cafeteria will be open to all service users, visitors, and staff at Ocean Views, Hillside Residential Home and the Bella Vista Day Centre.

The aim of the establishment is to offer supported employment to persons living with mental health issues. The initiative has been made possible as a result of collaboration between the Gibraltar Health Authority and Clubhouse Gibraltar.

The cafeteria will operate using a local mental health charity, working in partnership with Clubhouse Gibraltar, in offering their members sheltered employment opportunities within the hospitality and catering industry.

Over the last two years, Positive Pathways has been working with Clubhouse Gibraltar, and other mental health charities and local firms, who have generously contributed towards the project.

Darryl Britto, Positive Pathway's Project Manager, stated: "The Cafeteria will be operating using a social enterprise model, with an emphasis on social reinvestment. "We are working in partnership with Clubhouse Gibraltar in offering their members opportunities to work and receive training within the hospitality and catering industry, as part of Clubhouse Transitional Employment Program."

Mr Chris Chipolina, Manager at Ocean Views said that the cafeteria was an important development, as it would provide persons living with mental health issues the chance to acquire proper catering skills that would be transferable to any other catering establishment in Gibraltar. He said: "We purposely kitted out the cafeteria with industrial equipment of the kind that can be found in other bars and cafeterias. This is in its initial stages and our aim is to expand the programme to other areas such as gardening. It will make a big difference to Ocean Views and we are very much looking forward to it."

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Mr Neil F. Costa MP said: "The cafeteria is a wonderful initiative, which will not only provide a service to the entire campus, but job opportunities to persons that may find it difficult to take the first step to commence, or get back into, employment. No doubt, it will provide these individuals with a sense of pride and purpose and help

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them gain confidence in a working environment. Initiatives such as these are invaluable, as we have a duty to provide opportunities to all members our community and ensure persons do not feel isolated and that they can make significant contributions.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 716/2017

Date: 30th November 2017

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### **Minister Costa in meetings with Scottish and Welsh Cabinet Secretaries for Health.**

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, travelled to Scotland and Wales, to hold meetings with the Scottish and Welsh Cabinet Secretaries responsible for health care provision. Minister Costa was accompanied by the Medical Director of the Gibraltar Health Authority, Dr Daniel Cassaglia.

In Cardiff, Mr Costa met Mr Vaughan Gething AM, the Welsh Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services. While in Edinburgh, Minister Costa held talks with Ms Shona Robison MSP, Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport. Minister Costa and Dr Cassaglia also met with Professor Jason Leitch, National Clinical Director of Healthcare Quality and Strategy for NHS Scotland.

Mr Costa also had the opportunity to meet Dr Philippa Whitford, a Scottish Nationalist Party MP in the House of Commons and SNP parliamentary spokeswoman for Health in London.

GHA Medical Director Daniel Cassaglia said: "It was a very interesting series of meetings for us, as we were able to gain first-hand knowledge of health systems in both Wales and Scotland and see from close quarters the challenges faced by health services in parts of Britain. It was a productive visit, as we were able to exchange views and experiences with colleagues and team leaders at the sharp end of the delivery of these vital services to the public. We discussed issues relating to healthcare improvement and in particular Clinical Governance, patient safety, procurement, professional development for Health professionals, all of which are vital in our effort to improve our clinical services at the GHA."

Mr Costa said: "It was an important opportunity for me to cement my relationship with my Scottish counterpart and to meet the Welsh Cabinet Secretary for Health, both of whom are seasoned politicians with great experience in the provision of health services to their respective communities. Further to my previous trip with my Medical Director to Scotland, we pursued our discussions in attempting to find commonalities and seek to determine whether the GHA could





establish economies of scale. We are hopeful that we will be able to find synergies, which will be mutually beneficial.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 744/2017

Date: 12th December 2017

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### **Minister Costa hosts third meeting with Advocacy Council for Health Service Users**

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, met for the third time with the Advocacy Council for Health Service Users with Additional Needs. The meeting included presentations by medical professionals from the Accident and Emergency Department (A&E), Mental Health Services and the Audiology Department.

The presentation, delivered by the Accident and Emergency's Staff Nurse, Mrs Justine Rovegno and Enrolled Nurse, Mrs Joanna Muñoz, included detailed explanations on protocols followed when individuals with additional needs present at A&E. Recently recruited A & E Consultant, Dr Francis Heyes, contributed to the presentation and presented statistical information on A&E attendances and commended the GHA for the recent improvements within the department. Of particular note, was the statistic that 31,755 attend A&E in 2016, notwithstanding that Gibraltar's population is approximately 32,500. This contrasts starkly and unfavourably with the UK, where only 36% of the population attended A&E in 2016. Minister Costa explained that Dr Heyes is presently conducting a review of A&E, along with Dr. Albrecht Kussner.

Charge Nurse for Mental Health Services and Team Manager for the Community Mental Health Team, Mr Sukh Khaira followed, advising the Council on the safeguards and practices in place for individuals with mental health issues who attend A&E.

Mr Tony Loddo, Audiologist, addressed the Council members on protocols followed by GHA staff when persons with hearing impairments attend the Primary Care Centre.

The Council members and GHA's Clinicians, raised questions at the conclusion of each presentation and various ideas were debated for implementation.

Mrs Debbie Borastero, Council member and Chairperson for the Gibraltar Disability Society said: "The Gibraltar Disability Society encourages co-operation by HM Government with support groups in forums such as the Advocacy Council for Health Service Users with Additional Needs. These working groups are essential, as they ensure input and knowledge of groups such as the Gibraltar Disability Society are not only heard by HM Government, but also used to help improve and adapt all services for the benefit of those with additional needs. The Gibraltar Disability Society wishes to thank the Honourable Minister, Mr Neil Costa, for implementing this Council and we look forward to continuing to work together."

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Team Manager for the Community Mental Health Team, Mr Sukh Khaira stated: “I was pleased to have been given the opportunity to provide information and advice to the Council on matters relating to mental health; namely, procedures followed when individuals with mental health issues attend A&E. These persons, on such occasions, can find themselves feeling particularly vulnerable and it is vital that we, at the GHA, adopt the best practices to care for them. It is important that we communicate with our service users, and, as in this case with the relevant advocacy groups, to ensure we can properly meet their specific needs.”

Minister Costa said: “This was our third Council meeting since its formation, and the second time our excellent clinicians delivered presentations on their respective remits. Following the detailed presentations, I found the discussions between the Council and our members of staff particularly significant, informative and useful. I am firmly of the view that we must maintain strong and direct links with advocacy groups, as they provide invaluable insight and feedback which we, at the GHA, can use to assist us in further developing and improving on the services we provide. Moreover, the Council is a place for open and detailed debate and the exchange of ideas and I am happy that various matters arose that we will be able to consider and, if feasible, implement.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 750/2017

Date: 13th December 2017

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### **Minister Costa welcomes the donation by the Prostate Cancer Support Group to purchase new equipment for the Urology Department**

The Gibraltar Health Authority has recently purchased new equipment for the Urology Department at St Bernard's Hospital, following a donation from the Prostate Cancer Support Group. The Nexam Pro Professional Urodynamic System is equipped with state of the art technology, which achieves high quality investigations, a complete diagnosis of pelvic floor dysfunctions and provides biofeedback to clinicians. The Nexam Pro equipment was delivered to the GHA in August 2017 and was acquired with a charitable donation from the Prostate Cancer Support Group.

Specialist training for the medical profession by the suppliers was completed at the end of November 2017. According to the staff at the Urology Clinic, the equipment allows for earlier diagnosis and subsequent treatment of Prostate Cancer.

Mr Tamas Takacs, Urologist Associate Specialist, said: "The new urodynamic equipment is designed to investigate not only the pathological conditions of men's lower urinary tract syndrome, but the most complex cases of male and female incontinence also, something that has never been available in Gibraltar. It creates the opportunity to perform the full investigation process for our patients locally, for any micturition problems. Moreover, with a new software, a modern and non-invasive treatment option, (biofeedback training), will be feasible. It helps to avoid inconvenient travelling for investigations and treatment to a large group of patients, who face a really challenging situation when they need to travel."

For his part, the GHA's Medical Director, Dr Daniel Cassaglia, personally thanked the Gibraltar Prostate Cancer Support Group, for the charity's tireless work in pursuit of improved quality of care for the patients they represent. Dr Cassaglia said: "This is an excellent example of working together with patient advocacy groups to improve GHA services and aim for the highest achievable clinical standards in Gibraltar."

Mr John Diaz, Chairperson of the Prostate Cancer Support Group Said: "Ours is a local Charity whose sole purpose is to increase awareness, provide information, support and assistance to those suffering from prostate cancer and other prostate related diseases. We are delighted to continue to work in partnership with the GHA to ensure that local patients receive the highest possible

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standard of care and treatment. The donation of this equipment will further enhance the service already being provided at the Prostate Clinic; a Clinic, which our Charity was instrumental in setting up. The donation of this equipment is but another step in achieving our goal of excellence in this specialist area. All this has been made possible by the generous donations of the local community and sponsors, to whom we are extremely grateful."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, said he was truly pleased at the repatriation of yet another medical service to Gibraltar. Mr Costa said: "This new equipment will allow the local team to repatriate certain urology tests and therapy to St Bernard's Hospital and allow us to treat our patients at home. The GHA is constantly looking at ways in which to improve healthcare services to our community in the most efficient, medically advanced manner possible and to provide the best value for money to the taxpayer. With the purchase of this comprehensive urodynamic system, which uses the latest technology, I am pleased that the GHA is taking yet another step in the right direction."



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 760/2017

Date: 18th December 2017

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### Increased Capacity at Primary Care Centre

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar maintains a commitment to listening to feedback from all members of our community. As such, the Ministry for Health is pleased to announce that the Primary Care Centre (PCC) will increase the number of General Practitioners until the end of March to keep pace with not only the increased winter demand on appointments, but to overall increase GP walk-in and on the day appointments and the flexibility of the PCC to meet the needs of Gibraltar.

With immediate effect, locum cover will be provided for extra clinics and these will continue through to March 2018 to ensure all aspects of the winter flu season have comprehensive GP cover. In addition, a further part time GP will start in the PCC with immediate effect to provide far greater capacity throughout not only the winter, but also the summer months.

The PCC will introduce a "See and Treat" style service, where patients can be seen in an area that mirrors the minors area of a UK A&E Department, with nurses and GPs working together to see patients as they walk in the door. This will create not only extra capacity, but also a flexibility that the PCC has hitherto been unable to offer.

Dr Krishna Rawal said: "We are extremely grateful for the increase in clinician numbers. Our GPs and Nurse Practitioners work extremely hard to provide the best level of service possible, but the winter flu season places the PCC under great strain and it is always a deep disappointment for us if we find ourselves in a position where we have no more appointments to offer. These increased resources will give us approximately 280 extra walk-in and on the day appointments for the winter months. I am very excited about the development of the "See and Treat" area, which I am confident will enhance our services."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP said: "The Primary Care Centre is the first port of call and the public face of our health service and it must have the capacity and resilience to deal with demand on appointments throughout the year. Whilst the winter increase in demand is entirely to be expected, we must listen and learn. Further to the various reforms already introduced this year, it is my intention to fundamentally restructure and develop primary care services to the point where we are able to use the new full time GPs to create a service that bridges the gap between primary care and A&E, so that walk in and on the day appointments are always available and patients are never turned away."

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## PRESS RELEASE

No. 762/2017

Date: 19th December 2017

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### **GHA announces the opening of a new Lymphoedema Clinic**

We are extremely proud to continue our drive for a modern, up-to-date health service that serves every member of our community, in particular, to those most in need. In this, an elegant demonstration of the Gibraltar Health Authority working in partnership with our community, is the opening of the brand new and purpose built Isaac and Rachel Levy Lymphoedema Clinic.

Staffed by trained GHA nurses, but totally funded by Mr James Levy CBE QC, the Lymphoedema Clinic, based in the Primary care Centre, is an impressive and modern facility designed to care for patients suffering with this long-term chronic condition.

Lymphoedema is swelling and fluid retention in areas of the body caused by damage or a blockage of the body's natural lymph fluid drainage system. This condition is very difficult to treat and needs management with fluid drainage-assisting massage and equipment, which provides pressure waves up a limb to move fluid away from a swollen area. The relief from the constant pressure of fluid retention when a patient completes a treatment is enormous and extremely rewarding to see.

Mr James Levy CBE QC said "My wife, family and I are delighted to have been of some help in the refurbishing of this small but important facility for the GHA. We are honoured that it should bear my parents' name and we are very grateful for the opportunity given to us to participate in this project".

Dr Krishna Rawal, Deputy Medical Director, stated: "I am so pleased to see how the Primary Care Centre is working with our community to develop and deliver some truly important services, so we can improve our care of patients who have very specific medical needs. It has been a privilege to work with Mr James Levy on this project; his willingness to help and the bonds we have strengthened have made this a high point of my year. It is my genuine belief that we are all part of the team when it comes to caring for our precious community."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP said: "While we strive every day to improve all our services, some services need particular attention and energy. The Isaac and Rachel Levy Lymphoedema Clinic is an excellent example of a team of professionals from different areas coming together with a clear focus to provide something truly noteworthy. My deepest gratitude to Mr James Levy CBE QC for his help and belief in our health services and to the health care professionals whose vision has brought this flagship project to reality."

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## PRESS RELEASE

No. 766/2017

Date: 20th December 2017

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### **A new facility creates an enhanced Cardiac Rehabilitation Centre at St Bernard's Hospital**

Patients enrolled in the Cardiac Rehabilitation Centre will enjoy a new, modern facility following the addition of new equipment. The newly renovated space is designed to create an optimal, healing environment for patients with cardiopulmonary history or classified as 'high-risk'. The gymnasium is furnished with the latest equipment and a fully integrated audio-visual system, which will provide music during exercise sessions and will support education, mindfulness and relaxation needs.

The new Cardiac Rehabilitation Centre has been named in honour of the late Mr Lionel Perez, in recognition of his voluntary services. The late Mr Perez was chairperson of the Cardiac Rehabilitation Support Group, which was founded in 1998 by Mr Gerry Fortuna (Cardiac Specialist Rehabilitation Nurse). In the year 2002, he formed part of the Primary Care Patients' Forum, where he actively advocated on behalf of the patients and their families. Mr Perez became a well-known local leader, who chaired monthly meetings with the Cardiac Support Group to discuss the service's structures, processes and outcomes, in a bid to improve the quality of services being offered. His continuous involvement and dedication led to the formation of the Gibraltar Cardiac Association, a charitable association whose primary objectives are toward health equity and patient centeredness in cardiac care. In this respect, the Health Ministry and the GHA are working closely with the Association to better and fully understand the needs of cardiac patients.

Cardiac rehabilitation is geared towards improving quality of life and reducing risk associated with heart problems. It is designed specifically for people who have had recent heart problems such as angina, suffered a heart attack or have undergone heart surgery. The patients who have completed the Cardiac Rehab Programme will become eligible to join the Cardiac Rehabilitation Self-help Group, as part of the maintenance phase that focuses on independence, while helping them maintain a healthy heart.

Gerry Fortuna, Cardiac Specialist Rehabilitation Nurse, said: "I am extremely grateful to HM Government of Gibraltar and the Honourable Minister, Mr Neil F. Costa, for having recognised and acted upon the needs of our cardiac patients, their families and the importance of resourcing the service adequately, in order to help reduce the cost of both preventing and treating cardiovascular disease."

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Clinical Nurse Manager, Suzanne Romero explained: “Cardiac rehab is not just about exercise, it is a comprehensive programme, which helps patients understand the importance of keeping to lifestyle modification changes that will build a healthier future and lower mortality rates.”

Dr Krish Rawal, Deputy Medical Director said: “I am delighted to have been involved in the recent review of this service. We are very proud of a high quality rehabilitation service, which is fully in line with clinical excellence guidelines.”

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP added: “I am impressed with this new facility. Some of my key clinicians at the Primary Care Centre have completely reviewed and refreshed a vital clinical service, which will benefit our cardiac patients and will prove pivotal in our continued drive to improve and modernise the health services which we provide to our community. Although I say this often, I feel truly fortunate to be surrounded by such hard working and compassionate clinical teams. I also wish to thank the Gibraltar Cardiac Association and in particular, its chairman Mr Troy Jeffries and its secretary, Mr Maurice Ignacio for bringing to my attention various important matters relating to the care of cardiac patients. It is only by listening and actioning association’s recommendations, and by understanding patients’ needs, that we will continue to improve our health services delivery”.



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 11/2018

Date: 8th January 2018

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### **The GHA Welcomes Numerous Advances within the Health Service**

Over the last 12 months, the GHA has launched several new initiatives and programmes to improve and modernise surgical services and maintained bed resiliency. This has included increased staffing in key areas and the appointment of specialists to develop new services within the GHA.

The appointment of a new colorectal surgeon has seen the introduction of a 'keyhole bowel surgery programme' for the first time in the GHA, meaning less invasive surgery and shorter hospital stays for patients. The new service is being supported by an enhanced recovery programme, which aims to optimise patients before surgery and ensure rapid return of normal bowel and body function. This programme involves targeted input from dieticians, physiotherapists, intensive care nurses and anaesthetists. Patients will receive the most up to date anaesthetic and pain control techniques, to ensure they are comfortable and able to get up and about within a very short time of their surgery.

The GHA has also appointed an upper gastro-intestinal surgeon twelve months ago and has launched two new surgical programmes. The first of these is weight loss surgery, (bariatric surgery), which again is mainly being done via the key hole approach. Patients entered into this programme are prepared for surgery via a programme of coordinated care, involving the surgeons and dieticians. The surgical and anaesthetic techniques being used allow patients to recover rapidly from their surgery and go home after a few days. The second programme is upper gastrointestinal surgery, also new to the GHA. This has seen new types of key hole and open stomach, spleen, liver, pancreas and gall bladder operations being performed in the GHA for the first time. Only this week, a second upper gastro-intestinal surgeon has commenced work at the GHA, she also has a special interest in Breast Surgery, having completed a fellowship with the Royal Marsden Hospital Specialist Breast team.

As the public may have read in the UK press, the NHS is regrettably in the midst of its worst winter crisis, with many hospitals without even a single free bed since the middle of November. UK newspapers have noted, that the lack of beds have meant that 'boarding' patients on trolleys was common, with some A&E departments running out of corridor space. It has been quoted in the Guardian Newspaper that "23 trusts were already 99% full and two trusts 100% full". "Tens of thousands of patients are having their surgery cancelled", with patients being warned that the ban on operations may have to be extended until the end of February 2018.

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Gibraltar is also, currently experiencing a surge in winter influenza and other flu-like-illnesses, which is similar to the pattern that is being seen in the UK. The St Bernard's Emergency Department has seen a total number of 500 attendances from the 22 December to the 27 December 2017, and the wards have had increased admissions from just before Christmas

Welcomingly, however, the GHA has had no operation cancellations, due to non-availability of beds since 9th January 2017. Notwithstanding the surge in A & E attendances, there has been bed capacity throughout this period, with average bed availability at 32 beds every night. The Chief Minister's mandate to integrate Health, Elderly Services and Care Agency, has been key and instrumental, in order to coordinate care between hospital inpatients, Elderly Residential wards and the community. There is now an active and robust multi-disciplinary team approach to be able not only to look after inpatients, but also to ensure discharged patients are cared for in the community with adequate packages of care.

The Medical Director of the GHA, Dr Daniel Cassaglia, commented that: "my medical colleagues have confirmed that the numbers of patients being seen and admitted with Influenza is the highest they have seen for many years and mirrors what is being seen in other European countries this winter. So far we have been able to cope with this surge in admissions, and GHA staff will continue to work very hard to ensure optimal bed availability at St Bernard's Hospital".

The Director of Nursing Services, Ms Sandie Gracia, said: "The Nurse Management Team, alongside Medical Staff, Allied Health professionals and Social Services who all form part of a multi-disciplinary team, are working flat out to cope with the additional seasonal pressures to ensure all patients receive the best possible Care and elective services are not disrupted. We will continue to plan and make provisions to always try to ensure bed availability, so that patients receive their elective Surgery as scheduled as the pain and discomfort caused by people's health conditions cannot be put aside".

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Mr Neil F Costa MP said: "I am immensely proud, to see how our surgical services has expanded over the past twelve months, which will definitely have a positive impact on improving the service that we deliver to our patients. My amazing bed management team at the GHA have been working extremely hard over the last few months to plan for the winter surge in hospital admissions and I am happy to announce that beds have always become available to cater for patients. This improved service has also been due to the GHA having a Social Worker permanently based at St Bernard's Hospital, who has been crucial in order to monitor and manage packages of care for individuals who need it. It also gives me enormous, personal satisfaction to learn that no operations were cancelled due to bed shortages since February 2017 given the various reforms introduced. I would like to thank, from the bottom of my heart, all GHA staff for their professionalism and dedication in meeting this winter's increased demand. They truly represent the best of Gibraltar and are a credit to their profession".



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 36/2018

Date: 23rd January 2018

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### Minister Costa welcomes GFRS transfer of third ambulance to GHA

The Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service, (GFRS), has transferred the frontline ambulance service, it has operated for the past 20 years, to the GHA's Ambulance Service.

As part of the move, seven new ambulance personnel have been recruited, initially, as Ambulance Care Assistants. Three of the new recruits have been promoted to Emergency Medical Technicians, following the successful completion of the necessary training.

As a result, Gibraltar has all pre-hospital emergency response assets operating under the same umbrella, automatically standardising vital areas such as emergency callout attendances, training, clinical development, protocols and the coordination and planning of major incident response procedures.

The new members of staff have undertaken training and development programmes, which include:

- Clinical Development Courses.
- Emergency Response Driver Training.
- Vehicles and Manual Handling Equipment.
- Major Incidents & Civil Disturbances.
- Supporting the Paramedic.
- Patient Communication.

The training programme, which was recently completed, has enabled the official handover of the emergency ambulance service operated by the GFRS to take place. The handover of the service will not affect the close relations that exist between both frontline services, as joint exercises and practical collaboration will continue. The Gibraltar Ambulance Service is also committed to continue providing clinical training to GFRS frontline staff, as it is important that these professionals preserve the clinical skills they have already acquired.

Chief Fire Officer, Mr Anthony Yusifredo commented on the transfer: "Further to the transfer of the 3rd Emergency Ambulance from the GFRS to the Gibraltar Ambulance Service of the GHA, as agreed by HM Government of Gibraltar, I take this opportunity to thank everyone involved within the GHA and Emergency Ambulance Services staff for the tremendous efforts made in order to

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achieve their training objectives, so that this transfer could be effectively made within the scheduled deadline. I highlight that that our longstanding, both professional and personal, relationship, will remain solid, as our organisations continue to complement each other in their operational development as partner emergency services, with mutual interests and objectives. As partner emergency services, we seek to protect our community and make Gibraltar a safer place to live in. Without hesitation, the GFRS will continue to make every effort to support GHA Ambulance crews, as and when required, in the execution of their duties.”

Chief Ambulance Officer Adrian Gerada expressed satisfaction with the transfer. He stated: “Although it has been a challenging journey, having all three frontline emergency ambulances operating under the same umbrella, opens a wide spectrum of new opportunities in further developing pre-hospital care in Gibraltar.”

For his part, Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP added: “I am delighted with the transfer of the third emergency ambulance from the GFRS to the GHA’s Ambulance Service, a long-standing Government objective. I think it makes sense to have all vehicles, fitted with lifesaving equipment, under the management and control of health care professionals at the GHA. I have to thank both staff at the GHA and the GFRS, who co-ordinated the transfer seamlessly and for the dedication and professionalism they have demonstrated in achieving this. Further, I wish to express my gratitude to Unite the Union, with whom we have worked closely, to ensure their members’ working conditions were, at all times, carefully considered, during this important transfer of resources.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 56/2018

Date: 1st February 2018

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### More PCC Reforms

- Qualified nurses to phone routine test results to patients
- Extra GPs being recruited to provide a walk-in 'See and Treat' service
- Extra GPs being recruited to provide evening clinics
- Better balance between advance appointments and on-the-day appointments
- £5 increase in the fee for House Calls to patients under age of 65
- Sick notes for up to 5 calendar days can be requested by phone whilst retaining existing safeguards

The Ministry of Health and the Gibraltar Health Authority are pleased to announce a further tranche of planned reforms to the Primary Care Centre (PCC). The new processes aim to refresh and reinvigorate the appointments system and to increase the community access to GPs and Nurse Practitioners.

The Gibraltar Health Authority is introducing a series of key supporting improvements to provide greater availability of appointments and more convenient access to primary healthcare services.

The first reform reflects an initiative that represents modern, current and well-established practice adopted in GP practices in the UK. Qualified Nurses will be assigned to operate a telephone service in which patients will be contacted to inform them of routine clinical results. This will enable patients to receive reassurance that investigation results have been entirely normal, eliminating the need for patients to seek a further appointment with the GP, and avoiding any unnecessary worry.

On 27 December 2017, the GHA introduced GP walk-in clinics, to deal with the winter flu season. Following the introduction of extra GPs, the PCC's capacity has been enormously improved, with an average of 48 unused appointments every single weekday. This appointment availability has not been seen in the past in the winter months and our primary care services have effectively managed to keep pace with the winter flu surge that has created such difficulties in other countries.

Further full time GP posts are now to be advertised to develop a "See and Treat" style Minor Illness Service, where patients can be seen in an area that mirrors the 'Minors' area of an A&E Department with nurses and GPs working closely together to see patients as soon as they arrive. This will create

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a far more flexible service and will bridge the gap between primary care and the Accident & Emergency Department.

After consultation with patients and clinicians, and based on the success of the walk-in clinics, it has been decided that a better balance between, advance pre-booked appointments, and book-on-the-day appointments, needs to be established. To that end, the GHA will increase the number of book-on-the-day clinics available every day over the next few months. This exercise will gradually establish the right balance between, appointments providing quick and easy access to a GP, and those appointments with a preferred GP for long-term care management and regular follow-ups.

There has also been an extensive review of the House Call Service that is provided by the GPs. It is usually preferable for a patient to attend the PCC where there is a full range of clinical equipment and clinical support staff to provide a range of treatment options. However, it is understood that there are some housebound, elderly and vulnerable patients, who are simply unable to attend the PCC and the GHA is extremely keen to preserve house calls for such patients who are in genuine need. House calls fees have not increased since October 1998 and will now be adjusted, in line with the increase in the Index of Retail Prices, and reviewed automatically on an annual basis.

To that end, and with effect from today, the fee for a visit by a house call GP will be increased from £10 to £15, for patients under 65 years old. Patients who are over 65 will continue to pay £5. Patients who are exempt for social reasons will remain exempt from payment, including pensioners whose only income is the Old Age Pension.

Perhaps one of the most anticipated and requested reforms is that of evening clinics in the PCC. It is, therefore, with great pleasure that we are able to announce that the GHA is already in the process of recruiting two part-time GPs, to provide an evening GP clinic, to run in the PCC between 6pm and 8pm on weekdays from Monday through to Friday evening. To support this change, the GHA has consulted with the Administrative Staff at the PCC, to cover the evening clinics, and will be recruiting the necessary Part Time Clerks.

Finally, the sick certificate telephone line has proven to be an enormous success and currently provides, on average, 270 sick certificates every month. This telephone service will now be enhanced by providing a sick certificate for up to five calendar days, once every quarter, instead of the current two days. This will also take effect as from today. Any additional sick certification must be requested by direct consultation with a GP, as with the current arrangements.

The Deputy Medical Director and Lead GP, Dr Krishna Rawal said, "The Primary Care Centre continues to evolve to better serve our patients and our community as a whole. These very important and extensive reforms should not be underestimated; the effect on our appointment availability will be significant and very much appreciated by patients and GPs alike, substantively increasing the time to discuss medical issues and seek advice and treatment options in a more relaxed manner."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa said, "It is clear to me that we need to constantly review primary care services to meet the particular needs of our community. I am immensely proud to announce these reforms, as I cannot stress enough how important it is to enable our GPs to deliver high quality consultations for all patients in an environment where time



pressures are reduced and a holistic approach is not only encouraged, but is the standard working practise. Not for the first time, I wish to record my gratitude to all our hardworking, highly competent and compassionate clinicians and administrative staff, for their dedication.”





## PRESS RELEASE

No: 62/2018

Date: 2nd February 2018

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### Organ Donation

The GHA continues to introduce new services, increase staffing in key areas, enhance governance and strengthen its links with the NHS.

One key development has been the agreement with the UK Department of Health in May 2015, when Gibraltar-based patients became eligible to enrol on NHS transplant waiting lists, allowing people suffering from end-stage kidney failure and other conditions to remain in their own homes while awaiting their transplant.

The next logical step is to give the people of Gibraltar the opportunity to give the gift of life by making organ donation after death possible. To that end, the Ministry of Health and the GHA have been working with NHS Blood and Transplant to make this long aspired goal a reality.

HM Government of Gibraltar and the GHA are therefore, delighted to announce a site visit by a senior delegation from NHS Blood and Transplant Service to Gibraltar to help the GHA prepare the ground to make organ donation after death an option for the people of Gibraltar for the first time. Gibraltar residents will be able to register themselves as an organ donor on the UK register. The GHA anticipate that there will be one to two potential organ donors per year in Gibraltar. It is important to note that one organ donor can potentially give the gift of life to up to eight recipients, and this opportunity to change the life of others for the better is one that will surely be taken up by many members of our caring community.

The UK Transplant team is activated as soon as a potential organ donor is identified in Gibraltar. This will set in motion a protocol to send a team from the UK to retrieve the organs in Gibraltar, if the donor is suitable. The organs will then be allocated for recipients on the UK transplant list, which includes Gibraltarians.

The UK delegation includes Dr Paul Murphy, Dr Dale Gardner, Tracey Gibson and Shibu Chacko. Dr Murphy is the National Clinical lead for Organ Donation and was a member of the Organ Donation task force. Since the publication of the task force's recommendations in 2008, Dr Murphy and his

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team of regional and local clinical leads for organ donation have overseen a 75% increase in deceased organ donation in the UK. Dr Dale Gardner became the UK Deputy National Clinical Lead for Organ Donation for NHS Blood and Transplant in 2013 after being both a local and then regional lead for organ donation in Nottingham, where he is a Consultant in Adult Intensive Care. Tracey Gibson is the Team Manager of the South East England Organ Donation Services Team with whom we plan to develop our operational links. Shibu Chacko is a Specialist Nurse in Organ Donation (SNOD) with NHS Blood and Transplant UK.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, was immensely pleased with the visit: “It is vitally important that we continue to work closely with the Department of Health in the UK to ensure that the process of enrolling in the NHS transplant waiting lists, and receiving organ transplants, is one that works for our patients. The fact that our patients can remain longer at home whilst waiting to receive a transplant will provide some comfort during what can be a traumatic period in their lives and those of their loved ones. It is also important that we have become eligible to register as an organ donor, to allow Gibraltarians to contribute to the number of organs available for life saving and life transforming transplants. As ever, I wish to sincerely thank the Intensive Care Unit Lead Consultant, Hamish Thomson, and my Medical Director, Daniel Cassaglia, and all persons involved in this process, whom have worked incredibly hard to make organ donation a reality.”

#### **Note to Editors:**

Gibraltar residents can record their desire to become an organ donor after death by signing up to the UK Organ Donor Register at [www.organdonation.nhs.uk](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk) or by calling 0044 300 123 23 23. After you submit your registration, the Organ Donation team will have a record of your wishes. After you register, it is also important to make your wishes known to your family members so they can support you in making the gift of life after your death.



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 77/2018

Date: 12th February 2018

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### **The GHA Welcomes Visit by Specialist Surgeon**

A Specialist Consultant Surgeon visited St Bernard's Hospital this past week to perform a number of surgeries and follow up clinics.

Mr Johnathan Bernstein, who undertakes both NHS and private practice at The Royal Marsden in London, is also Honorary Clinical Senior Lecturer at Imperial College London. Mr Bernstein specialises in thyroid cancer surgery, head and neck surgical oncology and reconstructive surgery. He arrived in Gibraltar last week, as the GHA continue to offer treatments locally, which would have previously required patients to travel abroad to tertiary centres.

The visit was part of the GHA's extensive Visiting Consultants Programme, which continues to develop further, in a bid to repatriate as many treatments as possible. Hosting Consultants to carry out clinics locally, is very much driven by the core clinical policy, that offering patients treatment locally wherever possible, will avoid the stress and inconvenience of having to travel abroad.

The GHA's Medical Director, Dr Daniel Cassaglia, said: "Successfully repatriating a clinical service to the GHA, requires meticulous forward planning and effective teamwork, between many different professionals involved in the care pathway. GHA staff were also able to take advantage of specialist training to upgrade their skills. This initiative has enabled the GHA to provide top quality care from a specialist at a leading institution like the Royal Marsden Hospital in London at home in Gibraltar. I would like to thank all those members of GHA staff involved in making sure that this visit was a success."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, spoke about the visit: "I am pleased that the GHA hosted Mr Bernstein's visit; a very experienced and highly qualified surgeon in his field. To repatriate treatments, wherever possible, is one of our top priorities. It is vital that we continue to develop our Visiting Consultants Programme, primarily, for the comfort and well-being of our patients. To travel abroad for treatment can be a traumatic experience, although, unfortunately, for certain cases it may be unavoidable. We will continue to work, however, to repatriate as many services as possible so as to minimise the procedures for which our patients need to travel abroad."

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## PRESS RELEASE

No: 95/2018

Date: 21st February 2018

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### **The GHA Extends Opening Times at the Douglas Ferro Dialysis Unit**

The GHA has increased the Douglas Ferro Dialysis Unit's opening times to deliver Haemodialysis treatment six days a week, from Mondays to Saturdays.

The Unit, which has been operational since 2005, provides treatment to GHA patients requiring Haemodialysis. Whereas the management of the unit had been outsourced since its formation, following the appointment of Dr Simon Lines, Consultant Nephrologist and Physician in July 2017, the service is now fully delivered by the GHA.

The increase in opening times, will allow the dialysis team to increase its capacity and provide greater flexibility for their patients. The Unit will also have greater capacity to dialyse patients with acute kidney injuries, as well as to offer dialysis treatment to persons visiting Gibraltar, who are required to undergo Haemodialysis.

Dr Lines commented on the increased opening times: "I am very pleased to be able to say that we are now able to offer dialysis across more days of the week, increasing capacity to meet local demand and offering patients' flexibility. To see this project to fruition, has required the input of many different people and departments across the GHA, to whom I am very grateful. I am particularly indebted to the dialysis nursing team who have been instrumental."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP was pleased with the improved service, adding: "The wellbeing and comfort of our patients, and their loved ones, is central to everything that we do at the GHA. I am very pleased that we have now extended the opening times for this vital service, whereby we will be able to offer greater flexibility to our patients who require dialysis treatments. The majority of our patients who use this service, will require treatment several times a week. It is, therefore, essential, that we do all we can to accommodate them wherever possible, helping them to achieve greater balance between their clinical needs and their daily lives. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr Lines and his excellent team, as well as my Medical Director, for making this possible."



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 99/2018

Date: 22nd February 2018

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### **The Primary Care Centre and Advocacy Council Work Together to Provide Training and Raise Awareness**

The Gibraltar Health Authority's Primary Care team have welcomed the opportunity to work together with the 'Advocacy Council for Health Service Users with Additional Needs', to deliver informative talks and help raise awareness regarding disabilities and different additional needs.

The Advocacy Council represents various associations, societies and support groups, which support members of our community living with dementia, Down's Syndrome, autism, mental health issues and hearing impairments, amongst other conditions.

The Council members explained: "We work together to advocate for members of our community with additional needs and ensure they receive the care they need and deserve. Furthermore, frontline staff are key to delivering better value for service users and we are grateful for the opportunity to work with the GHA, to provide an important and informative educational programme".

The Advocacy Council brings a wealth of knowledge and shared experiences, which are conveyed to front line staff to improve communication and engagement with health service users, who may need extra requirements. The forum is working together to develop an on-going, structured educational teaching programme, specifically designed for the PCC staff. The aim is to help staff better understand issues affecting some service users, strategies to promote positive life changes, relational connectedness and care in how to manage complex health care needs.

The programme began with talks on "Understanding Disabilities", which were held over the period of two days, on 22nd and 23rd February.

The PCC's Clinical Nurse Manager, Ms Suzanne Romero, said: "Caring for people with disabilities can, at times, be challenging, though, ultimately rewarding and instructive. We endeavour to protect our most vulnerable service users and bring about improvements with appropriate structures and processes in place. We openly welcome this initiative, which will shape and influence future services."

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Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon Neil F Costa MP, opened the talks, adding: “It is my fundamental view that we must ensure we work closely with our community and engage with our service users. The Advocacy Council provides invaluable support to our health professionals and I am pleased that we have formed such a strong relationship since its formation last year. We regularly hold meetings on different areas within our health services, which have already proven to be extremely constructive and useful. This is yet another beneficial initiative, where we can work together towards our common goal - improving and developing on the services we offer our community”.



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 134/2018

Date: 7th March 2018

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### **New blood gas machine for St Bernard's Hospital**

A state-of-the-art blood gas machine has been installed at the A&E Department of St Bernard's Hospital, the Gibraltar Health Authority has confirmed. This is a diagnostic piece of equipment, the size of a desktop photocopier, capable of testing a small amount of freshly taken blood from an artery within minutes. The analyser measures the levels of certain gases and compounds dissolved in the patient's blood stream and gives valuable, instant test results, to the doctors and nurses.

A diagnostic sampling tool such as this, used at the point of clinical assessment in A&E, enables the medical and nursing staff to make a rapid analysis of a patient's condition and directly administer treatment especially to those who are critically ill. The staff has welcomed this initiative, noting that from a clinical perspective, this point of care testing will yield a number of benefits to the sickest patients. This will include, improved turnaround times in A&E and a reduction in time to implement a plan of treatment to patients.

Associate Specialist for A&E, Dr Albrecht Kussner said: "We make good use of the blood gas machine on a daily basis. Literally within hours of commissioning, the analyser was used to guide treatment of a patient in cardiac arrest, who was stabilised and transferred to ITU. Undoubtedly, near-patient testing of the range of critical parameters this machine provides expedites decision making and spells an invaluable asset to our Emergency Department."

Sister, Elaine Ferro commented that: "the addition of the blood gas analyser to the Department has hugely facilitated our work. The rapidity with which we are able to access results proves invaluable to the critically ill, as we are able to titrate their treatment as required in a timely manner. The close proximity of this resource to the bedside, allows us to focus our efforts on providing essential nursing care, ensuring our patient's experience with us is as comfortable as it can be. I can confirm all staff have received training on its use and maintenance."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F Costa MP said: "I am extremely pleased at the introduction of this sophisticated piece of equipment, which follows on from the upgrade of front-line medical facilities at the Accident and Emergency Department. The Government will continue to improve the delivery of medical services at the GHA for the benefit of our patients. We will also continue to review the overall material needs of the hospital and, where necessary, purchase

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the life-saving equipment, which our excellent medical profession can put to good use. Whilst we continue to make good progress in all areas of our health service, I am conscious of the need to always do much more. In this, I know I have the full support and enthusiasm of an excellent team at the GHA.”





## PRESS RELEASE

No: 169/2018

Date: 19th March 2018

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### **New Primary Care Centre and Paediatric Centre**

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar and the Gibraltar Health Authority are fully committed to elevating good quality healthcare to excellent healthcare, and as such, are truly proud to announce a new and fully bespoke Primary Care and Community Centre and a Paediatric Centre, in the surrounding grounds of St Bernard's Hospital.

The Paediatric Centre will combine children's medical health services under one roof. The project has been driven by a team of clinicians who specialise in paediatric healthcare. The centre will be a cutting-edge hub for parents and their children with a wide range of healthcare services, in a convenient and child friendly environment, delivered by highly trained specialist staff. Children's healthcare will include multidisciplinary primary and secondary outpatient paediatric medical care. There will be a full range of child services available, including Physiotherapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Dietetics, Child and Adolescent Psychology, Audiology and Child welfare services, including Health Visitors and Immunisation services.

Medical Director and Consultant Paediatrician Dr Daniel Cassaglia said, "This represents a paradigm shift in the way we deliver healthcare for children. This project has been one that has been very close to my heart and is the creation of the team of GHA professionals working with children. We all know how worrying it can be when our children become unwell and we need access to healthcare. The team of specialist professionals at the Paediatric Centre will be able to provide a friendly and efficient service and ensure that the child sees the right professional in a timely manner. This will give peace of mind to parents, grandparents and carers. We will be able to deliver better continuity of care and improved access to services particularly for children with special needs and for those children who have long-term medical conditions. The team will be able to work closer together for the benefit of the children they serve. This Centre will radically improve the way in which children's services are delivered for future generations to come."

The Primary Care and Community Centre will be a brand new three-storey building designed around the needs and advice of the health care professionals working in the primary care system. Primary care in itself will become a much more comprehensive service, focussing on improving community services and aiming to repatriate services from tertiary centres and secondary care, to where they are best provided.

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The development has been designed with the future in mind and teams will be working in integrated departments with increased office space, to make provisions for the further development of all primary health services. Whilst the backbone of this service is that of GP clinics, there will also be additional services such as an expanded health promotion, a 'walk in' minor treatment area and provision for an out of hours GP service. Familiar departments such as nursing, district nursing, diabetes, asthma clinics, community physiotherapy and occupational therapy will all be enhanced, improved and located close together to create a more cohesive team and increase efficiency.

Deputy Medical Director and GP Lead, Dr Krishna Rawal said "This is an amazing project that has been the result of extremely hard work and extensive input from all the different departments to provide a truly Community Care Centre. The result is not only new, modern and future proof, but also integrated and much more patient friendly. A great deal of thought has gone into the design of this building and we have definitely learned from our experiences in creating and running a primary care service."

Fundamentally, this new Primary Care and Community Service is reflects the central theme of integration, where primary care can now work closer with secondary care and streamline communication between GPs and primary care professionals, and their secondary care and consultant colleagues."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Mr Neil F Costa MP said, "This one single project represents one of the most significant in my time serving as the Minister for Health. As I never tire of saying, I feel incredibly privileged to serve our community and to work with so many excellent professionals to improve our healthcare services. The new Primary Care and Community Centre is the culmination of our efforts towards allowing clinicians to guide and lead our health services, while always listening to patients and placing them in the centre of everything we do. Vital to this, are the fundamental values of integrating our healthcare services and repatriating as many of these services back to Gibraltar, for the benefit of our entire community. It makes me immensely proud to announce this project, to see that the hard work and dedication by our healthcare professionals and our dedicated staff at the Gibraltar Health Authority, which has enabled this incredibly exciting project to come to fruition. I am confident that we will deliver a Primary Care Centre and Paediatrics Centre, which will enhance our services to our community and serve us well for now and in the future."

The Chief Minister, the Honourable Fabian Picardo QC MP said "In every Government's term of office, there are a few announcements that will make huge improvements to people's quality of life – and this is certainly one such initiative. I am sure that every parent will be as excited as I am at the superb facilities which are being provided at the Paediatric Centre and I must draw everyone's attention to the enormous amount of planning that has gone into this development and that of the new Primary Care Centre. I really must thank all the clinicians and healthcare professionals who have worked tirelessly to bring so many exciting ideas to fruition."

"I also want to thank my ministerial colleague and friend Neil Costa for his work and dedication in making these plans a reality. His work, his team's work and the work of all our professionals in this area makes all the difference to the lives of people who need medical care in our community and we are going to improve the physical infrastructure available for that care considerably with the projects announced today."



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 177/2018

Date: 22nd March 2018

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### **New Initiative to Tackle Child Obesity**

A new health awareness programme designed for children, known as 'CHAMP', (Children, Healthy and Active! Multiagency Programme), will be launched at the Piazza on Saturday April 7th 2018, at 10am, by the Gibraltar Health Authority. CHAMP is a local initiative that intends to tackle child obesity, which has doubled in Gibraltar in recent years.

CHAMP started as a small steering group of professionals working together for the common cause of helping children and their families live healthy and active lives. The group of 'CHAMPions' has been growing, with members from various Government Departments, including the Gibraltar Health Authority, Public Health, Education, the Care Agency, Sports and Culture, all contributing. CHAMP seeks to create an informative, pragmatic and supportive environment in which children and families are empowered and encouraged to make appropriate choices toward healthy living.

According to the World Health Organisation, poor weight management in childhood is one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21 century. Based on current trends, half of all children in the UK will be obese or overweight by 2020 and half of all men and women could be obese by 2030.

Dr Vijay Kuman, Director of Public Health, explained that this was a long standing problem in Gibraltar, noting that the GHA's dietetics department had carried out a survey of Gibraltar's schoolchildren in the late 1990s and found that over a third of them were overweight or obese, an incidence that was higher than that of UK and other comparable nations at the time.

Dr Kumar said: "Children are very dependent on their parents, families, teachers, the media and the wider society to guide them through the pitfalls of modern life. However, the quality of what they receive may not be optimal, as the older generations themselves struggle to adapt to a fast-changing world. There is no doubt that poor child health is a nation-wide problem, not just that of individuals."

Dr Annie Dai, GHA Consultant Paediatrician, said that unhealthy lifestyles leading to poor weight management have a significant impact on modern families and societies in today's world, adding: "This does not only affect personal health, but influences a nation's economic growth and social cohesion, that leads to happy, progressive communities."

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Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP spoke of the programme: “Child obesity is, of course, a matter of great concern for our community. I was very enthusiastic when Dr Dai briefed me on the work being conducted by ‘CHAMP’, and believe that a multiagency approach to tackle such an important issue, is the right one. It is essential that this is addressed in a positive and engaging manner, in order to encourage our children and their parents to make the right lifestyle choices to lead healthier lives.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 200/2018

Date: 3rd April 2018

### **The GHA takes note of complaints received in order to inform its new procedures**

The GHA has taken full note of the Public Services Ombudsman's Report relating to the calendar year 2017 and is taking all the relevant steps to ensure that the Report's recommendations are being fully implemented.

From January 2018, the handling of complaints has reverted to a system similar to that in place up to the end of 2016, where patient enquiries are first handled by GHA staff with the aim of providing positive outcomes, before formal complaints are filed. Patients can still complain to the Office of the Public Services Ombudsman without seeking resolution from the GHA. These changes to the complaints procedures have been implemented further to the recommendations received from the Office of the Public Services Ombudsman. The process followed during 2017 was one where all complaints were immediately logged as 'formal complaints' and before assistance was offered to rectify any issues. This meant that the number of complaints logged during 2017 did not represent a fair comparison to all previous years.

There has been a 50% reduction in complaints received in January and February 2018, when compared to the same comparable period in 2016. In circumstances where PALS is unable to find a resolution that has satisfied our patients, PALS will register the formal complaint with the Office of the Ombudsman, even if the patient does not do so. This is because the GHA is keen to receive advice on improvements in an open and transparent manner.

The decrease in complaints received this year is attributed to the various reforms in the Primary Care Centre, St Bernard's Hospital and the Community Mental Health Team, as well as the introduction of the 'Patient Advocacy and Liaison Service' (PALS) in November of 2016. Recent reforms introduced at the Primary Care Centre have increased appointment availability and provided service users with better access to General Practitioners and primary care services, such as the treat and see and the issuing of repeat prescriptions

Further, initiatives to better manage bed availability at St Bernard's Hospital saw an emphatic reduction in the number of cancelled medical procedures due to bed shortages. The GHA has had no operation cancellations, due to non-availability of beds, since 9<sup>th</sup> January 2017. The GHA is extremely proud to reiterate that in 2017 there were only two operations cancelled due to bed shortages. In addition, reforms have seen waiting times for Consultant referrals drop significantly over the last year as have been recently announced in Parliament.<sup>i</sup> The average waiting time at the Accident & Emergency Department during 2017, from arrival at A&E and being first seen by a

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clinician, was 1 hour and 27 minutes, which is well within the four hour maximum waiting time set by the NICE guidelines.

The Medical Director Dr Daniel Cassaglia said, “Listening to our service users and taking on board their feedback is an essential part of our strategy to keep improving our services. I want to thank all the GHA staff who have worked so hard in recent months to repatriate services back to the GHA and improve the standard of care we provide.”

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa, MP commented on the reduction of complaints received. “Reviewing reforms and improving processes in the GHA will always be an ongoing task. The GHA is already a multi-layered and wide entity, which provides numerous medical, surgical and clinical services to our entire community. I am concerned, therefore, to try to ensure that the GHA maintains a bird’s-eye view of patients the moment they enter the system and we still have work to do in this respect. Having said all of this, I am very pleased to have been advised that we are receiving fewer complaints from our service users. This is a testament to the efforts of our medical professionals, clinicians, staff and management at the GHA, who have led and embraced the various reforms. It is vital to us that any complaints that the GHA has been unable to resolve, or which are lodged with the Ombudsman at the outset, are investigated thoroughly and independently to provide the best possible outcome to the complainant. The GHA needs to ensure that, as an organisation, we are open in learning from our mistakes and work transparently on improvements to avoid similar occurrences in future. Whilst there is still a lot to do, I take some comfort in the already evidenced reduction in the number of complaints. I wish to thank the matrons, the clinical staff and PALS and all the various teams involved in ensuring the patients’ journey is as smooth and seamless as possible.”

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<sup>i</sup> Notice to editors, information on waiting times for Consultants can be found on the Government Website.



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 215/2018

Date: 16th April 2018

### **GHA to offer locally delivered BSc (Hons) Operating Department Practice in partnership with Oxford Brookes University**

The GHA will be working in partnership with Oxford Brookes University to offer a Gibraltar-based BSc (Hons) in Operating Department Practice. A delegation from Oxford Brookes University, a range of GHA Clinicians and the School of Health Studies Gibraltar, have met to discuss arrangements to take forward this new initiative forward. This exciting and challenging programme will be accredited by the Health and Care Professions Council, (HCPC). Once students graduate, they can apply to register with the HCPC immediately and start work as a fully qualified Operating Department Practitioner. The three-year full time Degree will be run in Gibraltar, commencing in January 2019, with staff from across the GHA enrolling on to the programme.

Those selected to undertake the programme will be required to demonstrate maturity and a high level of personal commitment alongside excellent communication skills. The programme offers a unique opportunity for GHA staff to develop their knowledge and clinical skills that are needed to deliver high quality care to those undergoing surgery. Students will gain a range of experiences in the operating theatre environment and associated clinical areas within the hospital setting. As a member of the operating theatre team, staff will work alongside medical and other health care professionals.

Dr Astrid Schloerscheidt, Pro Vice-Chancellor Dean Faculty of Health and Life Sciences at Oxford Brookes University said she was delighted to be entering into this relationship with the GHA: "Working in partnership with the GHA will provide the opportunity to ensure that the programme of study is robust, fit for purpose and staff will be fit for practice reflecting the needs of not only the GHA but also the needs of the people of Gibraltar."

Mr Nigel Conway, Programme Lead, spoke of the relationship between the GHA and Oxford Brookes University: "There are a number of excellent opportunities for both organisations to come together and develop a BSc (Hons) Operating Department Practice. Meeting clinicians in the GHA has provided us with some insight as to how we can tailor the needs of the local workforce ensuring that personal professional aspirations are met. We are very excited with the prospect of working with the GHA in exploring a range of possibilities to ensure that the programme offers staff numerous learning opportunities."

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Dr Ron Coram, Principal of the School of Health Studies added: “Providing a Gibraltar-based programme of study, enables us to develop our own local staff to provide local services that are responsive to local needs. This programme will recognise the unique needs of students, producing professionals who can perform effectively in the dynamic and ever changing field of health care, transforming patient and service outcomes at a local level.”

The Acting Chief Minister, the Hon Neil F. Costa MP, said he was pleased to be working with Oxford Brookes University on this new venture, commenting: “This is the first time that Operating Department Practitioners have been trained in Gibraltar. Oxford Brookes University have a proven track record of providing programmes of study for a range of health and social organisations, nationally and internationally. The BSc (Hons) Operating Department Practice programme is relevant, up-to-date and closely in touch with innovation in the field of perioperative care. It will make a crucial contribution to the design and management of services now and for the future. I am delighted that we have secured this programme that will be delivered in Gibraltar. This offers a wonderful opportunity to staff members who wish to develop further in their careers, but may not have been able to study abroad due to different circumstances, such as family commitments.”





## PRESS RELEASE

No: 216/2018

Date: 16th April 2018

### **Training in the Prevention and Detection of the Sexual Exploitation of Children**

The Child Protection Committee and Designate Safeguarding Officers from different Government Departments and other relevant agencies will take part in Training in the Prevention and Detection of the Sexual Exploitation of Children on the 16 and 17 April respectively. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate, or deceive a child or young person, under the age of 18, into sexual activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. In CSE, the victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual, and what makes this of concern is that it does not always involve physical contact. CSE can also occur through the use of technology and the internet without the child's immediate recognition; for instance, being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet or on their mobile phones without any immediate payment or gain.

CSE is a complex form of abuse and research has found that it can be difficult for those working with children to identify and assess. The indicators for CSE could be confused with what is considered typical adolescent behaviours and it requires knowledge, skills, expertise and an assessment. The investigation analyses the risk factors and personal circumstances of individual children to ensure these signs and symptoms are interpreted correctly and appropriate support is given by all those with safeguarding duties.

The Child Protection Committee has already begun working on this area of concern and one of its sub-committees led by Royal Gibraltar Police has been delivering presentations and raising awareness via the "Don't Click...Think" campaign highlighting the dangers of sexting. The Chair of the Child Protection Committee, Natalie Tavares, stated that "the safety of children and young people is a priority for this Committee and training in Child Sexual Exploitation will provide further information on this area of concern, enabling the Committee to continue developing its safeguarding strategies, and provide practitioners with the tools to assess, identify and support those at risk".

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The training will be delivered by Julie Dugdale, a leading expert in this field and senior consultant at Barnardo's, child protection and safeguarding agency in UK.

The Acting Chief Minister, the Hon Neil F. Costa MP, stressed that Child Sexual Exploitation is a grave safeguarding issue and he fully supports the Child Protection Committee in the work they are undertaking. He stated: "Professionals working with children and young persons need to be equipped with the knowledge, skills and tools to identify any areas of concern and to continue to keep them safe and free from harm. I look forward to opening this training session and to continuing the very important work in this complex and delicate area with the Child Protection Committee."



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 219/2018

Date: 28th April 2018

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### Improving the Provision of Intensive Care Treatment

To support new services and improve the provision of intensive care treatment, the Intensive Care and Anaesthetics Department have appointed 5 new registrars/hospital grade doctors, doubling the medical staffing of the Intensive Care Unit and creating a second tier of on call cover. This has allowed the GHA to deal with multiple emergencies more effectively and was invaluable during the recent Influenza outbreak where multiple cases needed Intensive care support at the same time.

Furthermore, the Intensive Care Unit has seen an increase in nursing staff, and has arranged a 'Clinical Placement Programme' with a major teaching hospital in the north of England that enables locally trained nurses to gain experience of ICU care in a major centre and complete a Masters' Degree in Intensive Care Nursing. The first group of four locally trained nurses are already nearing the end of their placements and will be returning in two months, bringing back new skills and insights to the unit.

In addition, our ICU nurses have received training in the latest emergency renal replacement therapy from external trainers. This service, previously carried out by external contractors, is now being delivered by GHA staff using the most up to date techniques.

To ensure all GHA patients benefit from these improvements in critical care delivery, our new, modern matrons, have launched an outreach service, which will identify critically unwell patients on the wards as early as possible. This will allow the medical and nursing teams to institute appropriate treatment to stabilise their condition.

Patients who have required prolonged complex treatment on intensive care will now be followed up in the ICU follow up clinic, to ensure their recovery is progressing well after being discharged from hospital.

Dr Hamish Thomson, Intensive Care Unit Lead Consultant, said "The ICU was placed under significant pressure with the Christmas influenza outbreak, but has never been better equipped to cope with these demands, and the increase in surgical services, than it is now. We are working hard to make sure that our ICU meets, and exceeds, UK standards and are planning further major improvements over the next 12 months."

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Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa, added: “It is very pleasing to witness the enhancements of our Intensive Care Unit, a crucial department within our health services. As Dr Thomson rightly highlights, the unit experienced particularly testing times in December of last year, with a number of admissions requiring intensive care. The effective manner in which the ICU coped during the influenza outbreak is testimony of its continuous development and improvement, not least, given the bed resiliency at St Bernard’s Hospital during this period. As Minister with responsibility for Health, it is my duty to provide our excellent professionals and clinicians with the right assets and resources to enable them to perform their clinical duties, using the latest methods in healthcare. It is also crucial that we continue in our efforts to repatriate as many services as possible, for the benefit of our community.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 239/2018

Date: 25th April 2018

### **New Mental Health Act and new Lasting Powers of Attorney Act commenced**

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F Costa MP is pleased to announce the commencement of the Mental Health Act 2016 and Lasting Powers of Attorney and Capacity Act 2018. These Acts are both landmark pieces of legislation, which will change in several fundamental ways the way we provide mental health care.

The new Mental Health Act is primarily concerned with the circumstances in which a person with a mental health condition can be detained for treatment. It sets out the processes that must be followed and the safeguards for patients to ensure that they are not inappropriately detained or treated. The Act ensures that people with serious mental conditions, which threaten their health or safety or the safety of the public, can be treated where it is necessary to prevent them from harming themselves or others.

Some of the main changes are –

- Creating a new independent Mental Health Board whose function is primarily to review and monitor treatment of patients and generally to represent the interests of the patient.
- The introduction of Community Treatment Orders for patients following a period of detention in hospital to assist in their transition back into the community.
- An overhaul of the Mental Health Review Tribunal by giving greater access to the patient. The patient now has a right to legal representation before the Tribunal and the Tribunal now has greater powers to review the case of a patient and to order their discharge where appropriate.

The second Act that came into force yesterday is the Lasting Powers of Attorney and Capacity Act. This Act builds on the new Mental Health Act by making provision to allow persons who anticipate they may lack capacity in future to manage their health, welfare, property and financial affairs –

- To confer authority on individuals to make certain decisions on their behalf and to allow for the creation and safeguards and registrations of Lasting Powers of Attorney.

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- To make provision for a person to be able to decide about specific treatment they may not want to receive in future, known as ‘Advanced Decisions’.

The Acts came into being following representations from, and consultations with, local mental health professionals.

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Mr Neil F Costa MP, said: “It is a great personal pleasure to announce the commencement of these two landmark pieces of legislation which build on HM Government of Gibraltar’s commitment towards the most vulnerable members of our society. I am thankful to my predecessor as Minister for Health, Prof. John Cortes, for having led the multidisciplinary team that researched, drafted and consulted on the legislative changes to the Mental Health regime and presented the Bill on that Act before Parliament. His and his teams’ work on this was exemplary. I would also like to thank psychologist Dr Alan Lillywhite and our excellent professionals at the Gibraltar Health Authority, the Elderly Residential Services and the Care Agency, for all their work.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 256/2018

Date: 8th May 2018

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### Automated Telephone Service

The Gibraltar Health Authority is pleased to announce the launch of an automated digital telephone appointment line for bookings of routine appointments at the Primary Care Centre (PCC). This will mean no more waiting in a telephone queue for a clerk, or for appointments to be released once a month. By dialling the PCC appointment number on 2000 7007 callers will be greeted with a menu of options to book the next available routine GP or Nurse Practitioner appointment, or to book a particular primary care specialist clinic, such as the smoking cessation clinic. Once a choice has been confirmed, the caller will receive a confirmation text message as a useful reminder. The automated telephone appointment system is charged at local call rates.

It is important that being able to book a medical appointment is as easy and as convenient as possible and, to that end, this service will be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to update directly with our electronic appointment system. To provide full flexibility and choice, there will also be an option to cancel an appointment through the telephone service or by replying "CANCEL" to the confirmation text message. Cancelling an appointment will immediately free up that time for someone else to book, so reducing wasted appointments and making better use of clinic times.

It is vital that we have up to date contact details of patients, including their correct mobile phone numbers, so that a reminder text message can be sent. At the PCC, a form will be available in order that the contact details can be entered on to patients' electronic health records. Alternatively, the form can be found on the GHA website at <http://www.gha.gi/mygha/>

While we are proud of this initiative, we are aware that, sometimes, patients would prefer to speak to a clerk to seek advice or simply because this is their preferred way of booking. The option to speak to a clerk will always be offered during the administration desk working hours of 0815 to 1530, and a patient will always be able to speak to an operator directly without having to use the automated service if they prefer. Given the change to our appointment system, we are starting by releasing 50% of the daily appointments to the automated system, with constant reviews to ensure we strike the right balance.

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This entirely new service will go live in four weeks' time, thus allowing the system to be fully tested and for comprehensive information leaflets to be given out to PCC users. These leaflets will explain exactly how to use the system.

Dr Krishna Rawal, Director of Primary Care added: "Technology is an integral part of the extensive series of reforms that we are introducing. Waiting in a telephone queue to book an appointment is hugely frustrating, and it has been one of my key aims to resolve this. I am hopeful that everyone will benefit from this service. I am keen to take this opportunity to thank all the PCC staff who have adapted so seamlessly to all the changes introduced and who provide outstanding care and attention to our community every day."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP said: "In the last 18 months of my tenure as Health Minister, more than anything, I have focused on the comments and suggestions of members of the community who have taken the time to call, message or email me. The issue of how to telephone the PCC has been a recurrent theme, and I have sought the advice of my key medical advisers to solve this issue. Whilst we continue to work with EMIS in developing the online functionality to book and cancel appointments, amongst other things, the automated service is a useful tool for service users that prefer to use the telephone. Simple, elegant and modern, this is an initiative that can be used by everyone, making booking an appointment more convenient, and making better use of the appointments available. I am enormously proud of the enthusiasm with which the PCC teams have embraced all the extensive reforms to date".





## PRESS RELEASE

No: 264/2018

Date: 14th May 2018

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### GHA Boost Surgical Services

The GHA has recently completed the recruitment of a number of health professionals as part of the policy to repatriate clinical services and to further improve the delivery of surgical services in Gibraltar.

Ms Christina Macano, from the specialist Breast Team at the Royal Marsden Hospital, was contracted in January 2018 by the Gibraltar Health Authority to support the expansion and development of breast surgery services. Ms Macano completed a three month Fellowship at the Royal Marsden Hospital, with whom she maintains an honorary contract, prior to her engagement with the GHA.

Mr Denes Kovacs has been contracted to support the visiting vascular surgery team. Straightforward vascular operations such as varicose veins will now be carried out at the hospital, meaning that patients will not need to travel abroad.

The orthopaedic team has also been bolstered by the permanent appointment of Mr Marius Negru, a dedicated upper limb specialist, and Mr George Chami, a lower limb specialist. Mr Kamil Baczynski has been appointed as an associate specialist in Orthopaedics and his main area of responsibility will be the spinal clinic and coordination of the visiting orthopaedic super-specialists in scoliosis, spinal surgery and paediatric orthopaedics. The measures taken to improve inpatient bed availability and reduction of the joint replacement waiting list has seen over four times as many knee and hip replacements performed this year than last.

Patients receiving joint replacements in the GHA will soon benefit from our new enhanced orthopaedic recovery programme. A new tier of resident anaesthetic junior doctors, 6 in total, has made it possible to operate on more urgent cases over weekends and reduce waiting times for injuries such as broken hips.

The urology surgery team has also been augmented with an associate specialist, resulting in increased numbers and types of urological surgeries carried out locally.

The GHA's Medical Director, Dr Cassaglia said: "The Surgical and Orthopaedic Departments have

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undergone a total restructure with many new members of staff. We now have a group of highly skilled specialist professionals working together in the GHA to provide the highest possible standard of modern surgical care. This is only the beginning of our reforms in this area. We plan to continue to repatriate more and more services to the GHA and ensure we continue to train and develop our team of professionals to provide the latest standards of care. I would like to personally thank all those members of GHA staff who work so very hard for our patients and have helped transform the Department in such a short period of time.”

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, The Honourable Neil F .Costa MP said: “My Ministry and the GHA are working diligently to continue the policy of repatriating as many medical services as possible to enable members of our community to receive first class medical treatment at home. We have also achieved notable advances in the quality of the medical care provided by recruiting leading international clinicians to the GHA. Sustained progress across all areas of medical services delivered to the community remains a core policy of my Ministry. I am also delighted to note that our bed management strategy and vigorous drive to reduce waiting lists for joint replacements has been extremely successful, quadrupling the number of operations carried out since last year.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 271/2018

Date: 16 May 2018

### **Well Person Unit at PCC to Include Comprehensive Sexual Health Service**

While the Ministry of Health and the Gibraltar Health Authority are constantly seeking ways to improve Gibraltar's health services, we also strive to find areas and gaps in healthcare provision where new services may be introduced to benefit our community. One of those services is that of providing a comprehensive Sexual Health service to provide a confidential, non-judgmental service. This new centralised service is to allow patients access to an experienced and professional source of advice to help them make informed choices for their family planning.

There is no doubt that this key service is very much needed and the GHA are dedicated to providing the best level and quality of service in this respect. As such, this service will be launched as part of an overall Well Person Unit, which will also include Well Man and Well Woman services to improve health and wellbeing in our community. The Well Person Unit will open during Sexual Health Week in September 2018.

A very experienced expert in the field and local GP has been engaged to establish the new service. Her role will be to work with all local services and bring their expertise together in this one Unit. Advice and guidance will be sought from the Education Department and local schools and youth groups to create teaching programs for young people to help them make balanced and informed future life choices. The direction of the Director of Public Health, the Health Promotion Department and Infection Control Departments have guided the Unit's core services based on their own long and considered experience. The Nursing Department will advise on staffing and daily operational needs.

Many challenges have been encountered in the background work for this service, in particular, proposing and designing a Unit that deals in a difficult and sensitive area of medicine. Persons requiring any of these services will be attending the 'Well Person Unit' at the Primary Care Centre, which encompasses various Clinics, including; Well Man and Well Woman Screening Clinics, as well as Sexual Health and Family Planning. This means that any person attending can do so knowing that their presence within the Unit will not indicate the reasons for their visit. In addition to this, meticulous consideration was taken concerning processing of test results. The anonymisation of

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test requests and results means only the GHA's Medical Director, the Deputy Medical Director and a patient's clinician will be able to identify the name of the patient in question.

Sexual health is a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction, or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.

Director of Primary Care, Dr Krishna Rawal commented: "This is a service that has been long awaited, much discussed and extensively planned. The support of Minister Costa has been the pivotal point that has turned this idea in to a reality and for that I am hugely grateful. The benefit to our community will be enormous, not only straight away but as an investment in our families, our youth and our future. I would like to personally thank my excellent Clinical Nurse Manager Suzanne Romero who has dedicated so many hours to this amazing project and whose expertise and experience have been invaluable."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP said: "The creation of this Unit will be one of the best examples of the collaboration between patient groups and clinicians. For Gibraltar, this will be an entirely new service, but many of the elements are already being provided at separate locations and by different teams. To bring them together will create a comprehensive and streamlined service that will develop and grow, and fill a well -needed gap in our health care provision. I am truly grateful to all of our highly dedicated health professionals who have been involved in the creation of this important service, and have succeeded in overcoming various challenges along the way. Mr Nathan Lightbody and Ms Sandra Netto of the Infection Control Unit, members of the Health Promotion Unit, the Hospital Pharmacy, the Prescribing Unit and the Pathology Department, along with the Youth Services and Department of Education have all contributed towards this project. I wish to sincerely thank them all for their excellent work."



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 299/2018

Date: 23rd May 2018

### Primary Care Centre Evening Clinics

The Ministry for Health, Care and Justice and the Gibraltar Health Authority wish to remind the public that the next key service in a series of extensive reforms to the Primary Care Centre (PCC) and to accessibility to GP appointments has commenced.

As of 21 May 2018, evening GP clinics started in the PCC. Two new highly experienced part time GPs have been recruited to provide this long anticipated and much requested service. Evening Clinics will run from 5pm with the last appointment finishing at 8pm to allow access for those who need to be seen on the day or who may become unwell later in the day. To support these clinics, three new GHA clerks have also been recruited. The format of the evening clinics will be similar to the already familiar weekend emergency clinics with 25 appointments. The appointments will be released from 4.30pm on the day, and the clinics will run every evening from Monday to Friday.

The GHA would like to remind the public of the Automated Telephone Service. Automated service update forms, used to record patient's contact details, may be obtained at the PCC or can be found on the GHA Website. Further information on using this service may be sought at the PCC counter, or via the GHA website at <http://www.gha.gi/mygha/>

Dr Krishna Rawal, Deputy Medical Director said, "One of the key points of feedback is for primary care services to offer evening clinic appointments. We are very privileged to be able to offer this first-rate service, which not only demonstrates how seriously we take the views of our service users, but also shows that Primary Care as a department, listens and works closely with other departments; in this case the Accident and Emergency department, which experience high attendance and demand in the early evenings. Working closely with the Ministry for Health, we have undergone a series of extensive and impressive reforms to better serve our community, and we shall continue to work to identify areas where improvements can be achieved."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa said, "It is my intention to continually challenge and enhance services to provide the best possible access to our GPs and Nurse Practitioners, while at the same time ensuring that the core of excellent family practice is protected. My sincere thanks, once again, goes to every member of the primary care team who have embraced and delivered another high quality and very much appreciated additional service."

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## PRESS RELEASE

No: 303/2018

Date: 24th May 2018

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### Open Evening - School of Health Studies

The School of Health Studies held Open Evening Wednesday 23rd May 2018. The event was open to the community, with the aim of providing information to persons interested in undertaking a career in Nursing. The open evening provided attendees with an opportunity to meet staff and students, to discuss programme content, requirements and to experience some of the teaching and learning resources that are used in the School on the BSc (Hons) programmes.

The School of Health Studies are offering three-year degree programmes, in conjunction with St George's University of London and Kingston University London. Students will study full time in Gibraltar, undertaking both clinical and theoretical teaching in various care areas. The programmes on offer are a BSc (Hons) in Mental Health Nursing and a BSc (Hons) in Adult Nursing. In addition to these, the School of Health Studies deliver Enrolled Nurse courses, Diploma Higher Education Nursing, and MSc Leadership and Management for Health Care Practice, in collaboration with Pearson Edexcel, St George's University of London and Kingston University London and the University of Salford respectively. An extensive variety of programmes on continuing professional development is also delivered to staff at the School of Health Studies.

Since 2012, 25 students have qualified to become Registered General Nurses, with a further 8 due to complete their studies in September of 2018. In addition, 37 Enrolled Nurses have qualified since 2013, with 17 students due to complete the course in August of this year.

Professor Ian Peate, Head of the School of Health Studies said: "The School of Health Studies provides locally delivered nurse education programmes to the highest professional standard. External assessment is undertaken by a UK university, ensuring that we continue to provide healthcare that is responsive to local needs, is compassionate and delivered by highly competent and confident staff."

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, Neil F Costa opened the event, he commented: "My Ministry and the GHA are delighted to support the School of Health Studies as it continues to broaden its educational portfolio. For the first time in Gibraltar, a BSc (Hons) Mental Health Nursing will be running alongside the already, well established, BSc (Hons) Adult Nursing by offering the additional Mental Health Nursing degree, my Ministry and the GHA demonstrate our continued commitment to invest in persons wishing to pursue a career in nursing and to providing high quality,

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safe and effective mental health care. By delivering degree courses at the School of Health Studies, we are giving persons, who may have otherwise not had the opportunity to undertake such studies. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ian and his excellent team for the important work they are doing in this regard.”

Further information on the programmes on offer may be obtained via: <http://shs.gha.gh>



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 317/2018

Date: 30th May 2018

### GP Specialising in Alcohol and Substance Misuse and Addictions

Delivering high quality community healthcare often involves collaboration with other Government Departments. Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar and the Gibraltar Health Authority are extremely pleased to announce that a General Practitioner with Special Interests will be starting work at Bruce's Farm from 30 May 2018. Dr Chimene Taylor is a highly experienced and well trained local GP, who has recently returned to Gibraltar. She has Royal College of General Practitioners training in alcohol and substance misuse, which is the highest level of recommended UK qualification for a GP working in substance misuse management.

Dr Taylor is already providing excellent general patient care in the Primary Care Centre (PCC), and will also be working closely with the Drug and Alcohol Awareness and Rehabilitation Services to significantly improve medical care and recovery from substance and alcohol addiction. She will dedicate one morning a week to working at Bruce's Farm for general medical care for residents and will also be providing a community detox service to clients from her medical clinic in the PCC. This aspect of her role will be invaluable in continuing care for those who have completed a programme at Bruce's Farm and will also provide confidential detox care.

The Director of Primary Care, Dr Krishna Rawal said: "It is entirely my intention to create a far more comprehensive level of primary care to provide the truest sense of community care for all of Gibraltar. This involves recruiting GPs with Special Interests in areas such as alcohol and substance misuse so we can care for a part of our community that perhaps does not access care as easily or as effectively as others."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP added: "The recruitment of a GP with Special Interest in alcohol addiction and substance misuse is an excellent example of how my Ministry and the Gibraltar Health Authority is working in close collaboration with other Ministries to serve our community in the best possible way. I am extremely proud of all my GPs, who provide a truly excellent service to this community. By developing specialist skills, they are able to show how adaptable and crucial a General Practitioner is as part of any healthy and well cared-for community. I am eager to encourage all health care professionals to develop higher in specialist interests, in order to progress further in their careers, and to always strive for the highest standards of healthcare."

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## PRESS RELEASE

No: 320/2018

Date: 31st May 2018

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### **GHA Introduces ‘Single-use Plastics Reduction’ Policy**

The Gibraltar Health Authority is pleased to announce the introduction of a policy for the gradual reduction of single use plastic items at St Bernard’s Hospital and across other GHA departments. The initiative follows an exercise conducted by Matrons at St Bernard’s Hospital over several months, who evaluated the quantity of plastic items, consumables, medicine pots, cups, eating utensils and crockery, used in the different wards and departments, with the aim of substituting such items with biodegradable materials over a period of time. The introduction of the policy comes as part of a wider Gibraltar Government led campaign for more environmentally friendly practices throughout public services.

Director of Nursing Services, Ms Sandie Gracia said: “We are not eliminating plastics altogether, but reducing the use of these items and introducing more ecological alternatives. For instance, we will be reverting to the use of glass crockery and traditional kitchen utensils.” Ms Gracia explained that staff were always looking at ways to address patient’s needs, and had noted that frail and elderly persons were far more comfortable using traditional utensils than plastic utensils. She added: “Raising the benchmark of patient care, making things easier for them, is always a primary consideration for us, and our medical teams are constantly reviewing the systems in place to ensure we maintain top quality standards. We are always campaigning internally to re-educate GHA staff on the importance of adopting environmentally friendly practices in the workplace. We also constantly engage with patients and their relatives to ensure excellent care at the point of delivery”

In addition to this plastic reduction initiative, recycling bins have been installed throughout the GHA sites.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP said: “Her Majesty’s Government is committed to environmentally friendly practices; therefore, the initiative to reduce the use of single plastic items at St Bernard’s Hospital and across the GHA is something I wholeheartedly wished to implement as soon as possible. The introduction of biodegradable materials to replace many of the day-to-day single-use plastic items that are used in the GHA is a right step in the right direction to protect the environment. It is a policy that we have embraced to contribute in lessening the damage that plastics can cause.”

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## PRESS RELEASE

No: 340/2018

Date: 7th June 2018

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### **GHA Nurse Nominated for ‘UK Diabetes’ Inspire Awards**

GHA nurse, Ms Cynthia Maoko was recently nominated by Diabetes UK, a leading nationwide healthcare charity in Britain, for one of its prestigious annual Inspire Awards. Diabetes UK, a voluntary entity, supports the care and treatment of persons living with Diabetes, organises outdoor recreational summer camps for affected children and carries out numerous promotional and fund raising activities.

Ms Maoko has been taking local children to the UK camps for a number of years on behalf of the GHA, and in conjunction with the Gibraltar Diabetes Association. The camps are an invaluable opportunity for children to meet other children with whom they can relate and share their experiences. Last July, Ms Maoko responded to an urgent request from Diabetes UK due to a shortage of Paediatric Diabetes Specialist Nurses (PDSNs) required for a one-week Type 1 camp in Port Talbot, Wales.

She said: “They were about to cancel due to the lack of specialised nurses to lead the event. I put my name forward to help them out and was enlisted for the task. I flew out to Cardiff, without expecting that I would end up with this nomination. The trip was made possible by Diabetes UK, with the support of the Gibraltar Health Authority.”

In May, Diabetes UK informed her that she had been nominated for an award for going the extra mile to help children -- the only person outside the Wales region to be proposed. Ms Maoko, who has been working as a PDSN at the GHA for the past eight years, said she was pleasantly surprised by the nomination and that she felt humbled after meeting so many of the volunteers who do a great deal of work for children with diabetes in Britain. She said it is important to promote greater public awareness of diabetes, both Type 1 and Type 2 in the community, given that there is still much misunderstanding about the condition, and that attending the award ceremony at the weekend in Cardiff had been inspirational for her.



Ms Maoko added: “Apart from networking and discovering what is new in the world of diabetes, it was also an opportunity to unofficially benchmark our GHA Paediatric Diabetes Services against those offered by Wales NHS Trusts, and I am pleased to say we are doing a good job here in Gibraltar. The best thing about the nomination was the sense of satisfaction for receiving recognition for the work that we do to help children with diabetes. I feel greatly honoured and privileged - it has been one of the highlights of my nursing career.”

Minister for Health Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F Costa MP spoke of Cynthia’s award nomination, he said: “I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Cynthia on her nomination. I am delighted that her fantastic work and commitment to children living with diabetes has been recognised by Diabetes UK - she should feel extremely proud. This is testament to the quality of professional staff that we have at the Gibraltar Health Authority, delivering excellent clinical services and always going that extra mile.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 350/2018

Date: 13th June 2018

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### Launch of the MyGHA Automated Telephone Booking System

The MyGHA automated telephone system was fully activated at 6pm on Sunday 3 June 2018 to enable appointment bookings to start for the publicised launch date of 4 June 2018. Overnight 12 appointments were booked with complete success and text message confirmations were sent to those who used the system. To date, a total of 242 appointments have been booked via the MyGHA automated telephone system.

To support the launch of this initiative, leaflets are being given out to patients to inform them of the new service and to provide an extremely useful take-home navigation aid to make using the system quick, efficient and easy. A dedicated member of the PCC clerical staff is on hand at the PCC Enquiries Desk to explain the service, to update personal contact details, to answer any questions and to deal with any concerns or issues.

Feedback has been extremely positive. The key comments focus on ease of use, convenience and accessibility to appointments with no waiting time on the telephone to speak to a clerk.

Director of Primary Care, Dr Krishna Rawal said: "With any new initiative, it is important to monitor and adjust to ensure that we deliver the service to the highest possible standards. I would encourage everyone to use this modern and elegant solution to booking an appointment, and to collect a leaflet to help navigate to the best appointment to suit their needs. Over time we will allocate more and more appointments to the MyGHA system to make appointment booking as easy and convenient as possible."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP said: "One of the cornerstones of primary care is to provide the best possible access to the clinicians who work so diligently to deliver optimum care. This new initiative is open to all, and I am sure is already familiar to many. I am delighted to announce that this service is now fully functional and will be adjusted and improved over time to ensure that all patients can access primary care with ease and convenience as befitting a modern primary care service."



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 354/2018

Date: 13th June 2018

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### World Blood Donor Day

Every year, on 14<sup>th</sup> June, countries around the world celebrate World Blood Donor Day. The event serves to thank voluntary, unpaid blood donors for their life-saving gifts of blood and to raise awareness of the need for regular blood donations to ensure the quality, safety and availability of blood and blood products for patients in need. We want to say thank you to Gibraltar's 2000 unsung heroes, and encourage more people to follow their lead.

Transfusion of blood and blood products helps save millions of lives every year. It can help patients suffering from life-threatening conditions live longer and with a higher quality of life, and supports complex medical and surgical procedures. It also has an essential, life-saving role in maternal and child care and during the emergency response to man-made and natural disasters.

A blood service that gives patients access to safe blood and blood products in sufficient quantity is a key component of an effective health system. An adequate supply can only be ensured through regular donations by voluntary, unpaid blood donors.

The theme of this year's campaign is blood donation as an action of solidarity. It highlights the fundamental human values of altruism, respect, empathy and kindness, which underline and sustain voluntary unpaid blood donation systems. We have adopted the slogan, "Be there for someone else. Give blood. Share life", to draw attention to the roles that voluntary donation systems play in encouraging people to care for one another and generate social ties and a united community."

We would like to welcome all those who have an interest in becoming a blood donor to attend our stall at Casemates Square on Thursday 14th June from 10 am to 3 pm where we will be explaining how the process works and registering any new potential donors.

If you are unable to attend on Thursday you are welcome to come Monday to Friday between 11.30am and 14.30 to Blood Donation Department which is located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor St Bernard's Hospital to register.



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 365/2018

Date: 19 June 2018

### **GHA and ERS to Become ‘Smoke-Free’**

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, has today published regulations prohibiting smoking, subject to certain exemptions, across all Gibraltar Health Authority (GHA) and Elderly Residential Services (ERS) premises. These regulations published today, supported by a new GHA Policy, will come into effect in October this year. This coincides with ‘Stoptober’, the annual no-smoking campaign by Public Health England.

Smoking is already prohibited in most enclosed public areas in accordance with the Smoke Free Environment Act. The regulations introduced today add most outdoor and unenclosed areas on GHA and ERS premises to the list of places where smoking is prohibited by law.

Smoking is a leading factor in many causes of death and chronic illnesses, including cancer and respiratory and heart diseases. Despite this well-known fact, smoking prevalence has increased in Gibraltar, according to the latest Health and Lifestyle Survey (2015). Importantly, exposure to second hand smoke is also a known health hazard, proven to increase the risk of several serious illnesses and death.

The new regulations aim to promote a healthier and cleaner environment for all patients, visitors, residents and staff of the GHA and ERS and to encourage members of the community to stop smoking.

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, said: “The ban on smoking within GHA and ERS premises is very much a reflection of the GHA’s ethos of promoting healthy lifestyle choices and environmentally-friendly practices. This ban does not intend to impede those who wish to smoke; a decision we entirely respect. The regulations and new policy mean that patients, residents, employees and visitors to ERS and GHA premises will not be subject to second hand smoke when on the premises, even in unenclosed areas.”

Anyone wishing to attend the GHA’s ‘Stop Smoking Clinic’ may book an appointment with the Nurse Practitioner via telephone, on 20007865, or alternatively visit the Green Area at the Primary Care Centre. The clinic provides advice and support to persons trying to quit, with the aim of increasing their chances of quitting for good and enjoying healthier lives.

Further information on the risks of smoking can be found on the Public Health website:  
<http://www.healthygibraltar.org/quit-smoking/>

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## PRESS RELEASE

No: 372/2018

Date: 21st June 2018

### Hillsides Celebrates First Anniversary

Hillsides, the purpose built residential home for persons living with Alzheimer's and Dementia, has celebrated its first anniversary with a reception in the home's garden to commemorate the occasion. Hillsides currently provides care and accommodation for 52 residents diagnosed with Alzheimer's and Dementia and who require specialist care. Additionally, Hillsides also includes a respite ward, which offers short-term support and professional care for families who may need these services for their loved ones.

The home's ethos is to provide its residents with a secure and homely environment, offering compassionate care and support at all times, be it physical or emotional. Hillsides is staffed by carers and nurses from MedDoc, which maintains a seamless working relationship with the Elderly Residential Services (ERS).

Hillsides boasts spacious bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms and expansive communal areas for residents to gather. It also offers a wide range of excellent amenities, enhancements and safety features specifically designed for persons living with Alzheimer's and Dementia. The designs throughout the building are tailored to minimise the risk of injuries and falls, including soft flooring, handrails and specially adapted doorframes to avoid hand injuries. Low-profiled beds also assist those residents with impaired mobility. As is the case at Mount Alveria, the John Mackintosh Home and the BellaVista Day Centre, Hillsides is fully fitted with 'Dementia Friendly' furniture and colour coded areas across the building, to assist with the residents' orientation.

Residents also have access to General Practitioners, three of whom are assigned solely to provide services to ERS and, in addition, a Consultant Geriatrician. By carrying out clinics 'in-house,' elderly residents do not have to endure the stress of having to attend medical appointments at the Primary Care Centre or St Bernard's Hospital unless it is absolutely necessary. Physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech & language therapy are also available and delivered at Hillsides.

The Snoezelen Room offers residents an area to aid relaxation and reduce anxiety without the need for medication. A spacious and well-kempt garden also provides an area where they can relax and enjoy spending time with their visiting loved ones, carers and colleagues. The 'Gibraltar Alzheimer's and Dementia Society' has a facility within the campus where they offer support and advice to

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relatives and liaison with staff to address any issues which may have been brought to their attention and which may need to be addressed.

Mrs Susan Vallejo, ERS Manager, said that they had been able to create an environment at Hillside which residents call their home. She said: "We provide individually-centred care, with an emphasis on individualised plans tailored to meet specific needs. Not only have we managed to provide the latest dementia care for our residents, but we have also managed to keep abreast of new developments and advances in the field, always looking to progress and improve on the services we already deliver. I feel immensely proud of the work my staff, together with MedDoc, our contractors, have carried out since Hillside was inaugurated last year. I would like to sincerely thank my Staff, our colleagues at the Gibraltar Health Authority, the Care Agency and MedDoc, who have all contributed towards our first year being such a great success."

Dr Ricard Gandia, Consultant Psychiatrist and Managing Director of MedDoc Healthcare added: "Both the Hillside Residential Home and the BellaVista Day Centre provide evidence to show that when passion, dedication and knowledge meet with honesty, transparency and effort, it generates a team spirit that leads to the best combination to work for our community. I would like to take this opportunity to show my gratitude and to thank all the staff for the excellent professionalism that have demonstrated over the past year, which reflects directly on the level of care given to our residents. I would also like to thank HM Government of Gibraltar for providing these superb facilities"

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, said: "Our aim, from the outset, has always been to ensure that we deliver a first class residential home for a much-cherished sector of our community; a place to call home where residents can receive warm and compassionate care. The admirable dedication and professionalism demonstrated by staff across the ERS, the GHA, the Care Agency and our colleagues at MedDoc has made this possible. Today we celebrate the first year since we inaugurated the home. I take this opportunity to wholeheartedly thank, and congratulate all those who have been involved in ensuring the first year has been such a great success. I must thank and single out Mrs Susan Vallejo, my Elderly Residential Services Manager, who has devoted so much time and effort into the project. She has led her ERS team in an exemplary manner, working together with Dr Gandia, his fantastic team at MedDoc, and our dedicated professionals from the Care Agency and the GHA, who have all contributed in one way or another towards the great success that is Hillside. I would also like to send my best wishes to the residents and their loved ones and look forward to celebrating many more years of quality care to our elderly in this wonderful home."



# Elderly Residential Services

250/2017- New dementia care residential facility opens at Hillside

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624/2017 - ERS Certificate Presentation Evening

670/2017- Elderly Residential Services announces standardised dementia-friendly environments

64/2018- Works Provide Additional Floor to John Mackintosh Home

244/2018 - Elderly patients from St Bernard's Hospital relocated to John Mackintosh Home



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 250/2017

Date: 24th April 2017

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### **New dementia care residential facility opens at Hillsides**

A new residential facility for persons with Alzheimer's and Dementia was officially inaugurated today by Chief Minister, Fabian Picardo QC MP and Minister for Health, Care and Justice, Neil F. Costa MP. 'Hillsides' is located at the site of the old Royal Naval Hospital and close to the Bella Vista Dementia Day Centre, another vital elderly care facility and milestone in the provision of elderly care services, which opened in January 2017.

The new residential facility provides care and accommodation for 52 patients diagnosed with dementia and in need of full time, high-dependency, specialist care.

Following advice from Bob Wilson Chaplow, UK specialists in the field of dementia care, the Hillsides design focused on maximizing the comfort and wellbeing of patients. Features such as en suite bathrooms, increased floor area in bedrooms and communal areas, were incorporated into the designs, together with all necessary equipment to give residents the highest possible standards of care.

The construction phase has presented innumerable challenges, which have had to be overcome, as the original project by the previous administration envisaged 92 beds, subsequently reduced in number to create a fit for purpose facility with better and more spacious living conditions. Much of the infrastructure including air conditioning, lighting and electricity wiring, has also had to be reconfigured or redone from scratch during a protracted period of works.

Hillsides boasts a fully equipped kitchen area, snoezelen room, plus hairdressing and chiropody services. There is also a pleasant garden area with different types of flowers and plants for sensory stimulation. All rooms are colour coded for dementia, while furniture has been specifically designed as recommended by our UK dementia consultant. The soft flooring throughout the building similar to that in toddler parks, and signage is also dementia friendly.

Additionally, verandahs on the various floors have been opened up to enhance views and give a greater sense of unrestricted space to patients.

Staff will also benefit from adequate amenities and there will be eight beds available to provide respite for family carers.



Patients will move in between now and July when the centre is expected to be running to full capacity.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon. Neil F. Costa MP said: “I think everyone can see that this Government is unswervingly committed to continue improving the services for vulnerable adults within our cherished elderly community. It was vitally important that we got things exactly right, after inheriting plans which were described by medical experts as “displaying a shocking philosophy of ‘quantity’ rather than ‘quality.’” We took the view that designs must always have the interests of the residents at heart and insisted on the new, excellent design we see today. I am therefore delighted to see the fantastic Hillside dementia residential care home opening its doors today. I must thank Susan Vallejo and the team at the Elderly Care Services and the staff at the GHA and the Care Agency for all their efforts in bringing this excellent project to fruition.”

For his part the Chief Minister said: “Along with the Bella Vista Day Centre, Hillside was a key feature of the GSLP/Liberal Government’s ‘Dementia Strategy’, which was launched in 2016. These are both excellent facilities providing quality care for elderly citizens. The people of Gibraltar can rest assured that care for vulnerable elements in the community will continue to be a top political priority for my administration and we will continue to invest financial and material resources to ensure that they can have dignified care and the best possible quality of life.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 292/2017

Date: 10th May 2017

### **Traffic Light Controlled Crossing at Bella Vista Dementia Day Centre & Ocean Views**

Following the official opening of the Bella Vista Dementia Day Centre, the Ministry for Infrastructure and Planning and the Ministry for Health, Care and Justice, are pleased to announce the commissioning of a new traffic light controlled crossing at Europa Road.

In keeping with the recommendations of the Sustainable Traffic, Transport & Parking Plan, the Technical Services Department, as part of the implementation of the new crossing, have introduced several traffic improvements on approach to the area outside the Bella Vista Dementia Facility & Ocean Views which are as follows:

- Reducing the speed Limit in the area to 30 Kph;
- Implementation of speed limit signs and painted speed limit road markings;
- Introduction of traffic signs warning drivers of the new crossing ahead;
- An Electronic Speed Indicator sign to advise motorists of their current speed.

In addition, transverse rumble strips will shortly be laid together with a flashing pedestrian crossing sign to provide motorists with additional warning of this new crossing to maximize pedestrian safety.

The new traffic light controlled crossing will be commissioned for use as from 11:30am Wednesday 10 May 2017. This will be a much welcomed crossing for access to patients and visitors of the facilities.

The Minister for Infrastructure and Planning the Hon Paul Balban M.P. said: "I am delighted to announce the commissioning of this crossing, which is one of the proposed zebra crossings within the STTPP. The Traffic Light controlled crossing will ensure the much needed safety of users and visitors to both recently opened care facilities."

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon Neil F. Costa M.P. said: "I am equally delighted at the introduction of these much needed traffic calming measures given the traffic hazards that

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had been identified in the area. The traffic light and other features will ensure road safety to users of the facility, including family and staff.”

Daphne Alcantara, Chairperson of Gibraltar Alzheimer’s and Dementia Society, added: “I am extremely pleased to finally see the implementation of the much needed Traffic Light Controlled Crossing at Europa Road. This is a massive step towards ensuring the safety of staff, service users and visitors at Bella Vista Day Centre and Ocean Views.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 454/2017

Date: 20th July 2017

### **Bella Vista Day Centre for Alzheimer's and Dementia Working at Near Full Capacity**

The Bella Vista Day Centre for Alzheimer's and Dementia patients is now working at almost full capacity, offering therapeutic services to around 70 patients from Monday to Friday. The centre provides a holistic approach to dementia by having a multidisciplinary assessment in order to identify patient needs. Services include nursing, speech and language therapy, as well as a psychologist and a GP. The team works closely together with a consultant psychiatrist, a consultant geriatrician and nurses from the memory clinic and the Care Agency.

Once the specific needs are identified for each patient, the Multi-Disciplinary Team develops individualised care plans, which include the different activities in the centre, (both medical and recreational), to optimise an approach of person-centred care and therefore their quality of life.

The centre provides breakfast, lunch and snacks, 'snoezelen' facilities, reminiscence therapy, arts and crafts, cognitive stimulation programs, as well as personal hygiene for those who require additional help. The afternoons are taken up mostly by entertainment with bingo sessions, table-top games, cinema and arts & crafts. Those patients with mild dementia who are still active in the community are supported by cognitive stimulation via a computer programme. Each of the activities at the centre is designed with a therapeutic purpose and monitored by the professional team. With these interventions, the aim is to promote autonomy and delay dependency.

The GHA has introduced GP services in the centre, in order to create a one-stop shop. This service includes investigation requests, blood tests, microbiology, ECGs, changes in dressing, blood pressure, diabetes control, similar to the Primary Care Centre. With these services, continuity of care and a reduced burden on families is guaranteed. Other services provided to patients as part of their daily timetable, includes hairdressing and transport.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP said: "I am extremely pleased that the excellent Bella Vista Day Centre for Alzheimer and Dementia patients is now working to near full capacity. The success of this excellent centre is further testament to the ambitious vision that we have rolled out, regarding the need for a complete overhaul and transformation of care services in the community. The quality and professionalism of the care provided to vulnerable members of the community at Bella Vista, is excellent - something that the

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people of Gibraltar can be justifiably proud. Bella Vista highlights our firm commitment to effective, compassionate and high quality care. Alzheimer's and Dementia are a concern of modern societies and we need to act decisively to ensure that we create the necessary infrastructure to deal with such a serious and growing medical condition."

"I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere appreciation for the work carried out by the service provider Meddoc, in ensuring that the Bella Vista Centre project came to successful fruition. The Ministry for Health looks forward to a continued productive working relationship with them for the benefit of patients and their families. I was also especially impressed with the accessible friendly transport to and from Bella Vista, which Meddoc provides"

Manager at Bella Vista Day Centre, Ms Sonal Samtani, added: "Families and service users have provided useful suggestions and very positive feedback for the first six months since Bella Vista opened. This reflects the efforts of the whole team and motivates us to continue to improve our service."



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 463/2017

Date: 25th July 2017

### **Patients Successfully Transferred from St Bernard's to New Hillside's Dementia Home**

The successful phased transfer of patients from St Bernard's Hospital to the recently inaugurated Hillside's Dementia Home took place over the weekend of the 10th and 11th of June 2017. The scheduled timeframe for the total occupation of the new home has been met with the admission of 26 residents on floors 2 and 3 of the building. The transfer was organised by the Gibraltar Health Authority in conjunction with Elderly Residential Services.

The coordinated relocation of residents from St Bernard's Hospital to Hillside's was carried out by the GHA ambulance service over two days, in a combined operation with the GHA, ERS, the Care Agency and MedDoc, the care provider.

Families of the patients involved have expressed delight after seeing the new environment where their relatives are going to reside. They were impressed with the design and details of the home and have praised the staff for their kind attention to all residents admitted in the residence. With the opening of the second and third floors, the service has reached its maximum capacity.

Respite beds are now being offered to persons in the community requiring the service.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP welcomed the move to Hillside's: "I am extremely pleased at the safe and smooth manner in which patients were transferred. The professionalism shown by staff at all times is worthy of praise. Hillside's is a magnificent asset of Gibraltar's ever improving health care infrastructure. We are now able to provide 24 hour care for high dependency patients in a professional, well resourced, safe and caring environment. The Ministry for Health, the GHA and ERS will continue to work tirelessly to ensure the best healthcare possible, providing the necessary facilities for vulnerable sectors, and for the entire community, improving and expanding all medical services over this term of office. Once again, I wish to thank MedDoc and highlight their excellent work in ensuring that Hillside's provides residents the caring and pleasant home they deserve."





## PRESS RELEASE

No. 467/2017

Date: 26th July 2017

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### **New headquarters inaugurated for Gibraltar Alzheimer's and Dementia Society**

The Honourable Chief Minister Fabian Picardo QC MP and the Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, today inaugurated the new headquarters of the Gibraltar Alzheimer's and Dementia Society (GADS) at the Old Naval Hospital. GADS chairwoman Daphne Alcantara said she was extremely pleased that GADS had been allocated premises next to both the Bella Vista Day Centre and the Hillside Residential Home for persons living with the disease.

"The Society would like to extend its thanks and deep appreciation to the Chief Minister, the Minister for Health, Neil Costa, and Minister John Cortes for their support. We have worked closely and productively with the three of them and are extremely satisfied to see this project come to fruition," said Mrs Alcantara.

The new GADS premises will be open to anyone who may be worried or affected by Alzheimer's and Dementia. The Society will hold information sessions, where advice to help live as well as possible with the condition, will be provided to members of the public who require it. GADS House will also organise regular family support meetings for relatives and carers to develop a mutual support system, where they can talk through the challenges, share experiences and advice on what it means to live with a person with Alzheimer's or Dementia and the services available in Gibraltar.

Mrs Alcantara declared that now that the Dementia Friends Gibraltar Group had been launched, the headquarters will also be the focal point in the continuing challenge to change public opinion perceptions generally of the disease. "We have long campaigned so that no one in Gibraltar faces Alzheimer's and Dementia alone and we want to change the way people think, talk and act about Alzheimer's and Dementia. That is a task that we intend to pursue to transform Gibraltar into a truly Alzheimer's and Dementia friendly community," she added.

Mr Picardo said: "I am very happy that we have been able to allocate premises to the Gibraltar Alzheimer's and Dementia Society (GADS). This hard working and committed NGO disseminate information and promote social awareness about a terrible disease. GADS also provides support and comforting advice to relatives and families. We greatly value the close working relationship forged in these past few years, and look forward to further developing our partnership with GADS

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for the benefit of elderly persons and others living with this condition, in conjunction with their relatives and families.

Minister Costa said: “We are delighted to have inaugurated the new GADS premises in Gibraltar, as it will greatly assist them in the magnificent work and untiring efforts they carry out to help some of the most vulnerable sectors of our community. We have established a productive working relationship with GADS and are truly grateful for all the work they carried out in helping us to furnish Bella Vista and Hillside. GADS carry out a critically important function with the families of people living with dementia, which they discharge with admirable passion and commitment. The comfort that they give to the relatives of those that live with Alzheimer’s and Dementia is commendable.”

“The health of our community and the care of its most vulnerable members is one of the pivotal points of government. We have led an unprecedented expansion of medical services in Gibraltar, introducing a whole series of new specialised clinical disciplines, improving professional care across all sectors and investing in staffing and material resources to achieve the type of health service that Gibraltar deserves. We have also repatriated those medical services we felt could be delivered locally to save the expense and added stress to patients of having to travel abroad.

“I wish to congratulate GADS chairwoman Daphne Alcantara and her very able committee for the sterling work that they do and will continue to do in the coming years. I also look forward to continue to work with her for the benefit of our cherished elderly in our community.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 624/2017

Date: 19th October 2017

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### ERS Certificate Presentation Evening

The Elderly Residential Services (ERS) held a presentation evening on 18th October to award certificates to staff members on a variety of training courses they have successfully completed. Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa presented staff members with their certificates.

Throughout the year, the ERS Practice Development Team organise various courses to develop help maintain the high levels of care which their dedicated staff members provide. The presentation evening was arranged to formally recognize their achievements. Courses, for which certificates were presented, involved staff members completing an assessment in the form of a written examination, a presentation, or a combination of both, in order to achieve an official accreditation.

Certificates were presented for a wide range of courses ranging from leadership management and mentoring, Stroke Awareness, Patient Handling and an Enhanced Dementia course, accredited by the Royal College of Nursing. In addition, the Advanced Clinical Audit course, followed with a Clinical Audit Trainer course, an NCFE Level 2 in Stroke Awareness, a Stroke and Vascular Health Training course for trainers and finally an IOSH (The Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) Managing safely course.

ERS Manager, Ms Susan Vallejo said: "Training and developing staff is vital to the development of the Elderly Residential Services. It shows that, as an organisation, we greatly value our staff and courses such as these will help motivate and give them the necessary skills to ensure that residents receive the best evidence-based care."

Commenting on the above, Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP added: "It gave me great pleasure to present certificates to the many deserving and dedicated staff members at the ERS who have successfully completed their training courses. The work they carry out is invaluable to our community, as their passion and commitment contribute greatly to the quality of life of our elderly residents. They should feel proud of their achievements"



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 670/2017

Date: 13th November 2017

### **Elderly Residential Services announces standardised dementia-friendly environments**

The Ministry for Health, Care and Justice and the Elderly Residential Services are pleased, and proud, in equal measure, to announce that standardised dementia-friendly environments will be introduced throughout all of its Elderly Residential Services sites.

By working in conjunction with the Gibraltar Alzheimer's and Dementia Society (GADS), the Health Ministry and Elderly Residential Services will embark on a programme of adaptations, improvements and developments to ensure that those living with dementia, along with their families and carers, are supported and able to function as part of the community.

Adaptations to the environment will include the use of colour coding and signage, placing illustrated directional signs at eye level and painting doors a different colour. Taking such simple steps as these will have a very positive impact to the daily lives of those living with dementia, as it will help them to experience feelings of familiarity and personal value, improving their quality of life and those of their relatives and loved ones.

Mrs Daphne Alcantara, GADS Chairperson said, "The Gibraltar Alzheimer's & Dementia Society welcomes Minister Neil Costa's commitment to standardising dementia-friendly environments, as this will have a positive impact and improve the wellbeing of people living with dementia in our community. Whether a person is living at home, in hospital, or in residential care, everyone is entitled to the right care, at the right place, at the right time; simple dementia-friendly adaptations to the environment will ensure that people with dementia can have dignified care and the best possible quality of life. Also, when a person living with dementia can no longer live at home, their families should have the peace of mind that their loved ones are in the best facilities and not have to worry whether they go to one residential home or another".

Elderly Residential Services Manager, Ms Susan Vallejo said; "Over the past years, great strides have been taken in better understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia. Adaptations such as those in which we are embarking, should have a very positive effect on the daily lives of our service users living with dementia and will help to improve their orientation.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP added, "This is a fantastic

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opportunity to raise awareness of dementia and to continue to educate the community in how best we can help those living with this illness. Reforms such as these gives us great pleasure and satisfaction, as we can see, first hand, the positive impact they have on the lives of our loved ones.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 64/2018

Date: 5th February 2018

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### Works Provide Additional Floor to John Mackintosh Home

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, together with the Minister for Housing and Equality, the Honourable Samantha Sacramento MP, opened an additional floor at the John Mackintosh Home this morning. This new area follows conversion works to the ground floor of the Home, which formerly contained flats.

The conversion works have provided space for 16 additional beds on the ground floor of the Home. Furthermore, the refurbishment works have opened up space for an extra two beds on the third floor of the building. This raises the total to 70 beds available at the Home, spread over four floors.

The design of the refurbished ground floor meets the same detailed specifications as the three other existing floors. The Home is fitted to be 'dementia friendly', by making use of colour coding on doors and corridors and using signage, which resonates best for those with sensory or memory difficulties. These simple but effective steps will allow residents to better orientate themselves and minimise anxiety. The Home is fully accessible to wheelchair users and is fitted with low profiling beds, enabling residents to maintain maximum independence in the safest environment. Specialist equipment such as hoists and standing aids have also been supplied, along with vital pieces of equipment, which provide for the residents' needs and ensure staff are carrying out resident manual handling tasks safely.

The move will benefit elderly patients, who will be able to enjoy a modern, purpose-built home, which will better suit their needs. The Home boasts spectacular views and spacious common areas, where residents and relatives visiting their loved ones can gather. Private rooms are generous in size and fitted with en-suite bathrooms and a flat screen television for each resident. Residents are also encouraged to participate in therapeutic and recreational activities.

The move will release a number of beds at St Bernard's Hospital, which will be available for acute admissions. The releasing of these beds will also have a positive impact on capacity for clinical procedures, resulting in more beds being available for planned admissions.

Elderly Residential Services Manager, Susan Vallejo, said: "My team has worked diligently to ensure that the standard of accommodation and care, which will be provided for our 18 new residents, will be of the highest quality."

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Minister Costa spoke following the inauguration: “Firstly, I wish to thank staff at the Elderly Residential Services for their great work and professionalism during this time, ensuring that our residents continue to receive first class care and attention. Further, I wish to thank my colleague, Samantha Sacramento, for her collaboration in allocating this floor to the Elderly Residential Services. I think that there can be no doubt of Her Majesty’s Government of Gibraltar’s continuous commitment to invest in our Elderly Residential Services, in order to provide our elderly loved ones, with the best living environment. I am extremely pleased to open this new floor of the John Macintosh Home.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 244/2018

Date: 2nd May 2018

### **Elderly patients from St Bernard's Hospital relocated to John Mackintosh Home**

The successful transfer of 'long stay' elderly patients from St Bernard's Hospital to the recently refurbished 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the John Mackintosh Home, took place during the month of April 2018.

17 elderly persons moved to the John Mackintosh Home, which was adapted in February of this year to provide an additional floor. The home is designed to provide a 'dementia friendly' environment across all 4 floors, fully fitted with specialised furniture and equipment. It includes modern and spacious rooms, as well as large common areas, where residents can enjoy spending time with friends, carers and visiting loved ones.

The transfer of the residents was organised by means of a well co-ordinated multi-agency approach, organised by the GHA's nurse management team and Elderly Residential Services, in close collaboration with the Ambulance Service, the Care Agency, Pharmacists, Medical Consultants and MedDoc staff.

Susan Vallejo, Manager for Elderly Residential Services, highlighted the safe and seamless manner in which the transfer had been conducted, commenting: "I am pleased to say that there were no incidents and residents all have settled in very quickly into their new environment. We have also received positive feedback from families and loved ones with regards to the newly refurbished premises."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, said: "I am very pleased as to the professional manner, and team work displayed, by the excellent staff of the Gibraltar Health Authority, the Care Agency, Elderly Residential Services and MedDoc, our care providers, during the move. The transfer of patients is always a delicate task and it is important that is done so in the least disruptive way possible, always with the needs and wellbeing of our elderly patients at the forefront. The John Mackintosh Home is generously sized, comfortable and provides a pleasant and caring environment for our elderly residents. I am especially happy, as the move resulted in two positive outcomes: a more suitable environment for our cherished elderly, as well as a further 17 beds becoming available at St Bernard's Hospital, which can be used for emergency admissions or planned clinical procedures. I must wholeheartedly thank all involved for their fantastic work."

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# Care Agency

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351/2018 - Sexting and Safeguarding

386/2018 - Social Work Degree to be offered on the Rock



## PRESS RELEASE

No:211/2017

Date: 3rd April 2017

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### **Ministry of Health, Care and Justice Commissioned Accredited Award in 'Planning and Provision of Activities' for Disability Services Staff Members**

The Disability Service organised a 'Planning and Provision of Activities' accredited course for 11 members of staff - comprised of care workers, session leaders and managers - from St Bernadette's Resource Centre and Dr Giraldi Home during 27th-30th March 2017.

The training was delivered by external company Incare Services Ltd, in conjunction with the Disability Service internal Specialist Occupational Therapist / Strategy Coordinator and Management, to ensure that its content was specific to the programmes and therapeutic interventions that are provided to service users. The course is an Open and Distance Learning Quality Council (ODLQC) accredited course and Incare Service Ltd is a specialist provider of training for staff working in care homes and other related facilities.

Staff completed five separate units and an additional supplement unit for persons working with learning difficulties. They were assessed on each unit and received an accredited certificate upon successful completion. An additional 19 members of staff received a certificate of attendance for the 1 day course delivered on 31st March.

The main focus of this course was on the importance of meaningful occupations, the value of therapeutic interventions and method of delivery, following service user assessment. This enables the Service to continue supporting staff on their professional development and provides them with additional tools and skills to continue supporting people with learning disabilities and maximising their potential.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon. Neil F. Costa MP said: "As a Government, we are committed to further protecting and promoting the interests and welfare of persons with disabilities, through the development of effective policies and the creation of training programmes for care staff at St Bernadette's and Dr Giraldi Home. The introduction of these accredited courses reflects our deeply-ingrained ethos in respect of the professional advancement of our excellent and highly skilled employees. We are pleased to see how these training initiatives can be useful in enriching the standards of care for persons living with disabilities. Disability Services staff members will now be better equipped and better trained to deliver their sessions at their respective centres."



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 350/2017

Date: 30th May 2017

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### **The Royal Gibraltar Police, Childline and the Care Agency join forces to tackle child abuse cases**

Social workers from the Care Agency, a representative from Childline (Gibraltar) and Royal Gibraltar Police officers have completed a one-week joint training course on child abuse investigation at Bleak House. Known as SCAIDP, (Specialist Child Abuse Investigator Development Programme), this is a UK based scheme designed to enhance the professional skills of those investigating and dealing with child abuse offences in Gibraltar. The basic aim is to allow the two organisations to work together in resolving child protection matters and dealing with the effects of trauma on children.

Police officers and social workers have received specialist training in child abuse investigations covering topics such as Child Development in the context of abuse, Identifying Abuse and Significant Harm, Assessing Risk and Sharing Information, multi-agency working with the use of Signs of Safety model, as well as working through case studies.

There is also a specific module on Domestic Abuse, which trains officers and social workers to analyse these cases with a specific emphasis on the impact to the child.

The instruction has been carried out by Ann Stuart, a former Detective Sergeant for the UK Metropolitan Police Service who, with 34 years of service, worked in Child Protection Units and developed policy and procedures for the Association of Chief Police Officers. Mrs Stuart still carries out work for the College of Policing and reviews policies, practice and Serious Case Reviews for Local Area Safeguarding Boards, (the equivalent of our Child Protection Committee). She was awarded an MBE for her lifelong work in safeguarding children.

Training commenced on Monday 22 May 2017 and culminated today, Friday May 26, with a presentation of SCAIDP certificates to the participants by the Minister for Health, Care and Justice Neil Costa MP. An RGP spokesman said: "As a result of the ongoing commitment to multi-agency work and the development of local professionals in the field of child protection, the Care Agency and Royal Gibraltar Police have provided a UK standard specialist programme to professionals in the field known as SCAIDP."

Minister Costa added: "I am delighted to have attended the closure of the training week for police officers and social workers, who are in the frontline of the Gibraltar Government's strategy to protect children and families from the scourge of domestic abuse in its various forms. The excellent



training that has been carried out this week by a recognised UK expert like Mrs Stuart, will ensure that our professionals are equipped with the necessary skills to investigate cases, which by their very nature are extremely sensitive and complex. We are confident that local professionals who handle this important work, have attained a degree of specialisation and competence which will allow them to ensure that vulnerable children in the community are brought up in a safe environment and afforded the maximum degree of care and protection possible.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 355/2017

Date: 1st June 2017

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### **Chief Minister Hosts Receptions For Child Support Teams**

This week, the Chief Minister has hosted two receptions for those involved in providing support to children in our local community. On Tuesday evening, around forty Childline volunteers were invited on to the terrace at No6 where Mr Picardo, along with Ministers Neil Costa and Steven Linares, thanked them both individually and collectively for all their efforts. The volunteers explained to him that, in the last year, nearly 400 young people have been helped by the 365-day helpline service and that Childline also provided the invaluable Appropriate Adult service and Positive Parenting courses.

The following evening the Chief Minister used the No6 Cabinet Room to host members of the Children's Services from the Social Services department of the Care Agency. In an informal social setting Mr Picardo chatted to them about fostering, adoption and the problems of youth offending in Gibraltar. They also discussed various important Child Support initiatives which will be announced in the next few weeks. The Chief Minister also thanked Ministers Neil Costa and Samantha Sacramento, the two Ministers who had provided such strong leadership for the Care Agency during the last five years.

'On these two evenings I have been delighted to meet some of the unsung heroes, or, in most cases, unsung heroines of our community,' said the Chief Minister. 'We would be deluding ourselves if we thought that Gibraltar was immune to social problems and I am incredibly impressed with the work these people have done, and are continuing to do, both as Childline volunteers and as Civil Servants of the Care Agency. In both cases, their caseloads are emotionally demanding and stressful so I was pleased to be able to meet them all and to personally thank them, from the bottom of my heart, for their efforts and their commitment.'



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

No: 366/2017

Date: 6th June 2017

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### Launch of 'Sexting' campaign: "DON'T CLICK.....THINK"

The Royal Gibraltar Police, in partnership with the Department of Education and the Care Agency, are today launching a new campaign highlighting the issues and dangers of sharing explicit images online or via text messages (known as 'sexting'), with the aim of engaging young people to encourage them to think about risks and what they can do to stay safe online.

The campaign was commissioned by the Gibraltar Child Protection Committee on advice given to them by the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Coordinator, after MAPPA representatives attended the UK National Conference for the National Organisation for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (NOTA). At the conference it was highlighted that young persons - as young as the age of 9 - were engaging in "Sexting", a trend which had also begun to gain momentum locally.

RGP School Liaison Officers, as part of ongoing work with schools and other organisations, will be highlighting issues surrounding sexting and encouraging young people to think about their actions through the use of messages on posters, audio visual presentations and social media.

The campaign features advice for victims and messages that warn those who request 'sexual images' that they are potentially committing criminal offences.

Detective Inspector Enriles from the RGP Public Protection Unit, said:

*"Any image of yourself that you send, can and might be shared by the person you sent it to, or even be used for blackmail. Remember, once you press send, you can't undo and can't go back."*

*He added: "Sexting' is an activity we have become increasingly aware of amongst young people and many may not realise that what they are doing is illegal or that it may be potentially harmful to them in the future. We have already seen a very real impact on local victims. Although our reported numbers are not as high as in other jurisdictions we do believe that this is currently underreported and we wish to raise awareness in order to prevent our children from falling foul to "Sexting". Children are growing up in an*



*age of ever-changing technology and are learning their social norms through technology and social media. It falls upon us as adults to educate them and support them through the safe use of these technologies”.*

*“Specialist investigators trained in Safeguarding and Child Protection are able to deal with reports of this nature on a case by case basis. Based on vulnerability and risk, taking into account any age difference, repeat offending and repeat victims, a decision can then be made on an appropriate course of action.”*

Minister of Justice, the Hon Neil F Costa said: “This campaign sends an important message to young people about how they can protect themselves online, but also as to the importance of reporting requests for sexual images and incidences of ‘sexting’ to the police, or to their teachers, parents and carers. All of us have a duty to safeguard the wellbeing of children and young people, both online and offline. It is vital that the appropriate structures and policies are in place to ensure that young people feel safe and confident enough to come forward and report anything that makes them feel uncomfortable. Simultaneously, the campaign sends a serious message that requesting sexual images from children is a criminal offence which may result in a criminal prosecution.”

Minister for Education, the Hon John Cortes, said: “While mobile technology has brought great benefits, it also brings serious dangers. This campaign highlights some of these and aims at helping to make a difference.”

### **Teenager? Take a look at this advice about sexting**

- Remember even if you think you are having a private conversation; once you have hit send, where those words or images end up will be out of your hands.
- Nudes, sexts, fanpics, whatever you call them, sending private pictures of yourself to someone else is never a good idea. Whether it's to your boyfriend or girlfriend or someone you've met online, a quick snap can have long-term consequences.
- If you have sent pictures and regret it, remember it is never too late to get help –The ThinkuKnow & The Parent Zone websites host excellent information on staying safe online.
- Children who are 'sexting' may actually be committing criminal offences. If a teenager were to have in their possession an indecent image of another minor (aged under 16), they would technically be in possession of an indecent image of a child, which is an offence under the Crime Act. If someone is prosecuted for these offences, they may be placed on the sex offenders register, potentially for some considerable time.
- Tell your parent, carer, teacher or an adult if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried, or if you or someone you know is being bullied online.
- You can also seek advice from:
  - RGP specialist officers at [safeguarding@royalgib.police.gi](mailto:safeguarding@royalgib.police.gi)



- The Care Agency at [Referral.concernsforachild@careagency.gov.gi](mailto:Referral.concernsforachild@careagency.gov.gi)
- ChildLine on the 8008 helpline

### Here are some tips when using social media

- Pause before you post. What you write could come back to haunt you.
- How you behave online can affect your future. Think about your job prospects. Do you really want future potential employers to see what you are about to post or send someone?
- Make sure you check your privacy settings on social media. Do you really want the whole world to see what you are saying or the pictures you are posting?
- Think about how much information you put online. Could it be used to steal your identity, or are you telling the world information that could be used against you by criminals - have you told potential burglars that your house is empty while you all go on holiday for two weeks, for example.
- Stay safe by being careful not to give out personal information to people you are chatting with online.
- Remember that information you find on the internet may not be true, or someone online may be lying about who they are.
- Meeting someone who you have only been in touch with online can be dangerous. Only do so with your parents' permission and only when they can accompany you.
- Tell your parent, carer or an adult if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried, or if you or someone you know is being bullied online.
- Visit the ThinkuKnow – an excellent online resource with information on internet safety
- You can also seek advice from:
  - RGP specialist officers at [safeguarding@royalgib.police.gi](mailto:safeguarding@royalgib.police.gi)
  - The Care Agency at [Referral.concernsforachild@careagency.gov.gi](mailto:Referral.concernsforachild@careagency.gov.gi)
  - ChildLine on the 8008 helpline

### Information and advice for parent and carers

- There is a growing trend among children and young people to take indecent photographs of themselves, and sometimes even of friends, to send on to each other or post in public places. This could be on the internet - for example on social media sites - or by sending the photos to each other on their mobile phones.
- Many young people see it as 'harmless fun' - often thinking it is a good way to show someone they like and trust them. Others may see it as a modern way to push boundaries and experiment with risk taking.
- Organisations such as the Police, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre or the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), receive reports of harassment after private photos





have been circulated. This risk comes when children and young people lose control over where the images are circulated.

- Once an image is on the internet, it can be freely copied by anybody.
- Children who are 'sexting' may actually be committing criminal offences. If a teenager were to have in their possession an indecent image of another minor (aged under 16), they would technically be in possession of an indecent image of a child, which is an offence under the Gibraltar Crimes Act 2011. If someone is prosecuted for these offences, they may be placed on the sex offenders register, potentially for some considerable time.
- Children and young people may not realise that what they are doing is illegal or that it may be potentially harmful to them in the future.
- What you can do as parents/carers is educate your children to these dangers. Tell them that this behaviour could come back to haunt them in later life and that once an image is on the internet - you can never get it back.
- Make sure they stay safe by being careful not to give out personal information to people they are chatting with online.
- Make sure they check their privacy settings on social media. Ask them; do they really want the whole world to see what they are posting?
- Educate them around the risks of sharing personal information.
- Visit the ThinkuKnow website, an excellent resource on internet safety.

**To make a report** as a someone aged 18yrs and younger, a parent/guardian or as a professional working with children or young people, contact one of the RGP's specialist officers at [safeguarding@royalgib.police.gi](mailto:safeguarding@royalgib.police.gi), or the Care Agency at [Referral.concernsforachild@careagency.gov.gi](mailto:Referral.concernsforachild@careagency.gov.gi)



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 370/2017

Date: 7th June 2017

### **The Care Agency and the Royal Gibraltar Police Sign Memorandum of Understanding on Missing Vulnerable Children**

The Gibraltar Care Agency and the Royal Gibraltar Police have signed a memorandum of understanding for the joint protection of children who go missing from residential and foster care. The aim of the initiative is to further strengthen the close working cooperation between the two entities and ensure there are direct and effective lines of communication whenever there is an episode of vulnerable children absconding from care.

It will also enshrine the supporting role of the RGP within a formal protocol.

The signing took place today, Wednesday 7th June 2017, at the Offices of the Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa, MP.

The Care Agency is the responsible authority for children in residential and foster care. Children and young persons under 18 who are looked after by the Care Agency are often extremely vulnerable when they have gone missing. Even short stays from their carers can lead to a child or young person being at risk of significant harm.

The RGP is the responsible authority for the welfare and safety of the community and have a primary role in searching for and returning to safety vulnerable children who have absconded or been reported missing. Both agencies have an ongoing commitment of collaborative work in order to safeguard children and young people in Gibraltar.

Care Agency CEO Natalie Tavares said: "The memorandum of understanding sets out very clear guidelines, including the role and responsibilities of each agency and also of carers and foster parents. The joint protocol will undoubtedly help the RGP and Care Agency respond to incidents of children missing from care in a consistent and professional manner. It includes the levels of risks which need to be assessed by the professionals and the required responses from each department. The public should note that these are not frequent occurrences but we must be well prepared to react to any contingencies."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon Neil F Costa MP, said he was very pleased with the introduction of this joint protocol. Mr Costa said: "The Ministry is always looking at ways in which

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to enhance the protection mechanisms that the Care Agency affords to vulnerable children and young persons in the community. This memorandum will provide a consistent framework to ensure good practice and is in addition to the RGP's standard operating procedures as reflected in the Missing Person's Policy, which applies in all other cases.

"It is doubly satisfying that two key agencies within my ministerial responsibilities have teamed up to design, and now implement, this memorandum, which updates professional procedures. The agreement paves the way for closer working ties and collaboration that will ultimately serve to enhance the quality of a vital service for the benefit of the community."

For his part, Royal Gibraltar Police Commissioner Eddie Yome said: "It is right and proper that local institutions should seek to work together for the betterment of our community. More so when, as in this case, it applies to those young persons whose safety and wellbeing is entrusted to us."



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 563/2017

Date: 27th September 2017

### Care Agency announces a new Family and Community Centre

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar and the Care Agency are delighted to announce that a Family and Community Centre has been inaugurated today at Mid Harbour Estate. The Family and Community Centre will create an invaluable resource for children, young people and families from all walks of life.

There is compelling evidence to show that the provision of early help and support to families avoids difficulties for children and their parents at later stages in their lives. This early help and support can be offered in a variety of ways and can focus on different factors, which affect children, young people and families.

The Mid Harbour Centre will provide a multi-agency service and will be instrumental in offering the different organisations working directly with children, young people and families the opportunity to engage with them in different ways. This excellent resource will be used and supported by different organisations such as the Gibraltar Health Authority, Drug and Rehabilitation Services, the Youth Service, Department of Education, Citizen's Advice Bureau and other voluntary organisations and support groups.

The Family and Community Centre is confident it will make a positive difference within the community. It will run structured programmes such as the Incredible Years parenting programme and will also offer informal drop-in sessions. The latter will provide parents the opportunity to meet other parents and make friends, or seek advice from the professionals at hand.

The Head of Children's Services, Ms Nicole Viagas, pointed out that "the aim of the Family and Community Centre will be to meet the needs and enhance the strengths of our community. The Care Agency will ensure that it is a community-led initiative whereby the programmes and early support offered will be tailor-made to meet the needs experienced by those in the community. Our mission is to provide an empowering, community-focused service, which enables families to thrive. I am extremely grateful at the opportunity to work with the different staff teams who will run this service and to those persons who have worked relentlessly to make this possible."

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon Neil F. Costa MP, stated: "It is with extreme

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satisfaction that I announce the opening of the Family and Community Centre, completing yet another of our manifesto commitments. I am grateful to my colleagues the Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia for making this possible by allocating the premises for this particular use and my predecessor the Minister for Housing and Equality Samantha Sacramento for developing the concept that has come to fruition today.

The service provided by the Family and Community Centre will be a multi-disciplinary one. The Care Agency, together with other departments and organisations working with children and their families, have explored different options and services so as to ensure that the Centre's use is maximised to meet the varied needs of our community. This means, for example, that the Youth Service will also have an allocated time slot. We fully embrace the opportunities which this centre will offer and support the vision for this service."



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 644/2017

Date: 1st November 2017

### **RGP and Care Agency sign protocol for the protection of adults with learning disabilities**

The Care Agency and the Royal Gibraltar Police have signed a joint protocol for the protection of vulnerable adults within the Adult Learning Disability Residential Services when such adults leave care without authorisation.

The main objective of this active, collaborative approach is to ensure that vulnerable individuals, who leave residential care without permission, return to residential care safely and as quickly as possible. The Memorandum of Understanding sets out and clarifies the response of both agencies, including risk assessment provisions and it provides a consistent framework to ensure good practice and positive outcomes.

The Memorandum of Understanding details levels of risk and concern, with police involvement only becoming necessary when there are concerns for the safety of vulnerable adults. It is important to note that not all persons who leave residential care are exposed to risk; nonetheless, the protocol will ensure that all areas of concern are assessed and acted upon.

The agreement has been described by Natalie Tavares, CEO (ag) at the Care Agency as 'A further development in establishing robust protocols and resiliency in working practices, and represents another welcome move in improving an already positive working relationship with the Royal Gibraltar Police.'

Commissioner of Police Eddie Yome has also welcomed the initiative, which he says, 'Consolidates the RGP's long-standing working partnership with the Care Agency.'

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, welcomed the protocol and said, 'This Memorandum of Understanding is the second agreement the Royal Gibraltar Police and the Care Agency has entered into since my appointment as Minister for Care and Justice. We are confident that these mechanisms will effectively support individuals with learning disabilities, who leave residential care without authorisation. By bringing together the professional resources of the Care Agency and the Royal Gibraltar Police, this protocol will provide assurances to family members that there are agreed systems in place between the two organisations, and, guidance to

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staff working with vulnerable adults. This protocol will be reviewed periodically by the Care Agency and the Royal Gibraltar Police and updated, if and when, required. The excellent professionals in the Care Agency and the Royal Gibraltar Police are the best guarantors of our firm commitment to look after vulnerable adults in our community to provide them the safety and quality of life they deserve.'



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 669/2017

Date: 10th November 2017

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### Care Agency and RGP agree a Protocol for Protection of Adults with Learning Disabilities

The Care Agency and the Royal Gibraltar Police have signed a further Memorandum of Understanding for the protection of adults under the Agency's care in the rare event that these adults are displaying behaviour that may require police involvement. The agreement sets out a consistent framework to be followed by both organisations to ensure best practice when dealing with these individuals. Both the Care Agency and Royal Gibraltar Police have agreed that, in order to guarantee continued best practice, it would be advantageous to have a more formal structure in place. The protocol, created by experts in the field of care, includes written guidelines that can provide the basis for a consistent and uniform approach.

Furthermore, the Memorandum, which is the third written protocol entered into by the Royal Gibraltar Police and the Care Agency over the past 12 months, also envisages the annual training of police officers across a number of areas. Specifically, the Royal Gibraltar Police will receive instruction on how best to respond to each individual with a learning disability. As a result of this protocol, police officers will be able to gain a greater insight into the characteristics of persons with learning disabilities and provide a more individualistic approach to their needs. In addition, Care Agency workers will receive regular on-going training to continue to improve upon the service provided within this highly specialised area of work.

The programme is led by the Care Agency and the Royal Gibraltar Police, with the participation of senior social workers, social care workers, psychiatrists, psychologists, learning disability nurses, the occupational therapist/strategy coordinator and management.

CEO for the Care Agency, Natalie Tavares, said: "Working with persons with learning disabilities is a specialised area of work and it is essential for services that ensure the well-being and safety of these persons to keep abreast with developments in this field. I am therefore very pleased to see the establishment of a further protocol between the Care Agency and the Royal Gibraltar Police. This represents another welcome move in improving an already positive working relationship with the Royal Gibraltar Police for the safety of the community, especially its vulnerable members."

The Commissioner of Police, Mr Eddie Yome, added: "With this third Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Care Agency and the Royal Gibraltar Police, both organisations continue to

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demonstrate their resolve and commitment to working in partnership for the benefit of our community. We have built a strong foundation that permeates through both organisations and on which we shall continue to build.”

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, welcomed this third protocol and said: “I am extremely happy to note, that this partnership between key agencies who safeguard the welfare of vulnerable individuals, is extending its scope of action. This is another extremely welcome step forward in ensuring that best practices are followed by the Royal Gibraltar Police when responding to any situation involving vulnerable members of our community, such as persons with learning disabilities. I am confident that we have the mechanisms in place to ensure that the vulnerable in our community are safeguarded by knowledgeable and compassionate professionals, both in the Care Agency and the Royal Gibraltar Police, who can respond firmly but sensitively, and also in an effective manner.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 679/2017

Date: 15th November 2017

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### **Gibraltar Fostering Campaign 2017 gathers momentum**

Over the past two years, Gibraltar has seen an increase in the number of people who have opened up their hearts, lives and homes, to accommodate children who, for various reasons, cannot live with their families and who require alternative placements, which may be temporary, but in some cases, may be permanent.

In the last two years, the Care Agency has organised successful fostering awareness and recruitment campaigns and is pleased to have been able to retain its foster carers despite some of the challenges this commitment may bring, especially in a community as small as Gibraltar. The Team has been able to retain the foster carers through its on-going supervision, individual and collective support sessions, training programmes and responses from the Social Workers.

This year's Gibraltar Fostering Campaign, is themed, "This is Me". The Children's Services have teamed up with the Department of Education to produce an advert, which will be launched on Monday 20th November 2017 and will form part of the GBC View Point programme on the 23rd November 2017.

The advert has been acted, filmed and produced by local university students, teachers and volunteers, who have given their time willingly to contribute to this worthy project.

Ms Nicole Viagas, Head of Children's Services said: "This year's campaign aims to help the community understand that children, despite the abuse and neglect they may have suffered, still have a right to a childhood and to grow up within a loving family. It aims to provide a message of hope, one that dispels the myth that children who have endured abuse and neglect will not achieve their goals in life."

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Mr Neil F. Costa MP said: "We are looking forward to this annual initiative, which was made possible by the vision and efforts of my colleague Samantha Sacramento, to promote the values of fostering in Gibraltar and to raise awareness and understanding on the importance of the role of foster parents. The Care Agency's team of excellent professionals show maximum dedication and commitment and it is thanks to their efforts, and those of the foster parents, that it is possible to transform children's lives. We passionately believe that children can have a second opportunity to emerge from a difficult family background and

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have the chance to succeed in life.”

This year’s awareness campaign is again aimed at the recruitment of foster carers and begins on 20th November 2017. Anyone interested in fostering is most welcome to attend. The programme consists of the following:

Tuesday 21 November 2017

Information stall – Casemates Square 12pm – 2pm

Fostering workshop - John Mackintosh Hall 6pm – 7pm

Wednesday 22 November 2017

Information stall – John Mackintosh Square 12 – 2 pm

Thursday 23 November 2017

Fostering workshop - John Mackintosh Hall 6pm – 7pm

Documentary - to be screened on Viewpoint

Friday 24 November 2017

Fostering workshop - John Mackintosh hall 2pm – 4pm

Note to Editors:

Anyone wishing to gain more information on fostering can do so by contacting the Care Agency on 20078528 or by emailing [fostering@careagency.gov.gi](mailto:fostering@careagency.gov.gi)



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 683/2017

Date: 20th November 2017

### **Celebrating Fostering in Gibraltar to Give Children New Opportunities**

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP has formally launched this year's Fostering Awareness Campaign, to celebrate the success and achievements of fostering in Gibraltar. The launch was held at the new Family and Community Centre in the Mid-Harbour Estate.

Since October 2015, the local Fostering and Adoption Service has held an annual campaign in line with National Adoption week in the UK, to promote adoption awareness in Gibraltar. These initiatives have also proved successful in the recruitment of foster carers and in raising the public's awareness of the need for fostering.

The Head of Children Services, Ms Nicole Viagas said she was delighted with how the fostering service has developed over the past two years in Gibraltar. Ms Viagas said: "I am extremely pleased with the number of children now being placed in foster placements, as opposed to residential settings. By providing consistent one-to-one care and support, we have given the children a sense of security and safety, which is undoubtedly contributing to their overall development. The success of the programme is down to an excellent team who have worked diligently to ensure that the service continues to grow and that the foster carers are supported within their role. Of course, none of this would be possible without the wonderfully caring and committed foster parents."

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, acknowledged the extraordinary work carried out by the foster carers and congratulated them for their commitment to offer children a home when they most need it. He said: "Children are best cared for in a family environment. It is this principle that drives the Social Work team to ensure that services are developed in line with improving outcomes for children. The Government whole-heartedly supports this annual event, which gives children the best possible opportunity to help them develop and grow into well-adjusted individuals. The Care Agency continues to work diligently to ensure that services are developed to give children the best possible grounding for their future. The commitment shown by foster carers is exemplary and, in my opinion, reflects the best of Gibraltar as a caring, loving and inclusive community."

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## PRESS RELEASE

No: 690/2017

Date: 22nd November 2017

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### Why become a Foster Carer?

It can be difficult to hear or read about children who have suffered and experienced abuse and neglect. It is even more difficult to help these children and young people learn to trust and build a relationship with a total stranger.

Some may ask, "So why would you foster?" These are some of the comments from our foster carers.

"Some people look at me and think, Wow what an amazing job you do"... "I don't see that at all, I just think I'm doing something that is incredibly rewarding..."

"To see my husband bond with the child we are caring for and to see the smile on her face makes it all worthwhile."

"Becoming a foster parent was the best thing that I have ever done, seeing how he is developing on a daily basis."

"I never wanted to replace their mummy and daddy but more to provide them with a family environment, provide them with a good life but at the same time maintain their identity.... making sure they know they are part of another family."

There are different types of fostering that you could consider and these are:

**Short term:** This is a short stay of up to a year for children who may be able to return home to their birth families, or who may need a foster placement, whilst alternative plans are being made for permanence via the courts. Some of these placements are made in an emergency.

**Long term:** This type of fostering is usually for older children who are unable to live at home but may continue to see their birth family.

The Care Agency and Placement Team welcome applications from people from all backgrounds, as this brings a range of life experiences, skills and qualities that help meet the needs of children and young people in foster care.

Foster carers can be single, married, can be of any sexual orientation, religion and there is no age

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limit to foster. The Fostering and Adoption Service is interested in anyone able to demonstrate commitment to children, stability and ability to support a child and meet their individual needs. You do not need any formal qualifications, but will receive foster carer training and support to achieve the training and development standards for foster carers in Gibraltar.

Head of Children Services, Nicole Viagas said: “Foster carers are persons who are willing to open up their hearts and their homes to children and young people who can be extremely loving, but also at times challenging. It takes patience, commitment and set boundaries to help children to accept their situation, and help them with a transition back to their birth families, or possibly to an adoptive family. Our foster carer programme has helped many children to get back into a supportive family set-up, and given them the opportunity to grow up in a balanced family environment that is hugely beneficial to their social and emotional development as members of our community. This is what makes fostering so special.”

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, The Honourable Mr Neil F. Costa MP added “We are delighted at the success of our foster carer programme in Gibraltar, reflected in the fact that whereas there was only one foster family 3 years ago, now there are 7 loving families ready to make a transformative difference to the life of a child or young person. We encourage members of the public, who may be interested in fulfilling this role to come forward. Fostering has become an important piece of our social care network of services and we acknowledge its importance in ensuring that children, who may have difficult upbringings, are given a chance to grow up in a loving family environment, so they can look forward to the future with confidence.”

The Care Agency Fostering and Adoption Team urge anyone who thinks fostering is for them not to hesitate to get in touch!

Please contact The Care Agency on 20078528 or email us on [fostering@careagency.gov.gi](mailto:fostering@careagency.gov.gi)



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 700/2017

Date: 27th November 2017

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### **Positive Feedback received from the Family and Community Centre**

The Ministry for Health, Care and Justice and the Care Agency are extremely pleased with the response it has received since the Family and Community Centre was officially inaugurated by the Honourable Mr. Neil F Costa MP, on the 27th September 2017.

The Drop-In service opens once a week to parents and children below school age whereby parents attend and take an active role in the preparation and the provision of activities. These have included baking, story time and play activities.

Further, the Family and Community Centre has provided an invaluable opportunity to families by offering them support and guidance, with the opportunity to meet other parents, as well as enjoying quality time with their children in a warm and comfortable environment.

The Centre has seen a steady increase in attendance, with initial numbers ranging from 11 children and 9 parents, to 28 children and 20 parents. Parents have been delighted with this new initiative and have commended the Care Agency on the provision of this welcoming and supportive service. The Family and Community Centre has also opened its doors to an older group of children on Thursday afternoons between 5.30pm to 7.30 p.m. During these sessions, the Centre worker and an experienced volunteer have been working closely with these children and have provided them with the opportunity to engage in outdoor and indoor activities. The number of children attending these sessions has increased since the onset of this initiative, with numbers rising to a total number of 15 children.

Another highly welcomed initiative has been the introduction of a Positive Parenting Programme, called Handling Anger. Both the Care Agency and Childline staff were trained together to deliver these programmes which have been proven to assist parents in caring for their children in a positive and enriching manner. The parenting programme commenced on the 13th October 2017 and has run for four weeks. The Care Agency will continue working together with Childline and other Departments, such as the Youth Service, the Department of Education, the Gibraltar Health Authority, the Royal Gibraltar Police and the Citizen's Advice Bureau, to ensure that they continue to work together towards building a brighter future for our children.

The Head of Children's Service, Ms Nicole Viagas, commented that she is very pleased on how this service is developing and said that "the Care Agency is fully committed in helping families to nurture

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a new generation of happy and confident children. When families are listened to, and are provided with a place where they feel supported and can share their views and feelings, they in turn feel that they are a valuable member of our community”.

The Chief Executive for the Care Agency, Mrs Natalie Tavares noted that engaging older children and young people was very important to the team. She highlighted that “having volunteers involved in this project provided these individuals the opportunity to give something back to the community. This is truly a vocational area of work”.

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Mr. Neil F Costa MP expressed his immense pleasure and satisfaction at the already evident success of the Family and Community Centre. He commented: “Her Majesty’s Government of Gibraltar is committed to improving the well-being of children and their families, especially through the implementation of early intervention. We will continue to invest and support this area of work to ensure our present and future generations enjoy all available opportunities to become secure and emotionally healthy members of our society”.





## PRESS RELEASE

No. 729/2017

Date: 6th December 2017

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### Care Agency Announces Safeguarding for Adults at Risk Training

The Care Agency held two days of Safeguarding Training for Adults at Risk on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> November 2017.

Safeguarding relates to protecting an adult's right to live in safety and free from abuse and neglect. Vulnerable adults exist in all areas of society and it is vital that professionals and practitioners understand safeguarding procedures and their roles and responsibilities, so as to promote the welfare of vulnerable adults and safeguard them from potential harm.

This Safeguarding Training for Adults at Risk course, aimed to provide the skills to identify risk and vulnerability. It also covered the duties and responsibilities for professionals and their organisations, to ensure that all staff working with adults are aware of the Safeguarding Adults at Risk policies and procedures. Managers with lead responsibilities in safeguarding from the Gibraltar Health Authority, the Royal Gibraltar Police and the Care Agency, attended the training.

The CEO for the Care Agency, Mrs. Natalie Tavares commented that safeguarding was central to the work of the Care Agency. The Adult Services works hard to ensure the course was delivered to all its stake-holders. She went on to say that "Safeguarding is about professionals and organisations working together to promote well-being and choice".

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Mr Neil F Costa MP was delighted at the work being conducted by the Adult Services and the delivery of the Safeguarding Training for Adults at Risk. He stated: "This training will provide all the practitioners working with vulnerable adults with the skills to ensure the welfare and safety of those who may suffer harm. Additionally, it will enhance the already positive working relationships between the staff of three Departments for which I am responsible."



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 14/2018

Date: 10th January 2018

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### **Child Protection Safeguarding Training**

The 7th December saw the last Child Protection Safeguarding Tier 1 Training for the year 2017. This completes the 2017 Safeguarding Training provided by key professionals within the Safeguarding Training Sub-Committee, part of the Child Protection Committee. During this last year the team has delivered twelve Tier 1 sessions, two Tier 2 sessions, and one Tier 3 session. The total number of participants trained in 2017 alone is 402.

The Training Sub-Committee remains multi-disciplinary, with identified lead trainers from the Care Agency, Gibraltar Health Authority, Department of Education, Royal Gibraltar Police, Youth Services, and Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority. Giselle Carreras, (Chair for the Safeguarding Training Sub-Committee and Head of Psychology and Therapy at the Care Agency), highlighted that multi-agency working and the delivery of this training by a multi-disciplinary team over many years, has been pivotal in the success of this training programme. She further emphasised the importance that Safeguarding Training encompassed, specifically in learning, understanding, and implementing systems and processes, so as to protect and safeguard children from harm.

Safeguarding training is essential for all professionals working with children and young persons. This training has been provided to all professionals working with children since its first commencement and delivery in the year 2007. December 2017 has seen the 10th anniversary of safeguarding training delivery to front line professionals working with children. Since its commencement, approximately 2000 professionals have undertaken the Safeguarding Training.

The Chair for the Child Protection Committee, and CEO of the Care Agency, Natalie Tavares was happy at the positive feedback provided on the safeguarding training, stating: "I would like to thank the members of both the executive and operational arms of the Child Protection Committee on the invaluable work their different departments are delivering in ensuring children and young people are safeguarded."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, commented that he was very pleased that the Child Protection Committee, and its sub-groups, continue to raise awareness, in addition to firmly establishing the importance of safeguarding for children and young persons in Gibraltar. "It is important that this work is carried out in a multidisciplinary manner and delivered by professionals from my different responsibilities, in conjunction with the other Government Departments, which hold responsibility for safeguarding." He further added that: "safeguarding is everybody's business".

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## PRESS RELEASE

No: 71/2018

Date: 8th February 2018

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### Open Day at Waterport Terraces Day Centre

The 'Waterport Terraces Day Centre for the Elderly' opened its doors to the public on Wednesday 7th February 2018.

The Care Agency's staff were able to display the Centre's philosophy of care throughout the day, demonstrating how it is put into practice. It provided a wonderful opportunity for people within the community to experience a first-hand encounter of the Centre's essence of care, as well as the chance to discuss matters relating to the elderly in our community. The Day Centre prides itself on offering friendly support and advice to all who attend, which are values that make it such a popular service.

The Centre, which has been operational since January 2014, includes a purpose built kitchen, a dining area and spacious areas, where attendees can enjoy a wide range of therapeutic activities. Activities include physical exercises, arts and crafts, baking and cake decorations, singing and outings into the community, amongst others. Meals are available at the Centre and include a breakfast on arrival and a three course mid-day meal.

The service is aimed at individuals who would benefit from social interaction and have a range of mild to moderate physical difficulties that may reduce their ability to easily access general services in our community. It is open to persons over 60, who are eligible to receive services in Gibraltar, and is not restricted to any specific catchment area. Any person interested in attending can self-refer and referrals are accepted from friends or relatives. These can be submitted to the 'Adult Social Services', at 16 Governor's Parade or directly at the Day Centre. Following a referral, assessments are then carried out in order to prioritise admittances and ensure the specific needs of the person can be met.

Natalie Tavares, CEO for the Care Agency explained how attending to day centres like these could benefit older persons: "Persons who attend the centre often remark on how their quality of lives has improved by taking part in activities and meeting up with their peers. Whilst visitors enjoy their time at the Centre, families can enjoy peace of mind, knowing that their relatives are in a caring and safe environment."

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The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP attended the Open Day and commented: “I was truly impressed to see, once again, this wonderful Day Centre in operation and catch up with many of our visitors. When you speak with them, you see first-hand, and appreciate, the real benefits that this service provides to our elderly and how much they cherish their time at the Centre. The relaxed and friendly atmosphere offers visitors, who may not have the chance otherwise, to socialise with their friends, enjoy meaningful activities and form new friendships. Further, visiting the Centre, in many cases, may allow a person to live in their own home for a longer period and delay the need for residential care.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 105/2018

Date: 26th February 2018

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### **Incredible Years Parenting Programme**

The Care Agency is fully committed to provide high quality practice, that is both effective and evidence based. Over the last year, the Care Agency has been working hard to develop the Early Intervention Services.

Since the opening of the new Family and Community Centre, there has been a steady increase in families attending the drop-in service, held on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. It is recognised, that parents are a major influence on children's lives and it is also understandable that, at times, parents may find it hard to cope with the additional responsibilities which inevitably come with parenthood. It is therefore crucial that families are provided with the right support at significant points in their children's lives.

It is with this in mind, that the Care Agency has commissioned training for their staff from the 'Incredible Years Training Group' in UK, with the view of delivering the training locally. The Incredible Years Parenting Programme was developed by Carolyn Webster-Stratton, in the University of Washington's Parenting Clinic. The programme, aimed at children aged between the ages of 3 and 12 years old, is founded on social learning theory and consists of at least 12 weekly, two-hour group sessions, delivered by skilled practitioners. The programme aims to promote positive parenting, improve parent-child relationships and increase the use of positive strategies. It also works towards helping parents to identify social learning theory principles for managing behaviour and improve home-school relationships. The programme uses a collaborative approach, encouraging parents to learn from each other. Methods used include role-play, modelling, group discussion, homework and reviewing videos of family behaviour.

For the first time, the Care Agency will be offering the Incredible Years Programme for 12 consecutive weeks, commencing on the 13th March, between 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m., at the Family and Community Centre in Mid Harbours Estate. The Minister for Health Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, launched the programme on the 26th February, with social workers providing a presentation about the programme and the referral system to an audience of voluntary organisations and care professionals.

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The Head of Children's Services, Ms Nicole Viagas, expressed her delight at how the Early Intervention Services has developed in such a short time. She reiterated that the guiding force driving the Children's Team is the understanding that children want to grow up in their families, stating: "Having the opportunity to grow up in a healthy family unit is what the team aspire for every child. The parenting programmes will undoubtedly bring in another dimension to the early intervention programme, which I am certain will be extremely positive. I have trained and have delivered this programme in the UK as a Social Work student and I can vouch the effectiveness of the programme".

Following the launch, Minister Costa commented: "I am impressed with the achievements of this important service and happy with the work that the Care Agency is carrying out and the team's ongoing commitment. I am confident that the Incredible Years Parenting Programme will be a success and prove beneficial to parents, children and families in our community".

We welcome anyone who is interested in undertaking the programme to email the Care Agency on [incredibleyears@gibraltar.gov.gi](mailto:incredibleyears@gibraltar.gov.gi), or to contact the Family and Community Care Centre on 200 46386.



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 216/2018

Date: 16th April 2018

### **Training in the Prevention and Detection of the Sexual Exploitation of Children**

The Child Protection Committee and Designate Safeguarding Officers from different Government Departments and other relevant agencies will take part in Training in the Prevention and Detection of the Sexual Exploitation of Children on the 16 and 17 April respectively. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate, or deceive a child or young person, under the age of 18, into sexual activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. In CSE, the victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual, and what makes this of concern is that it does not always involve physical contact. CSE can also occur through the use of technology and the internet without the child's immediate recognition; for instance, being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet or on their mobile phones without any immediate payment or gain.

CSE is a complex form of abuse and research has found that it can be difficult for those working with children to identify and assess. The indicators for CSE could be confused with what is considered typical adolescent behaviours and it requires knowledge, skills, expertise and an assessment. The investigation analyses the risk factors and personal circumstances of individual children to ensure these signs and symptoms are interpreted correctly and appropriate support is given by all those with safeguarding duties.

The Child Protection Committee has already begun working on this area of concern and one of its sub-committees led by Royal Gibraltar Police has been delivering presentations and raising awareness via the "Don't Click...Think" campaign highlighting the dangers of sexting. The Chair of the Child Protection Committee, Natalie Tavares, stated that "the safety of children and young people is a priority for this Committee and training in Child Sexual Exploitation will provide further information on this area of concern, enabling the Committee to continue developing its safeguarding strategies, and provide practitioners with the tools to assess, identify and support those at risk".

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The training will be delivered by Julie Dugdale, a leading expert in this field and senior consultant at Barnardo's, child protection and safeguarding agency in UK.

The Acting Chief Minister, the Hon Neil F. Costa MP, stressed that Child Sexual Exploitation is a grave safeguarding issue and he fully supports the Child Protection Committee in the work they are undertaking. He stated: "Professionals working with children and young persons need to be equipped with the knowledge, skills and tools to identify any areas of concern and to continue to keep them safe and free from harm. I look forward to opening this training session and to continuing the very important work in this complex and delicate area with the Child Protection Committee."





## PRESS RELEASE

No: 310/2018

Date: 29th May 2018

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### Domiciliary Care Services

One of the factors that impinges most on persons as they get older is the loss of independence. Being able to remain independent enables a sense of achievement which in turn generates a sense of self-worth as well as dignity, control, and fulfilment. This is something that Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar values and promotes in the development of its services to the community; examples of this are Bella Vista Day Centre for persons with dementia, opened in January 2017, and the Waterport Day Centre, opened in January 2014. These are services of which this Government is proud, and which support vulnerable persons in maintaining their independence and be able to continue to live in their own homes.

Another area in which this Government has invested heavily has been the domiciliary care service. Domiciliary care is an invaluable free service that the Care Agency provides to persons, over the age of 60 years, who still live in their own homes and require additional support; this allows them to maintain their independence and quality of life.

Within the domiciliary care service, there is also provision for home support. This service provides assistance to persons who require support with basic daily living activities, without which they would not be able to maintain links with the community. This service assists families in managing difficult situations with dignity.

In continuing to develop its services, the Care Agency introduced a hospital social work service in St Bernard's Hospital. Hospital social workers and health professionals, work in conjunction, assessing patients in hospital and arranging packages of care for those persons ready for discharge. In 2017 alone, a total of 109 patients have been discharged from hospital with packages of care.

Domiciliary care has been instrumental in enabling persons to remain living in the community for longer, before requiring residential care. It has also reduced the number of 'long-stay' patients in hospital by providing support to persons who were ready for discharge, but unable to live at home without support. Additionally, home support has provided independence to persons with complex conditions helping to improve their quality of life.



Natalie Tavares, CEO for the Care Agency said: “By providing these services, the Care Agency ensures the well-being, both physically and emotionally, of its service users and their families. Domiciliary care enables persons to remain independent for as long as possible. It enables them to keep in contact with friends and the community, and this in turn generates a better quality of life. Both, health professionals and community social workers, continue to assess those requiring packages of care, and review those already in place, so as to ensure the seamless continuity of this important service.”

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon Neil F. Costa was happy with the service, commenting: “I have worked very closely with the Care Agency in the last eighteen months to ensure the development of domiciliary care services. It is of great importance to Government that those who are vulnerable within our community are properly cared for and are offered the right support. We have demonstrated our commitment in this area with the significant increase in recipients of domiciliary care. We will continue to work diligently to ensure that those in need continue to enjoy this service, which undoubtedly has a positive impact in their lives and the lives of their love ones.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 351/2018

Date: 13th June 2018

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### **Sexting and Safeguarding**

The Royal Gibraltar Police, in partnership with the Department of Education and the Care Agency, launched the DON'T CLICK.....THINK last year on the 6 June 2017. Since then, the three organisations have been working diligently to highlight the issues and dangers of sharing explicit images online or via text messages, (known as 'sexting'). The aim of the awareness campaign is to engage young people to think about risks and what they can do to stay safe online.

The campaign was commissioned by the Gibraltar Child Protection Committee. There has been a team working on this safeguarding concern and, as such, presentations were prepared and have been delivered both to parents and children. The presentations have highlighted issues surrounding sexting and encouraged young people to think about their actions. Schools have participated in these sessions throughout the last 12 months, and by the 21 June 2018, all middle and secondary schools will have engaged in this very significant initiative.

In addition to this, the Child Protection Committee commissioned training in April 2018 on the dangers of child sexual exploitation (CSE) where the dangers of sexting were also highlighted. One of the points raised during this training was that in these type of incidents the victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appeared consensual, and what made this of concern was that it did not always involve physical contact. CSE could occur through the use of technology and the internet without the child's immediate recognition; for instance, being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet or their mobile phones without any immediate payment or gain. The Child Protection Committee and Designate Safeguarding Officers from different Government Departments took part in this training. The main aim of this course was to enable the Committee to continue to develop its safeguarding strategies, and provide practitioners with the tools to assess, identify and support those at risk.

Natalie Tavares, Chair of the Child Protection Committee, explained that "one of the main aims of the Child Protection Committee is to identify trends and patterns affecting safeguarding of children in Gibraltar, and online safety is one of the areas of work that will continue on the Committee's agenda. We will keep what is already in place under review, and develop this so as to meet the needs of the community".

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Minister of Health, Care and Justice, the Hon Neil F Costa MP, said: “As we near the end of this important awareness campaign, it is essential that young people know how they can protect themselves online. It is just as imperative that parents, carers, teachers, and other practitioners, know and understand the dangers to which children and young people can be exposed. All of us have a duty to safeguard the wellbeing of children and young people, both online and offline. The work undertaken to date to implement the appropriate procedures and policies has been crucial to enable young people to come forward and report anything that makes them feel uncomfortable. For me, and the Child Protection Committee, it is equally essential that the professionals working with children and young people are being equipped with the knowledge, skills and tools to identify any areas of concern and work together to continue making children and young people in Gibraltar safe and free from harm”.

### **Teenager? Take a look at this advice about sexting**

- Remember even if you think you are having a private conversation; once you have hit send, where those words or images end up will be out of your hands.
- Nudes, sexts, fanpics, whatever you call them, sending private pictures of yourself to someone else is never a good idea. Whether it's to your boyfriend or girlfriend or someone you've met online, a quick snap can have long-term consequences.
- If you have sent pictures and regret it, remember it is never too late to get help – The ThinkuKnow & The Parent Zone websites host excellent information on staying safe online.
- Children who are 'sexting' may actually be committing criminal offences. If a teenager were to have in their possession an indecent image of another minor (aged under 16), they would technically be in possession of an indecent image of a child, which is an offence under the Crime Act. If someone is prosecuted for these offences, they may be placed on the sex offenders register, potentially for some considerable time.
- Tell your parent, carer, teacher or an adult if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried, or if you or someone you know is being bullied online.

You can also seek advice from:

- RGP specialist officers at [safeguarding@royalgib.police.gi](mailto:safeguarding@royalgib.police.gi)
- The Care Agency at [Referral.concernsforachild@careagency.gov.gi](mailto:Referral.concernsforachild@careagency.gov.gi)
- ChildLine on the 8008 helpline

### **Here are some tips when using social media**

- Pause before you post. What you write could come back to haunt you.
- How you behave online can affect your future. Think about your job prospects. Do you really want future potential employers to see what you are about to post or send someone?
- Make sure you check your privacy settings on social media. Do you really want the whole world to see what you are saying or the pictures you are posting?
- Think about how much information you put online. Could it be used to steal your identity, or are you telling the world information that could be used against you by criminals – have you told potential burglars that your house is empty while you all go on holiday for two weeks, for example.



- Stay safe by being careful not to give out personal information to people you are chatting with online.
- Remember that information you find on the internet may not be true, or someone online may be lying about who they are.
- Meeting someone who you have only been in touch with online can be dangerous. Only do so with your parents' permission and only when they can accompany you.
- Tell your parent, carer or an adult if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried, or if you or someone you know is being bullied online.
- Visit the ThinkuKnow – an excellent online resource with information on internet safety

You can also seek advice from:

- RGP specialist officers at [safeguarding@royalgib.police.gi](mailto:safeguarding@royalgib.police.gi)
- The Care Agency at [Referral.concernsforachild@careagency.gov.gi](mailto:Referral.concernsforachild@careagency.gov.gi)
- ChildLine on the 8008 helpline

### **Information and advice for parent and carers**

- There is a growing trend among children and young people to take indecent photographs of themselves, and sometimes even of friends, to send on to each other or post in public places. This could be on the internet - for example on social media sites - or by sending the photos to each other on their mobile phones.
- Many young people see it as 'harmless fun' - often thinking it is a good way to show someone they like and trust them. Others may see it as a modern way to push boundaries and experiment with risk taking.
- Organisations such as the Police, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre or the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), receive reports of harassment after private photos have been circulated. This risk comes when children and young people lose control over where the images are circulated. Once an image is on the internet, it can be freely copied by anybody.
- Children who are 'sexting' may actually be committing criminal offences. If a teenager were to have in their possession an indecent image of another minor (aged under 16), they would technically be in possession of an indecent image of a child, which is an offence under the Gibraltar Crimes Act 2011. If someone is prosecuted for these offences, they may be placed on the sex offenders register, potentially for some considerable time.
- Children and young people may not realise that what they are doing is illegal or that it may be potentially harmful to them in the future.
- What you can do as parents/carers is educate your children to these dangers. Tell them that this behaviour could come back to haunt them in later life and that once an image is on the internet - you can never get it back.
- Make sure they stay safe by being careful not to give out personal information to people they are chatting with online.
- Make sure they check their privacy settings on social media. Ask them; do they really want the whole world to see what they are posting?
- Educate them around the risks of sharing personal information.
- Visit the ThinkuKnow website, an excellent resource on internet safety.

To make a report as someone aged 18yrs and younger, a parent/guardian or as a professional working with children or young people, contact one of the RGP's specialist officers at [safeguarding@royalgib.police.gi](mailto:safeguarding@royalgib.police.gi) or the Care Agency at [Referral.concernsforachild@careagency.gov.gi](mailto:Referral.concernsforachild@careagency.gov.gi)



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 386/2018

Date: 26th June 2018

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### **Social Work Degree to be offered on the Rock**

The Care Agency is inviting applications for a three-year, full-time BA (Hons) course in Social Work, a course which will be delivered here on the Rock. This is the first time that a degree course in Social Work has been delivered locally.

In order to set up this course, the Care Agency has been working with the Gibraltar School of Health Studies, Kingston University London and St George's University of London.

After graduating with their BA (Hons) in Social Work, students will become eligible to apply to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) for registration and they can then apply to work as qualified social workers. However, it should be noted that this exciting and challenging course will only run if it is justified by the number of applicants.

The entry requirements for the BA (Hons) Social Programme are:

- Two or three A-levels (Two A\* grades or BBC). General Studies not accepted.
- BTEC Extended or National Diploma in a health-related subject (DMM).
- Other Level 3 qualifications equivalent to 112 UCAS points.

All candidates must have five GCSE's A\*- C including English Language and Mathematics or equivalent.

Applicants with experience of employment in social care may apply for recognition of their prior experiential learning in respect of the practice learning modules.

A series of Open Days and Evenings will provide those who are interested with the opportunity to gather further information on the course and speak to social workers and managers from the Care Agency. The first Open Day was held on Tuesday 26th June at the Family and Community Centre in Mid-Harbours and attended by students from Westside and Bayside comprehensives. Future events will be advertised in the local press.

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Natalie Tavares, the Care Agency's CEO(ag) said this was a fantastic opportunity for anyone who is interested in becoming a social worker but unable to leave Gibraltar due to personal commitments. She thanked Professor Ian Peate from the School of Health Studies, stating: "He has a proven track-record in education, and has already established links with Kingston University London and St George's University of London through the work he has undertaken in the BSc (Hons) Nursing (Adult) courses".

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP said, "I am delighted to see the development of qualifications in both Social Work, and Nursing, within my Ministries. There may be many reasons why people who wish to further their education may find it difficult to leave Gibraltar to further their studies. So it is vital that we try our utmost to ensure that further education, in these important vocational professions, is provided locally whenever possible. I wish thank Natalie Tavares and Ian Peate for their hard work and collaboration in making this possible."

**Note to Editors:**

Anyone interested in learning more about the BA (Hons) Social Work, or in further information events should contact:

Karen Dawson (Personal Secretary to the Chief Executive Officer 20078528);

Or the Gibraltar School of Health Studies via email: [shs@gha.gi](mailto:shs@gha.gi)

They may also visit the BA (Hons) Social Work course page via the link below:

<http://www.kingston.ac.uk/undergraduate-course/social-work/>

# Ministry of Justice

244/2017- Smoking to be Prohibited at the Bayside Sports Complex

321/2017- Consultation on a Draft Code of Conduct for Persons Providing Legal Services

560/2017- Legal Services Act 2017 passed by Parliament

575/2017- Consultation on Reforms to Legal Assistance and the Creation of a Duty Solicitor Scheme

662/2017- Bill to amend the Proceeds of Crime Act 2015

711/2017- Justice Minister Introduces New Legislation on Lasting Powers of Attorney

753/2017- First Meeting of Law Commission

91/2018- People to Have More Control over their Future Care

109/2018- New Bill in Parliament to set up 'Gibraltar Police Federation'

201/2018 -New post of local Director of Public Prosecution to be created

230/2018 - Legal Assistance

285/2018 - Minister Costa addresses Police recruits

286/2018 - 'Easy to read Guide' to Lasting Power of Attorney

364/2018 - Bill for a specific "upskirting" offence to be introduced

387/2018 - Legal Assistance Reforms and Duty Legal Representative Scheme





## PRESS RELEASE

No. 244/2017

Date: 20th April 2017

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### Smoking to be Prohibited at the Bayside Sports Complex

The Minister for Sport, the Hon Steven Linares, and the Minister for Health, the Hon Neil Costa are pleased to announce that, as from Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2017, smoking will be prohibited throughout the entirety of the Bayside Sports Complex (BSC).

In exercise of the powers conferred on him by Section 5 of the Smoke- Free Environment Act 2012, the Minister for Health has made regulations that smoking is prohibited in all areas of the Bayside Sports Complex which are not otherwise prohibited under the Act. At present, this only extends to indoor venues.

Minister Linares explains that “...initially, the prohibition was going to be effected after a change in the Gibraltar Sport and Leisure Authority’s general policy only but after liaising with Minister Costa and the Health Promotion team at the Gibraltar Health Authority it was thought best to actually make changes in the regulations in the Smoke- Free Environment Act. In effect this makes smoking within the Bayside Sports Complex illegal”

Health professionals in Gibraltar have always questioned the omission of sports complexes from the original law, noting that these are areas extensively used by children and are actively promoted as healthy places. In addition, participants in sport are naturally breathing more vigorously, which requires that the air should be cleaner and less polluted, not more.

The effects of smoking are well documented. Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS) is a toxic air pollutant that pollutes the environment far more than people think or realise and breathing polluted air for even brief periods can counter the benefits of exercise. Tobacco smoke is associated with numerous illnesses in the persons exposed, including an increased risk of heart disease, lung cancer, asthma and aggravation of a number of respiratory complaints.

No sportsperson or spectator should have to endure such exposure when it is so easily preventable. It is now increasingly common for smoking to be prohibited at stadia and sports and leisure complexes around the world and the BSC will now fall in line with this trend. The Director of Public Health and the Health Promotion team are strongly supportive of this reform and welcome its introduction.

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We urge the general public to embrace the changes and the positive intentions which have formed the basis for the decision and to co-operate with Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority management and staff in the execution of the new regulations.



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

No: 321/2017

Date: 18th May 2017

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### **Consultation on a Draft Code of Conduct for Persons Providing Legal Services**

HM Government of Gibraltar, together with the Bar Council, issued a consultation paper on a draft Legal Services Bill in the summer of 2016. The Government intends to publish a revised draft of that Bill shortly in order that it may be taken before Parliament.

Under the revised Bill, a new Code of Conduct for Legal Services professionals will need to be introduced. The Code of Conduct would apply to all persons providing legal services in Gibraltar, including:

- Lawyers working in private practice.
- In-house counsel in industry, for the Crown or a statutory body.
- Foreign lawyers working in Law Firms.
- Counsel called to the Bar for specific cases only.

The revised Bill also is drafted so as to apply to legal executives and law-costs drafters.

The Bar Council, in discussion with the Chief Justice and the Registrar of the Supreme Court, has produced the draft Code of Conduct, which has been published today by the Bar Council for consultation purposes. Representations should be addressed to the Chairman of the Bar Council by post or email to [barcouncil@gibtelecom.net](mailto:barcouncil@gibtelecom.net) copied to [ka@tsnlaw.com](mailto:ka@tsnlaw.com). The deadline for receipt of submissions, comments or representations is **5pm on Thursday 7th September 2017**.

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon N F Costa MP, said:

“The Government is committed to reviewing the current system of regulation of Legal Services in Gibraltar and will take a Bill to Parliament shortly based on the draft circulated last year. To that end, we are pleased that the Bar Council has been diligently working, together with the Chief Justice and the Registrar of the Supreme Court, on a draft Code of Conduct to support the proposed law.

“The draft Code of Conduct is being circulated by the Bar Council to its members as well as to Heads of Chambers. The Bill as currently proposed, and the draft Code of Conduct, will potentially

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affect not only current Bar Council members but in addition other persons not currently members of the Bar Council who provide legal services, including those employed as in-house lawyers. On this basis the Government and Bar Council believe that there is benefit in a wider circulation of the draft and invites persons potentially affected by the changes, and the public in general, to examine the consultation paper and make any representations they may have to the Bar Council so that they may be taken on board.”

The Chairman of the Bar Council, Keith Azopardi QC said:

“Having a Gibraltar Code of Conduct designed specifically for a fused profession is an important step in the better regulation of legal services. It is intended that this Code will replace the existing system that imports into Gibraltar law codes that are sometimes not responsive to the needs of a fused profession. This draft Code has been the product of the work of a special sub-committee of senior practitioners formed by the Council and chaired by Lewis Baglietto QC. I am very grateful for their efforts. We look forward to comments from persons undertaking legal services. The draft Code is being provided to members of the Council and law firms as well as being published on the Council’s and Government’s websites to ensure wide circulation. We look forward to receiving responses by the deadline of 7 September.”



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

No. 560/2017

Date: 25th September 2017

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### LEGAL SERVICES ACT 2017 PASSED BY PARLIAMENT

HM Government of Gibraltar and the Bar Council are pleased to announce that the Bill for a new Legal Services Act was passed unanimously by Parliament on the 20th September 2017.

The Government had a long-standing commitment to review the current system of regulation of Legal Services in Gibraltar in order to achieve a modernised and comprehensive statutory framework. This would replace the existing legislation based on provisions that are 50 years old.

Once it is commenced, this Act will ensure that there will be a more comprehensive, modern and effective regulatory system. For the first time, a full definition of legal services will be provided under the new law. The Act provides for the registration of persons authorised to offer legal services and establishes an independent Legal Services Regulatory Authority. Further, the Act places the Bar Council on a statutory footing as Gibraltar's "Law Council".

The new law will apply to all persons providing legal services in Gibraltar and not just lawyers working in private practice. As such, in-house counsel in industry, Government lawyers, law-costs draftsmen, legal executives and law firms themselves, are specifically covered in law, also, for the first time.

Work is already underway on secondary legislation to ensure that the Act can fully achieve its objectives. This work included a recent consultation undertaken by the Bar Council for a Code of Conduct. It is expected that the legislation will be commenced in full in the early Spring of 2018.

The Chairman of the Bar Council, Keith Azopardi QC said:

"The passing of this Act by Parliament is a significant step in ensuring that Gibraltar achieves a more modern and comprehensive system of regulation for the provision of legal services in Gibraltar. The Bar Council warmly welcomes this and looks forward to working with the Government to ensure that all is in place to commence the legislation as soon as is practicable."

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon N F. Costa MP, said:



“On behalf of HM Government of Gibraltar and as part of a wide ranging and long outstanding review of legislation in this area, I am delighted that this Act was passed unanimously by Parliament. This legislation represents the first major reform in this area for fifty years and ensures that our jurisdiction’s legal profession is subject to more effective regulation, which is fit for purpose. As I mentioned in Parliament when speaking on the merits of the Act, the new legislation has been a true team effort and one of which I am extremely proud to have been a part. I again wish to place on record my thanks to the Honourable the Chief Justice, the Bar Council, the Attorney General, my Ministry’s Legal Counsel, Kevin Warwick and all stakeholders who contributed.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 575/2017

Date: 2nd October 2017

### **Consultation on Reforms to Legal Assistance and the Creation of a Duty Solicitor Scheme**

The Ministry of Health, Care and Justice and the Bar Council are pleased to announce that discussions between them have progressed to a stage where a proposal to stakeholders on a revised legal assistance framework and the creation of a duty solicitor scheme can be placed for public consultation. The proposal is for a pilot project to be formally reviewed within three years.

The new statutory structure included in the consultation document would see an increase in the financial eligibility threshold for legal assistance from £5,000, a sum set in 1990, to over £14,000 (being 50% of the average annual income in Gibraltar). This would, in effect, mean that persons in full time employment and on the minimum wage would be eligible to receive assistance. The proposed new system also increases the amount of capital and the amount of equity in an applicant's home that the Registrar may disregard when deciding to grant legal assistance.

The reforms also include changes to the scope of legal assistance to ensure that taxpayers' money is not used in respect of cases where there is no strong or compelling public interest in making legal assistance available or where controls of expenditure are being introduced in the interest of the taxpayer by limiting the cost payable in certain cases. To that end, the consultation includes additions to the type of cases that are to be excluded from the scope of legal assistance and creates category of cases where a scale of fees would be applied. Examples are the exclusion of consumer disputes and making divorce proceedings, where there are no children of the marriage, subject to scale fees.

Further revisions are included, which will strengthen the Registrar's power to refuse the funding of unreasonable cases. To assist in the prompt and low cost resolution of disputes, mediation will be compulsory in most cases where a party is legally assisted. The regime for the recovery of costs will also be strengthened, which will include provision to ensure that successful claimants who are awarded damages pay back to the consolidated fund any legal assistance they receive from such damages in appropriate cases.

The consultation envisages that the changes to the legal assistance regime will come into effect at the same time as the creation of a duty solicitor scheme. This will ensure that legal representation will be available on a 24/7 basis to persons arrested and held in custody. Membership of this

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scheme will be compulsory for all law firms of 5 or more practitioners and voluntary for smaller law firms. Practitioners who wish to undertake legal assistance work must, however, also be practitioners of law firms participating in the duty solicitor scheme.

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon N F Costa MP, said: “On behalf of HM Government of Gibraltar, I am delighted that our discussions with the Bar Council have resulted in the issue of a joint consultation paper on a new legal assistance framework and the establishment, for the first time, of a duty solicitor scheme. In my view, the proposed legal architecture set out in this consultation document balances the need to increase such eligibility with the need to ensure that tax payers’ money is not used to fund unreasonable cases or cases where to grant legal assistance is not in the public interest.”

The Chairman of the Bar Council, Keith Azopardi QC said: “The proposed reforms to legal assistance and introduction of a duty solicitor scheme that form part of this consultation exercise are very far-reaching and significant. The proposed increase of the legal assistance threshold would increase the potential pool of applicants for legal assistance significantly and for the first time give financial assistance to many individuals who need access to the courts or who have been prevented in the past from recourse to the courts for determination of any dispute because they could not afford the cost of litigation. It will significantly improve access to justice. Likewise the introduction of a duty solicitor scheme has been longstanding and will secure advice and representation to persons in custody thus securing a basic fundamental right. The Council looks forward to responses to this consultation exercise.”





## PRESS RELEASE

No. 662/2017

Date: 9th November 2017

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### **Bill to amend the Proceeds of Crime Act 2015**

Today, the Minister with responsibility for Justice, the Hon Neil Costa, has published a Bill containing amendments to the Proceeds of Crime Act 2015.

This Bill will expand upon the current definition in that Act of ‘unlawful conduct’ to include conduct outside Gibraltar by a public official that constitutes a gross human rights abuse. This is further defined in the Bill as the torture or inhuman, cruel or degrading treatment of a person on the grounds that such person has been obtaining, exercising, defending or promoting human rights, or has sought to expose gross human rights abuse conducted by a public official.

As a result, any property obtained through this conduct will be subject to the existing civil recovery powers within the Act including the freezing of assets obtained and their subsequent forfeiture. This amendment reflects a similar change made in the UK earlier this year, but not yet in force there, which came out of the so-called “Magnitsky Amendment”, (named after the Sergei Magnitsky, a Russian lawyer who was tortured and died in prison in Moscow in 2009 after exposing an alleged \$230m (£184m) fraud carried out by leading Kremlin officials).

Commenting on the publication of the Bill the Minister for Justice Neil Costa said:

“I am delighted to cause the publication of the Bill which once again shows the commitment of this Government to ensuring that Gibraltar has all the legislation necessary to prevent the laundering and retention of money by persons involved in unlawful conduct. This Government introduced the Proceeds of Crime Act in 2015, which included “recovery orders” for the first time in our legislation, and has not shied away from introducing any necessary or desirable amendments to it since then to ensure that our law enforcement agencies have all the tools they need to recover the proceeds of crime.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 711/2017

Date: 29th November 2017

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### **Justice Minister Introduces New Legislation on Lasting Powers of Attorney**

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Mr Neil F Costa MP is pleased to announce new legislation, which will support and protect individuals who are unable to make specific decisions in relation to their health, welfare or finances, due to lack of capacity.

The Bill will allow for the creation and registration of lasting powers of attorney and for advance decisions to refuse medical treatment to be made before capacity is lost.

This Lasting Powers of Attorney and Capacity Bill will introduce several important new aspects to Gibraltar Law, as follows;

The Bill will enable anyone over 18 years of age, whilst they still have mental capacity, to appoint a trusted person to make decisions on their behalf at a time in the future when they may no longer have capacity.

Advance decisions will allow an individual to express their preference to refuse specific medical treatment if, at the time in the future when that treatment is to be given, the person has lost capacity to consent to it.

The Bill will give guidance as to how best to safeguard those individuals who are in a care home who have lost their mental capacity and what can and cannot be done in relation to their care and treatment.

Further, and importantly, the Bill will introduce independent capacity advocates, who support people who cannot make or understand decisions, by stating their views and preferences. They are in no way connected to the patient and their role is to ensure that the person's wishes can be respected and followed.

Mental health is a delicate area and can affect all of us at some stage in our lives, which makes positive and active care in this sphere so crucial. The philosophy behind the legislation supports personal autonomy and a person's decisions and best interests.

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The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Mr Neil F Costa MP, said: “this legislation relating to decision making and to the care and treatment of those individuals who lack capacity, is of crucial importance in our society. This Bill, once enacted, will allow individuals to plan ahead in this manner. This legal framework will empower and protect those who cannot make specific decisions for themselves. It will work, hand in hand, with the continuous efforts of Her Majesty’s Government of Gibraltar in increasing the awareness, early diagnosis and care for those with mental health issues and dementia. We must ensure that vulnerable adults are afforded, at a minimum, a certain level of protection. In turn, patients and their families will have greater peace of mind, knowing that a person’s wishes will be respected.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 753/2017

Date: 14th December 2017

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### First Meeting of Law Commission

The Minister with responsibility for Justice, the Hon Neil F. Costa MP, chaired the first meeting of the recently created Law Commission for the reform of the law and connected purposes.

The Law Commission is a statutory body created by HM Government of Gibraltar to receive and consider proposals for the reform of the law, undertake the examination of particular branches of the law, formulate proposals for reform and generally provide information and advice to HM Government of Gibraltar on the reform or amendment of the law.

The Law Commission is comprised of the Minister with responsibility for justice, and HM Attorney General as ex officio members, together with a panel of experts in different fields such as education, the environment, financial services and the law. These experts are Supreme Court Judge, Mrs. Justice Prescott, the Stipendiary Magistrate, Charles Pitto, John Restano QC, Mark Isola QC, Dr Joey Britto, Dr Liesel Torres and Mr Lawrence Podesta.

Further to previous statements made by Minister Costa, and other members of HM Government of Gibraltar, and in particular in response to public concern surrounding recent criminal cases, the Minister opened the first meeting of the Commission by noting that their first project will be a review of local criminal sentencing laws.

In particular the Commission was tasked with examining-

- (a) eligibility for parole licences, which in Gibraltar, is usually possible after one third of a custodial sentence has been served, and
- (b) whether the maximum sentence available in respect of certain offences in Gibraltar should be amended, or local guidelines issued in their respect, so as to take account of differences between the UK and Gibraltar.

The Minister with responsibility for Justice said: "I am delighted that the Law Commission met for the first time. I have been very keen to get the work of the Commission started, especially, as the areas that the Commission is tasked to look into are matters in which I have a particular interest and which I know the public in Gibraltar are also keen should be properly and fully considered. I am especially pleased at the high calibre of the persons who have agreed to join the Attorney General

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and myself as members. I am certain that the Commission experts will provide sound advice to HM Government of Gibraltar so that future policy and legislation in relevant areas may be formulated in the national interest.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 91/2018

Date: 19th February 2018

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### People to Have More Control over their Future Care

- *Individuals to have greater control over personal decisions when they no longer have the mental capacity to make them.*
- *New right to refuse medical treatment in advance.*
- *Guidance for professionals on how to act in a person's best interests once they have lost capacity.*

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar introduced a Lasting Powers of Attorney and Capacity Bill. On Friday 16<sup>th</sup> February, the Bill was passed unanimously by Parliament. Once the law is commenced, it will provide individuals with the confidence that their wishes will be reflected and protected, should they lose the mental capacity to be able to make decisions at a future time.

The Act will:

- enable anyone over 18 years of age, whilst they still have mental capacity, to appoint a trusted person to make decisions on their behalf at a time in the future when they may no longer have capacity – Lasting Power of Attorney;
- allow a person, whilst they still have mental capacity, to express their preference to refuse specific medical treatment if, at the time in the future when that treatment is to be given, the person has lost capacity to consent to it;
- give statutory guidance to professionals as to how to administer and care for those who no longer have capacity;
- introduce safeguards, on when and for how long, those with mental health conditions, such as, autistic spectrum conditions, dementia, personality disorders and old age, their liberty can be restricted. There are now procedural rules, criteria, limits of time and the requirement of continuing clinical assessments, to protect the citizen against the possibility of arbitrary restrictions of liberty in the specific cases where a significant restriction of liberty may be in the person's best interests;

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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](mailto:ministry@gha.gi) w [gibraltar.gov.gi](http://gibraltar.gov.gi)



- introduce independent capacity advocates, who support people who cannot make or understand decisions, by stating their views and preferences; and
- amend the Medical (Gibraltar Health Authority) Act 1987, to include the power to charge for residential services for the elderly.

A person will now be able to record a statement of their wishes - either financial or health-related - which is registered at the Supreme Court Registry. If capacity is lost in future, the attorney appointed under that document, will have the authority to act. A lasting power of attorney can cover decisions about day-to-day things like what to wear or what to buy, or serious life-changing decisions, like whether to move into a care home or have major surgery.

New criminal offences have been created to deter attorneys from intentionally or recklessly ill-treating or neglecting a person for whom they have been appointed to act in the best interests.

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Mr Neil F Costa MP, said: “Persons living, amongst other things, with mental disorders, who no longer have the mental capacity to express their wishes, should be able to receive such care and treatment as they need *and want*. It is this second part which is so crucial. A person has the right to choose what may be done with their body or their mind in the event that they lose their mental capacity in the future. The Act is recognition of a person’s autonomy and their right to make choices and be protected.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 109/2018

Date: 27th February 2018

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### **New Bill in Parliament to set up ‘Gibraltar Police Federation’**

The ‘Gibraltar Police Association’, which comprises members of the Royal Gibraltar Police, is set to be formally replaced by the ‘Gibraltar Police Federation’, following a Bill brought before Parliament by the Minister for Health, Care and Justice, Neil F. Costa MP. This legislation will provide a legal framework to establish and regulate the Federation. The Association has been lately working in the spirit of such an arrangement.

The ‘Gibraltar Police Federation’ will become a completely independent body, providing its members with a forum to raise matters with the Commissioner, the Authority, and/or HM Government of Gibraltar, which are deemed to potentially affect the welfare and efficiency of the Royal Gibraltar Police.

A new set of regulations, devised by the Federation, HM Government of Gibraltar and His Excellency the Governor, will also be introduced, to repeal the current Gibraltar Police Association regulations. Other than replacing Section 79 of the Police Act, the new regulations will govern the procedures and functions of the Federation. This will include the establishment of two full-time convener posts, to be held by the chairman and secretary of the Federation, and the obligation to keep proper accounting systems.

Chairman of the Gibraltar Police Association, Mr Henry Bautista, stated: “The Association thanks the Chief Minister, the Minister for Justice and HM Government of Gibraltar for their continued support and is pleased to announce that this modern concept will provide the necessary legal platform in voicing and recognising its members concerns. A view welcomed and shared by all.”

Minister Costa commented on the Bill: “It is important to establish the Gibraltar Police Federation and for this body to be officially recognised as an independent entity, to represent our officers and to work closely with the Commissioner and Government. The Federation will serve to identify and raise any matters for the benefit of our police force. I very much look forward to continue working with the Association and the newly constituted Police Federation, once established.”





## PRESS RELEASE

No: 201/2018

Date: 4th April 2018

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### **New post of local Director of Public Prosecution to be created**

The Ministry of Justice is extremely pleased to announce that a Bill for a new Act to establish the office of Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) in Gibraltar, in accordance with one of the Government's key manifesto commitments, has today been published.

In Gibraltar, the position of the DPP has never existed and, in the past, the Attorney General (AG) has principally carried out that function. With the appointment of Michael Llamas QC as AG in 2015, the Government was committed to bring about the necessary changes so that our system would more closely replicate that in the United Kingdom. In such a system, the DPP is in charge of the day-to-day running of the criminal prosecution service under the direction of the AG and the AG can concentrate on being the chief legal advisor to the Government. With the creation of the new post, Gibraltar will follow the UK model where the DPP and AG are two separate appointments.

The DPP will head the Office of Criminal Prosecutions and Litigation, (which performs in Gibraltar a role equivalent to the Crown Prosecution Service in the UK), on a day-to-day basis and will carry out criminal law and litigation work on behalf of the AG. The DPP will also exercise certain of the AG's powers in relation to criminal litigation, such as consenting for certain offences to be prosecuted. The exercise of such powers will be strictly under the direction of the AG and, in accordance with the Constitution, the DPP will be subject to any instructions issued by the AG in that regard. The DPP will not be able to act in any manner contrary to such instructions or in cases where the AG has personally exercised a power or discretion.

The Bill sets out that the appointment of the DPP will be carried out by the Gibraltar Government in consultation with the AG. The provisions of the Bill ensure that the person so appointed must be not only an expert in criminal law and litigation, but also a fit and proper person to hold the post. The notice of the creation of the post of DPP will be published in the Gibraltar Gazette.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP said: "I am confident that the creation and appointment of the post of Director of Public Prosecution will positively enhance our legal services. To have a DPP in place within this term of office is one of the Government's manifesto commitments and a pledge that is about to become a reality for the first time in Gibraltar. I

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think the creation of this new office is an important development for the legal community and one that will be welcomed by professional practitioners and the public alike, as it will improve the administration of justice for the benefit of our entire community.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 230/2018

Date: 23rd April 2018

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### Legal Assistance

The Minister for Justice, the Hon Neil F. Costa MP, at the next sitting of Parliament will lay before it the 40th Annual Report of the Parole Board.

Notable in this report is the mention of the amendment to Schedule 1 of the Legal Aid and Assistance Act by the Legal Assistance (Amendment) Rules 2017. This provided for legal assistance under that Act to be available for proceedings before the Parole Board.

This amendment has meant that, for the first time in Gibraltar, prisoners applying for parole can, should they meet the relevant criteria for assistance, receive free legal representation when the Parole Board considers their case. This ensures that important decisions about prisoners are made fairly and that prisoners who wish to have a legal representative at the hearing have the opportunity to do so.

Minister for Justice, Neil F. Costa MP, said: "It was a great pleasure to introduce the amendments, contained in the Legal Assistance (Amendment) Rules 2017. I am happy to note that, since the date of introduction until today, a total of 16 prisoners have been granted legal assistance for such representation. These are prisoners who felt they would benefit from legal representation before the Board, but may otherwise have been unable to obtain it. This means that now over 50% of parole applications have the benefit of legal representation. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Chairman and all members of the Parole Board for their continued hard work in undertaking this difficult and demanding task for our community's benefit."



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 285/2018

Date: 18th May 2018

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### Minister Costa addresses Police recruits

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F Costa MP, visited New Mole House Police Station and addressed the recruits currently undergoing their initial police training course.

The current recruit intake is made up of 11 Royal Gibraltar Police and 1 Gibraltar Defence Police recruit constables, who are undergoing a 15 week long police training course. The course includes legislation, police powers and investigative skills. The recruits are also exposed to practical sessions, including unarmed defence tactics and the use of, and exposure to incapacitant spray.

The recruits will take part in their pass out parade on Wednesday 19th June, to be held at John Macintosh Square, before becoming operational.

Commissioner McGrail expressed his gratitude to Minister Costa for having taken time out from his busy schedule to visit the recruits and showing interest in their progress. Speaking to the recruits, he added that he is personally being kept abreast of their individual development and is very happy with their progression so far, and looks forward to them completing their course and seeing them at their pass-out parade.

Minister Costa commented: "I would like to thank Commissioner McGrail and his officers for their dedication and professionalism in ensuring the new recruits are properly trained and prepared before commencing their careers as Police Officers. I would like to take this opportunity to wish the recruits the very best in their journey and future careers; they should feel proud of what they have achieved so far."



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 286/2018

Date: 21st May 2018

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### **‘Easy to read Guide’ to Lasting Power of Attorney**

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F Costa MP, is pleased to note the publication, on the Gibraltar Courts Service website, of an “Easy to read guide” to Lasting Powers of Attorney (LPA), together with blank templates for an Health and Welfare LPA and for a Property and Financial LPA. These documents may be accessed at <http://www.gcs.gov.gi/index.php/lasting-powers-of-attorney> and will provide an introduction as to what these new instruments may be used for, including separate sections on both types of LPA and advance decisions.

This guide and the templates build on the Lasting Powers of Attorney Code of Practice, which can be found at <http://www.gibraltarlaws.gov.gi/articles/2018s097.pdf>. The Code goes into more detail and is useful to anyone who may be named as a donee (attorney) in an LPA.

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Mr Neil F Costa MP, said: “I am delighted that in the short time since the legislation has been in force there have already been applications made to the Supreme Court for the registration of LPAs. As I have said before, LPAs are a useful tool to appoint a trusted person to take decisions on one’s behalf. Through an LPA, persons who anticipate they may lack capacity in future to manage their health, welfare, property and financial affairs may, while they still have capacity, make provision for their views and preferences to be taken into account. I would urge anyone who has any concerns about how their affairs may be managed, if there were to lose capacity, to read the guide and consider whether it would be useful for them to make and register LPAs.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 364/2018

Date: 18th June 2018

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### **Bill for a specific “upskirting” offence to be introduced**

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice has announced that, following recent news in the UK Parliament, HM Government of Gibraltar has today published a Bill to make “upskirting” a specific criminal offence in Gibraltar.

“Upskirting” is a term used to describe the act of taking a photograph under a person’s clothing, typically up someone’s skirt, without that person’s knowledge or permission. It is a form of sexual harassment that is incredibly violating and which currently is not specifically prohibited in Gibraltar. “Upskirting” is already specifically illegal in Scotland, Australia, New Zealand and some US states.

Creating a specific “upskirting” offence will strengthen the law in this area, and will also ensure that this behaviour will be listed as a sexual offence for the purposes of placing offenders in the sex offenders register. The Bill will ensure that all instances where such a photograph is taken for the purpose of obtaining sexual gratification or causing humiliation, distress or alarm are covered. The offence will be triable either at the Magistrates’ Court or the Supreme Court and on summary conviction will carry a sentence of up to one year in prison and/or a fine, and on indictment would carry a sentence of up to two years in prison.

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice the Hon. Neil F Costa MP, said: “HM Government of Gibraltar has noted steps to make a specific offence to cover the despicable behaviour known as “upskirting”. This will ensure that individuals who violate other persons in this way may be prosecuted and, in the most serious offences, subject to terms of imprisonment in line with other voyeuristic offences.”



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 387/2018

Date: 27th June 2018

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### Legal Assistance Reforms and Duty Legal Representative Scheme

The Minister of Health, Care and Justice and the Bar Council are pleased to announce that necessary amendments to legislation to introduce Legal Assistance reforms are ready and are effective immediately as at today. The arrangements to establish a Duty Legal Representative Scheme as from 1st October are also in place. This will ensure that legal representation is available 24 hours, seven days a week to those who are arrested and held in custody.

The reforms increase financial eligibility for Legal Assistance from £5,000, (a sum set in 1990), to over £14,000, which represents 50% of the average income in Gibraltar. This means that a person in full time employment on the minimum wage will now be eligible. Further, the amount of capital an individual may hold whilst still being eligible to apply for Legal Assistance has risen from £350 to £10,000. Further, the first £50,000 of equity in an applicant's residential property will also be disregarded by the Registrar when deciding to grant Legal Assistance.

The increased eligibility is balanced by amendments dividing civil cases into three categories:

- a) those that will not be eligible for Legal Assistance, (such as consumer disputes);
- b) those which are eligible for Legal Assistance, but subject to "scale fees", (such as divorce proceedings without dependent children); and
- c) those that will continue to be assessed as is presently the case, (including divorce cases where there are dependent children). Most grants of Legal Assistance will be subject to mandatory mediation, by a qualified mediator appointed by the Registrar. Mediation costs will also be paid by Legal Assistance as the Registrar may determine.

These reforms are a pilot project and are to be formally reviewed after three years. The regime to recover costs is also strengthened, which will include provision to ensure that successful claimants who are awarded damages pay back to the consolidated fund any legal assistance they receive from such damages in appropriate cases. The Registrar's powers to refuse funding of unreasonable cases is also reinforced.

The Bar Council said, "The Bar Council welcomes the introduction of this significant package of Legal Assistance reforms which will result in increased access to justice for members of our community where it is most needed. We also look forward to working with all stakeholders in

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delivering the Duty Legal Representation Scheme on a 24/7 basis. Finally, we take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Health, Care and Justice and his team for delivering these complex and forward-looking reforms in close collaboration with the Bar Council.”

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon Neil F Costa MP said, “On behalf of Her Majesty’s Government of Gibraltar, I am extremely pleased that we have been able to agree a new legal assistance framework with the Bar Council. This has not been an easy task, and I take this opportunity to thank the Bar Council, our Government lawyers who painstakingly drafted the new reforms and all those who responded to the consultation paper issued last year, for engaging so positively in this complex and delicate exercise. These amendments balance the need to significantly improve access to justice by increasing eligibility for Legal Assistance with the need to ensure that tax payers’ money is not used to fund unreasonable cases. In addition, the introduction of the Duty Legal Representative Scheme will secure advice and representation to persons in custody thus guaranteeing arrested persons’ human rights.”