



PRESS RELEASE

No: 540/2018

Date: 14th September 2018

Autism Workshop for GHA Staff

Autism Support Gibraltar, in conjunction with the Gibraltar Health Authority (GHA), held an 'Autism workshop' on Friday the 14th September, where they delivered a series of talks to frontline staff at the Primary Care Centre. The workshop was also held for staff at St Bernard's Hospital on the 12th September. The workshop was part of an ongoing initiative, started by the GHA and the 'Advocacy Council for Service Users with Additional Needs'.

The Advocacy Council is formed of representatives of various associations and support groups, who advocate for members of our community who live with different conditions and who have additional needs in their day-to-day life. The GHA regularly meets with the Council to identify areas within our Health and Care services which may be improved to better cater for persons with additional needs.

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder, refers to a range of conditions which affects the person's social skills, speech non-verbal communication and how they experience the world around them. There is not one form of autism, but many types, caused by different combinations of genetic and environmental influences. The term "spectrum" reflects the wide variation in challenges and strengths possessed by each person with autism. Autism's most-obvious signs tend to appear in young children aged between 2 and 3; however, it can be diagnosed as early as 18 months. Autism is a common condition. Statistics indicate that there are 700,000 people on the autism spectrum in the United Kingdom alone. While there is no cure for the condition, the right support at the right time can make have great benefits.

Mr Kevin Mañasco, Chairperson for Autism Support Gibraltar said: "Autism Support Gibraltar are extremely pleased to have been able to organise and offer these workshops to both the staff at the Hospital and PCC, as it widens their understanding and offers advice on how to deal with individuals on the spectrum. These sessions are invaluable and we will endeavour to try and make life easier for those on the spectrum and their families by coming up with similar initiatives in the future. ASG would like to thank the GHA and Minister Costa for their support towards our workshops."

Clinical Nurse Manager for Primary Care, Mrs Suzanne Romero said: "We are delighted to have a very experienced health care professional in Autism, deliver these talks to our members of staff. It is important we all develop a better understanding on Autism."

Ministry of Health, Care and Justice

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

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



The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon Neil F. Costa MP, addressed the attendees prior to the workshop's commencement. He added: "I would like to thank the members of the Autism Support Gibraltar for working with our teams at the GHA to organise the workshop. The talks will be invaluable to our staff at the Primary Care Centre, to help them better understand the challenges faced by persons with Autism and their loved ones, and learn what they can do to help overcome, or better deal with, some of these challenges. I would also like to extend my thanks to all the Advocacy Council members for their important contributions since its formation – I very much look forward to our next meeting."