



PRESS RELEASE

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Adoption and Fostering Awareness Week – Statement by Minister for Social Services

Today marks the commencement of fostering and adoption awareness week.

This is the second time that the Care Agency is running an awareness campaign of this nature and this year we are building on the success of our campaign from last year. Last year's theme was 'Be a Hero' and the Care Agency's aim was to reach out to prospective foster or adoptive parents and encourage and support them in taking the next steps in the fostering and adoption process. The Care Agency's work over the past year has had tangible success, and social workers have been able to find foster placements for children and, indeed, found some 'hero' adoptive parents.

The theme of this year's campaign is 'Shaping Families', with a special emphasis on foster care.

Fostering is to provide someone else's child with a safe and stable family environment for a period of time during which they are unable to live with their own parents, whether because of family crisis, parents finding it difficult to cope or due to abuse, neglect or domestic violence. Foster placements may be short or may become long term, and some may even lead to adoption: it all depends on the needs of the individual child.

Foster care in Gibraltar has been growing steadily over recent years. Gibraltar is a caring community and many have shown a genuine interest in becoming prospective foster parents or adopters. The Care Agency aims to recruit and support prospective foster carers and adoptive parents from a variety of backgrounds and skills, so as to be able to better match children with suitable families.

The Care Agency prides itself in providing quality placements for children and our dedicated social workers have an unwavering commitment to this service. Social work professionals are available to provide information on the fostering and adoption service throughout the year, and are running a series of drop-in information sessions and more comprehensive awareness workshops throughout this week. All of these are free to attend for anyone genuinely interested in the fostering and adoption process.

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Ahead of the 'Shaping Families' launch event, which will begin at 6pm this evening at the O'Callaghan Elliot Hotel, Minister for Social Services, the Hon Samantha Sacramento, stated: 'I am very pleased with the development of the fostering and adoption service and its increasing success since our 'Be a Hero' awareness campaign last October. The fostering and adoption of children who are no longer able to live with their own parents provides them with best possible start in life. The Care Agency has a very dedicated team of professionals and the effort of social workers in ensuring the realisation of this new department has been outstanding. The outcomes for children are immeasurable. I wish to wholeheartedly thank everyone involved in making a difference to children.'