



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 203/2017

Date: 31th March 2017

---

### Autism Awareness Month

April is Autism Awareness month and is being marked by the Government in various ways. A number of initiatives will commence on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March to raise awareness of autism, as well as to provide support to families of people who are on the autism spectrum.

The Ministry of Equality, together with clinical colleagues at the GHA, Care Agency and other Government departments, including the Department of Education, work on policy and strategy development on measures to deal with autism and of course other learning disabilities throughout the year.

To mark Autism Awareness Month, the Ministry of Equality has organised an information seminar on parental strategies to manage behaviour as part of its Understanding Autism series of lectures. This is the first in a series of seminars and workshops aimed at supporting parents. Further training for professionals is planned to take place later this year.

As part of its Equality Means Business strategy, one of the partnerships with the private sector that the Ministry for Equality has been further developing is its collaboration with Leisure Cinemas. In addition to the provision of inclusive equipment for the hearing and visually impaired, Leisure Cinemas have launched a programme of sensory screenings to accommodate people on the autism spectrum.

Finally, the Moorish Castle will be lit with the puzzle piece symbol for Autism from Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March through to World Autism Day on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

Minister for Equality, the Hon Samantha Sacramento MP, said "I am absolutely delighted with all the progress that we are making on policy and strategy development on disability equality. Autism strategies are an important part of this. I am very fortunate to work closely with a team of professionals who are committed to developing policies and strategies to promote inclusion of people with disabilities.

'In addition, and in large measure as a result of our awareness-raising campaigns and the range of information training that we are providing, these developments are being embraced by the private sector. A number of local organisations and businesses already stand out for their commitment to being progressive and being inclusive towards people with disabilities, whether learning disabilities or physical.'