



## PRESS RELEASE

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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."

Ministry of Health, Care and Justice

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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.”