



PRESS RELEASE

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Care Agency offers child protection 'Signs of Safety' training programme

This week, over 30 professionals from the Department of Education, the Gibraltar Health Authority, the Royal Gibraltar Police and the Care Agency will participate in the second phase of the 'Signs of Safety' training to enhance child protection systems in Gibraltar.

The course delivered by the Care Agency seeks to promote collaborative working between professionals to ensure effective communication, together with shared goals and responsibility in working with children and families. Another of its aims is to promote learning opportunities within the respective organisations and ensure a clear focus and sense of direction into embedding the Signs of Safety model in their practice.

The Signs of Safety model is an innovative, safety-organised approach to child protection casework. It was developed in the 1990s in Australia and has been successfully adopted worldwide in Europe, North America and Japan. Professionals are equipped with the skills to conduct a risk assessment, to detect warning signs that a child may be in danger and to elaborate a safety plan as part of a holistic assessment of the needs of a family. The programme has been adapted to Gibraltar's requirements considering our culture and ethnicity. Following the initial training in November 2016, attended by 60 delegates, the enthusiasm for such a module has been clear to all the professionals involved.

The Care Agency has successfully implemented the initial three-month Trajectory Plan and is now looking forward to implement the second stage. This has involved establishing the Practice Lead Committee, with representatives from each of the key departments working with children and families in our community, such as the GHA, the RGP, the Education Department and the Youth Service.

Head of Children's Services at the Care Agency, Nicole Viagas said: "The training programme will once again be facilitated by Ms Agnes Gault, Signs of Safety Consultant and Trainer who has extensive experience in supporting social work departments in the UK and across the globe in implementing the Signs of Safety Model. The training will be more focused in developing and embedding the model within our practice. It aims to provide all those involved with the necessary skills, knowledge, confidence and specific tools to work directly with children and their families."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon. Neil F. Costa MP, welcomed the second phase of the

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training programme. He declared: "I am delighted with the response and feedback from the professionals from the different disciplines working with children and young people who participated in the training last year. It is my understanding that since the training in November, the Children's Service has adapted the multi-agency referral form to reflect the Signs of Safety Model and that a stronger cohesion between professionals has been achieved. I am certain that this model will bring together all parties involved in working with children and it will continue to ensure accountability and quality assurance in safeguarding and child protection work, and thus achieve best outcomes for all children."