



PRESS RELEASE

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Celebrating the Success of the Opening of the Family and Community Centre

It is with great pride that the Care Agency celebrates over one year of success at the Family and Community Centre. Since it was inaugurated in September 2017 by the Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, the Centre, based at Mid Harbour Estate, has been pivotal in establishing and cementing the Care Agency's Early Intervention Service. There has been a steady increase in the number of projects, activities and services provided to children and families in the community. To celebrate this milestone, the Family and Community Centre will be launching its Facebook Page – Gibraltar Family and Community Centre.

The Centre operates an 'open door' policy, where all children and young persons are welcome to attend. The Centre's drop in service, in particular, caters for children below school age and their parents or carers. It aims to provide a safe space for them to enjoy time together and take part in meaningful activities. These sessions are designed to help parents develop their parenting skills and confidence and are carried out in a relaxed environment with the aim of promoting positive parenting.

The Parent and Child Association, (PACs), a charity, also organise popular playgroups, an after school club and a cookery club at the Centre. These have been very popular and have seen a good response from parents and children.

The Children's Hub sessions take place on Mondays and Thursdays, from 5pm to 8pm for children of different ages. They provide a welcoming, friendly and inclusive atmosphere, where children and young people are encouraged to take part in decision-making activities and meaningful debates. Children are encouraged to develop a community spirit and their self-awareness and are taught to take pride in the community.

Arts and Crafts sessions also form part of the Centre's extensive programme, focussing on group activity. Parents and carers are encouraged to stay and participate, enjoying quality time with their children, while their children are learning through play and art. These activities help children develop their artistic skills and imagination, as well building their self-confidence.

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Earlier this year, the Care Agency launched the Incredible Years Programme. The programme, designed to promote positive parenting, was developed for children between the ages 3 and 12. It consists, of at least, 12 weekly, two-hour group sessions, with the aim of improving parent-child relationships and promoting the use of positive strategies. Using a collaborative approach, parents are encouraged to learn from each other. Methods used include role-play, group discussion, homework and reviewing videos of family behaviour. The feedback from those who attended the programme in April of 2018 was extremely positive and as a result, the team will be running the programme again for another 12 weeks.

Ms Nicole Viagas, Head of Children Services at the Care Agency said: “The Family and Community Centre will aim to continuously develop and improve, so as to ensure that the needs of our community are being met. This new service has motivated our staff; they have listened to the needs of the children and families and have managed to develop the service to meet its desired outcome. The team of workers and volunteers feel they are making a difference and are proud of the work that is being achieved. Investing in early intervention and creating services for a community to access has proven to be a huge step forward in the way we deliver our services.”

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, commented: “We have received great feedback to date. It is extremely satisfying to learn how children and families in our community are benefiting from this wonderful service. The excellent work carried out at the Centre by the Care Agency’s Children’s Services, should not be underestimated, and goes a long way towards improving opportunities for children and families in our community. I would like to wholeheartedly thank Ms Nicole Viagas, her fantastic team, and our kind volunteers for their inspiring work.”

For further information on the services offered at the Family and Community Centre and to express interest in volunteering at the Family and Community Centre please contact: familyandcommunitycentre@gibraltar.gov.gi or alternatively call 20046386.