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Welfare Training for Government Staff

Five Government employees have achieved a Level 3 qualification and the Diploma in Welfare Studies which is the only nationally-accredited qualification offered by the Institute of Welfare. The Diploma requires attendance on an intensive one-week course in Fulham, followed by the successful submission of a 5,000 word dissertation on some aspect of Welfare in the Workplace.

The five men are employed by HM Customs, HM Prison, Civil Service Human Resources and two by the Gibraltar Fire and Rescue service.

Of the five, Sean Keating is the only full-time Welfare Officer. He is based in the Human Resources Department which has responsibility for all Government employees. 'My role requires me to support Government staff who are faced with welfare issues - perhaps they may have suffered bereavements or they are facing inter-personal problems. I also advise management if one of their staff is going through a particularly difficult time.'

Shane Macdonald who works at the Airport and Alfred Rovegno are both members of the Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service. 'I do this work in addition to my regular shifts,' said Shane. 'One of the issues I have to deal with is helping those officers who have endured especially traumatic experiences.' In addition to Alfred's normal shifts at the Grand Parade Fire Station, he runs a support network for firefighters. 'And I also give lectures and presentations on matters relating to stress and trauma as part of the awareness and education part of the network to build resilience at work on these important topics.'

Karin Pacheco is a Prison Officer. 'I've been doing this sort of work in addition to my normal duties,' says Karin. 'Amongst the officers, I find I'm dealing with stress and a range of family issues - all of which can affect an officer's performance at work.'

Alex Macdonald (who is a brother of Shane) spotted a need for some welfare support within HM Customs and found that management were very positive. 'I deal with issues that are both personal and job-related. Our officers are sometimes exposed to some distressing situations which are different to those experienced by the normal man on the street.'

Across all their different areas of work, the training received by these members of Government organisations has enabled them to be better equipped to deal with welfare issues amongst their colleagues.

Chief Secretary, Darren Grech, said: "We are all increasingly aware of Mental Health issues and, as a good employer, it is important that we offer some assistance in the area of welfare. People need to feel that they can take their problems to someone who has been professionally trained to offer support."