



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Automated Telephone Service

The Gibraltar Health Authority is pleased to announce the launch of an automated digital telephone appointment line for bookings of routine appointments at the Primary Care Centre (PCC). This will mean no more waiting in a telephone queue for a clerk, or for appointments to be released once a month. By dialling the PCC appointment number on 2000 7007 callers will be greeted with a menu of options to book the next available routine GP or Nurse Practitioner appointment, or to book a particular primary care specialist clinic, such as the smoking cessation clinic. Once a choice has been confirmed, the caller will receive a confirmation text message as a useful reminder. The automated telephone appointment system is charged at local call rates.

It is important that being able to book a medical appointment is as easy and as convenient as possible and, to that end, this service will be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to update directly with our electronic appointment system. To provide full flexibility and choice, there will also be an option to cancel an appointment through the telephone service or by replying "CANCEL" to the confirmation text message. Cancelling an appointment will immediately free up that time for someone else to book, so reducing wasted appointments and making better use of clinic times.

It is vital that we have up to date contact details of patients, including their correct mobile phone numbers, so that a reminder text message can be sent. At the PCC, a form will be available in order that the contact details can be entered on to patients' electronic health records. Alternatively, the form can be found on the GHA website at <http://www.gha.gi/mygha/>

While we are proud of this initiative, we are aware that, sometimes, patients would prefer to speak to a clerk to seek advice or simply because this is their preferred way of booking. The option to speak to a clerk will always be offered during the administration desk working hours of 0815 to 1530, and a patient will always be able to speak to an operator directly without having to use the automated service if they prefer. Given the change to our appointment system, we are starting by releasing 50% of the daily appointments to the automated system, with constant reviews to ensure we strike the right balance.

Ministry of Health, Care and Justice

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This entirely new service will go live in four weeks' time, thus allowing the system to be fully tested and for comprehensive information leaflets to be given out to PCC users. These leaflets will explain exactly how to use the system.

Dr Krishna Rawal, Director of Primary Care added: "Technology is an integral part of the extensive series of reforms that we are introducing. Waiting in a telephone queue to book an appointment is hugely frustrating, and it has been one of my key aims to resolve this. I am hopeful that everyone will benefit from this service. I am keen to take this opportunity to thank all the PCC staff who have adapted so seamlessly to all the changes introduced and who provide outstanding care and attention to our community every day."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP said: "In the last 18 months of my tenure as Health Minister, more than anything, I have focused on the comments and suggestions of members of the community who have taken the time to call, message or email me. The issue of how to telephone the PCC has been a recurrent theme, and I have sought the advice of my key medical advisers to solve this issue. Whilst we continue to work with EMIS in developing the online functionality to book and cancel appointments, amongst other things, the automated service is a useful tool for service users that prefer to use the telephone. Simple, elegant and modern, this is an initiative that can be used by everyone, making booking an appointment more convenient, and making better use of the appointments available. I am enormously proud of the enthusiasm with which the PCC teams have embraced all the extensive reforms to date".