



PRESS RELEASE

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Government and GHA Respond to Unite the Union

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar and the Gibraltar Health Authority (GHA) wish to reiterate the fact that it does not intend, nor has it ever intended, to privatise health services in Gibraltar, contrary to claims made in a statement by Unite the Union. The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, regrets the further unfounded and misleading claim made in the statement that the Government's actions and policies had produced "a less efficient public sector". This statement cannot be left unchallenged.

In relation to human resources, the GHA has seen an increase of over 25% in the number of directly employed staff since December 2011, an increase of 223.5. In September of 2017, Unite issued a joint statement with Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar to announce the regularisation of 81 nursing and industrial positions. Further, at that time, a total of 57 adverts have been issued in respect of medical, nursing, ambulance service, allied health professional, consultant and non-consultant hospital doctor posts.

Once again, the GHA confirms the use of agency workers during the process of recruitment. Agency Workers are deployed to bridge the gap until a post has been substantively filled, following the recruitment process. Also as repeatedly pointed out, Agency Workers are essential in the delivery of services and day-to-day operations, providing cover when necessary to ensure that safe clinical levels of care are always maintained. Agency workers are only deployed to cover long-term absences and maternity cover.

It is particularly saddening to read claims of plummeting efficiencies, a claim which disregards, and threatens to undermine, the valuable work and achievements by the GHA and its dedicated professionals. The following list is merely a sample of the efficiencies achieved:

- zero operations cancelled due to lack of beds since January of 2017;
- on Sunday 8th July, the GHA recorded a high of 81 available beds at St Bernard's Hospital, with an average of 68 beds available in the month of June 2018;
- 40% decrease in the number of formal complaints in the first quarter of this year, compared to the same comparable period last year;
- repatriation of numerous medical and surgical services, including Vascular Surgery, Renal Replacement, (Hemofiltration), Keyhole Bariatric and Colorectal Surgery,

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Specialist Shoulder and Ankle Surgery, (including replacement shoulders and ankles), Urology and Haematology;

- increase in the number of major surgeries requiring hospital admission from 202 in 2016 to 296 in 2017, and an increase in emergency surgeries from 509 in 2016 to 570 in 2017; and
- reforms at the Primary Care Centre has seen the introduction of Walk-In Clinics, Evening Clinics, the See and Treat Minor Illness Unit and the Automated Telephone Systems, which have all contributed to an improved service, highlighted by the fact an average of 48 appointments remain unused every single weekday.

Further information on the numerous improvements and enhancements in services may be obtained from HM Government of Gibraltar press statements, which may be accessed via the following link:

<https://www.gibraltar.gov.gi/new/sites/default/files/press/2018/Press%20Releases/Costa%2017-18%20PR%20FINAL.pdf>

Minister Costa said: “I was very, very disappointed by the insensitive remark made by my friends in Unite the Union this week, citing ‘a less efficient service’ when referring to our health service. I am duty-bound to speak up for all of my excellent and dedicated GHA teams. I would urge those who have made this baseless allegation to read my Budget Address, which I delivered only last week. They will learn that in the past financial year, having spent virtually the same amount than in the previous financial year, the GHA and my Ministry have achieved significant improvements to our services. These include substantial reductions in surgical waiting lists, an increase in the number and types of surgeries performed and welcome increases in clinical staff within key areas, such as the A&E and the Critical Care Unit, to name but a few.”