



PRESS RELEASE

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CHAMP: A Winter of Festive Cheer & Good News – Command Paper to ban the sale of energy drinks to under 16 year olds

CHAMP (Children, Healthy and Active! Multi-agency Programme) as a local public health initiative, launched its third phase of planned events on Saturday 8th December. The winter phase of the programme, entitled 'A Winter of Festive Cheer & Good News', kicked off at Casemates Square. CHAMP is a well-supported, multi-agency programme set up to promote healthy living for Gibraltar's childhood population. The programme is led by local professionals from across Health, Social Care, Education, Public Health, Sports and Leisure, Youth and Culture, along with local businesses and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) considers poor weight management in childhood as one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century. The WHO report that the number of overweight or obese infants and young children, (aged 0 to 5 years), increased from 32 million globally in 1990 to 41 million in 2016, and state that, without intervention, obese infants and young children will likely continue to be obese during childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

CHAMP seeks to engage children and their carers through various planned events around the year in order to raise awareness on and promote healthier lifestyle choices in Gibraltar. The event launch of the winter programme, which will run into 2019, was titled 'CHAMP about Town'. Children and families enjoyed a treasure hunt, starting at Casemates, along Main Street and back via Irish Town, with multiple educational 'quiz stops' stationed along the route. 'Lucky draw' prizes were handed out to participants on successful completion of the treasure hunt. Another main feature on the day was the 'Guess how many steps?' game. Participating children and families were asked to state how many steps it would take to complete the roundtrip during the treasure hunt, with prizes awarded to those with the nearest or correct answers.

Further, the consumption of energy drinks has been reported to be particularly detrimental to a child's health, frequently containing high and unregulated amounts of caffeine. These drinks have been associated with serious adverse health effects, such as, diabetes, mood and behavioral issues. It is also proven to contribute towards tooth decay. To demonstrate its unwavering support towards this extremely worthy initiative, HM Government of Gibraltar will, on Monday, publish a command paper on the banning of the sale of energy drinks to under 16 year olds. The Minister for Health, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, has worked in collaboration with the Honourable John Cortes MP, Public Health Minister, on the preparation of the Command Paper.



Dr Annie Dai, Consultant Paediatrician and Clinical Lead of the GHA's Paediatric Service, shared her views: "Gibraltar is a wonderful home to us all, and as a caring and responsible community, it is down to all of us to make sure that our children grow up to be healthy, happy and productive individuals. We must lead by example and provide opportunities to the next generation to live healthily. It is only through investing our time and effort wisely and wholeheartedly this way that we can secure our children's future, and hence Gibraltar's future, in this beautiful land. CHAMP is here to help in the challenging work of making healthy choices the easy choices for children and their families in Gibraltar. After all, healthy children - happy future!"

Minister Costa added: "I have been a very keen supporter of this programme since the very first time Dr Dai, brimming with her usual enthusiasm and joy, briefed me on this excellent initiative. The work CHAMP is doing cannot be underestimated. CHAMP is already proving to be beneficial, and I am confident that the long-term effects will be even more valuable. It is important that we teach our children about the importance of keeping active, eating healthily and leading healthy lifestyles and how making the right choices will be beneficial to their health throughout their lives. I would like to congratulate, and sincerely thank the whole of the CHAMPs team for their fantastic work. I would also wish to thank my dear friend, and Cabinet colleague, Professor Cortes, for working with me on this project."

Minister Cortes said: "It's a real pleasure to once again work with my friend and colleague Neil Costa on this initiative. CHAMP is clearly showing the value of good old-fashioned teamwork. A great deal of progress is being made in this vitally important area of child health thanks to the joint efforts of many professionals. The Government wants to make a real positive difference to the health of young people. We led the way in creating smoke-free environments, which have benefited the whole community, and our legislating to control access to high energy drinks once again shows our commitment to real progress. And there will be more to come"