



House of Commons
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Press Release – For immediate release

Sarah Champion
Member for Rotherham
15 January 2013

HOMELESS ACCESS TO REHABILITATION

Rotherham's Member of Parliament, Sarah Champion questioned the Health Minister Norman Lamb on the ability of homeless people to access rehabilitation services.

From meeting homeless people and visits to the Shiloh homeless shelter, Sarah Champion has seen first hand that many homeless people have secondary issues of mental health, drug or alcohol dependence. Sarah met with Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust last week to discuss the issue. They informed her that there were rehabilitation services available, but to access them people needed to be referred by their GP.

Sarah Champion commented:

"There seems to be a catch 22 situation occurring. Rotherham has good mental health and substance abuse services but homeless people can't access them because they are not registered with a GP. If they can't access the services, they can't get help, if they can't get help, they are trapped in the nightmare of sleeping rough on the streets.

I am very disappointed that when I raised this issue with the Minister, he told me it was up to the local authority to decide if they wanted to help the homeless. Homeless people are already vulnerable and this Government should be protecting them, not passing responsibility on to others."

Ends.

Notes for editors

For more information please contact the constituency office; 01709 331035. Joni.thorpe@parliament.uk

Question raised 15.1.13, Health Questions.

Hansard transcript follows:

[Sarah Champion \(Rotherham\) \(Lab\):](#)

Damage to health as a result of alcohol consumption often leads to wider social damage. I have seen that at first hand when visiting shelters for the homeless in Rotherham. Many homeless people cannot gain access to rehabilitation services because they do not have GPs to refer them. What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that those services are available to everyone, especially those who need them most?

[Norman Lamb:](#)

The hon. Lady has raised a really important point. One of the consequences of the responsibility deal is that by 2015, 1 billion units of alcohol—about 2%—will be taken out of the market, and that will help some problem drinkers significantly. Moreover, the money that the Government are investing in public health gives local authorities an opportunity to invest in prevention services in order to deal specifically with the core group of people to whom the hon. Lady has referred.