

News release

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With pix – image shows Sarah Champion MP signing up to the Barnardo's campaign

Rotherham MP joins the fight to stop child sexual exploitation

Sarah Champion MP is getting behind Barnardo's latest campaign to stop the sexual exploitation of children.

The Rotherham MP signed up to the children's charity's 'Remember they are children' campaign this week. The campaign calls for changes to the way the justice system treats sexually exploited children and young people.

Barnardo's is calling for changes to be made to reflect the fact that no child can ever truly agree to being sexually exploited irrespective of their age.

The Barnardo's petition has been signed by over 30,000 people. It illustrates public support for this important issue at a time when the legal system is aiming to give children greater confidence in coming forward with disclosures of any abuse or sexual exploitation they have suffered.

Sarah Champion MP, said:

"I am really proud to be supporting this Barnardo's campaign. I will do all that I can to protect our children as they deserve to be safe, heard and respected. In the coming years I will be working closely with Barnardo's and other charities to change the anomalies in the law so that every child gets the protection they deserve."

Steve Oversby, Director for Barnardo's Yorkshire, said:

"It is difficult to imagine the horrors experienced by the vulnerable victims of child sexual exploitation. Many turn in on themselves and have feelings of shame and self-loathing on top of the psychological scars inflicted by the abuser.

"It takes immense bravery for these young people to relive their ordeal in a court of law. They must not be made to feel responsible for their abuse and sentencing guidelines must be changed to reflect this."

The 'remember they are children' campaign aims to challenge current judgements made about sexually exploited young people.

Barnardo's specialist services who work with young people who have been sexually exploited report that the perceptions people have can too often result in victims feeling that the abuse they suffered is their own fault, or that people will not believe them. If assumptions about the victim are made in a courtroom it can result in child sexual exploitation being viewed as a less serious crime.

Barnardo's believes that regardless of a child's appearance, previous relationships or behaviour, it is the abuser who is guilty and victims of sexual exploitation should never be left feeling as if they are to blame for what happened to them. To support the 'remember they are children' campaign and sign the petition, go to www.barnardos.org.uk.

Ends

Notes to editors:

- The Sentencing Council proposed guidance relates specifically to the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and covers England and Wales. The guidance for judges on sentencing for sexual offences in England and Wales is being revised. The Sentencing Council has produced draft guidelines and is consulting on these until 14 March. For more information on the consultation click [here](#).
- Barnardo's has been tackling child sexual exploitation since 1994 and has 21 specialist services in England and Wales.
- In 2011-12 Barnardo's worked directly with 1,268 exploited or at risk children in England and Wales.
- Barnardo's works with more than 200,000 children, young people and their families each year. Barnardo's now runs more than 800 services across the UK.
- Every year we help thousands of children turn their lives around. But we cannot do it without you. Visit www.barnardos.org.uk to find out how you can get involved and show you believe in children.
- **Please note there are a number of current trials on-going.**
- Brothers Anjum Dogar and Akhtar Dogar, along with Kamir Jamil, Zeeshan Ahmed, Mohammed Karrar, Mohammed Hussain, Assad Hussain, Bassam Karrar, Bilal Ahmed, are **on trial at the Old Bailey** charged with offences including rape, conspiring to rape a child, arranging child prostitution and trafficking in relation to an alleged child sex trafficking ring in Oxfordshire. Their trial is on-going.