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MP gives Rotherham's Young Carers a voice in Parliament

MP for Rotherham, Sarah Champion, met with young people at a Barnardo's service in the town to learn about issues facing young carers today.

Young people from the charity's Rotherham Young Carers service – which supports children as young as eight who care for a sick or disabled relative – asked the MP for her help to improve support for the city's estimated 3,000 young carers.

Their discussion focused on the current Care Bill which outlines better support for adult carers – but does not do the same for young carers.

Following on from the meeting, the young people's life stories were highlighted in the MP's speech to Parliament during the debate on the Queen's Speech - keeping the profile of young carers high on the agenda.

Young carer, 15-year-old Hannah, said: "Sarah's visit was really important to us as it meant someone is finally listening to what young carers have got to say. I hope that Sarah's visit will mean that young carers get better support in the future."

Manager at Rotherham Young Carers service, Peter Rutherford, said: "We are really pleased that Sarah Champion came to our service. It was a great opportunity for the young people we work with to talk directly to the MP about issues that affect them and for staff to celebrate and discuss their contribution to helping children and families across Rotherham."

Sarah Champion MP said: "It was really important for me to meet with the young people and hear their stories. I was shocked how isolated they felt and just how much they have to endure. Young children should not be the sole carer of their parent, it's too much of a burden and takes their childhood away. I was really pleased that I could give them a voice in Parliament and, hopefully, get them some support."

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Young carers are children and young people under 18 who care for a family member who is disabled, physically or mentally ill or has a substance misuse problem. They carry out, often on a regular basis, significant substantial caring tasks taking on a level of responsibility that is inappropriate to their age.

A young carer undertakes tasks, usually performed by an adult, such as shopping, taking care of the household finances, personal care, organising medication and checking on the relative during the night. These responsibilities often restrict their lives and impact on school work.

Rotherham Young Carers project currently supports around 100 children and young people a year but it is felt this is the tip of the iceberg, with an estimated 3,000 young carers across the Rotherham area.

Ends

Notes to editors

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.

To see Sarah Champion MP's full speech on Health and Social Care please visit the below link – direct to Hansard
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm130513/debtext/130513-0003.htm#13051335000188>

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