



**Press Release – For immediate release**

**Sarah Champion  
Member of Parliament for Rotherham  
20<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

**Press Release**

**MP speaks out about the use of IT and social media in child abuse.**

Rotherham MP Sarah Champion highlighted the risks IT and social media present to children in a debate in Parliament on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

She spoke about how gangs use social media to target vulnerable children and then lure them into sharing personal information.

Sarah said;

*“Abusers have always been able to identify vulnerable children, but social media and mobile phones now make it easy for them to make contact with them.”*

Sarah went on to say how

*“Technology has left parents with an extremely difficult task in monitoring their children’s interactions and recognising potentially dangerous situations. Children and parents must be better educated as to the risks of online communications and the safeguards that are currently available.”*

Sarah urged Government to have safe search as the default option on computers and search engines. Filters already exist to screen out harmful material, but 54% of parents whose children use the internet at home have no parental controls installed on their devices. Making filters the factory setting removes this risk, and parents have the option to opt out of the system if they see fit.

Sarah also called for better co-ordinated operations to track down and tackle abusers. With agencies ensuring that there is a free flow of information between them because in the past it has proved too easy for vulnerable children to fall through the gaps due to poor communication.

Sarah ended by saying

*“While child protection must always be the primary focus, prosecution must not be allowed to become an ancillary concern. I recognise that prosecutions in these cases can be extremely difficult, but without a proper deterrent the risk of child abuse will continue to rise. We must ensure that the law is fit for purpose. New forms of abuse and grooming, especially online, might not always fall under existing laws. It is our duty to provide our police and child protection officers with the tools they require to ensure that vulnerable children are protected and offenders are prosecuted.”*

**ENDS**

Notes to editors:

The full speech can be found by following the link below:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm130612/debtext/130612-0002.htm#13061269002319>