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Press Release – For immediate release

**Sarah Champion
Member of Parliament for Rotherham
9th September 2013**

The Government's Lobbying Bill will hit local charity, claims MP

Sarah Champion MP has revealed that respected local charity GROW could have its voice gagged by the Tory-led Government's Lobbying Bill, with potentially damaging consequences for people in Rotherham.

This could make it much more difficult for small charities and local organisations to hold the Tories and Lib Dems to account for their record in Government, to campaign against their destructive policies and to highlight how these policies have a damaging effect on people in Rotherham.

For example, GROW might no longer have the freedom to bring together local women to take forward their views about issues impacting on their lives e.g. End Violence Against Women and Girls campaign, the Fawcett Society Equality impact agenda

Sarah Champion MP said: "This Bill would discourage and restrict those who are already working hard to improve their communities. David Cameron came into Government claiming to be passionate about building the 'Big Society' but the truth is that this Bill would help destroy what the Prime Minister claims to want to encourage.

"Small charities such as GROW do so much to protect and improve the lives of people in Rotherham. We've already seen how their important work has helped to support the lives of 350 Rotherham women and families per year, by enabling them to make informed choices about issues that are affecting them e.g. debt, domestic abuse, health etc.

"This is incredibly important work that has had a real impact and David Cameron should be helping them instead of trying to gag them by and tie them up in red tape.

"This Bill amounts to a gag on charities and campaigners and is a desperate attempt by the Government to prevent their record and policies from being criticised and scrutinised at a local level.

"I have signed an amendment to have Section 2 of the bill, which is the part gagging charities, removed. I will be speaking out on Tuesday to try and get this ill-conceived legislation reconsidered."

A spokesperson from GROW concluded: *"Our voice is the voice of our service users who are the women of Rotherham. If our voice is silenced we would not be able to raise awareness of the issues affecting local women"*

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Notes to Editors:

1. GROW is a charity aiming to provide a unique holistic service that enables Rotherham women and their families to make informed choices. This is delivered by guiding, coaching, mentoring and providing learning and development opportunities.
2. For further information on GROW, click on <http://www.growproject.org.uk/>