



House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

**Press Release – For immediate release**

**Sarah Champion  
Member of Parliament for Rotherham  
17<sup>th</sup> December 2013**

**Evidence heard from sexually exploited children as part of inquiry**

Earlier today, victims of child sexual exploitation and trafficking gave their evidence to a panel of politicians in a closed session as part of a wide-reaching inquiry into the issue. Rotherham's MP, Sarah Champion, in partnership with Barnardo's, is leading the inquiry, which aims to focus the response of authorities, including the police, to these crimes.

These young people came to Parliament from Barnardo's services right across the country and were able to tell the cross-party panel at length about their experiences, as well as exactly how they had been treated by the police, as well as the other agencies which had been directly involved with them.

The session is the first of four that will test the effectiveness of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

**Sarah Champion MP said:**

"To hear how the system let down these young people when they tried to get help and also prosecutions was shocking. I have so much admiration for their bravery to come and tell their stories today. Their only motivation was to prevent others from being exploited.

"This inquiry will shine a light on how effectively agencies in the UK are currently working to fight child sexual exploitation and trafficking.

"Their evidence is essential if we are to create legislation that is fit for purpose and I am very grateful to them for being brave enough to speak to us."

**Barnardo's UK director of strategy Puja Darbari said:**

"Through our work with sexually exploited young people we see first-hand the devastating impact of these terrible crimes. Situations where sexually exploited children have difficulty being listened to and believed must be consigned to the history books.

"It is to be hoped that by acting on what these young people say, we will be able to create a justice system that puts their welfare at its very heart."

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editors**

1. This media release is relevant to England and Wales.
2. For more information contact media officer William Davies on 07584-347290.
3. Barnardo's is supporting Sarah Champion with the inquiry and acting as policy and practice experts on child sexual exploitation.

4. The inquiry will test the efficacy of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 with a particular focus on the legislations specifically created to combat the trafficking of children within the UK for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

5. The inquiry will consist of at least four evidence sessions. The next session for legal professionals is scheduled for January 14 2014. There will follow evidence sessions with the police and partnership working (other sessions may be added)

6. The cross-party panel consists of: Sarah Champion (Labour MP for Rotherham), Emma Lewell Buck (Labour MP for South Shields), Baroness Benjamin (Liberal Democrat Peer), Baroness Walmsley (Liberal Democrat Peer), Lord Thomas (Liberal Democrat Peer) and Simon Snell (former head of Devon and Cornwall police child exploitation unit). *The make-up of the panel is subject to change*

6. Child sexual exploitation is used to cover a broad spectrum of activity from seemingly 'consensual' relationships or informal exchanges of sex for attention, accommodation, gifts or cigarettes through to serious, organised crime.

7. Barnardo's has been tackling child sexual exploitation since 1994 and has 21 specialist services in England and Wales.

8. In 2011-12 Barnardo's worked directly with 1,268 exploited or at risk children in England and Wales.

9. To read the most recent Barnardo's report on child sexual exploitation 'The tangled web' click [here](#).

10 Barnardo's works with more than 200,000 children, young people and their families each year. Barnardo's runs more than 900 services across the UK.

11. We believe in children and we believe every young person has a right to thrive. Our vision is to realise Thomas Barnardo's dream of a world where no child is turned away from the help that they need.

12. We work to transform the lives of the UK's most vulnerable children and every year we help thousands of families to build a better future. But we cannot do it without you. Visit [www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk) to find out how you can get involved and show you believe in children.

13. Follow Barnardo's media team on Twitter [@BarnardosNews](https://twitter.com/BarnardosNews).