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Sarah Champion
Member of Parliament for Rotherham

Immediate release
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'Giant children's prison' should not go ahead, says Sarah

Sarah Champion MP has this week put on record her opposition to Government plans to build a 'giant prison for children'.

The MP for Rotherham spoke out in Parliament as part of the debate on the Criminal Justice and Courts Bill, to question the Government's intention to invest in the prison, which is referred to as a 'secure college' by Government ministers.

Speaking in the debate, Sarah said: "I want to put on record my abhorrence at the idea of the giant children's prison. I know that it is being packaged as an educational establishment, but there is nothing in the Bill to tell us that there will be qualified teachers and social workers, or anything about the level of education that the children will be offered."

She continued: "Particularly worrisome for me is that only 4% of the young people and children in the prison population will be girls. Out of 320 young people, about 12 will be girls. I find it abhorrent to put them in a very testosterone-led environment, and worry for their psychological futures.

"I also find the fact that there was no commitment for qualified teachers extremely worrying, and it confirms to me that the college is just a holding borstal, rather than an educational establishment as it is described."

Commenting after the debate, Sarah added: "The Government's plans for a giant children's prison are worrying on so many levels. Younger children and girls will feel particularly victimised, as they will be very much a minority.

"I worry about how we will rehabilitate these young people, especially without the use of qualified teachers: we're trying to take them away from a life of crime, after all".

The prison is due to become operational in 2017.

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