



House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Sarah Champion

Member of Parliament for Rotherham

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

02/07/2015

Sarah Champion MP shares concern about increasing ‘commodification’ of women and girls

Sarah Champion, the Member of Parliament for Rotherham, has spoken in Parliament this week to tackle gender inequality head on.

In a speech made as part of a debate on pay inequality, Sarah argued that pay is only one of the problems facing women and girls in the fight for equality, and the ‘commodification’ of women and girls was an increasing problem.

Speaking in the Commons Chamber, Sarah said:

“Equality is not a women’s issue; it is a society issue. I say this because, if a woman is unable to reach her true potential, the whole of society is worse off, and that is exactly why we need this debate.

“One of the biggest blocks to women and girls reaching their full potential is violence. Since my election, I have been working on tackling child sexual exploitation, in my constituency and nationally. That exploitation is disproportionately of girls, and we see the same pattern with all forms of child abuse and domestic violence. Those crimes have a direct bearing on the economic potential of women due to the mental, physical and health issues involved, but there is also an effect on their confidence—their ability to ask for a pay rise and to put themselves forward.

“I have been trying to grasp the root causes of violence against women and girls, rather than focusing on the outcomes. I have spoken to countless survivors of abuse and met approximately 60 young Rotherham women to try to understand what needs to be done to tackle this escalation in violence. I am of the firm belief that there has been a shift in cultural norms, with young girls now accepting their “commodification” and violence from a partner, or indeed viewing it as normal.”

Commenting after the debate, Sarah added:

“This is about empowerment for women and girls across the UK and the world. If women aren’t reaching their full potential then that is a problem for everybody. We need to start early, enabling all children to reach their potential both at a young age and as they grow up.

If children are treated with disrespect, they will not know that they shouldn't treat others that way.

"Violence against women and girls comes as a result of a slow erosion of boundaries that happens over years. We shouldn't be focusing all of our efforts on waiting to deal with the crime after it has happened; we should be focusing on preventing it happening in the first place."

ENDS

Notes to editors:

The full text of Sarah's speech can be found here:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/hansard/commons/todays-commons-debates/read/unknown/491/>

For more information contact:

Dawn Elliott

Research Manager to Sarah Champion MP
07543 400620

Dawn.elliott@parliament.uk