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Press Release – For immediate release

**Sarah Champion
Member of Parliament for Rotherham
Shadow Minister for Preventing Abuse and Domestic Violence
Monday 6th June, 2016**

Sarah Champion MP challenges government on their failure to ensure specialist domestic violence services are available to BME and LGBT people

Sarah Champion MP, Shadow Minister for Preventing Abuse and Domestic Violence, has today challenged the Government on their failure to ensure specialist domestic violence services are available to BME and LGBT people, and other vulnerable groups.

The Shadow Minister's challenge comes as the Department for Communities and Local Government is due to release a National Statement of Expectations on the quality of domestic violence provision delivered by local authorities.

Speaking in the House of Commons, Sarah urged the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, The Rt Hon Greg Clark, to do more to guarantee that local authorities prioritise the specialist needs of BME women and other vulnerable groups.

During an accountability session, Sarah asked the Secretary of State:

“The Minister knows how devastating domestic violence is and also how the services provide a literal life-line. However specialist services particularly the LGBT and the BME services are facing a huge funding crisis with many going to the wall.

So, in the National Statement of Expectations will he commit to supporting and ring fencing money for those specialist services.”

Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Jon Trickett MP, expanded on this by calling for an immediate review of the present procurement practice of refuge provision by Local Authorities. The practice of favouring large generic refuge providers in tender processes has led to the closure of one in six specialist refuges since 2010.

The Secretary of State acknowledged the importance of protecting these specialist services but did not commit to allocating funding for this vital provision.

Talking about the importance of specialist services, Sarah Champion stated:

‘BME and LGBT led organisations understand the dynamics of the abuse faced by the women in their communities, and can tailor the services accordingly. As a result, and of vital importance, these specialist services are trusted by the people who use them.’

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. The Department of Communities and Local Government question time occurred on the 6th June 2016 at 14:30pm. A full transcript of today's debate can be found on the Hansard website: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/>
2. Over the last 12 years, Imkaan, an organisation representing dedicated BME women's services, estimates that 15 BME specialist services have already closed. Now, only 34 specialist BME women's organisations offering services to victims of violence remain. <https://www.dropbox.com/s/0ux2b3rz0k9e28x/State%20of%20the%20Sector%20Exec%20Summary.pdf?dl=0>
3. A Women's Aid report on Local Authority commissioning practices: https://1q7dqy2unor827bqjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/SOS_Data_Report.pdf
4. This month, the UK's only national domestic violence charity for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, Broken Rainbow, has gone into liquidation. More information can be found here - <http://www.outnews.co.uk/exclusive-britains-only-lgbt-domestic-abuse-charity-has-ceased-trading/>