

Sarah Champion launches National Action Plan to prevent child abuse and violence in teenage relationships

Sarah Champion, MP for Rotherham and Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities, today (Tuesday) sets out her plan for preventing child abuse and violence in teenage relationships at the launch her National Action Plan, Dare2Care.

The National Action Plan is the culmination of 18 months' work examining how best to protect children from child abuse and has taken evidence from experts and leading campaigners.

The key recommendations of the action plan are the introduction from Key Stage One of age appropriate compulsory resilience and relationships education for all children, a public health campaign about the spotting the signs of abuse and training on abuse for all frontline professionals working with children.

Sarah will say today at the launch of the action plan in Westminster *'There seems to be an acceptance in our society that child abuse is inevitable. I absolutely disagree with that.*

'One child in every primary school class will experience sexual abuse and over 57,000 children are currently identified as needing protection from abuse in the UK.

'I won't rest until all children can grow up without fear of abuse.

'Education is the best way we can protect our children.'

Sarah collaborated with academics, charities and survivors to develop the recommendations to prevent the endemic of abuse in the UK in the digital age.

Also speaking at the launch will be three women whose lives have been directly affected by abuse. They included Lorin LaFave, mother of Breck Bednar who was murdered after being groomed online.

Lorin said: *'The Breck Foundation is 100% behind the Dare2Care National Action Plan for Preventing Child Abuse and Violence in Teenage Relationships by Sarah Champion MP.*

'We strongly believe that prevention and Lessons4Life are absolutely key to keeping children safe as well as helping them to build resilience to become healthy, happy and safe adults in the future. We cannot expect every parent to know about every subject and to have the knowledge and skills to deliver these lessons at home.

'By learning these important safety lessons in school, every child will have the opportunity to make the right choices for themselves on the risks that they will surely face throughout their lives. This plan is a long term answer to protecting our children as well as creating better citizens who understand and strive to build healthy relationships for life.'

Barnardo's Chief Executive, Javed Khan said:

'All children are at risk of sexual abuse, whether they're on the internet, in the playground, or in their own bedroom. Much, much more must be done to prevent this vile crime.

'Compulsory lessons on sex education and healthy relationships from an early age are essential to help children understand consent and respect. We also know through our specialist child sexual exploitation services that parents and professionals need help to recognise the signs of grooming and abuse and grasp the technology their children use, so they can keep them safe.'

'Building strong relationships between children, parents and other adults can help prevent abuse by enabling difficult discussions around potential abuse to take place. Children's centres can help develop these bonds by building parents' and carers' skills and confidence and knowledge of where to go if they have concerns.'

A spokesperson from GirlGuiding's Advocate panel said:

'We welcome the Dare2Care action plan and support their call for high quality, compulsory Sex and Relationships Education (SRE). We believe that young people must be informed and empowered to create healthy, respectful relationships and that this must start in school.'

'Girlguiding's Girls' Attitudes Survey 2015 showed that less than half of girls aged 11 to 16 had learnt about pornography, consent or healthy relationships in school. As young women aged between 14-25 we know that sexual harassment and abuse are huge issues for young people today and we have launched our campaign to end sexual harassment in schools to ensure that no girl has to face harassment or violence when she is trying to learn.'

Matthew Reed, Chief Executive of The Children's Society, said:

'Internet access opens up a whole new world of opportunities for children and young people's education and development, but it has many risks as well as benefits. In the worst cases it can present a serious threat to their safety. Some young people we work with tell us that contacts they meet online have gone on to exploit them for sex and coerced them to share inappropriate sexual images. The internet also provides access to pornography which is reshaping young people's views of what constitutes a safe and healthy relationship. This too can put them at risk of abuse or exploitation, not only from online predators, but also from classmates and other young people their own age.'

'This important report highlights the urgent need for age appropriate sex and relationship education in every school. Classes should be compulsory and cover both online and offline relationships to combat grooming, exploitation and violence. Given that many victims of sexual offences are aged 16 and 17 it's vital that older teenagers in further education are able to learn about how to stay safe from sexual abuse as well.'

Attached please find a full copy of the National Action plan.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. Sarah Champion is the Labour MP for Rotherham. Since her election in 2012 she has led the campaign to prevent child sexual exploitation and child abuse. She launched the Dare2Care

campaign in January 2016 to bring together different strands of the campaign against child abuse and violence in young people's relationships and to focus on prevention.

2. The launch was attended today by MPs, survivors, academics, and representatives from charities.
3. Sarah Champion will be available for short interviews relating to the launch of the Action Plan. Please email victoria.finan@parliament.uk or call 020 7219 5942 to discuss