

International Development Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Tel: 020 7219 1223 Email: indcom@parliament.uk Website: www.parliament.uk/indcom Twitter: [@CommonsIDC](https://twitter.com/CommonsIDC)

From Sarah Champion MP, Chair

Nigel Adams MP
Minister of State
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
By email

Copy to:
The Rt Hon James Cleverly MP
Minister of State
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

22 October 2020

Terms and conditions for “ODA staff” on sexual relations with aid beneficiaries

Dear Nigel,

I am writing to thank-you for your prompt response to my question regarding the terms and conditions for FCDO staff and safeguarding beneficiaries from sexual exploitation and abuse. This matter is extremely important to the International Development Committee as we undertake our inquiry into Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector: next steps.

We welcome your reassurances that “sexual relationships between staff and beneficiaries/partners, as well as relationships based on inherently unequal power dynamics” are considered unacceptable and will be treated as potential gross misconduct by the FCDO under its new staff terms and conditions and HR policies.

My question to you in the Chamber arose due to the wording included in the UK Strategy: Safeguarding Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment within the Aid Sector, which sets out responsibilities for all “ODA staff”. The strategy states that “Sexual relationships with beneficiaries are strongly discouraged, as well as other relationships which are based on inherently unequal power dynamics.”

While we must take into account those staff who are hired in-country, and may be part of the local community, allowing international staff and others in positions of power to have sexual relationships with beneficiaries leaves local populations – particularly women – at a severe risk of abuse and exploitation. During our inquiry we have heard many examples of where this is happening, including in Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon and to South Sudanese refugees in Uganda. We want to ensure that the Government is doing everything in its power to tackle this scourge.

Therefore, I would be grateful if you could clarify:

1. Who is included within the category of “ODA staff” referred to in the UK Strategy: Safeguarding Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment within the Aid Sector;

2. Whether FCDO's position, as clarified by you, will apply in other ODA spending departments to ensure that sexual relationships with beneficiaries are considered unacceptable and treated as gross misconduct across all of HMG.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Champion MP

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Chair of the Committee