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## **UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00.01 on 28<sup>TH</sup> October 2015**

### **[MP NAME] gives an overdue kick to downtrodden footwear!**

“The human foot is a masterpiece of engineering and a work of art” stated Leonardo da Vinci, and he was quite right, but most people’s feet and footwear do not paint a pretty picture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

‘Fashion often gets the blame for ugly feet but that is not always fair; it is all about shoe construction and materials, how a shoe fits the shape of a foot and the proficiency of the Fitter’ says The Society of Shoe Fitters, but there are no regulations or official warnings so how can people understand?

How many times do you hear people say ‘my feet are killing me?’; sometimes it is true. Our feet work harder than most other parts of the body – they carry our bodies thousands of miles in our lifetime and with an increase of 60% in obesity and diabetes in the last 10 years, most feet are carrying a lot more weight than they were born to cope with. No-one actually informs us that what we put on our feet can have a devastating affect on other parts of our bodies causing a lifetime of pain requiring medication or even surgery – a massive cost implication to the NHS. There are now 135 foot amputations weekly and numerous knees, hip, back and neck operations that might have been prevented.

Children are the most vulnerable because at birth their feet are usually perfectly formed chubby little parcels, with beautiful tiny toes. Like small saplings or mini-bonsai trees, they are soft and flexible and can be moulded into any shape. However parents do not realise that ill-fitting footwear and hosiery can distort the development of the bones which in turn alters the way a child walks, and if natural gait is affected it puts unnatural pressure and wear on other joints and tendons within the body. Prevention is kinder and cheaper than a cure.

Parents are not qualified to understand either anatomy, or measurement, or how shoes are constructed and do not realise the footwear industry is unregulated. They need to be warned that if feet and footwear are not regularly monitored, measured and fitted professionally they could be storing up a painful problem. There is no legal obligation for any shop selling shoes to know about feet and footwear. Footwear is sold in supermarkets, online and cheap clothing stores and wrongly treated as simply an accessory, just something to look nice - but the responsibility is down to the wearer, the parent and inevitably the health service.

With changes in retail many in their senior years are also struggling to find the right shoes to accommodate their misshapen feet. Most of us suffer with arthritis or rheumatism as we grow older and these conditions attack damaged joints and distort them. Fitting an acute bunion or hammer toe into mainstream footwear is not easy and requires skill which fashion chainstores cannot offer. It is usually only dedicated independent shoe shops and quality footwear multiples who know that measuring is only the start of the fitting process and what to look for and the best advice to give.

[MP name] [will be listening - listened] to the concerns of health professionals and the Society of Shoe Fitters at their event Politically Correct Footwear at Westminster [today – time sensitive] who are collectively appealing to the government to take important steps to educate the public, improve the footwear industry and make great strides into preventing painful and costly visits to health authorities.

For more information about the Society of Shoe Fitters go to their website: [www.shoefitters-uk.org](http://www.shoefitters-uk.org).



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