

MP nominated for Commons award

by RICHARD DAVIES

SOUTH Hams MP Dr Sarah Wollaston is in the running for a top parliamentary award just over 12 months after being elected to the House of Commons.

The GP turned MP has been shortlisted for the prestigious Backbencher of the Year, in recognition of the way she brought her professional expertise to the controversial Bill to reform the NHS.

Dr Wollaston, who sits on the Health Select Committee, has been a constant critic of aspects of the Health and Social Care Bill, but she has always insisted that she is a 'critical friend' of the Government.

She shares the shortlist with former shadow Home Secretary David Davis and former Justice Secretary Jack Straw, nominated for their efforts to secure a Commons debate on prisoner's voting rights.

Dr Wollaston was chosen as the Conser-



Richard Davies

Dr Sarah Wollaston after winning the Totnes seat at the last general election

vative candidate for Totnes in the country's first open primary election, which meant everyone in the constituency, whatever their political colour, could vote.

The announcement – and shock defeat of the then mayor of Torbay Nick Bye – was made to a packed audience at the Royal Seven Stars

Hotel in Totnes. Dr Wollaston said: 'I was delighted to be nominated for backbencher of the year.'

She added: 'I feel that coming to parliament through the open primary process has been especially important in enabling me to make good on my promise to stand up for the NHS, which I have

found very rewarding.

'I have always felt that parliament needed more MPs from non-political backgrounds and hope that my nomination will encourage political parties to continue to look at ways of making this easier.

'Being able to speak with the background of 24 years in the NHS has allowed me to play a

part in contributing to the debate on the future of our NHS.'

The house awards are nominated by readers of parliament's weekly magazine, and finalised by an editorial panel of MPs before being voted on by parliamentarians.

The result will be announced at a ceremony on July 6.