

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP**  
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**

**LONDON SW1A 0AA**

17<sup>th</sup> January 2018

*Dear Constituent,*

**RE: BOWEL CANCER SCREENING.**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about bowel cancer, with specific reference to Early Day Motion (EDM) 617.

As a Parliamentary Private Secretary, I am not able to sign Early Day Motions, as doing so would likely be in breach of the Ministerial Code's rules on collective responsibility. However, in any event, I have general concerns about the effectiveness and expense of the EDM system, and I enclose a copy of an excellent article written by my colleague, Chris Heaton-Harris MP, which I feel succinctly sets out those concerns. I hope that this will be of interest to you, and essentially, I think it is much more effective to raise concerns directly with Ministers, both verbally, and in writing, rather than signing EDMs.

I appreciate your concerns as I know that bowel cancer is one of the most common types of cancer diagnosed in the UK. Over eight in ten cases of bowel cancer occur in the over 60s and I agree that early diagnosis is key.

Under the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme in England, people aged 60-74 years old are sent a home testing kit every two years. Those aged above the eligible age limit are also able to self-refer for screening. As part of the programme, a new test is being introduced which is easier to complete and it is hoped that 200,000 more people per year will take up the opportunity to be screened. An additional one-off bowel scope screening test is also being introduced for those aged 55 years old. As of March 2015, roughly two-thirds of screening centres were offering this test to 55 year olds. This is an important test which can find and remove any small bowel growths, which could turn into cancer.

All hospital trusts are able to offer screening for patients if clinically appropriate. New cancer referral guidelines by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, published in June 2015, state that GPs should refer patients for testing in hospital if they present with relevant symptoms at relevant ages.

Cancer survival rates in the UK have never been higher; however, I am aware that there is still more to be done. The Government is working with the NHS, charities and patient groups to deliver the new Cancer Strategy developed by the independent Cancer Taskforce. By 2020, everyone urgently referred with a suspicion of cancer will receive either a definitive diagnosis, or the all-clear within four weeks.



Furthermore, the £1.2 billion Cancer Drugs Fund has helped over 95,000 people and I continue to support the Government's commitment to increase NHS spending in England by a minimum of £8 billion in real terms over the next five years.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

*With best wishes*

*Tom*

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**



## **Chris Heaton-Harris: Why Early Day Motions are politically impotent**

**Writing exclusively for PoliticsHome, Conservative MP Chris Heaton-Harris describes Early Day Motions as 'politically impotent', and warns he is 'not going to waste time and money on sponsoring or signing EDMs'.**

Since being elected last year, a number of my constituents have asked me to sign Early Day Motions (EDMs). I'm afraid I haven't signed any yet and don't plan on changing that in the future as I think they are pretty much politically impotent and too costly in their current form.

I'm not alone either, quite a number of the 2010 intake all independently decided to do the same thing and I would imagine that if the rules around EDMs don't change at the next election, even more MPs will join the "just say no" bandwagon.

Supposedly EDMs cost around £500 a go and we have already had 2423 tabled in this Parliament. Looking through the titles of the EDMs you'll see many a worthy political cause being lauded, people recently passed away remembered and an abundant amount of motherhood and apple pie. Yet even the most benign EDM rarely gets more than 50 signatories; indeed, many barely scrape into double figures.

I really do think that we need to change how EDMs can be sponsored before too many MPs decide to call it a day on them. Surely a sensible solution would be to say that an individual Member should not be allowed to table an EDM? We should at least try to separate the more popular ones by asking that there be at least ten MPs proposing for it to be accepted as being tabled and thus, opened up for others to sign.

Considering there are MPs out there who tend to sign a large number of EDMs (Sir Peter Bottomley and Alan Meale, please take a bow) surely setting an entry point of ten signatures is not an oppressive barrier if you really do care about a subject?

One of the main reasons (if not the main reason) why so few people sign EDMs is that in the last few years they have turned into the tool of the crap lobbyist. Sitting in a meeting room trying to work out how to justify their Client's retainer, many believe that if they can get a few signatures on an EDM he has done his or her job. Even better if you can persuade your client to run a campaign to get more MPs to sign up; more money for you to set up pointless meetings to talk about a pointless campaign to try and get more than a dozen signatures for a pointless motion that will be ignored by Government and just about everyone else too.

If you are a business, charity or NGO and your Public Affairs outfit recommends an EDM - fire them immediately! Few people take any notice of them and so they are really no more than political graffiti.

So, to my Constituents I say if you are writing to me, please don't ask me to sign an EDM. I'll happily raise subjects with Ministers, ask questions in the House or try to have a Westminster Hall debate - in other words, do things that actually count - but I'm not going to waste time and money on sponsoring or signing EDMs.