TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

21st June 2018

Dear Constituent,

RE: MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS (ME) – EDM 1247.

Thank you for contacting me recently about Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) and EDM 1247; your comments upon which I read with great interest.

As a Parliamentary Private Secretary, I am not able to sign Early Day Motions (EDMs), 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 have attached 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.

However, I understand that ME can be a painful and extremely debilitating condition, impacting on the quality of life of an individual. Therefore, I welcome ME Awareness week, and I hope it helps more people to understand this condition, which can be so frustrating and distressing for many.

While I understand that there is currently no cure from ME, I am aware that there are treatments that may help to ease symptoms, although these treatments may not suit every patient. Patients should be involved in decision-making throughout every stage of their care. Furthermore, patients should be offered information about local and national self-help groups, and support groups for people with ME, and their carers.

I believe that research into this condition, and its possible treatments, is vital. The Medical Research Council (MRC) and the National Institute for Health Research welcome high quality applications for research into all aspects of ME. In fact, ME research is a current MRC priority area, and so far over £2 million has been invested into this research area.

The majority of services for people with ME are the responsibility of local clinical commissioning groups. To assist diagnosis, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) have produced clinical guidance on the diagnosis, treatment care, and support for children and adults with ME.

Furthermore, you may be interested to know that NICE is currently reviewing these guidelines. This process will require thorough and careful consideration, and I understand that NICE expect to publish new guidelines on ME in 2020. I have been assured by my ministerial colleagues that these new guidelines will take into account patients' concerns about the PACE trials and the effectiveness of some existing recommendations. I am of the view, therefore, that it would not be appropriate for Ministers to interfere in this important work.

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 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.