

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

28th March 2019

Your Constituent,

RE: EDM 2113 – WARFARE EXPERIMENTS.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of EDM 2113 and warfare experiments; your comments upon which I read with great interest.

With regards to EDMs in general, I prefer to raise concerns such as these with Ministers rather than signing EDMs, as I have general concerns about the effectiveness and expense of the EDM system. 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.

The work done by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) at Porton Down helps deliver the latest scientific and technological advantages for the UK's defence and security. This includes the means to tackle chemical and biological attacks as well as injuries from conventional warfare. Part of DSTL's role is to find solutions to problems that unfortunately cannot currently be addressed without the use of animals in research. Animals are essential in supporting the scientific processes that save British lives at home and abroad. However, quite rightly, there are rules in place to make sure the testing of animals meets certain ethical standards.

Experimental procedures have to be in line with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, which aims to ensure the suffering of the animals is minimised. This legislation requires the DSTL to report to the Home Office how many animals are used in research every year. When research programmes are being planned, DSTL also follows the 3Rs principle to seek experimental procedures which either replace the use of animals, reduce the number of animals used, or refine how the animals are treated.

As necessary as animal testing is for scientific research, I am glad that DSTL has made significant efforts to keep its levels of animal testing under control, while still helping contribute to the security and defence capability of the UK. Animal testing by DSTL only makes up less than 0.5 per cent of the national total.

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.