

11th July 2016

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about dog fighting and Early Day Motion 64.

This is a heinous crime that has been banned in the UK for over 100 years. It is an offence under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and punishable by up to six months' imprisonment or an unlimited fine, or both. I also support the ban on owning or selling some types of dogs bred for fighting.

The police have powers to investigate allegations of dog fighting and have the power to arrest anyone suspected of being involved in this barbaric practice. People can be charged with causing, taking part in, attending or publicising an animal fight, receiving admission money or keeping equipment, premises or an animal to be used in a fight. This is a broad range of charges that is available to prosecutors and I would urge anyone with any relevant information to contact the police immediately.

The previous cap in the fine that charges of animal abuse can attract was removed last year, but I can tell you that the Ministry of Justice is now looking at whether there is a case for increasing the penalties further. There is also a public consultation now open into sentencing guidelines for these crimes, which will close on 11th August. You can find more details on the website of the Sentencing Council: <http://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/consultations/magistrates-court-sentencing-guidelines-consultation/>

With regards to EDMs, I make a general rule of not signing these. They have no legislative effect, are almost never debated in Parliament, and cost the British taxpayer over £600,000 annually in printing and publication costs alone. I do not feel that this represents a good use of public money, especially given the size of the current budget deficit.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP