



Craig Whittaker MP

CALDER VALLEY

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Firearms Laws – Interim Response

Thank you for contacting me about firearms legislation and handgun ownership.

I am sure that you can appreciate that it is the Government's responsibility to ensure the safety of people across the country. As such, there are currently no plans to change the laws in place for the purchase and possession of hand guns in England and Wales.

Following the Dunblane school massacre of 1997, in which sixteen children and one teacher tragically lost their lives, the then Government passed the Firearms (Amendment) Acts of 1997. This legislation, the idea behind which was to ensure that restrictions on firearm ownership would prevent any further such gun massacres from occurring, has largely been successful in its aim.

Restrictions on firearms have also been important in the Government's suicide prevention strategy, with action to reduce access to the means of suicide proven to reduce such deaths. A study by the World Health Organisation shows that less than 2 per cent of suicides in the UK are by firearm, compared with 56 percent in the USA where firearms are more easily accessible.

Successive Governments since 1997 have sought to strike a balance between protecting public safety and defending the rights of the public to enjoy gun-related sports at the numerous shooting ranges spread throughout the UK. I believe our current Government has successfully struck this balance, as demonstrated by its proud record in reducing the total number of UK firearm offences by 21 per cent since 2010.

As an additional point, I can state that there are no plans to change legislation relating to airsoft guns. The Government looked carefully at whether or not the 1J limit recommended in the Law Commission's report would have an adverse effect on the public's enjoyment of airsoft, as well as whether airsoft guns had caused any serious injuries. Having carefully considered all options, the Government has decided that the existing legislation is proportionate, and I fully support such a decision.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP