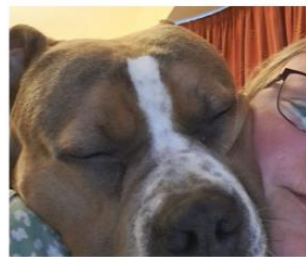
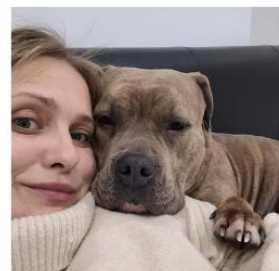


Evidence for EFRA regarding the discussion on the merits of the 'XL Bully' ban.

By a small group of concerned dog owners and professionals.

We have not published our names to ensure a level of anonymity.



Following recent brutal dog attacks and resulting deaths, there is a unanimous call to address and prevent further incidents. Such attacks and fatalities are unacceptable. Our team would like to extend our sympathies to those affected. The situation is both devastating and deeply concerning.

This document consists of scientifically backed information opposing the 'XL Bully' ban, instead calling for the implementation of a dog ownership licencing model. We also include a testimony written by Helen Howell, Canine Behaviourist and Expert Witness. The document concludes with a compilation of personal testimonies contributed by individuals from diverse backgrounds, including owners, professionals, and those who depend on their 'XL Bully' as an emotional support animal. Additionally, it features a cover page summarizing key takeaway points from each testimony.

Introduction

We wish to thank the Committee for taking the time to consider our evidence opposing the Government's announcement to add the 'XL Bully' to the current Dangerous Dog Act 1991 (DDA), as a banned dog under the Breed Specific Legislation (BSL).

The manner in which evidence has been presented, assigning sole blame to the 'XL Bully' for dog attacks, raises notable concerns. Unfortunately, we lack the privilege to scrutinize the evidence presented to the Committee for its balance, proportionality, and fairness. Despite multiple Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, we have not received complete responses from DEFRA or Police Forces nationwide at the time of writing. This places us at a disadvantage, relying on our own research and publicly reported information. It is crucial to emphasize that our sources are confirmed, reliable and credible.

We **DO NOT** agree with the Government's announcement, that banning the 'XL Bully' will break the cycle of dog attacks and subsequent deaths. Despite the implementation of the DDA, there has not been a notable decrease in dog bites and attacks (RSPCA, 2016). Furthermore, research indicates, 98% of canine behaviourists argue that adding more breeds/types to the banned list is redundant in preventing dog attacks as this is not a breed/type specific issue (Webb, 2016). The fact that BSL has been proven ineffective, highlights the Prime Minister's announcement as a hastily made, poorly thought-out response.

The continued attacks are the fault of the Government, who, on numerous occasions, year after year, ignored well-founded and proven arguments presented by experts, the dog coalition, and Members of Parliament (MPs), advocating the elimination of BSL and the introduction of a dog ownership licencing model.

It is also apparent that a substantial portion of the UK do not agree with the banning of any breed, including the 'XL Bully'. Petition 643611, which is against the proposed 'XL Bully' ban, has been signed by over 580,000 people.

Having conducted immense research into this topic, our team have streamlined and compiled pressing points that must be considered when tackling the issue; a rise in dog aggression, specifically looking at the 'XL Bully' and whether it should be added to the BSL as an effective solution. These points are anecdotally echoed at the bottom of this document within personal testimonies.

If the Government, simply add the 'XL Bully' to the banned dogs list, the issue of dog attacks and subsequent fatalities will not be appropriately tackled. If the government, go ahead with the ban on the 'XL Bully' along with implementing changes to the DDA, it will be admitting that the 'XL Bully' is not the current issue and instead government is targeting this "type" of dog and by extension their owners. It is a no-win situation.

Whilst we oppose such uneducated moves to ban a breed, we agree the issue of **ALL** dog attacks and subsequent fatalities **MUST** be addressed. Our stance is that this can **ONLY** be done by implementing a dog ownership licencing model; a long-term, effective solution that avoids penalizing responsible owners and their dogs and prevents the spread of hate and division among the public.

Our response is not a “knee jerk” one, but a well-informed, common-sense approach that is actioned in countries globally. Implementing a dog ownership licencing model is the most reasonable and proportionate response to the current situation, with owners of large breeds taking the lead.

The ‘XL Bully’

The Problem with “Typing the XL Bully”

There is a significant misconception regarding the American ‘XL Bully’ dog, which is bred in four different sizes, with ‘XL Bully’ representing the largest. The ‘XL Bully’ has characteristics that resemble various bull breeds, such as Cane Corso’s, Staffordshire bull terriers, Bullmastiffs, Presa Canarios, American Bulldogs and more. Additionally, various crossbreeds resembling the ‘XL Bully’, face the risk of being grouped together and affected under Breed-Specific Legislation (BSL).

When assessing what qualifies as an ‘XL Bully’ in relation to the evidence forming the basis of the proposed ban, it is crucial to consider two main factors; 'What information is available concerning each of the dogs seized in connection with the attacks under consideration?' and 'Can the Government assert with confidence that these dogs were not crossbreeds, and what evidence supports this conclusion?'. Further points for the government to contemplate include:

1. How did the experts decide what an ‘XL Bully’ is?
2. Is this in line with the American ABKC (American Bully Kennel Club)?
3. How did that information compare to the dogs that have been seized?
4. What checks and tests did they do to determine if this is correct?
5. Did all dogs look the same?
6. Have you viewed photographs and measurements of all the dogs reported to have been ‘XL Bully’s’?
7. What are the backgrounds of these dogs?
8. Are these dogs still alive?

To illustrate our point, we have added several images of dogs below. We challenge you to spot the ‘XL Bully’. **Only one dog pictured is a ‘XL Bully’.**



‘Identify the XL

The True Nature of an 'XL Bully'

Genetics and breed characteristics cannot be ignored; however, most canine behaviour is dictated by their environment, training, and life experiences (Wilsson, 2016).

The 'XL Bully' is classed as a companion dog, any form of aggression towards humans or other dogs is not considered breed standard according to the American Bully Kennel Club (ABKC) (ABKC, 2021).

This is echoed within the following testimony by Canine Behaviourist, Helen Howell.

Insert about the 'XL Bully' from Helen Howell – Canine behaviourist and expert witness:

I am Helen Howell, I am a forensic canine behaviourist and expert witness. I have a BSc (Hons) in Canine Behaviour and Management and I am currently undertaking a PhD at the University of Lincoln; my doctoral research is around risk factors for human directed dog aggression. I have been asked to provide a brief description of the temperament and behaviour of the dog known as the American Bully XL.

The American Bully XL is not a breed in its own right. The American Bully is a crossbred dog. The American Bully is a combination of a number of different breeds including the American Pit Bull Terrier, the English Bulldog, American bulldog and olde English bull dog. Some dogs described as an American Bully XL that I have examined have also had mastiff heritage.

The American Bully is a dog bred predominantly for companionship (United Kennel Club, 2023). It has been suggested by the media that the American Bully XL is a dog bred for fighting. This is incorrect, while the American Pit Bull terrier is a dog that was historically bred for fighting, the American Pit Bull terrier is predominantly a family pet in the USA in the present day.

The points of conformation desirable in a pit bull terrier bred for fighting include a light springy gait, and standing high; an effective fighting dog requires the ability to wrestle for extended periods of time and heavy, thick set dogs do not have the ability to do so (ADBA, 2015). The American Bulldog, the Olde English Bulldog or the English Bulldog are not breeds considered to be bred for fighting, yet many American Bully XL's may have a greater percentage of these breeds comprising their genetic profile than American Pit Bull Terrier.

The American Bully XL may share some genes of the American Pit Bull Terrier however, in the same way that a cockerpoo, being neither a cocker spaniel nor a poodle, is recognised as a type of dog in its own right, the American Bully is not an American Pit Bull Terrier nor is it bred for fighting. The American Bully is a dog bred to be sociable to people, the bull breed in general is known for this trait. Any aggression towards people is undesirable in the breed.

Aggressive behaviour is multifactorial in nature. Research has demonstrated that breed is not a predictive factor for aggressive behaviour (Casey et al., 2014). And behavioural variation may be as prevalent within breed as well as across breed (Hammond et al., 2022). From my personal experience I have seen great variation in the behaviour within the breed of the American Bully's that I have worked with.

A dog's tendency to use aggression is based on many factors including the dog's early life experiences, genetic predisposition, the environment in which it lives, the way in which the dog is trained, if the dog is experiencing pain or discomfort, if the dog's physical and behavioural needs are being met and what the dog perceives is happening at the time (Baslington Davies et al., 2023; Mills et al., 2020; Casey et al., 2014).

Put quite simply, establishing if a dog is likely to exhibit human directed aggression is not as straightforward as it being of a particular breed.

Clearly, the likelihood of a severe injury being caused during an aggressive incident is greater if the dog is a large powerful breed and as such owners of large breed dogs have an increased responsibility to ensure their dogs are managed safely.

Responsible breeding and responsible dog ownership are a fundamental part of reducing dog bite incidents in the UK. It is suggested that licencing of all dogs, provision of education around dog bite prevention and enforcement of breeding regulations would be a more effective measure in reducing dog bite incidents than breed specific legislation.

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The Impact of the Proposed Ban on the ‘XL Bully’.

The proposed ban on the ‘XL Bully’ extends beyond mere registering, muzzling, neutering, and leashing a dog for life, as suggested by the media. Its ripple effect will touch every corner of society, profoundly affecting the daily lives of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of people.

The Effects of Implementing BSL on Human Mental Health.

Imposing a ban deliberately makes it impossible for some to keep their ‘XL Bully’ dogs, causing a decline in mental health and even suicidal thoughts. Already, individuals are being informed they will not be able to retain their dogs in social housing or private rentals if the ban is implemented.

Furthermore, the ban would lead to major work disruptions, as supportive services such as dog walkers will become unavailable due to insurance issues. These restrictions hinder holidays, as many holiday rentals will not accept banned dogs. Moreover, many individuals who suffer with mental health issues get a dog to stay active, engage in nature therapy and be part of a wider community, all of which will be hindered by the ban and the associated criminalisation of the owner.

‘XL Bully’ dogs are not always simply pets. They can be trained to be service and emotional support animals for children and adults with diagnosed SENDs such as autism (Weller, 2023) and mental health conditions like depression and anxiety. Please see person testimony of Person F, who has also been published in the Kent Online newspaper (Weller, 2023), to support this statement.

For many people, the ban will mean they will be forced to surrender their healthy and loving ‘XL Bully’ to the authorities where it will be destroyed. The emotional toll on an owners' mental well-being will be immeasurable. The loss of a pet can cause a plethora of emotions, from anxiety to severe depression. When grieving an animal, it is possible to experience a similar level of grief to human loss, especially for those who live alone or are classed as vulnerable (Testoni *et al.*, 2019).

Seizure & Euthanasia Costs – A Point of Concern for the Public Purse

The fallout from the 'XL Bully' ban in terms of dog seizures and euthanasia is yet to unfold. According to the American Bully Kennel Club (ABKC), there are over 100,000 registered American Bullies in the UK, with potentially thousands more unregistered (Wilson, 2023).

The Met Police seized 488 dogs and euthanized 12 in 2022, incurring a cost of £1,022,226. Costs so far this year have surpassed half a million pounds (Metropolitan Police, 2023). Northumbria Police Force seized 59 dogs, incurring approximately £59,000 in costs (Northumbria Police, 2022).

The proposed 'XL Bully' ban is likely to escalate these costs due to dog abandonment and seizures from both non-compliant and compliant owners and at the same time future policing budgets are being reduced, with quoted figures of up to £700 million (Ayad, 2023).

While public safety is paramount, public funding has not been adequately considered, despite the existence of alternative solutions, such as the potentially self-funded licensing models that are utilized in other countries. We urge you to carefully weigh this aspect when assessing all the implications of the proposed ban.

The Impact of Increased Levels of Euthanasia on Vets

Veterinarians face a suicide risk up to four times higher than the general population. While elevated euthanasia frequency is not the sole contributor to increased depression levels, it does have a negative impact on mood (Tran *et al.*, 2014). Notably, this study primarily focused on routine euthanasia performed by veterinarians and did not specifically evaluate the effects of euthanizing numerous healthy dogs. This concern is echoed by Dr Kendal Shepherd, a veterinary surgeon and clinical animal behaviourist. When discussing the proposed 'XL Bully' ban, she raises the concern that vets are *"already on the verge of emotional bankruptcy caused by the demands and stresses of current veterinary practice"* (Shepherd, 2023). This raises concerns regarding an elevated risk of suicide within the veterinary industry attributable to the rise in unjustified euthanasia directly caused by the proposed 'XL Bully' ban.

The Ban Neglects Reasons Behind Attacks

Often overlooked when discussing the horror of dog attacks is the underlying reason behind the incident. Every action has a reaction; it is inconceivable that any dog breed from a caring and responsible home would attack without any apparent reason.

Research evidence consistently points to human behaviour and situational factors as key triggers in dog bite incidents (Nurse *et al.*, 2021). This correlation has been reaffirmed in dog bite data collected from July to August 2023 by *'The Police Have My Dog'*, a team of dog law professionals.



With almost 30% of dog bites occurring from dogs escaping the home, BSL would have little impact on this statistic.

Every dog has different needs to fulfil their size and breed characteristics along with their general personality; the needs of a Pomeranian are going to be different from that of an Irish Wolf Hound; the needs of an anxious dog are going to be different from those of a confident dog.

By promoting dog education, individuals would be able to make informed decisions as to what breed and size of dog would be best suited to their family. A family who is very active and goes hiking multiple times a week may benefit from owning a 'working' line dog such as a Jack Russell terrier or working Labrador, whereas a family who only intend to go to the park for 30 minutes a day and desire more of a companion style dog may consider a breed such as a Maltese.

According to (Kienesberger *et al.*, 2022), 80% of children who were reported to have been bitten by a dog were familiar with said dog prior to the incident. Despite this research, most government measures focus on public incidents and tools to control dogs in public, rather than in the home. As a preventative measure, dog ownership licensing models should include education as part of their overall strategy. With the correct knowledge and resources, parents and dog owners would know how to prevent dog related injuries both in the home and in public.

The Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act, (2022) Must be Considered

The Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act (2022) bears no feature in the intended statutory instrument. It was parliaments intention when passing the Act that we now acknowledged, animals, including dogs, have emotions akin to humans.

The insistence on keeping dogs on a leash throughout their entire lives, as proposed by the BSL, raises ethical concerns considering The Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act (2022). Research indicates that dogs experience a heightened state of well-being, characterized by the release of endocannabinoids, when running at approximately 70% of their maximum heart rate (Raichlen *et al.*,

2012). Achieving this level of activity often necessitates allowing dogs to run off-leash or use specialized equipment like dog treadmills, which are not readily accessible to the public. The insistence on keeping dogs on a leash throughout their entire lives, as proposed by the BSL, raises ethical concerns.

Additionally, the ongoing requirement to muzzle dogs whenever they are outside their homes, as mandated by the Breed-Specific Legislation (BSL), contradicts the principles outlined in The Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act (2022). Outdoor enrichment plays a crucial role in the mental well-being of canines. Muzzles not only restrict a dog's oral behaviour, including investigative scent work and social interactions such as play—vital for fostering a stronger dog/owner relationship—but also impede a dog's ability to express itself. 'XL Bullies' that successfully pass an exemption process but reside in flats, for instance, may find themselves deprived of these enriching activities, as there may be nowhere the owner can take them without a muzzle (Arhant *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, muzzling can also jeopardize the dog's welfare by restricting their capacity to engage with other dogs, hindering the ability to convey crucial facial communication signals. This limitation diminishes another dog's ability to interpret body language accurately and respond appropriately and can put the banned dog at risk of canine aggression and being attacked (BVA, 2021).

As discussed previously, under BSL, an owner of an 'XL Bully' will likely no longer have access to dog industry services. Dog owners work in a variety of professions that may include travel for work or working away for extended periods of time. Without access to paid pet care, they will be forced to leave their pets alone for long periods of time. This isolation can negatively affect a dog's mental and physical health, thus conflicting with The Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act (2022). (Harvey *et al.*, 2022) and (Stephan *et al.*, 2021).

Seizing a suspected legislated dog can also have a detrimental effect that should be considered in line with The Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act (2022). Written evidence provided to the government in 2018 by DDA Watch stated that the seizure, incarceration and deprivation from family affects both the physical and mental wellbeing of dogs. This can lead to serious welfare issues, a deterioration of behaviour and/ or physical health which can affect the assessment of the dog and subsequent evidence given at a legal court hearing (DEFRA, 2018).

A study by Kathryn Chappell completed in 2009 showed that dogs exhibit stressed behaviour in kennels and are less likely to settle which may cause sleep deprivation. Dogs are also more likely to bark or howl, exhibit escape behaviours and exhibit fear responses including trembling and shivering (Chappell, 2009).

A dog ownership licensing model represents a humane approach that not only ensures vital protection for all animals, whether targeted or inadvertently involved, but also efficiently manages and prevents incidents involving aggressive dogs by encouraging responsible dog ownership. This aligns more closely with The Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act (2022).

The Solution: The way forward is licencing

It is evident from certain MP correspondence addressed to constituents opposing the ban, that owners of the 'XL Bully' have been 'typed' or stereotyped. This is discriminative, incorrect, and unfair. There are a minority of people who should never be allowed to purchase such powerful dogs, or any dog for that matter. But banning the 'XL Bully' will only lead them to select a more powerful breed, of which there are many. The cycle of dog aggression and attacks will continue. The UK makes good use of various licenses to ensure responsible ownership, so why not dog ownership?

Many countries have abolished all BSL in favour of licencing. Countries such as Germany, Ireland, Northern Ireland, parts of the USA, parts of Canada, the Netherlands, Italy, and Australia have successfully implemented dog licence models, some of which are self-funded.

According to a survey conducted in March 2023, 71% of UK participants expressed willingness to pay for dog licenses if they were re-introduced. Additionally, 66% of participants prioritised their dog's

wellbeing over their own. Reasons for supporting the reintroduction of dog licenses included reducing puppy farming (31%), promoting better care and training (24%), and utilizing the fees to support the UK economy and infrastructure (16%) (Johnson's Veterinary, 2023).

Overbreeding during the COVID-19 pandemic has exasperated and solidified a culture of dog aggression in the UK. Current law states breeders only require a licence if they are breeding 3 or more litters of puppies in any 12-month period (Gov.uk, 2023). It is abundantly clear many people facing a loss of income during the pandemic saw dog breeding as an 'easy way' to earn additional and tax avoidable income.

All breeders should be required to have a licence. All puppies should be microchipped and only people who have obtained a licence can then purchase a puppy. The link with the microchip and licence can be made at this stage, thus ensuring only a fit and proper person can purchase a puppy/rescue dog. Compulsory annual check-ups would mean the welfare and temperament of the dog can be checked and documented. All vet checks and concerns can be documented on a centralised database. Licencing will stop backyard breeding and ensure breeders are registered for tax purposes.

Most recently, DEFRA commissioned a report from Dr Angus Nurse in 2021: *'Investigation of measures to reduce dog attacks and promote responsible ownership amongst dog owners with dog control issues in the UK'*. This report contained several recommendations of measures that might reduce dog attacks and measures that might promote responsible dog ownership. All of which we fully agree with (Nurse *et al.*, 2021).

Implementing a dog ownership licencing scheme will prevent dogs from being placed in harsh or inadequate environments. By extension, this will improve the behaviour of future dog generations and therefore decrease the level of dog aggression both inside and outside of the home. Thus, helping to solve the issue long term and in a sustainable fashion (Shroads & Gusarova, 2018).

Furthermore, when dog licences were abolished in the UK in 1987, we did not have the technology that we do now. Had we have had the modern-day capabilities back in the late 80's it is highly likely that BSL would never have been introduced. Furthermore, due to the explosion of dog ownership in the UK, there has never been more of a need for dog licencing and education for dog owners and the public. It must be considered that in 1991, only 8,600 dogs were affected by the legislation (DEFRA, 2010) with 60% gaining exemption status, an acknowledgement that many of the legislated dogs were not dangerous. As a ban on the 'XL Bully' could affect hundreds of thousands of dogs, this is a much bigger decision than in 1991, with wide reaching consequences on dogs, owners, rescue centres and vets, not to mention the associated costs.

Conclusion

We need to do better, not just for the public but for our dogs too. They do not get any choice in who buys and raises them. They do not get to speak out about the abuse and mistreatment they endure. We need to ensure that they are in the right hands.

If the government truly wants to do this, genuinely cares about the people being hurt, and this is not just a political exercise, why would they not use a model that's proven to work and does not negatively impact animal welfare into the bargain as the current law does?

Every report commissioned by DEFRA, every piece of evidence, every report cited above, all contain the same message – That in order to tackle dog attacks, we need to place a focus on responsible dog ownership and education.

Let us not repeat past mistakes, let us look to a better future which tackles the problem right from the core, for the future of responsible dog ownership in the UK.

Thank you for your time.

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Personal Impact Statements:

Key points:

- **Person A** – Will experience loss of income as a dog walker. Dog walker safety is an issue, regardless of breed because of irresponsible dog owners.
- **Person B** – Anecdotal evidence against BSL effectiveness. Breeding infrastructure already exists for agriculture, so why not domestic animals?
- **Person C** – Concerned about her living situation as she lives in rented accommodation and the landlord may not accept a banned breed. She is also planning to start a family and wonders if Social Services will be involved if she has a banned breed.
- **Person D** – Lives alone and won't be able to go on holiday as there will be no one to leave dogs with. It will impact on her work as she travels for business.
- **Person E** – Has received messages from distressed bully breed owners who are facing eviction and in a poor mental state following the ban announcement.
- **Person F** – Son has ADHD and autism and has a unique bond with their XL bully.
- **Person G** – Concerned that legislated dogs will not be able to engage in suitable exercise and activities, impacting on their welfare. Is already seeing mental health impact on owners.

Person A, BA (Hons), MSc.

I am a 27-year-old dog walker, trainer and pet sitter by profession, animal activist and lover in my spare time.

This ban is frankly very disappointing and will impact my work. This will do nothing to curb the dog aggression issue I face on a daily basis in my line of work from all breeds, large and small. By continuing down the route of the BSL and implementing the ban, the government is telling me and everyone in my profession that our safety and lives do not matter. The larger issue at hand of dog aggression is not being holistically approached or solved.

Furthermore, I have not been able to find a pet insurance that will cover me to work with banned breeds under the DDA. Therefore, I am having to limit my clientele and lose out on possible future income. As a self-employed individual who has just bought a house and now has the responsibility of a mortgage, this is deeply worrying.

Before the proposed ban, I was considering buying an XL Bully or similar due to their loyalty, trainability and mellow temperament. I considered how this dog would fit into my future family unit. In my professional opinion, based on research, I deemed them child friendly and a family dog. Sadly, I will no longer be able to consider the XL Bully.

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with bully breeds in the past and greatly worry what this ban will do to the future of this breed both legally and mentally.

Person B

I'm a Dog trainer and walker by profession and a bully type dog advocate.

The proposed ban will not change anything. BSL as a whole is a joke, the pit bull is banned and yet I have personally worked with and handled many. So, the thought that the xl American bully will just go away is laughable.

I work with many different bully breeds and their families. The thought that this country is going to destroy families up and down the country makes me sick.

Dog breeding and ownership needs regulation, and this country has the infrastructure to do so, simply look at livestock farming as an example.

Person C

My name is Person D - 30 Years old, I am a self-employed hair stylist. I am an owner of a 5.5-month-old XL American Bully. I chose the XL American Bully as it is known for its friendly, affectionate, and loyal temperament, making it an ideal companion for families and individuals alike. These gentle giants are intelligent and eager to please their owners, which makes them highly trainable and adaptable to various situations. I spent many hours doing research before getting my dog to ensure this breed was the best fit for me, now, and in the future as I plan to have a family of my own in the next few years.

Since the announcement of the proposed ban, I feel my life has been upended. This has caused a great deal of stress, with a detrimental effect on my mental health. I have not slept properly, I cannot concentrate, I cannot eat for fear of what is going to happen and what my life will now look like going forwards.

This proposed ban will completely change the trajectory of my dog's life. My dog will never be able to run freely. She has already been demonised by the news, press and the government, to then force her to wear a muzzle in public will only make the public stereotype her as a 'dangerous dog' when this is in fact simply not true!

I currently live in a rental property, if the ban comes to fruition what then? As a responsible dog owner, I will not just simply give up my dog if I face eviction due to being an owner of a 'dangerous dog'. Taking into account that these dogs will not be able to be re-homed you will be sentencing these innocent dogs to an undeserved death - this will be the case for many XL Bully owners, will you be prepared to have the blood of these innocent dogs on your hands?

As mentioned, I am planning on starting a family in the next few years, hypothetically speaking what happens when the owner of a dog deemed by the government to be a 'Dangerous Dog' decides to have children? Will Social Services be involved, just because of the breed of my dog, the dog I chose with my future and children in mind for its loyalty, its sensitivity, its caring nature and known love for children?

I urge you to consider alternative options to a breed ban. Breed Specific Legislation and the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 categorically do not work, they need to be removed and replaced with something that works in the modern day and will help ALL dog owners to be better, more responsible dog owners. I fully support a licensing model, like the one they are already using in Calgary, Canada - this is tried, tested and successful.

I would like to say this is just a small selection of my worries surrounding the ban. There are so many factors to be addressed and banning this breed will only cause a ripple effect of stress and heartbreak that will affect many thousands of people in the UK.

Person D, BA (Hons), PGCE, MA, FCIPD

I'm Person E age 61. My profession is an educational senior consultant, working across the education & skills sector for over 25 years. I own two bully 'type' dogs.

The proposed ban has significantly impacted on me over recent weeks. I'm now in a state of disbelief, anger but more than anything desperately frightened. I live on my own and I cannot express enough the impact of such a ban will have on my life. The personal impact for me will be unmeasurable, from my mental health to effectively being on a 'lockdown'.

A banned breed cannot be looked after, other than by its owner. It's unlikely any boarding kennels will take my dogs which means I will never be able to have vacation or leave my dogs with someone for a few hours. This will also have a serious impact on my finances. As a consultant I travel the country supporting schools and colleges weekly. This will no longer be an option. What will I do? Will I lose my house? How will I survive?

I cannot express enough the need to review this proposal and introduce a new 'way'. I fully support a licensing model but to put the bully 'type' dog on the banned list will not only cause devastation for those like me but it will not stop all breed dog attacks.

I chose the bully dog for its loyalty, its sensitivity and its caring nature. I have not been disappointed! They truly are wonderful companions.

Person E

I'm Person F, owner of Billy, an American Bully. I'm a business consultant, a company director, I sit on a board of directors, and I have a popular TikTok account where I document my relationship and training with my dog.

Since the Prime Ministers announcement regarding the breed ban I have received message after message from worried dog owners who are unsure what the future holds for their family pet. People have expressed to me the toll this is taking on their mental health, during what is already a difficult time for many. I admit it is taking a toll on my own mental health and wellbeing too. Walking my dog and enjoying time in nature has always been a welcome break from a busy work-life, but now I feel like I am counting down the days until my Billy's life will become restricted.

I have had a message from someone who has received a 7-day eviction notice and must now decide between their dog and a roof over their child's head. I have had messages from people whose dogs are nervous, and they are petrified they won't pass a temperament test. I have had messages from people worried about having to neuter their dogs before they are fully developed which could have a long-term negative impact on the dogs health.

But the common theme across all of the messages I receive is that they are responsible owners just like me. That their dog is more than a dog, it is a member of their family. That they feel they are being criminalised. That they are currently scared to walk their dog for fear of judgement or abuse.

I've taken every precaution and responsible action I can with my dog, as having grown up with large bull breeds I know that this is essential to have a well-balanced adult pet. I see a professional trainer on a regular basis and ensure that my dog understands structure and boundaries.

I strongly feel that a licensing model in the UK would benefit responsible owners like me and encourage a safe community around dog ownership. People should not be able to impulse-buy dogs. It should be a well thought out, educated decision. Licensing and education is the way forward for the future of responsibly dog ownership in the UK.

Person F

Personal statement from Person F - owner of Rosie a nearly 3 year old XL bully.

Rosie is part of our family which is made up of Mum - Person F, Dad- Darrell, great Nan Dorreen(83), first son- Joseph (16), second son- Samuel (12). Joseph is diagnosed with ADHD and Autism.

We are a part of a large extended family, all dog owners (11 dogs), some working dogs but mainly family dogs. I grew up with dogs- Doberman's to be specific. We purposely chose an XL bully for our family because of their natural temperaments. They are the calmest, most docile, slightly lazy, cuddly dogs and I knew this because my sister has one. Rosie and my son, Joseph have a very special bond. Rosie has an amazing effect on Joseph, she grounds him, brings him back when he shuts down, she is his rock and constant unconditional love. He needs her. We need her.

As responsible owners of an XL bully, we already take precautions because we receive unwarranted fear and prejudice. When in fact any dangerous dog interactions I have experienced have been other breeds, but even still, these situations are completely down to bad dog owners. I completely support licensing for all dog owners and dog walkers too. Putting a muzzle and keeping my XL bully on a short lead will not solve the problem.

Person G

My name is Person H and I am a certified Training Without Conflict professional dog trainer. I run a successful and reputable dog training business and I specialise in working with Bull Breeds. I live with my wife and our two children, aged 13 and 5. We have 4 dogs in total, 3 American XL Bullies and a Staffy x American Bulldog that we have raised in our family home from puppies. Altogether, we have owned Bull Breeds in excess of 10-years. Both of my male American XL Bullies are titled in the prestigious sport of PSA, something only a handful of Bull Breeds have achieved in the world. I often get asked why I chose this breed and my answer is always the same - their desire for social interaction with humans, dog to handler relationship and their sheer commitment to any task set.

In my experience, the most efficient and lasting methodology for training the American XL Bully is to provide a suitable outlet for their behaviours that may be unwanted elsewhere - this is where genetics come in. This, as well as setting clear boundaries and rules, are an absolutely essential and important part in dog training. I fear that if a ban were to be enforced, exempted dogs would struggle to receive the adequate exercise, stimulation and challenge that they gain from outlets such as tug and ball games. This will inevitably lead to high levels of frustration and psychological conditions such as depression, obsessive compulsive behaviours, and destructive behaviours. For me personally, this is a huge animal welfare concern.

I see issues with out of control dogs of all breeds on a daily basis. Breed specific legislation does absolutely nothing to address this issue and has been letting our country down for in excess of 30-years. There are already multiple studies to show that it is ineffective, as well as support from experts within the Dog Control Coalition. There is a massive problem with dog ownership in general, which must be addressed in an effective way. A far more impactful and effective approach would be to implement licensing for dog ownership, enforce stricter laws around breeding and the sale and rehoming of dogs, and to provide more educational resources for dog owners to promote responsible ownership and sufficient training. These methods have been proven to work in other countries, such as Canada who have seen an 80% reduction in dog bites since they introduced the "Calgary" model.

The clients that I work with take ownership of their dogs very seriously. They are normal, hard-working people who are dedicated to meeting the needs of their dogs and practising a socially responsible level of control. I have utmost respect and admiration for my clients and their dogs and I'm incredibly proud of their commitment to training and the well-rounded and balanced dogs as a result of this.

Sadly, I have received multiple messages from my own clients, friends and members of the dog training community, as well as other dog owners who have reached out to me regarding their increased anxiety and fear around the impending ban and what this could mean in the future. My wife and I have found this time incredibly challenging and our own mental health has deteriorated due to the potential impact this could have on our family (especially our children), our dogs and our business. I find it extremely concerning that people are feeling this way, especially considering the already escalating mental health crisis in this country and lack of support available.

I sincerely hope that we can find an alternative and effective solution for the sake of myself, my family and our own dogs, the hundreds of responsible dog owners and the general public.