Dear Matt

Thank you for your reply of 5 November 2018 to my letter of 9 October about the public health impacts of fracking.

Since publication of that reply I have received further correspondence on the matter, in response to which I would be grateful for your reply to the following questions:

- **What published evidence on the potential public health impacts of emissions associated with shale gas extraction has Public Health England reviewed since 2014?** I would be grateful for a response to this question in the form of a list of all the relevant research that has been assessed by PHE in that period.

- **The correspondence which I have received notes that PHE’s 2014 report assessed only the potential health impacts caused by the ‘direct release of chemical and radioactive pollutants’, and not the wider public health impacts caused by, for example, increased HGV traffic, noise and light pollution, or other potential health risks associated with fracking.** Your letter notes that “PHE continues to review the evidence on the potential public health impacts of emissions associated with shale gas extraction”, but makes no mention of the wider public health impacts associated with fracking, on which I understand there is now a considerable body of published evidence. **Does Public Health England have any plans to carry out a review of that evidence; and if not, what is your assessment of the case for inviting PHE to do so, given the extent of the evidence now available and the scope of PHE’s wider responsibilities for the protection of public health?**

I would expect the Committee to wish to publish your response.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Sarah Wollaston MP
Chair of the Committee
Dear Sarah,


In response to your question ‘What published evidence on the potential public health impacts of emissions associated with shale gas extraction has Public Health England reviewed since 2014?’ I enclose the extracted literature review to July 2016. Literature published to 2018 is currently part of the ongoing review process.

In response to your question ‘Does Public Health England have any plans to carry out a review of that evidence; and if not, what is your assessment of the case for inviting PHE to do so, given the extent of the evidence now available and the scope of PHE’s wider responsibilities for the protection of public health?’; PHE is yet to make a decision whether to formally update its 2014 review. It will be however be producing short annual reviews of the evidence going forward to determine if the new evidence suggests the conclusions and recommendations contained in the 2014 report remain valid or require updating.

The timescale for the delivery of the review of the evidence to 2018 has yet to be agreed, however it is anticipated to be early 2020.

Yours ever,

MATT HANCOCK


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9 October 2018

Dear Matt

I have received the attached letter from the group “Frack Free United”, signed by a number of experts in public health, inviting the Committee to inquire into the health impacts of fracking.

In the light of that correspondence, I would be grateful for your clarification of the Department of Health and Social Care’s position on the health impacts of fracking. I would also like to know what plans the Government has to update, and widen, Public Health England’s June 2014 report Review of the Potential Public Health Impacts of Exposures to Chemical and Radioactive Pollutants as a Result of the Shale Gas Extraction Process.

It would be helpful to have your reply by Tuesday 23 October.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Sarah Wollaston MP
Chair of the Committee
Dear Sarah,

Thank you for your letter of 9 October concerning the Department’s position on the health impacts of fracking and Public Health England’s (PHE) plans to update their 2014 review of the health impacts of fracking.


The review evaluated available evidence on issues including air quality, radon gas, naturally occurring radioactive materials, water contamination and waste water, and concluded that “… the potential risks to public health from exposure to emissions associated with shale gas extraction will be low if operations are properly run and regulated” and my Department relies on this advice regarding the health impacts of fracking.

PHE continues to review the evidence on the potential public health impacts of emissions associated with shale gas extraction and have not currently identified any significant evidence that would make it change its views stated in its review.
I hope you find this response helpful.

Yours ever,

MATT HANCOCK