



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From the Chief Medical Officer

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Dear Ian Andrews,

Thank you for your letter of 17 July regarding the Public Health Water Taskforce and its published Terms of Reference. I am grateful for your support for the Taskforce and for the points you have raised regarding private water supplies.

I recognise the important role that private water supplies play for many communities, particularly in rural areas, and the valuable work undertaken by environmental health professionals and others involved in their monitoring, regulation and oversight. I also acknowledge the concerns you have raised regarding the evidence base for public health risks associated with private water supplies and the challenges that can arise in understanding and managing these risks.

The Public Health Water Taskforce was commissioned by Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to independently advise Government on the public health risks associated with poor drinking and recreational water quality and on opportunities for mitigations. This focus reflects the findings of the Independent Water Commission and the broader programme of water-sector reform currently being considered by Defra.

While private water supplies were not within the original scope of the Taskforce, the issue was raised at the first meeting and Defra were asked to consider the matter further. Following the meeting, Defra recommended private supplies should be considered within the Taskforce's scope to the extent that any specific public health risks to private supplies can be fully understood and to guide future policy improvements. However, as the practical levers for intervention remain limited, Defra requested the Taskforce should continue to focus primarily on public supplies, where government action can have the greatest impact. The Terms of Reference are currently being updated to reflect this position.

Thank you again for writing.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Whitty', with a stylized, flowing script.

PROFESSOR CHRIS WHITTY
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER FOR ENGLAND