Responses to pre-submitted questions – follow up from Dr Victoria Turner

**It is to my understanding that the Group on Facebook social media known as 'Cleaner Bentham' received a grant for a certain amount of money, which was to be used to give concerned residents blood test screening. Can I ask if any such testing has taken place and if so can they disclose any results found.**

Dr Victoria Turner – NYC Public Health

The public health team have not been involved in any work undertaken by Cleaner Bentham around blood testing, so we are unable to answer whether testing has been undertaken and what results may have been found.

Interpreting blood test results for PFAS can be difficult, as there are not standard values for what an expected level of PFAS in blood should be, or an understanding of at what level of PFAS health impacts could potentially occur.

Having a blood test for PFAS would also not confirm where any PFAS has come from – it is likely most of us will have a level of PFAS in our blood from exposure to a wide range of sources.

*[Mat from Cleaner Bentham was present and confirmed that no blood testing has taken place yet]*

**Do you have any evidence of impact of PFAS pollution on Angus employees/the local population [question for Angus Fire, but not present]**

Dr Victoria Turner – NYC Public Health

Unable to answer on behalf of Angus Fire regarding any occupational work that may have happened regarding their own staff.

From a local population perspective, we currently do not have evidence of any impact of PFAS pollution on the wider population. However, investigations by the regulators are still ongoing, and it is important for public health to stay linked in to make sure that if there are exposure routes identified that are likely to have had a significant impact that these are appropriately dealt with and that health advice, and management where appropriate, is provided. Equally if any individuals would like to follow up with us regarding particular health concerns they may have then we are very happy to pick these up with health partners on their behalf.

***[Question asked at the end of the event]* Can you explain the references made in the media to the Bentham population having a high level of cancer than the surrounding population?**

Dr Victoria Turner – NYC Public Health

This data appears to have come from the Local Health website which no longer exists, although the data can now be found on Public Health Fingertips, which is also a public website.

If you look in this data at deaths from all types of cancer across the whole population (i.e. all ages), the rate does appear to be higher for Bentham than that of surrounding areas. However, if you look at cancer deaths in people under the age of 75, which is generally taken as indicative of preventable cancer deaths, the rate is pretty much the same as that for Ingleton and Clapham, and only slightly above Settle (and lower than other parts of Craven around Skipton).

There are some caveats to this data – it does just cover deaths rather than including all cases of cancer, and the most recent data is only from 2016-2020. It also combines all cancer deaths together, rather than specifically looking at those that might be more associated with particular environmental hazards.

NHS data shows that the percentage of people registered at Bentham Medical Practice who have cancer is not significantly different from neighbouring medical practices in Settle and Hornby/Kirkby Lonsdale – in fact it is slightly lower.