

# Hull and the Riding of East Yorkshire Local Dental Committee

## STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF WATER FLUORIDATION

January 2015

### **A safe and effective public health measure needed to tackle high rates of tooth decay**

Hull and the Riding of East Yorkshire Local Dental Committee endorses water fluoridation as a safe and effective method of reducing tooth decay.

As local dental health professionals, we know from our day to day experience in treating patients that resolute action on a community-wide scale is needed in Hull to address the unacceptably high rates of tooth decay among children.

Whilst dental health education is very important – to impress upon children and their parents the need to brush their teeth with a fluoride toothpaste and to moderate their consumption of sugary foods and drinks – the evidence of the past 50 or more years shows that fluoridating water has significant additional benefits.

Hull needs a combination of methods to help protect our children's teeth. Water fluoridation should be one of them. Fluoridation benefits adults too.

### **Fluoridation means less decay, fewer fillings and fewer extractions under a general anaesthetic in hospital**

We will support Hull City Council in exploring whether or not it is technically feasible to introduce fluoridation here. If it can be done, Hull residents may reasonably expect children's tooth decay rates to be significantly reduced within about five years of a scheme starting. Less tooth decay means less pain, less anxiety, fewer fillings, fewer extractions and less time off school for dental treatment.

### **Support from dental, medical and public health professionals**

Nationally, many health professionals are calling for water fluoridation. As recently as January 2015, the Faculty of Dental Surgery of the Royal College of Surgeons said local authorities should be encouraged to introduce fluoridation schemes in order to tackle the significant inequalities in children's oral health.

Just a few months ago, in November 2014, the British Society of Paediatric expressed its continuing support for fluoridation, pointing to studies published in ten different countries since 1990 which show that, on average, tooth decay in fluoridated areas has been reduced by 30% to 60% in primary teeth and by 40% to 50% in permanent teeth.

Water fluoridation is also supported by the British Dental Association, the British Dental Health Foundation, the International Dental Federation and the International Association for Dental Research, as well as by dental associations in countries as far afield as the United States and Australia.

But it is not just dentists who think fluoridation is a good idea. It is backed by the British Medical Association, the Faculty of Public Health of the Royal Colleges of Physicians, the World Health Organisation and dozens of national associations around the world that represent doctors and public health specialists.

Those bodies have reviewed the scientific evidence and concluded that fluoridation is safe. This has not stopped the wild stories put out by individuals who have a bee in their bonnet about fluoridation. There is nothing new about this. Opponents have always shouted long and loud whenever a new fluoridation scheme is proposed. But after schemes are introduced, tooth decay goes down and no health problems are identified by either routine public health monitoring or by specially commissioned studies.

### **Public Health England report confirmed dental benefits and found no differences in general health between fluoridated and non-fluoridated areas**

In March 2014, Public Health England published a major report that compared all the fluoridated parts of the country with all the non-fluoridated ones. It found that children in fluoridated areas were much less likely to have had tooth decay by the ages of five and 12, and that there were 45% fewer hospital admissions of very young children in fluoridated areas to have teeth removed under a general anaesthetic.

Importantly, Public Health England found no differences between fluoridated and non-fluoridated areas in cancer, hip fracture and Down's syndrome births. Whilst rates of kidney stones and bladder cancer were lower overall in fluoridated areas, PHE correctly reported that this does not mean fluoridation prevents these two conditions.

### **Some fluoride already in our water**

Fluoride is already in Hull's water, of course. It occurs naturally in all water supplies. In many places – Hartlepool, for example – the natural fluoride level in water is enough to reduce tooth decay (one part of fluoride per million parts of water). Fluoridation is a means of replicating this benefit where the natural fluoride level is too low, as it is in Hull. If we do get the fluoridation scheme

we need, Hull residents can rest assured that when they switch on the tap and pour themselves a glass of water, the fluoride that is naturally present and the fluoride that has been added will be chemically identical. You cannot taste it. You cannot smell it. But its presence is beneficial.

### **From the Statue of Liberty to the Birmingham Bull Ring**

Worldwide, thousands of communities have already done what Hull may be about to do. Nearly 400 million people drink fluoridated water now. So if you go on a trip to see the Statue of Liberty in New York, or the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, or the Sydney Opera House, or simply go shopping for the day in the Gateshead Metrocentre or the Birmingham Bull Ring, you will be drinking fluoridated water.

### **Put children's needs and the science over some individuals' personal preferences**

The Local Dental Committee accepts that some individuals may not like fluoridation. They are entitled to their views. But the science shows that water fluoridation works and that it is safe. In the weeks and months head, we urge the citizens of Hull (and any of those from the East Riding who share the same water supply) to back proposals for a scheme to serve all or part of this area.

We, as health professionals, are happy to drink the fluoridated water ourselves and have no concerns about our families, friends and patients doing likewise. They will all benefit from what the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have described as one of the top ten public health achievements of the past 100 years. Above all, our children's needs must come first.