



Association of Directors of Public Health North East  
North East and North Cumbria NHS Integrated Care Board  
North East Regional Local Dental Committee

## Joint Position Statement on North East Water Fluoridation

Oral health is an integral part of overall good health and wellbeing and allows people to eat, speak, smile, and socialise with confidence. The impact of severe tooth decay has wide implications for children and families: pain and distress, preventable hospital admissions, sleepless nights and missed days from school.

Tooth decay is the most common oral disease affecting our children and young people with lifelong impacts. Although largely preventable, a significant proportion of our residents still experience poor oral health. Ensuring drinking water contains the recommended level of fluoride is an effective way to help prevent tooth decay. Some areas of the North East already have tap water which contains fluoride at these recommended levels and this has been very effective at reducing dental decay for the population living in these areas.

As an Integrated Care System, there is unanimous support for the extension of water fluoridation across the North East. The Association of Directors Public Health North East (ADPHNE), the North East and North Cumbria NHS Integrated Care Board (NENCICB) and the regional Local Dental Committee have expressed their full support for the Government's proposal to extend water fluoridation, recognising that:

- **Tooth decay is largely preventable but remains a serious public health problem in the North East:** Tooth decay causes significant pain, discomfort and distress. It is the leading cause of hospital admissions in children aged 5 to 9 years and is also the cause of most dental treatments (including root canal therapies, crowns, implants and dentures). Preventing tooth decay reduces pain, distress and the need for complex dental treatments.
- **Water fluoridation is an effective and safe public health measure:** The safety of water fluoridation has been widely monitored and researched and there is no convincing scientific evidence of harm to general health from water containing fluoride within regulatory limits. Many areas across the country, including in the North East, already have fluoridated water.
- **Water fluoridation can reduce the prevalence, severity and impact of tooth decay:** In the North East, 5-year-old children living in non-fluoridated areas are up to 3 times more likely to have tooth extractions compared to children living in fluoridated areas.
- **Water fluoridation reduces health inequalities, and the greatest reductions in tooth decay are seen in areas with high levels of deprivation:** In 5-year-old children there is a 10% reduction in the prevalence of tooth decay between fluoridated and non-fluoridated areas with similar deprivation rates.
- **Water fluoridation significantly reduces hospital admissions for tooth extractions:** In the North East 2 out of 3 hospital admissions could be avoided in non-fluoridated areas compared to fluoridated areas.
- **Water fluoridation is a very cost-effective public health intervention:** An estimated £731,200 per year could be saved by extending water fluoridation across the North East.

We are urging partners to support and respond to the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) consultation on expanding water fluoridation in the North East.

[Community water fluoridation expansion in the north east of England](#)