

Community water fluoridation expansion in the north east of England

The Health and Care Act 2022 provides powers for the Secretary of State to introduce, vary and terminate community water fluoridation schemes.

'Faster, simpler and fairer: our plan to recover and reform NHS dentistry' sets out a focus on prevention of tooth decay. This includes the long-term ambition to systematically bring water fluoridation to more of the country, with a particular focus on the most deprived areas, which stand to benefit most.

Before using these powers, public consultation is required on the proposal.

We are consulting on a proposal to request the relevant water company to enter into new fluoridation arrangements, and to vary existing agreements, in order to expand community water fluoridation schemes across the north east of England. This is because of the significant and long-standing inequalities in the region and is part of the government’s plan to improve dental health.

You can find details on our proposal and whether you are affected in the full consultation document (link below).

**The consultation period will close at 11:59pm on 17 June 2024.**[**Please review the full consultation page before completing this survey**](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/community-water-fluoridation-expansion-in-the-north-east-of-england)**.**

**Notes about this survey: to share this survey with others, please**[**right click to copy this direct link address and paste it**](https://consultations.dhsc.gov.uk/en/659c11ef3252bdbbae01cb07)**. Do not share the link to the survey once you've started it. If you navigate away from the survey, it should continue from where you left it, if you reopen the link in the same browser.**

# About you

In what capacity are you responding to this survey?

* An individual sharing my personal views and experiences
* As an individual responding on behalf of someone else’s personal views and experiences
* An individual sharing my professional views

X On behalf of an organisation

# On behalf of an organisation

Is your organisation a body with an interest in the proposal to expand fluoridation in north east England?

 X Yes

* No
* Don't know

How is your organisation affected by the proposal to expand fluoridation in the north east of England - for example, it is located or does it operate in an area affected by the proposal?  (optional)

Maximum 100 words

The Board members represent organisations across South Tees with the interest of improving oral health and reducing health inequalities of local residents. The government’s proposal would extend water fluoridation to Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland communities. Middlesbrough is in the top 10 of most deprived Local Authorities based on IMD score, therefore, fluoridation would have the greatest health impact in our area.

Water fluoridation is a key part of our oral health plan to improve overall oral health and importantly reduce significant inequalities.

Open text box - 680 characters

What is the main role of your organisation?

* Local dental committee or network
* Dentist
* Dental care provider
* Dental care professional

X Professional representative body

* Academic body
* Local authority
* Integrated care board
* NHS trust or provider
* Patient representative body
* Education or school or college
* Voluntary or community group
* Group with special interest in fluoride
* Other

What is the name of your organisation?

South Tees Health and Wellbeing Board

Open text box- You have 150 characters

As part of this survey there are a few reasons we may require your email address:

* if you need to contact us about amending or deleting your response - the only way we can verify that it is your response is via your email address
* if you didn't have time to finish the survey, we can send you a reminder before it closes.

**If you are responding on behalf of your organisation, please provide your organisational email address. Your email address will not be shared with anyone outside of the department.**

**Note: your survey responses will not be emailed to you.**

Are you happy to share your email address with the Department of Health and Social Care?

 X Yes

* No

# Expanding water fluoridation

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to expand water fluoridation to other areas of north east England?

 X Strongly agree

* Agree
* Neither agree nor disagree
* Disagree
* Strongly disagree
* Don't know

What are the main reasons for your answer?

Select all that apply.

 X Reducing tooth decay

 X Reducing the number of dental treatments such as tooth extractions or fillings

 X Reducing oral health inequalities

 X Reducing costs to the NHS

 X Improving other health outcomes

* Concerns about negative health impacts of water fluoridation
* Concerns about the environment

X Ethical arguments

* Other

Please explain your answers and provide any supporting evidence, including weblinks, you have to support your views.  (optional)

If you selected ‘ethical arguments’ please explain these.

Maximum 250 words.

Open text box- You have 1693 characters

Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland have a higher level of prevalence of dental decay than the England average.

Oral health inequalities are stark across ST and closely aligned to deprivation.

Two areas within the North East: fluoridated Hartlepool and non-fluoridated Middlesbrough highlight stark differences in oral health. These areas have been chosen because they are statistical neighbours:

* In 3-year-old-children: **the prevalence of dental caries** is **6% less** in fluoridated Hartlepool (8.5%) v non-fluoridated Middlesbrough (14.9%).
* In 5-year-old children: **the prevalence of dental caries** is **10% less** in fluoridated Hartlepool (21%) v non-fluoridated Middlesbrough (31%).
* Fluoridation benefits are greater in more deprived population groups: Middlesbrough and Hartlepool are in the top 10 of most deprived LAs based on their IMD score.
* In 5-year-old children: **the proportion of children with experience of extractions** is **3 times less** in fluoridated Hartlepool (1.8%) v non-fluoridated Middlesbrough (5.8%). Extractions for children in this age group will usually involve either a general anaesthetic or sedation. Both procedures will have significant morbidity and are preventable.
* **Lower sedation rates** in Hartlepool demonstrate children need less complex treatments to treat their dental disease. Treatment under sedation for children is usually undertaken for anxious children requiring a high volume of treatment e.g. extractions that cannot be undertaken with local anaesthetic alone.

It is unethical to deprive the most vulnerable children a safe and effective public health measure that could: prevent tooth decay, avoid pain, distress and sleepless nights, reduce time off school, and reduce unnecessary hospital admissions

You may upload a document to support your response.  (optional)Upload a file

Upload the NE Water Fluoridation – Summary of Evidence

# Impact assessment

If you have any scientific evidence or evidence on the cost-benefit analysis for us to consider in our final impact assessment, please provide this.   (optional)

Maximum 250 words.

Open text box- You have 1693 characters

Tooth decay is still the most common reason for hospital admission in children aged between 5 and 9 years. **Every** **general anaesthetic poses a health risk to children, therefore, if dental decay rates can be reduced, we could prevent some hospital admissions for dental extractions and save the NHS money.**

**Each episode of GA costs £1387**. Reducing rates of GA can generate cost savings to the local health economy which could be invested in prevention initiatives to further reduce decay levels. Table 1 shows the potential to generate cost savings if the rate of GAs in fluoridated Hartlepool (GAs per 100,000 in 0-19 child population) is replicated in non- fluoridated areas of the North East. A potential of **£731,200** could be saved. To be noted: Sunderland has a lower rate of GA than Hartlepool, therefore no cost savings can be generated.

**Please refer to; Table 5 General anaesthetic rates and potential cost savings to the NHS within the uploaded document ‘NE Water Fluoridation – Summary of Evidence’.**

In addition to the cost savings linked to reducing the use of general anaesthetic the overall return on investment should include the wider benefits associated with; reduced pain, lost time at school/work, the avoidance of more complex dental treatment throughout the life course and the broader societal benefit of reducing health inequalities across the region.

The attached ‘Summary Oral Health Needs Assessment’ includes ‘Support extension of water fluoridation schemes in the North East to reduce inequalities in dental decay.’ as an area for action.

You may upload a document to support your response.  (optional)Upload a file

Summary Oral Health Needs Assessment: Understanding oral health inequalities in the North East and North Cumbria

Any other issues

Is there anything else you would like us to consider in this consultation?  (optional)

Maximum 250 words.

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 North East Regional Local Dental Committee have expressed their full support for the Government’s proposal to extend water fluoridation.

North East Local Authorities and the NHS have invested heavily in community based oral health programmes, however, despite reductions in dental decay rates associated with these prevention initiatives, dental disease remains persistently high in deprived non-fluoridated areas.

Please refer to table 6**,** which shows the oral health improvement programmes already implemented across non-fluoridated areas of the North East.

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You may upload a document to support your response.  (optional)Upload a file

NE Water Fluoridation – Joint Position Statement

# Please review your answers

The ‘review your answers’ feature lists all the questions that you have answered or had the opportunity to answer.

Clicking on the 'Change' button against an answer will allow you to amend that answer.

After making any amendments you can then click through the survey using the ‘Next’ button, previously answered questions retain their answers.