Dental bodies have welcomed an independent review of NHS dentistry launched by the government.

The review was set up following a daunting report by the Health Select Committee which criticised the new dental contract.

One of the key aims of the review is to identify ways the government and local NHS can work together to increase access to NHS dentists and improve quality of services. The review team will examine why there are improvements in some parts of the country, while problems continue elsewhere.

It will also investigate whether the decline in complex treatments reflects the clinical needs of patients.

The results of the study, A Review of NHS Dentistry in England will be published in the spring.

The British Dental Association (BDA) called the independent review ‘a step forward in addressing the significant problems facing NHS dentists and patients’.

BDA executive board chair Susie Sanderson said: ‘The BDA is pleased to see the long overdue announcement of a review of NHS dentistry in England.

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BDA supports fluoridation plans

The British Dental Association is backing a proposal by the South Central Strategic Health Authority to fluoridate the water in Southampton and parts of South West Hampshire.

The British Dental Association (BDA) claims it has drawn widely from available scientific evidence and believes that fluoridation of the water supply at the proposed one part per million is a safe and effective method of reducing dental decay in people of all ages and from all social backgrounds.

It also agrees with the World Health Organisation’s position that the level of dental caries falls from seven at a fluoride concentration of 0.1mg to around 3.5 at a fluoride concentration of 1.0mg (i.e. one part per million).

The BDA’s scientific adviser, Professor Damien Walmsey said: ‘The BDA bases its support for the proposed scheme on solid research. This has been carried out nationally and internationally.

On a local level we have looked at the impact of fluoridation on the dental health of people living in Birmingham. Five-year-olds in Britain’s second largest city have half the rate of tooth decay as their peers in Southampton where it isn’t fluoridated.

I believe that if fluoridation was introduced in Southampton it could play a major role in helping to reduce the high rates of tooth decay there as it makes teeth more resistant to disease.’

This is the first consultation of its kind in England since a change in the law over the way fluoridation can be introduced. The three-month long consultation ended on 19 December. The responses will now be assessed and the 12 board members of South Central Strategic Health Authority will vote on the consultation outcome on 20 February.