Full-time MP

A dentist in Paisley in Scotland wants to leave dentistry behind and become a full-time MP. Anas Sarwar is the number one choice for the Labour party to stand in the Glasgow Central seat at the next election. Mr Sarwar has been a dentist in Paisley for three and-a-half years but has always wanted to go into politics, having been a Labour supporter since he was 16.

Southampton

The decision, which will affect around 200,000 people, follows a large public consultation and months of debate.

Jim Easton, the South Central Strategic Health Authority’s (SCSHA) chief executive, said: ‘We recognise that water fluoridation is a contentious issue for some people. The board was satisfied that, based on existing research, water fluoridation is a safe and effective way to improve dental health.’

Bob Deans, chief executive for Southamptoni City Primary Care Trust (PCT) said: ‘Southampton PCT continues to believe that a water fluoridation scheme, when introduced with continued oral health promotion, will be the most effective way of reducing the large numbers of tooth fillings and extractions currently needed by children in Southampton.’

The British Dental Association (BDA) also welcomed the decision which it claims has been supported by dentists in the region. The BDA’s scientific adviser, Professor Damien Walmsley said: ‘The BDA commends South Central’s decision as we believe that fluoridation is a safe and effective method of reducing dental decay and oral health inequalities. We look forward to the day when we see fewer children in Southampton having to endure the pain and discomfort of dental treatment, having a tooth extracted as a result of adopting this initiative.’

In Southampton, four in every 10 children have a filling by the time they start school.

The decision by South Central Strategic Health Authority to back fluoridation, is the first under 2003 laws, giving health authorities powers to demand the service from water companies.

The decision by the SHA will enable the PCT to go ahead and ask Southern Water to add the chemical to the water, probably by 2010.

A three-month consultation on the plans revealed that 72 per cent of 10,000 local people were opposed to the scheme.

John Spottiswoode, chairman of Hampshire Against Fluoridation, said it is considering legal action against the scheme in Southampton. He claims the health authorities blatantly promoted fluoridation during the three-month consultation and called the consultation a ‘sham and a waste of public money’.

SHAs are required to make decisions on the ‘vagueness of the arguments advanced’ and not simply on numbers of people and organisations for or against proposals.

Authorities in north-west England, Derbyshire, Bristol, and Kirklees in West Yorkshire are thought to be among those preparing to go down the same route.

Fluoride is currently added to the water drunk by about 5.3m people in England, a ninth of the population, mainly in Birmingham and the West Midlands and parts of the north-east.

The government wants to target fluoridation in areas affected by high levels of dental decay which is mainly deprived areas, where nutrition and oral health care is poorest.

The Scottish government already decided four years ago that it did not want local authorities to have the power to bring in fluoridation. The Isle of Man abandoned the idea last summer.