Fluoridation study for East Midlands

Health chiefs in the East Midlands are carrying out a feasibility study to see if adding fluoride to the water supply will help boost dental health in the area.

The study has been commissioned to find out the advantages and disadvantages of water fluoridation. The Derbyshire County Primary Care Trust (PCT) is one of the PCTs taking part in the study which will be published in six months’ time. Each PCT will look at the results and decide if fluoridation is likely to have boost oral health. Derbyshire County PCT has said that no decision will be made on the fluoridation of Derbyshire water until the study is done and a full public consultation carried out.

Some areas in Derbyshire already have extra fluoride in their water, with Ogston in Derbyshire in particular, being at a high natural level.

The Bolsover district, which is supplied by Severn Trent water, has had fluoridated water since 1971. This covers about 75 per cent of the district, and parts of north-east Derbyshire, but not Bolsover town itself.

In the South Derbyshire district, next to Burton on Trent, over 22,000 homes receive fluoridated water from the South Staffordshire water board, and have done so since 1987.

Ken Wragg, consultant in dental public health for Derbyshire Primary Care Trust, said: ‘Derbyshire County Primary Care Trust has committed to working with other primary care trusts in the East Midlands to commission a feasibility study and economic evaluation of water fluoridation across the region.’

Dentistry crisis for Scotland

There is a huge shortage of dentists in the north-east of Scotland, according to new figures from the Scottish government.

The statistics released by Public Health Minister Shona Robison in response to a parliamentary question, show that in Scotland’s worst-affected area, North Ayrshire, there is only one dentist for every 1,632 residents.

Across the whole of Scotland, the ratio of NHS dentists to patients was one to 1,147 last year.

In Dundee there was 1,124 people for every dentist, with a similar figure in Angus.

While in Aberdeen, there are 1,285 people for every NHS dentist, compared with 612 for every city NHS dentist.

The ratio for residents in the Highlands and Shetland are among the best, with just 656 people in the Highlands and 666 in Shetland for every dentist.

Liberal Democrat public health spokesman Jamie Stone said the figures revealed unacceptable discrepancies across the country in getting access to an NHS dentist.

The MSP for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross said: ‘We need to look at schemes that are going to boost recruitment of dentists, particularly in the rural areas of Scotland.’

Miss Robison said the Scottish government was trying to tackle the crisis and mentioned the opening of the £21m dental school in Aberdeen last year.

She also said that geographical variations will take time to sort out, but claimed there are more dentists than ever working in the NHS and record numbers of people registered with a dental practice.