Dentists join campaign against fluoridation in Southampton

Open letter of opposition published, marking one year anniversary of South Central Strategic Health Authority landmark decision

A host of signatories, including dental professionals, have signed an open letter of opposition against the deci-sion to fluoridate drink- ing water in Southampton.

It is a year since the South Central Strategic Health Author- ity (SCSHA) took the decision to add fluoride to water in South- ampton and parts of Hampshire.

Much of the antipathy to the scheme is because the people in the area feel their views have been ignored as the SCSHA is going ahead despite 72 per cent of public consultation respond- ents rejecting the proposal.

Local opposition

The letter states that during the past year, local opposition to the scheme has grown, a 53,500-signature petition has been handed in to Doonring Street and every local MP has since written to the Strategic Health Authority to express concern over your continuing determination to impose fluoridation on an unwilling community.

The letter adds: ‘We urge you to ensure that the local NHS places greater emphasis on the implementation of targeted community-based oral health strate- gies as an alternative to water fluoridation.

It points to a peer-reviewed study published in the Journal of the American Dental Associa- tion that confirms previous re- search showing that babies fed formula milk in areas where the water is fluoridated at 1.0ppm may receive excess fluorides, putting them at risk of fluorosis.

Exceed the limit

The authors conclude that when powdered or liquid con- centrate infant formulas are the primary source of nutrition, some babies are likely to ex- ceed the recommended fluoride upper limit if the formula is re- constituted with water contain- ing 1.0ppm fluoride.

The plan for fluoridation is currently on hold as the SHA is facing a legal challenge to its decision.

The High Court has con- firmed that the ear- liest the judicial re- view can be heard by a senior judge is July or August.

The SHA has set aside £400,000 for the legal fight.

The legal challenge argues that the SCSHA failed to have regard to the British Govern- ment’s policy that mass fluo- ridation of drinking water should only go ahead in any particular area if a majority of the local people are in favour of it.

The open letter, which was submitted by the cam- paign group Hampshire Against Fluoridation said: ‘Given the fin- ancial constraints currently faced by the NHS, we are con- cerned that precious NHS funds should be used to force through a scheme that the local com- munity does not want. These funds could be better used to develop alternative, more effective oral health schemes.

‘Waste of money’

The SHA’s decision to continue with water fluoridation and to fight a legal challenge is seen as a waste of Health Service money and we are concerned that this will damage the reputation of the local NHS.

The letter was signed by a host of members of Local Authority and dental professionals, including: Jocelyn Conant, chair of the Hampshire Dental Health Group; Dr Andrew Haffner, a dental consultant at the Royal Hampshire County Hospital.

The letter also states that the SCSHA’s decision to fluoridate drinking water in Southampton has been subjected to a wide-ranging campaign of concerted protest, including emails to local Members of Parliament and petitions.

It states: ‘It is a year since the SCSHA took the decision to fluoridate drinking water in Southampton. We now see a legal challenge to the SCSHA’s decision.’

The letter concludes: ‘We urge you to ensure that the local NHS places greater emphasis on the implementation of targeted community-based oral health strategies as an alternative to water fluoridation.’

The full letter is available on the website of the Hampshire Against Fluoridation campaign group (hampshireagainstfluoridation.org.uk).