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 decision to fluoridate drinking water in Southampton.

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

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

Local opposition

The letter states that during the past year, local opposition to the scheme has grown, a 13,500-signature petition has been handed in to Downing Street and every local MP has since written to the Strategic Health Authority to express concern over the 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 strategies as an alternative to water fluoridation.

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

Exceed the limit

The authors conclude that when powdered or liquid concentrated infant formulas are the primary source of nutrition, some babies are likely to exceed the recommended fluoride upper limit if the formula is reconstituted with water containing 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 confirmed that the earliest the judicial review 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 Government’s policy that mass fluoridation 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 campaign group Hampshire Against Fluoridation, said: ‘Given the financial constraints currently faced by the NHS, we are concerned that precious NHS funds are being used to force through a scheme that the local community 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.