SHAs to be axed by 2012 says Dept of Health

Decision welcomed by Southampton residents opposing water supply fluoridation plans

All Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) are to be abolished by 2012.

The Department of Health (DH) broke the news to the SHAs through a Q&A document which said: “Subject to legislation, the NHS commissioning board will become fully operational from April 2012, removing the need for separate statutory strategic health authorities”.

The Department of Health claims that the new independent NHS board will combine functions currently provided by the DH and SHAs, and deliver those in a much more streamlined way.

The move has been welcomed in places such as Southampton where the SHAs decision to approve water fluoridation has been vehemently opposed.

Stephen Peckham, chairman of Hampshire Against Fluoridation, said he is encouraged by the news, particularly as those now in office are not keen to force fluoridation without proper public consultation.

All fluoride schemes across the country are currently on hold while the courts examine the decision by South Central SHA in February 2009 to add fluoride to the water in 200,000 homes in Southampton and parts of Hampshire. The judicial review is to be heard in the Autumn, according to the new Health Minister Simon Burns.

Southampton resident Germaine Milner is arguing that the SHA should have listened to the views of residents before giving the scheme the go-ahead, after 72 per cent of 10,000 people consulted said they were against the idea.

In response to a question in parliament from Dr Julian Lewis over the government’s fluoridation policy, Conservative MP for New Forest East, Mr Burns said: “Section 58 of the Water Act 2005 empowers Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) to contract with water undertakings to fluoridate a water supply after conducting public consultations. It is essential that any consultation gives people a real opportunity to make their views known and that those views are taken into account before a final decision is made. The decision by South Central SHA to approve the fluoridation of water supplies to the Southampton area is the subject of a judicial review, which is likely to be heard in the autumn, and so due to the legal challenge the Department is unable to comment.”

News

Digital dental technology
Sirona, developer of high-tech dental equipment, has launched its digital dental impression technology, Cerec Connect, in the UK as part of a wider international roll-out. The system allows optical digital impressions of teeth to be taken and transmitted into digital 3D models, which can then be transmitted instantly to a laboratory for the creation of restorations. According to Sirona, which has already seen success for Cerec Connect in Germany and the US, the technology is quicker and more accurate than conventional impressions and casting, as well as providing greater control to dental technicians.

Thumb-sucking clinic
Britain’s first thumb-sucking clinic has opened, promising to help break the habit as well as repair the damage that is caused by sucking your thumb. Dr Neil Counihan has opened Metamorphosis centre in West London after years of treating people whose jaws and teeth have been badly affected by the habit. Most children stop sucking fingers or thumbs between the age of three and six, when it causes no damage. But those who continue risk affecting their jaw development and the position of their teeth. The clinic has a range of metal devices which can be fitted in the mouth plus more conventional plastic ‘thumbguards’ which cover the thumb itself and which children find hard to remove. The clinic also sells products such as finger and thumb puppets which come with story books to reinforce anti thumb-sucking messages. Traditional remedies to discourage the habit include putting mustard on the fingers or coating nails with special bitter-tasting polish.

Clinical

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