

## SCRUTINY OF HEALTH COMMITTEE

14 June 2024

### Consultation on Community Water Fluoridation Expansion in North East England

#### 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To invite the committee to consider the current government consultation regarding expansion of community water fluoridation schemes across the north east of England and contribute comments.

2.0 The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) are currently consulting on a proposal to expand community water fluoridation in the north east of England. The government can require water companies to increase the naturally occurring concentration of fluoride in water supplies and around one in 10 people in England currently have fluoride added to their drinking water supplies.

3.0 There is already a fluoridation agreement in place which covers supply to a considerable part of the north east, including Gateshead, Newcastle, North Shields and Whitley Bay. The DHSC proposes to extend this further so that a number of additional north east local authority areas have fluoridated water at a level that reduces tooth decay. These include Darlington, Durham, Northumberland, Stockton, Middlesbrough and Sunderland.

4.0 Following public consultation and subject to a decision by the Secretary of State, the DHSC proposes to enter into agreements with Northumbrian Water Limited (NWL) to increase the level of fluoride to the water supply in specified areas. While this will principally affect those areas highlighted above, because of the way water is provided, the scheme expansion would also affect supply to neighbouring parts of North Yorkshire Council's area.

5.0 The area affected within North Yorkshire is relatively small. A map highlighting the proposed coverage is provided by DHSC at [Community water fluoridation expansion in the north east of England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/100000/community_water_fluoridation_expansion_in_the_north_east_of_england.pdf) and a version of this is also enclosed if helpful at Appendix B. Specific communities affected would include the following and some outlying villages or hamlets directly around these areas:

- Picton
- East Rounton
- Crathorne
- Hutton Rudby
- Potto
- Swainby
- Carlton in Cleveland
- Faceby
- Stokesley
- Great Broughton
- Ingleby Greenhow
- Little Ayton
- Great Ayton.

- 6.0 The DHSC driver around this proposal is to improve oral health and preventable tooth decay. The consultation proposal incorporates additional detail on public health surveys undertaken which highlight the statistics and issues around this, including survey results which indicate a high prevalence of tooth decay among Year 6 children in the north east.
- 7.0 The consultation acknowledges that there are alternative views on fluoridation, for example that some see it as an unnecessary government intervention. However, the detail provided seeks to underline that the DHSC consider this to be a safe and effective way to improve oral health.
- 8.0 The consultation asks five questions, principally around to what extent there is agreement or disagreement with the proposal (and why). The public consultation ends on 17<sup>th</sup> June. As portfolio holder, Cllr Michael Harrison is in the process of drafting a response for North Yorkshire Council. Any views or observations arising from discussions at the Scrutiny of Health Committee meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> June will feed into this.
- 9.0 Attached at Appendix A is a briefing from NHS England for local authorities and other stakeholders which provides further background on north east water fluoridation.
- 10.0 There is a wealth of additional material provided for the consultation via DHSC and this is signposted for Members' convenience under Background Documents; see link below.

#### **11.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 There are no significant financial implications arising from this report.

#### **12.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 The power to introduce, vary and terminate community water fluoridation schemes is not a local authority responsibility and this power now legally rests with the Secretary of State. As such it's important to clarify that North Yorkshire Council is a respondent to a government-led consultation.

#### **13.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 The DHSC has completed an equalities impact assessment as part of delivering this consultation, details of which are available at the link provided below.

#### **14.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 There are no significant climate change implications arising from this report. The consultation material provides an assessment of potential environmental implications of water fluoridation, via the link below.

#### **15.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 15.1 That the Committee:
- (a) notes the information provided in the report and appendices:
  - (b) provides its comments with a view to contributing to the council's response to the government consultation.

## **APPENDICES:**

Appendix A: Briefing on North East Water Fluoridation (NHS North East and Yorkshire)

Appendix B: Northumbrian Water Limited coverage map in North Yorkshire.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

[Community water fluoridation expansion in the north east of England - GOV.UK  
\(\[www.gov.uk\]\(https://www.gov.uk\)\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/community-water-fluoridation-expansion-in-the-north-east-of-england)

Barry Khan  
Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services  
County Hall  
Northallerton  
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Report Author: Diane Parsons, Principal Scrutiny Officer.