

Appendix One: Plans to add fluoride to drinking water in Southampton and South West Hampshire.

It is now over a year since the SHA Board took the decision to approve the request of Southampton City PCT to add fluoride to the drinking water in parts of Southampton and South West Hampshire. You will be aware of the strong opposition to this proposal that Hampshire County Council expressed: I would wish to reaffirm that our objections, on the grounds of both evidence base and ethics, given the strength of local opposition, remain.

There have been a number of developments since the decision taken by the Board that have prevented the implementation of the proposal, and in our view further weakened the grounds on which the SHA felt it was acceptable to proceed.

Firstly, a Judicial Review case is pending and the initial support expressed by a minority of elected representatives, including MPs and Local Authorities, has evaporated in the face of the continued opposition that has been expressed by the population affected. Because of the support of the Southampton City Council, the SHA Board felt able to disregard the assurances of Ministers, and indeed the Prime Minister, that fluoride should not be added to drinking water unless this was supported by the public. This support no longer exists.

Secondly, the recently published figures of children's dental health in Southampton are evidence that the case of need put forward by the Southampton City PCT and dental health professionals was overstated. The reservations, clearly expressed in the York Review as to the benefits to be gained for children and doubts as to the efficacy of fluoridation of the water supply in addressing health inequalities are reinforced by this evidence.

Thirdly, I have previously questioned the infrastructure and maintenance costs of the proposals and have not received clear answers. The consultation process has incurred significant expenditure and, regardless of the outcome, the Judicial Review will add a further £400,000 to this total. The uncertainty about the added value the scheme will bring for the target population coupled with the added costs of physical implementation would suggest that it would be wrong for the Board not to revisit its original decision.

My purpose in writing to you is to formally request that the SHA Board reconsiders its decision to proceed with these plans taking account of the new evidence that has emerged and its stewardship responsibilities in relation to the use of public funding.

To proceed with this proposal against the wishes of the population affected would seem to be inappropriate in the extreme at a time when real pressures are beginning to emerge in public sector finances. PCTs are already struggling to maintain front line services and this is likely to escalate.

I look forward to receiving confirmation of the action you are taking in response to this letter by 17 May 2010.