

City Council - 11 September 2023

Report of the Portfolio holder for portfolio holder for Adult Social Care and Health, Cllr Linda Woodings

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Title: Oral Health

Does the report form part of the Budget or Policy Framework?

Yes No

Does this report contain any information that is exempt from publication?

No

Relevant Council Plan Key Outcome:

Clean and Connected Communities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keeping Nottingham Working	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carbon Neutral by 2028	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safer Nottingham	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child-Friendly Nottingham	<input type="checkbox"/>
Healthy and Inclusive	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Keeping Nottingham Moving	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve the City Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Better Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial Stability	<input type="checkbox"/>
Serving People Well	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. Summary

- 1.1 A healthy mouth and smile have such an important role to play in our lives. They ensure people can eat, speak and socialise; important to overall quality of life, self-esteem and social confidence. Poor oral health can result in significant pain and eventual tooth loss, with an adverse impact on school or work, family and social life.
- 1.2 In 2022, the average number of teeth affected by dental decay amongst 5-year olds in Nottingham was 1.3 teeth. This is significantly higher than the England average 0.8 teeth. Similarly, over a third of 5-year olds had visually obvious signs of dental decay (34.2%); significantly worse compared to the England average (23.7%).
- 1.3 The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Nottingham City recognises that in order to address the long-standing issues of health inequalities we must consider interventions that improve health through changes in individual behaviour and community action, but also the environment in which we live, learn, work and play.
- 1.4 Improving Oral Health requires consideration of a package of interventions. Nottingham City Council Public Health team are in the process of commissioning a oral health promotion service that will work with schools, early years settings and their workforce to improve the oral health of children and young people as well as

supporting organisations working with older people and other vulnerable adults. Water fluoridation complements work already underway to promote good oral health.

- 1.5 Water fluoridation is an effective and safe public health measure, with fluoride found naturally in some water supplies in the UK. Studies show that increasing this concentration to specified levels reduces the likelihood of tooth decay and minimise its severity on people's oral health
- 1.6 The Health and Care Act 2022 introduced new provisions that transferred the statutory responsibility for developing or amending a water fluoridation scheme in England to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. Councils may still lobby central government to implement new or varied schemes.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Note the evidence that demonstrates children in Nottingham experience worse dental health than many other parts of England.
- 2.2 Note the evidence that water fluoridation is shown by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities to benefit children and adults throughout their lives and be a safe and effective tool to improve oral health and reduce some of the health inequalities felt by communities.
- 2.3 Re-affirm the council's commitment to improving dental health including advocating for a local water fluoridation scheme for Nottingham City.
- 2.4 Delegate to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health and the Director of Public Health to work with other local councils, the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board, and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities and ask the Secretary of State for Health and Care to conduct a more detailed exploration of a water fluoridation scheme that benefits Nottingham City residents.

3. Reasons for recommendations

- 3.1 The consequences of tooth decay are lifelong and poor oral health can lead to:
 - significant but avoidable suffering and pain
 - days off school – with potential impacts on learning and school performance
 - time off work – with economic and productivity consequences
 - low self-esteem and confidence
 - hospital admissions and treatment under general anaesthetic for children
 - costly dental treatment.
- 3.2 A higher proportion of 5-year olds have visual signs of tooth decay (34.2%) and, on average, a higher number of teeth affected by dental decay (1.3) than in England (23.7% and 0.8 respectively). Nottingham has the second highest proportion of children with visible tooth decay in the East Midlands with levels that are higher than most of our statistical neighbours. The [Nottingham City Oral Health Needs Assessment \(2020\)](#) described the oral health needs and oral healthcare needs of those living in Nottingham City.
- 3.3 Dental decay is a preventable disease that is strongly associated with deprivation. The Nottingham City Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2025 and Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Strategy 2023-28, identify health inequalities

- 3.4 The UK Chief Medical Officers' statement on water fluoridation in 2021 concluded that: "On balance, there is strong scientific evidence that water fluoridation is an effective public health intervention for reducing the prevalence of tooth decay and improving dental health equality across the UK. It should be seen as a complementary strategy, not a substitute for other effective methods of increasing fluoride use."
- 3.5 All water contains the mineral fluoride naturally in varying amounts; it is also present in some food. Nottingham has a low natural level of fluoride in its water. Water fluoridation involves adjusting the fluoride level in drinking water supplies to an amount that is optimal for dental health. Fluoridated water is currently supplied to 10% of the population in England.
- 3.6 Fluoride benefits children and adults throughout their lives. Fluoridation works in two ways. It has systemic effects on teeth, so that as children's teeth develop, fluoride provides added resistance within the tooth structures. It also has topical effects, through which fluoride protects against tooth decay by stimulating remineralisation, thus making teeth more resistant to plaque bacteria
- 3.7 For children younger than 8 years, fluoride helps strengthen the adult (permanent) teeth that are developing under the gums. For adults, exposure to fluoridated water supports tooth enamel, keeping teeth strong and healthy.
- 3.8 The [Office for Health Improvement and Disparities](#) compares data on the health of people living in areas of England with varying concentrations of fluoride in their drinking water supply, every 4 years. Along with global studies it confirms that water fluoridation is an effective, safe public health measure that is associated with lower levels of tooth decay amongst 5-year-old; fewer teeth extractions due to decay; and a reduced tooth decay in adults. It supports previous findings that these benefits are greatest in the most deprived areas, thereby contributing to reducing dental health inequalities.
- 3.9 The Health and Care Act 2022 introduced new provisions that transferred the statutory responsibility for developing or amending a water fluoridation scheme in England to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. This legislative change allows the government to commission local studies, conduct public consultation and implement new water fluoridation schemes while covering the costs of doing so. Councils may still lobby central government to consider new or varied schemes.
- 3.10 Nottingham City Council Strategic Council Plan 2019-2023 included a pledge to 'Improve the dental health of Nottingham's children by campaigning to introduce fluoride into Nottingham's water supply'.
- 3.11 Fluoridation will complement other Nottingham City oral health initiatives.
- 3.11.1 Nottingham City Public Health team is in the process of commissioning a new oral health promotion service which will: deliver a targeted supervised tooth brushing programme in Early Years settings and Schools; distribute oral health resources; and, deliver a sustainable and effective training programme to those working with children and young people, pregnant women, older adults and vulnerable people.
- 3.11.2 NHS England awarded Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Councils £100,000 of non-recurrent ring-fenced funding for the sole purpose of funding

the purchase and distribution of toothbrushing packs (age appropriate toothbrushes and toothpaste) to foodbanks and other venues and sites in the community who provide support for vulnerable people and families across the Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Integrated Care System (ICS).

4. Other options considered in making recommendations

4.1 Do not advocate for water fluoridation

Nottingham City experiences significantly worse dental decay than the England average. This is a persistent health inequality experienced by the Nottingham City population with the proportion of 5-year olds with visible signs of tooth decay remaining similar since 2015/16.

Nottingham City is taking action through the commissioning of an oral health promotion service and work with NHSE to distribute toothbrushes and toothpaste via food banks. However, fluoridation has been shown to be an effective and safe intervention to improve the oral health of a population. It is also suggested to reduce health inequalities when used to compliment targeted action and thus help reduce the number of children suffering tooth decay and avoid tooth extractions.

5. Consideration of Risk

5.1 The 2022 Health and Care Act introduced new water fluoridation clauses to give Secretary of State the power to directly introduce, vary or terminate water fluoridation schemes. The Secretary of State will continue to be responsible for reimbursing water undertakers for costs associated with water fluoridation schemes, however the Bill provides the Secretary of State with a power to make regulations that could require a public body specified in the regulations to make payments to the Secretary of State to meet any costs incurred (see [Section 87 Subsection 6B](#)).

If the Secretary of State looks to share the costs of exploring a water fluoridation scheme with the local authorities involved, a business case would be produced to request funding from the ring-fenced public health grant, and a decision made by the Portfolio Holder or Director of Public Health, as appropriate.

6. Best Value Considerations

6.1 The recommendations do not include any financial commitments by Nottingham City Council.

6.2 Fluoridation has been shown to be a cost-effective intervention to improve oral health; however, the cost to the Secretary of State of introducing a water fluoridation scheme would not be clear until feasibility studies have been undertaken.

7. Background (including outcomes of consultation)

7.1 As outlined in Section 3. No consultation has currently been conducted. The Secretary of State has a statutory duty to conduct a public consultation before introducing a new water fluoridation scheme. However, this would occur after feasibility studies have shown what coverage a scheme would have.

8. Finance colleague comments (including implications and value for money)

- 8.1 The Health and Care Act 2022 introduced new provisions that transferred the statutory responsibility for developing or amending a water fluoridation schemes in England to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. The report gives recommendations for Nottingham City to ask the Secretary of State for further exploration of a water fluoridation scheme. Any cost of the exploration would fall to the Secretary of State and therefore there are no financial implications that would directly impact Nottingham City. In the future, if the Secretary of State delegates this to Nottingham City or there are any changes not outlined within this decision, then further approval will be required.

Tracey Moore, Commercial Business Partner, 31 August 2023

9. Legal colleague comments

- 9.1 I am satisfied that there are no significant legal issues arising from the proposed recommendations.

Beth Brown, Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer, 29 August 2023

10. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 10.1 Has the equality impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

No

An EIA is not required because: The recommendations in this report focus on Nottingham City's role as an advocate given the transfer of responsibilities to the Secretary of State of Health and Social care. Exploration of water fluoridation by the Secretary of State would include a more detailed feasibility study

Yes

11. Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)

- 11.1 Has the data protection impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

No

A DPIA is not required because: The recommendations in this report focus on Nottingham City's role as an advocate given the transfer of responsibilities to the Secretary of State of Health and Social care. Exploration of water fluoridation by the Secretary of State would include a more detailed feasibility study – a DPIA with relevant parties will be considered at that time if appropriate.

Yes

12. Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA)

- 12.1 Has the carbon impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

No



A CIA is not required because: The recommendations in this report focus on Nottingham City's role as an advocate given the transfer of responsibilities to the Secretary of State of Health and Social care. Exploration of water fluoridation by the Secretary of State would include a more detailed feasibility study

Yes



13. **List of background papers relied upon in writing this report (not including published documents or confidential or exempt information)**

14. **Published documents referred to in this report**

14.1 Oral Health Needs Assessment (2020) -

<https://www.nottinghaminsight.org.uk/themes/health-and-wellbeing/health-needs-assessments/oral-health-needs-assessment-2020/>

14.2 Water fluoridation: health monitoring report for England 2022 -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/water-fluoridation-health-monitoring-report-for-england-2022>

14.3 Water Industry Act 1991-

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1991/56/section/87/2022-11-01>

Councillor Linda Woodings

Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health