

# **Public health and health integration scrutiny committee**

**Water fluoridation proposal**

**April 2024**

# What is fluoridation?

- **Fluoride** is a naturally occurring mineral that is added to toothpaste, drinking water and some foods, which can help prevent tooth decay
- **Water fluoridation** is the controlled adjustment of fluoride levels in a public water supply to reduce tooth decay
- Fluoride concentration of one part per million (1 mg/L) in a water supply reduces likelihood and severity of tooth decay
- In some parts of the UK, the water supply has this level of fluoride naturally.

# Why do we propose fluoridation?

## Need-

- Dental decay and caries affects much of Leicester's population and inequalities exist
- Leicester is 9<sup>th</sup> for dental caries amongst 5 year olds

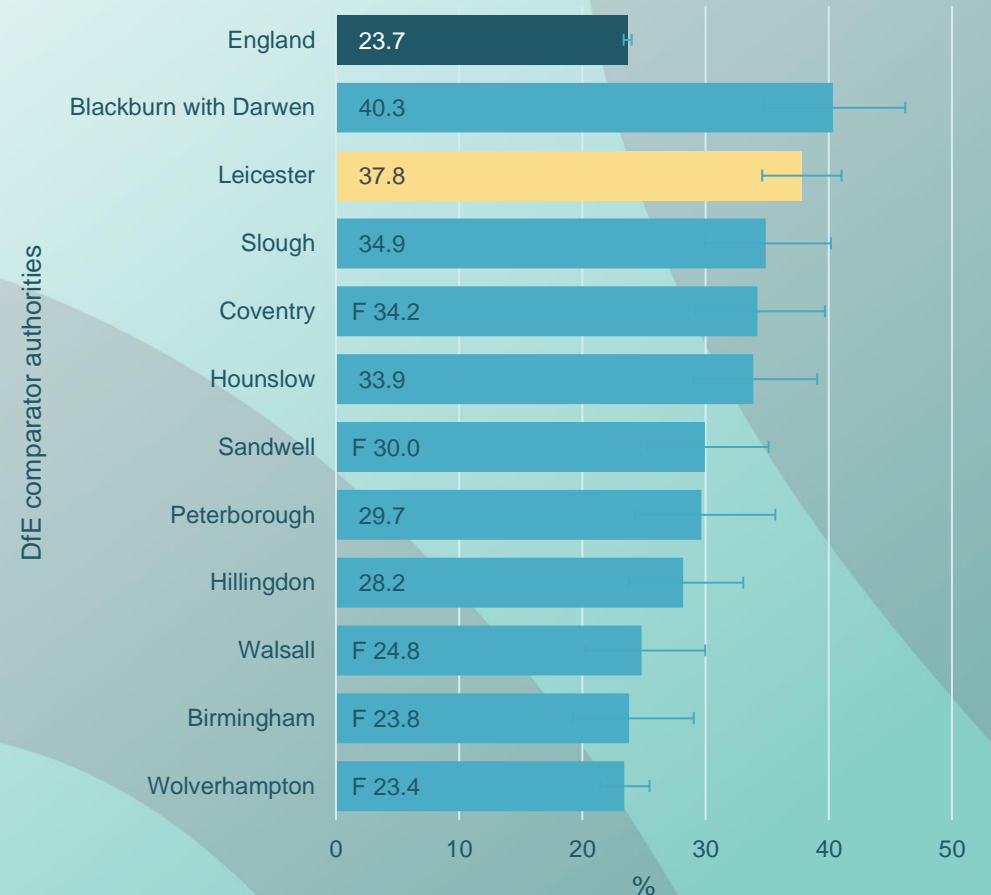
## Impact-

- Dental caries and decay can lead to pain, hospital admission, missed school days, sleeping difficulties, poor nutrition and affect speech development in children<sup>(1)</sup>.
- In adulthood, dental decay is associated with cardiovascular and lung disease, poor diabetes control, pain, low self-esteem, employment chances, poor sleep and difficulty eating<sup>(2)</sup>
- Fluoridation can provide an effective way of preventing dental decay and the associated risk

# Is it effective?

- **Systematic review**- indicates water fluoridation is effective for reducing child tooth decay incidence.
- Introducing water fluoridation led to 35% fewer decayed, missing or filled teeth (DMFT) for baby teeth and 26% fewer for permanent teeth
- **Comparator areas** where fluoridation has been introduced show lower incidence of dental decay (Walsall, Birmingham, Wolverhampton) than Leicester

Percentage of 5 year olds with decay experience (d3mft>0), 2022



# Next steps

The process may take a total of 5-10 years, steps include-

1. Write to Secretary of State (SoS) to request fluoridation be considered.  
SoS decides fluoridation can potentially be implemented
2. A feasibility study by water undertaker
3. If feasible, public consultation conducted by SoS
4. Considering consultation, SoS decides on fluoridation
5. Confirmation that fluoridation can commence necessitates a legal agreement by the SoS and water undertaker
6. Once legal agreement in place, the water undertaker arranges building of new plants and implementation of the fluoridation in the water supply

# Trajectory

- Other local authorities in the region are moving towards fluoridation
- Nottingham and Nottinghamshire have already written to SoS
- We are speaking with Leicestershire and Rutland to understand if this can be a joint endeavour
- Nationally ~10% of the population receive fluoridated water, most operating since 60's, 70's and 80's