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Sheffield: Fluoride is added to children's milk in 42 primary schools

Yorkshire Post
October 14, 2008

Sheffield: Fluoride is added to children's milk in 42 primary schools

By Jeni Harvey

[\(See original article\)](#)

Title of article: Dental action targets children

A NEW strategy with the focus of preventing dental problems among children is be introduced in Sheffield. Dentists in the city, who are currently paid according to how much treatment they carry out, will be asked to sign a new contract that will encourage them to carry out more preventive work.

The changes are part of NHS Sheffield's Dental Health Commissioning Strategy, which outlines how services should be run up to 2011.

Key changes will come into force in March next year, when the current three-year dental contract comes to end.

The director of dental public health for Sheffield, John Green, said the current dental contract was very "activity focused."

He said: "It focuses on treatment, which can be a bit of a problem, so at the end of the three years there is an opportunity to revisit it all and focus on other things, such as prevention, to try and stop teeth going bad in the first place.

"There would still be recognition for carrying out treatment such as extractions and fillings, but dentists would also get rewarded for preventive work.

"This would not only be good for dentists, but good for patients."

Statistics reveal that, while the condition of children's teeth in Sheffield is slightly worse than the national average, children in deprived areas suffer almost five times the number of decayed, missing and filled teeth than those in more affluent neighbourhoods.

The figures, which relate to the year 2005-6, show that five-year-old children in Sheffield as a whole have an average of 1.72 decayed, missing or filled teeth, slightly above the national average of 1.47. However, this increases to 4.21 in the city's more deprived neighbourhoods.

Preventive work will therefore focus on those areas where children are more likely to develop dental problems, such as Burngreave, Darnall, Manor Castle, Gleadless Valley, Shiregreen, Brightside and Firth Park.

This will include increasing access to dental care, improving children's diet and targeting oral health promotion at young children.

At present, fluoride is added to children's milk in 42 primary schools in the city. This will continue, and the local NHS is also planning to begin talks on the possibility of adding fluoride to water.

New Oral Health Action Teams will be set up in certain neighbourhoods, to give out free toothpaste packs, introduce teeth brushing in before and after-school clubs and also offer support to health, social and education professionals working in these areas.

These teams will initially be piloted and evaluated in Lowedges, Batemoor, Jordanthorpe, Tinsley, Darnall and Acres Hill.

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Mr Green added: "This financial year we're hoping to improve access to dental services.

"Sheffield is pretty good anyway – we're in the top 10 in the country for the number of people who get to see a dentist – but we need to be better.

"We're hoping people who need to see a dentist will get a better service.

"The patients who need preventative help, who have a high risk of disease, are also going to get more help.

"We hope to lift the standard of care to a very high standard right across the board."

Fluoride Action Network | 802-355-0999 | info@fluoridealert.org