



Dental Health Inequalities in the United Kingdom

November 1997

Latest League Table Reveals Seven-Fold Difference.

THE TOP FIVE DISTRICTS	BDA WELCOMES GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT	PEER CALLS FOR SUPPORT	GUARANTEE OF COST EFFECTIVE DECAY REDUCTION, SAYS BMA	THE BOTTOM FIVE DISTRICTS
<p>1. Bromsgrove and Redditch (<i>Fluoridated</i>)</p> <p>2. Solihull (<i>Fluoridated</i>)</p> <p>3. North Warwickshire (<i>Fluoridated</i>)</p> <p>4. North Birmingham (<i>Fluoridated</i>)</p> <p>5. S.E. Staffordshire (<i>Fluoridated</i>)</p> <p>West Essex (<i>Part naturally fluoridated</i>)</p>	<p>"The British Dental Association welcomes the Government's commitment to action to ensure that water companies are no longer able to block health authorities' fluoridation proposals."</p> <p>Bill Allen, Chairman of</p>	<p>"It is disgraceful that, as we approach the 21st century, there are such enormous inequalities in dental health. I call on everyone to support Tessa Jowell in her drive to put things right."</p> <p>Baroness Fisher, President of the British Fluoridation Society</p>	<p>"Fluoridation of water supplies in deprived areas would halve tooth decay rates in 5-year olds within five years. At a very low cost, it would virtually eliminate the distressing scenario described here."</p> <p>Dr Sandy</p>	<p>204. Dumfries and Galloway</p> <p>205. Greater Glasgow</p> <p>206. Rochdale</p> <p>207. Western Board (N. Ireland)</p> <p>208. North Manchester</p>

**Council, British
Dental
Association**

**Macara,
Chairman of
Council, British
Medical
Association**

Public Health Minister Pledges Action to Tackle Widening Gap

Minister for Public Health Tessa Jowell has pledged Government action to reduce the massive inequalities in children's dental health.

Her commitment comes hot on the heels of the latest survey of 5-year old children in every health district in the UK, which shows a seven-fold difference in tooth decay rates between the best and the worst districts.

In a national league table, fluoridated West Midlands districts - including those with high levels of social deprivation - dominate the top rankings for children's teeth.

Conversely, as the Minister points out, those UK 5-year olds with two or three decayed teeth are most likely to live in the poorest parts of non-fluoridated districts - suffering the double whammy of bad dental health and bad social conditions.

The worst children's teeth of all are found in the North West of England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales, the North, Yorkshire and parts of inner London.

The vastly different dental health experience between children from socially disadvantaged areas of fluoridated West Midlands districts and those from similarly disadvantaged non-fluoridated districts elsewhere in the UK makes the case for fluoridation, the Minister believes.

She describes as 'unacceptable' the current situation where several private water companies are refusing health authorities' legitimate requests for fluoridation.

One in three of the poorest children in non-fluoridated urban areas in the UK are 'gassed' before the ages of five so that they can have teeth taken out.

Imagine You Are 4 Years Old and Wake Up with a Terrible Pain in Your Face...

Your parents are so worried that they take you to casualty.

A doctor says you have an abscess in your gum above a front tooth. He prescribes antibiotics and painkillers and tells your parents to take you to a dentist the next morning so you can get treatment for bad tooth decay.

You end up in the 'gas' session of a local dental clinic where your four upper front teeth are removed under a general anaesthetic. You wake up from that with blood in your mouth, feeling dizzy and crying.

If only this were an imaginary scenario. But it isn't. It happens day in day out to children in socially deprived areas that do not have the protection of fluoridated water. It's time to end the misery. It's time to extend fluoridation.

Tooth Decay is a Painful, Ugly, Preventable Disease



This 5-year old's upper front teeth have almost rotted away, and the bottom teth have large areas of decay. An abscess is discharging pus at the right side of the upper gum.

Socially Deprived Children in Non-Fluoridated Districts have the Worst Teeth

	Health District	Region	1995 dmft	% pop F	F status
1	Bromsgrove & Redditch	West Midlands	0.54	95	F
2	Solihull	West Midlands	0.56	100	F
3	North Warwickshire	West Midlands	0.65	100	F
4	Birmingham North	West Midlands	0.71	100	F
5	S E Staffordshire	West Midlands	0.73	100	F
	West Essex (1)	North East Thames	0.73	0	

7	Southend	North East Thames	0.74	0	
8	Chichester	South West Thames	0.76	0	
9	Dudley	West Midlands	0.81	75	F
	North Lincolnshire	Trent	0.81	76	F
	Worcester	West Midlands	0.81	81	F
12	East Suffolk	East Anglian	0.82	0	
13	Mid Staffordshire	West Midlands	0.84	44	F
14	Eastbourne	South East Thames	0.85	0	
	W. Surrey & N.E. Hants	South West Thames	0.85	0	
16	Birmingham South	West Midlands	0.86	100	F
	South Warwickshire (2)	West Midlands	0.86	65	F
18	Peterborough	East Anglian	0.87	0	
19	Bexley	South East Thames	0.89	0	
20	Mid Essex (1)	North East Thames	0.91	0	
21	Bristol and District	South Western	0.92	0	
	Hartlepool	Northern	0.92	100	F
	Walsall	West Midlands	0.92	90	F
24	Canterbury & Thanet	South East Thames	0.95	0	
	Sandwell	West Midlands	0.95	100	F
26	North East Essex (1)	North East Thames	0.96	0	
27	Kingston & Esher	South West Thames	0.97	0	
28	Basingstoke	Wessex	0.98	5	
29	Worthing	South West Thames	1.03	0	
30	West Suffolk	East Anglian	1.05	0	
31	Birmingham Central	West Midlands	1.08	100	F
32	Merton & Sutton	South West Thames	1.09	0	
	South West Surrey	South West Thames	1.09	0	

34	North Bedfordshire	North West Thames	1.11	76	F
	South Lincolnshire	Trent	1.11	26	F
36	Winchester	Wessex	1.12	0	
	Huntingdon	East Anglian	1.12	0	
38	Mid Downs	South West Thames	1.13	0	
	North Tyneside	Northern	1.13	50	F
	Swindon	Wessex	1.13	0	
41	North West Surrey	South West Thames	1.16	0	
42	Bromley	South East Thames	1.18	0	
43	Birmingham West	West Midlands	1.19	100	F
	East Yorkshire	Yorkshire	1.19	0	
	Rugby (3)	West Midlands	1.19	0	
46	Maidstone	South East Thames	1.21	0	
	North Derbyshire	Trent	1.21	19	
48	South West Hertfordshire	North West Thames	1.21	0	
49	Coventry	West Midlands	1.22	80	F
	Harrogate	Yorkshire	1.22	7	
51	Cambridge	East Anglian	1.23	0	
	North West Hertfordshire	North West Thames	1.23	0	
	Scunthorpe	Yorkshire	1.23	67	F
54	Wycombe	Oxford	1.24	4	
55	Dorset	Wessex	1.25	0	
56	Brighton	South East Thames	1.26	0	
	Mid Surrey	South West Thames	1.26	0	
58	South East Kent	South East Thames	1.27	0	
59	Gloucestershire	South Western	1.28	0	
60	Aylesbury Vale	Oxford	1.29	0	

	Nottingham	Trent	1.29	0	
	Salisbury	Wessex	1.29	0	
63	Camberwell, Lewisham etc	South East Thames	1.30	0	
64	Barking, Havering & Brentwood	North East Thames	1.35	0	
	Bassetlaw (3)	Trent	1.35	30	F
66	Milton Keynes	Oxford	1.36	0	
	Northampton	Oxford	1.36	0	
	Richmond, Twickenham & Roehampton	South West Thames	1.36	0	
	Warrington	Mersey	1.36	0	
70	Croydon	South West Thames	1.38	0	
	North West Durham	Northern	1.38	100	F
72	Kidderminster	West Midlands	1.40	8	
73	East Berkshire	Oxford	1.41	0	
	Wolverhampton	West Midlands	1.41	32	F
75	South Derbyshire	Trent	1.42	3	
76	Great Yarmouth & Waveney	East Anglian	1.43	0	
	Shropshire	West Midlands	1.43	0	
	Somerset	South Western	1.43	0	
79	Tunbridge Wells	South East Thames	1.44	0	
80	East Hertfordshire	North West Thames	1.45	0	
	East Surrey	South West Thames	1.45	0	
	Macclesfield	Mersey	1.45	0	
83	Birmingham East	West Midlands	1.46	100	F
84	Cornwall & Isles of Scilly	South Western	1.47	0	
	Crewe	Mersey	1.47	53	F
86	Medway	South East Thames	1.49	0	

	Redbridge	North East Thames	1.49	0.4	
88	Dartford & Gravesend	South East Thames	1.50	0	
89	Oxfordshire	Oxford	1.51	9	
90	Newcastle	Northern	1.52	100	F
91	Basildon & Thurrock	North East Thames	1.53	0	
92	Chester	Mersey	1.54	3	
93	Hastings	South East Thames	1.55	0	
	Hillingdon	North West Thames	1.55	0	
95	Kettering	Oxford	1.56	0	
96	Haringey	North East Thames	1.57	0	
97	Bath	Wessex	1.58	6	
	Southport & Formby	Mersey	1.58	0	
99	Isle of Wight	Wessex	1.60	0	
	West Norfolk & Wisbech	East Anglian	1.60	0	
101	Trafford	North Western	1.63	0	
102	Herefordshire	West Midlands	1.64	0	
103	Wandsworth	South West Thames	1.65	0	
104	Plymouth & Torbay	South Western	1.67	0	
105	Greenwich	South East Thames	1.69	0	
106	Enfield	North East Thames	1.72	0	
107	Harrow	North West Thames	1.74	0	
	North Hertfordshire	North West Thames	1.74	0	
109	Exeter & North Devon	South Western	1.76	0	
110	Barnsley	Trent	1.77	0	
	Portsmouth	Wessex	1.77	0	
112	Hounslow & Spelthorne	North West Thames	1.78	0	
113	South Bedfordshire	North West Thames	1.79	2	

114	Hampstead	North East Thames	1.80	0	
	Norwich	East Anglian	1.80	0	
116	Northallerton	Yorkshire	1.81	0.2	
	North Staffordshire	West Midlands	1.81	0	
	York	Yorkshire	1.81	0	
119	Central Nottingham (3)	Trent	1.82	0	
120	Wakefield	Yorkshire	1.83	0	
121	West Berkshire	Oxford	1.84	2	
122	Gateshead	Northern	1.85	100	F
	Liverpool	Mersey	1.85	0	
124	South Sefton	Mersey	1.86	0	
125	Grimsby	Yorkshire	1.89	7.5	
126	South Glamorgan	Wales	1.90	0	
127	Airedale	Yorkshire	1.92	0.2	
128	Blackpool, Wyre & Fylde	North Western	1.94	0	
	Sheffield	Trent	1.94	0	
130	City & Hackney	North East Thames	1.95	0	
	Northumberland	Northern	1.95	35	F
132	North Tees	Northern	1.96	0	
133	Scarborough	Yorkshire	1.97	0	
134	Clwyd	Wales	1.99	0	
135	Huddersfield	Yorkshire	2.00	0	
136	Durham	Northern	2.05	25	F
137	Chorley & South Ribble	North Western	2.06	0	
138	Waltham Forest	North East Thames	2.07	0	
139	Doncaster	Trent	2.08	1	
	Gwynedd	Wales	2.08	0	

	Stockport	North Western	2.08	0
142	Newham	North East Thames	2.09	0
143	East Cumbria	Northern	2.10	5
	Wirral	Mersey	2.10	0
145	Barnet	North West Thames	2.11	0
146	Ealing	North West Thames	2.12	0
147	Parkside	North West Thames	2.15	0
148	Shetland	Scotland	2.16	0
149	Orkney	Scotland	2.17	0
150	Southampton	Wessex	2.18	0
	West Lancashire	North Western	2.18	0
152	West Cumbria (4)	Northern	2.20	0
153	Gwent	Wales	2.22	0
154	Leeds	Yorkshire	2.23	0
	Rotherham	Trent	2.23	0
	South Cumbria	Northern	2.23	0
157	Halton	Mersey	2.24	0
158	Hull	Yorkshire	2.25	0
159	Calderdale	Yorkshire	2.27	0
160	Lothian	Scotland	2.28	0
161	Darlington	Northern	2.30	0
	South Tyneside	Northern	2.30	0
163	Borders	Scotland	2.32	0
164	Islington	North East Thames	2.36	0
165	Pontefract	Yorkshire	2.39	0
166	East Dyfed	Wales	2.41	0
167	Bury	North Western	2.42	0

168	Riverside	North West Thames	2.47	0
169	Tayside	Scotland	2.49	0
170	Grampian	Scotland	2.51	1
171	Lancaster	North Western	2.53	0
	Powys	Wales	2.53	0
173	Pembrokeshire	Wales	2.56	0
	South Tees	Northern	2.56	0
175	Blackburn, Hyndburn & Ribble Valley	North Western	2.57	0
176	Dewsbury	Yorkshire	2.65	0
177	Bolton	North Western	2.68	0
178	Fife	Scotland	2.69	0
179	Tower Hamlets	North East Thames	2.72	0
180	South West Durham	Northern	2.78	7
181	Bradford	Yorkshire	2.80	0
182	Mid Glamorgan	Wales	2.82	0
183	Preston	North Western	2.83	0
	Wigan	North Western	2.83	0
185	Sunderland	Northern	2.84	0
186	Bloomsbury	North East Thames	2.86	0
	Northern	N Ireland	2.86	0
188	Eastern	N Ireland	2.87	0.3
189	Salford	North Western	2.88	0
	West Glamorgan	Wales	2.88	0
191	Tameside & Glossop	North Western	2.90	0
192	St. Helens & Knowsley	Mersey	2.91	0
193	Forth Valley	Scotland	2.92	0

194	Southern	N Ireland	3.00	1
195	Highland	Scotland	3.03	0
196	Ayrshire & Arran	Scotland	3.05	0
197	South Manchester	North Western	3.06	0
198	Oldham	North Western	3.09	0
199	Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale	North Western	3.12	0
200	Argyll & Clyde	Scotland	3.18	0
201	Central Manchester	North Western	3.22	0
202	Western Isles	Scotland	3.34	0
203	Lanarkshire	Scotland	3.43	0
204	Dumfries & Galloway	Scotland	3.48	0
205	Greater Glasgow	Scotland	3.50	0
206	Rochdale	North Western	3.73	0
207	Western	N Ireland	3.76	0
208	North Manchester	North Western	3.96	0

dmft=average number of decayed, missing and filled teeth per 5-year old child

DEFINITION OF FLUORIDATED DISTRICT

For the purpose of this briefing, where the impact of fluoridated water on the teeth of 5-year old children is assessed, a district is classed as fluoridated where at least 25% of this age group are likely to have received water fluoride (either naturally occurring or adjusted) at 0.7ppm or more since birth.

Source of dmft data:

Nugent ZJ and Pitts NB (1997). Patterns of change and results overview 1985/6 - 1995/6 from the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry (BASCD) coordinated surveys of caries prevalence. *Community Dental Health* 14, (Supplement 1) 30-54.

FOOTNOTES

Markers: number in parenthesis after district name on table

1. NORTH EAST ESSEX, MID ESSEX AND WEST ESSEX - Naturally occurring fluoride levels varying between 0.21 and 1.05 ppm - impossible to quantify accurately and therefore not listed as fluoridated.
2. SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE - Blended supplies resulting in variable fluoride levels between 0.3 and 0.9ppm natural and artificial.
3. RUGBY, BASSETLAW and CENTRAL NOTTINGHAM - with the exception of approximately one third of the population of Bassetlaw, fluoridation ceased in 1991 for plant refurbishment. Fluoridation was reinstated for Bassetlaw and Central Nottingham around late 1994/ early 1995, but remains intermittent. Fluoridation due to be reinstated for Rugby during 1997. These districts are therefore classed as non-fluoridated for the purpose of this briefing on 5-year olds.
4. WEST CUMBRIA - Fluoridation ceased in 1989 for plant refurbishment, and was fully reinstated in December 1994, since when 87% of the population have received optimally fluoridated water. West Cumbria is therefore classed as non-fluoridated for the purpose of this briefing on 5-year olds.

A Tale of Two Teams

Sandwell (West Bromwich Albion) v Blackburn (Blackburn Rovers)

Imagine that West Bromwich Albion and Blackburn Rovers were to be drawn against one another in this year's FA Cup.

An interesting clash, with one of this season's leading teams from the first division against an elite premier league side that won the championship only a few years ago.

Pools forecast? Probably a draw at The Hawthorns and a replay at Ewood Park.

That's football. But in dental matters there is absolutely no contest. Sandwell (the socially deprived Black Country district where West Brom play) is now one of the best districts in the country for children's teeth. Blackburn, by contrast, is languishing near the bottom of the UK dental health league.

The average 5-year old in Blackburn has 270 per cent more teeth decayed, missing and filled than the average 5-year old in Sandwell.

The difference cannot be explained in terms of social deprivation. In fact, according to one major index (the Jarman score) used by health authorities to measure relative social deprivation, Blackburn is better off than Sandwell.

So, all other things being equal, Blackburn children might be expected to have better teeth than Sandwell children.

However, it is very much the other way round. Why? Well, it is because the borough of Sandwell has received fluoridated water supplies since 1986.

Looking at the history of children's dental health in Blackburn over the past ten years, we find that there has been no improvement.

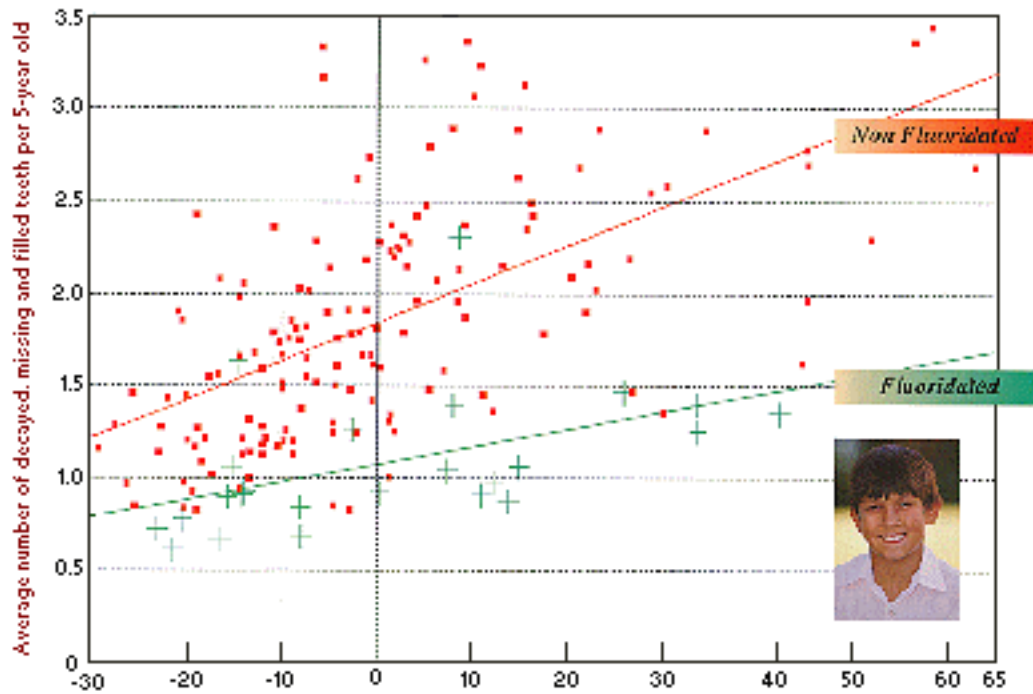
By contrast, Sandwell's dental health has been getting better and better. In fact, it has improved nearly threefold since the year before its water was first fluoridated.

And during all this time, Sandwell has moved spectacularly up the UK dental health league table. From being 136th in 1985, it is now 24th out of 208. Blackburn was 142nd in 1985 and has now dropped to 175th.

Without doubt, Blackburn would go shooting up the dental health league table within five years if its water were fluoridated like Sandwell's.

Generally speaking, tooth decay is halved by fluoridation. Should Blackburn children, and millions like them in other places with bad dental health, be left to languish at the bottom of the league for ever?

If reducing health inequalities means anything, it means getting to grips with this issue - not in a few years' time but right now.



The **Call for Action** Campaign to End Dental Health Inequalities - **Support is Growing!**

Thirty-one organisations are now supporting a campaign to end dental health inequalities by giving health authorities, **NOT PRIVATE WATER COMPANIES**, the final say about whether water supplies should be fluoridated:

- British Dental Association
- British Medical Association
- British Fluoridation Society
- NHS Confederation
- Association of Directors of Public Health Medicine
- Association for Public Health
- British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry
- British Dental Health Foundation
- British Dental Hygienists Association
- British Society of Dentistry for the Handicapped
- British Society of Gerodontology
- British Society for Paediatric Dentistry
- Faculty of Dental Surgery of the Royal College of Surgeons of England
- Faculty of General Practitioners (UK) of the Royal College of Surgeons of England

- Department of Clinical Dental Sciences, School of Dentistry
- Faculty of Public Health Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians of the United Kingdom
- FDI World Dental Federation
- Health Education Authority
- Health Promotion Wales
- Help The Aged
- Institute of Health Education
- MENCAP
- National Dental Health Education Group
- NHS Consultants Association
- Oral Health Promotion Research Group
- Public Health Alliance
- Scottish Association for Community Child Health
- Socialist Health Association
- The Patients Association
- The Royal Society of Health
- Unison Health Care

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