



Update on plans for community water fluoridation for the North East of England

Tees Valley Health Scrutiny Committee 15th December 2023

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• **Outline of current status**

- **The government supports the expansion of community water fluoridation across the North East**
- **The North East will be the first to use the new arrangements brought in by the Health & Care Act 2022, which transferred powers to the Secretary of State**
- **Statutory 12 week consultation is currently being developed. Subsequent decision-making will continue through 2024 before any consequential implementation.**
- **DHSC must write to all affected local authorities to notify them of the proposal**
- **Final decision making by the Secretary of State**
- **Capital and revenue costs will be the responsibility of DHSC**





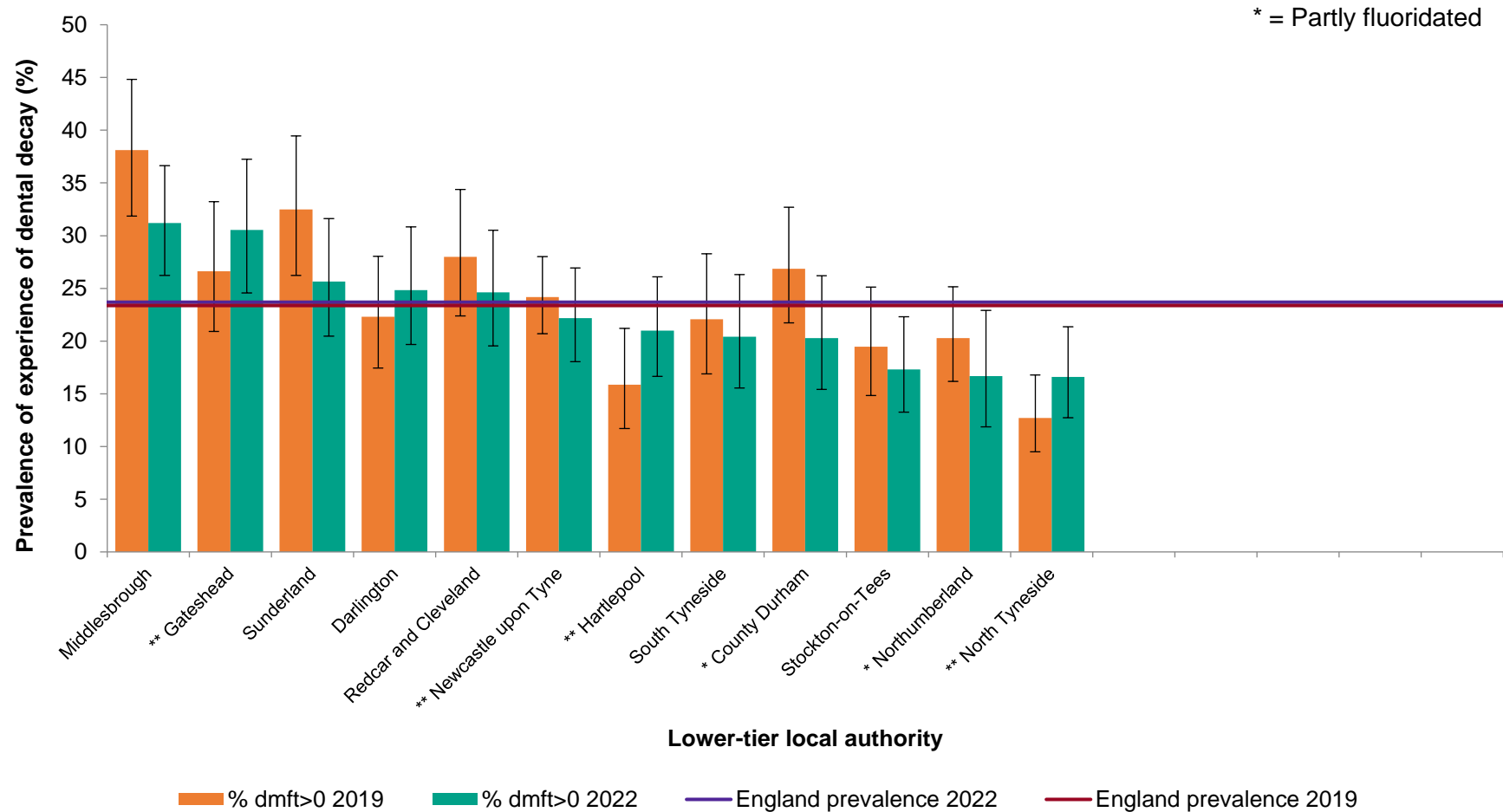
Acknowledgements: healthyteeth.org



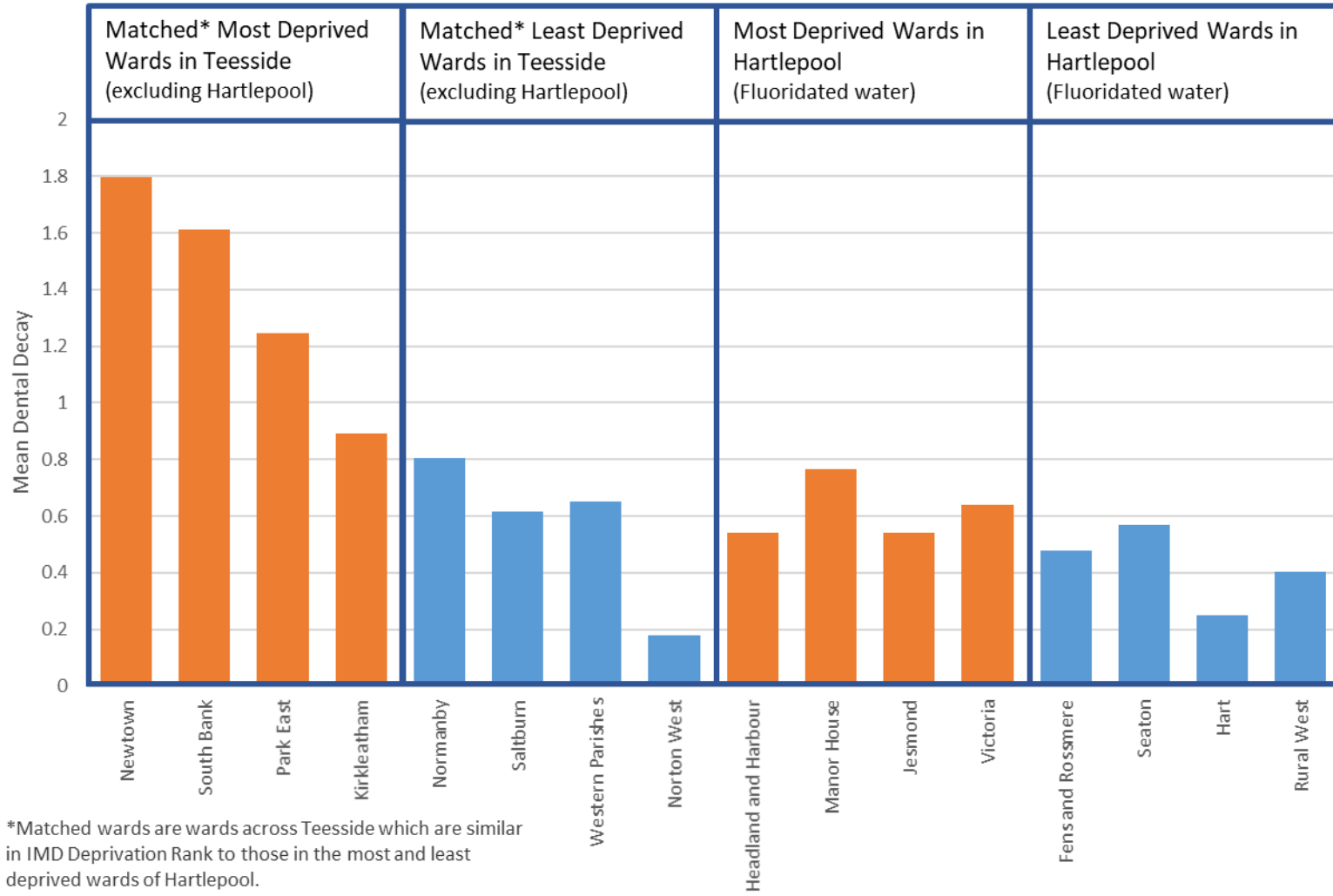
Acknowledgements: nytimes.com

Oral Health across Tees Valley 2019-2022

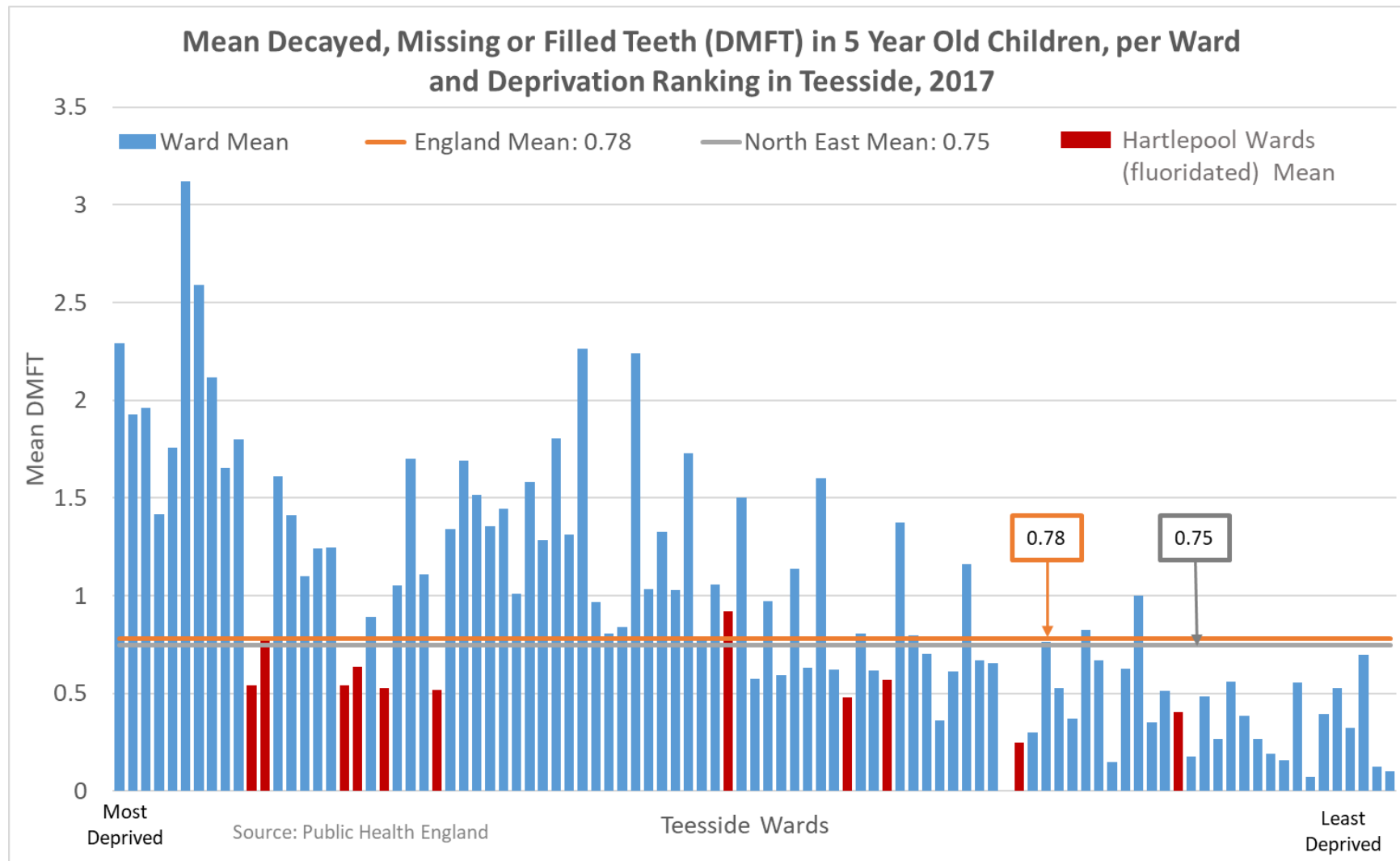
Prevalence of experience of dentinal decay in 5 year olds in the North East by lower-tier local authorities 2019 and 2022



Fluoridation and Deprivation in Relation to Dental Health - Mean Dental Decay, Teesside, 2017



Significant Inequalities across LAs



General Anaesthetic (GA): Numbers and Rates (22/23)

Local Authority	GA Numbers (22/23) Children	GA rates per 1,000 children
Hartlepool	25	1.15
Stockton-on-Tees	92	1.97
Middlesbrough	137	3.72
Redcar and Cleveland	46	1.5
Darlington	128	5.46

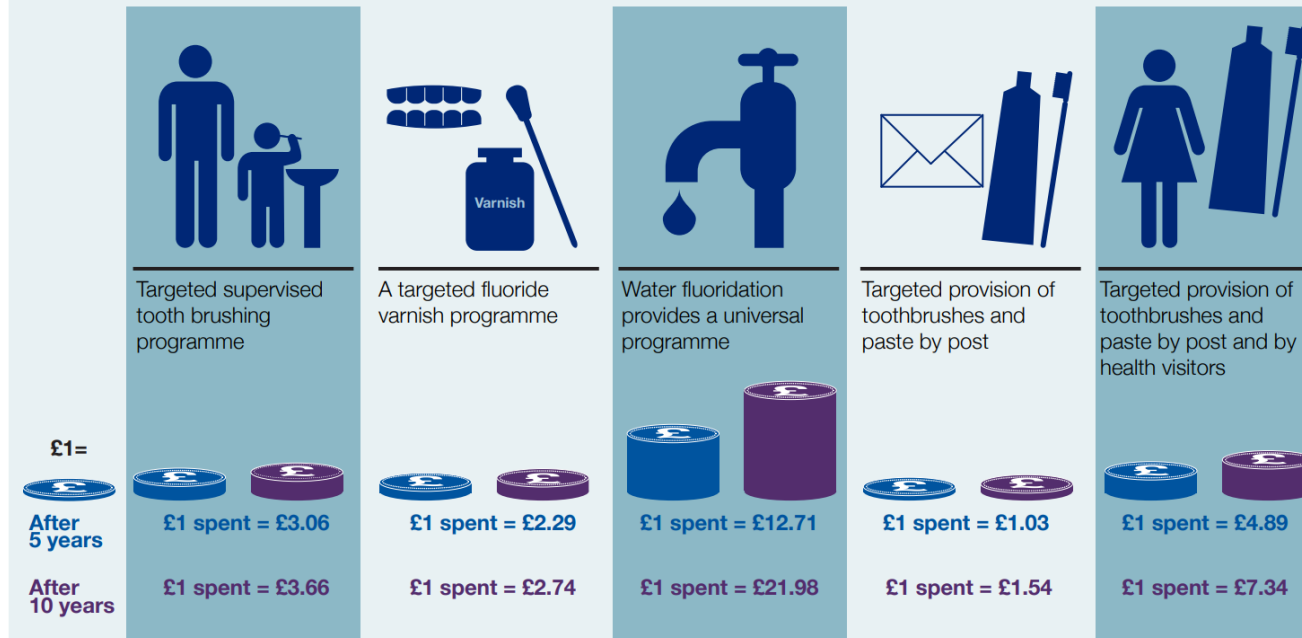
Evidence-based interventions to improve oral health



Public Health
England

Return on investment of oral health improvement programmes for 0-5 year olds*

Reviews of clinical effectiveness by NICE (PH55) and PHE (Commissioning Better Oral Health for Children and Young People, 2014) have found that the following programmes effectively reduced tooth decay in 5 year olds:



*All targeted programmes modelled on population decayed, missing or filled teeth (dmft) index of 2, and universal programme on dmft for England of 0.8. The modelling has used the PHE Return on Investment Tool for oral health interventions (PHE, 2016). The best available evidence has been used in this tool and where assumptions are made these have been clearly stated

PHE Publications gateway number: 2016321

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Consultation narrative

What are we doing?

- The Government wants to expand water fluoridation across the north east of England to reach an additional 1.6 million people.
- This is subject to public consultation and due to start by the end of 2023.
- We are working with Northumbrian Water Ltd on a possible scheme that is feasible and affordable.
- Some areas in the north east are already covered by water fluoridation scheme since. This scheme would cover Northumberland, County Durham, Sunderland, South Tyneside and Teesside, including Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees, Middlesbrough and Darlington

Why are we doing it?

- Tooth decay is largely preventable. However, it remains a serious health problem
- In the region [details of oral health need / health improvement focus].
- Water fluoridation is an effective and safe public health measure.
- Fluoride in water can reduce the likelihood of experiencing dental decay and minimise its severity.
- The effect of fluoridation on hospital admissions to have teeth extracted is substantial
- The impact is greatest for those areas with higher health needs and can reduce this inequality, especially with regard to children living in the most disadvantaged circumstances

What are our aims and next steps?

- The government has the power to introduce water fluoridation schemes subject to consultation.
- This process is not a referendum.
- It is a chance to provide more detail on the proposal, the areas affected and give people the opportunity to respond to it.
- The consultation will run for at least 12 weeks.
- After this, ministers will take final decisions on whether to proceed.
- We are seeking views on whether or not to ask the water company to increase levels of fluoride in water to improve dental health.
- Depending on the outcome, we will work with the water company over the next few years to implement the scheme.



Achieving consensus across the NE

- Local Dental Committees, individual dentist support, paediatric dentists, Dental School and academic dental support
- All NE Directors of Public Health
- HWBs, scrutiny committees, individual members/MP, seeking support from every local authority
- Regional NHSE, NENC ICB, NHS FTs, GPs and medical directors
- Parents and communities



Where are we now?

- Consultation on track to commence before the end of 2023
- All political stakeholders mapped out
- Seeking HWB board support from every NE local authority
- Teesside joint scrutiny committee in December
- Communication plan in final stages of preparation
- Seeking final ministerial approval



Recommendations:

- Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee are asked to support the community water fluoridation proposals for the NE
- Delegate the responsibility for LA consultation response to the Director of Public Health
- Engage local communities to highlight the process and encourage response

