

British Fluoridation Society

A plea for funding from Local Dental Committees (LDCs) to help us continue to provide science-backed expertise and support to the public health community

The importance of water fluoridation now and in the future

Tooth decay is the commonest cause of pain and discomfort among children. Yet, as the WHO recognises, good oral health is vital for good general health.

Over 50 years, water fluoridation schemes in parts of the UK have helped to reduce tooth decay rates. But, as report after report has shown, many areas of the country without fluoridation schemes continue to suffer from unacceptably high levels of tooth decay.

The role that BFS plays and needs to continue to play

The expertise which the BFS has accumulated since the early 1970s when it was formed has helped to see fluoridation schemes introduced. In addition, it has helped to protect existing schemes from the almost constant carping of ideological opponents of this safe and effective public health measure.

Given that tooth decay among children is still a major public health problem in many parts of the UK, and given the important role that water fluoridation can play within wider community-based strategies to address the problem, we ask the question: "Can the UK Public Health Community afford to lose the unique contribution that the BFS makes?"

Our need for funding to maintain the core of expertise and practical support we provide

We need your help and support in order to protect the existing fluoridation schemes in the country, which have made a significant difference to children's oral health over many years. We need it to help secure new schemes where they are most needed. We need it to ensure that an active and effective BFS continues for the future.

We should welcome the chance to discuss with you how you might assist. We do not hide the fact that we are looking for contributions to our funding needs. We are also happy to discuss how, in return for a financial contribution, we can best support your organisation.

To continue to provide these services – which no other organisation in the UK provides – the BFS needs approximately £10,000 a year. Historically, these funds were largely provided by the Department of Health (up to the early 2000s) and, subsequently, NHS Strategic Health Authorities (abolished at the end of March 2013). Over the next two to three years, the BFS needs to replace this now non-existent funding from other sources.

How we currently help and support the public health community

The Society's main activities include:

* providing a **scientifically-based information service** about water fluoridation to health organisations and commissioners, educational

establishments, professional organisations, the media, politicians and the general public

- * organising **scientific meetings** to promote oral health through water fluoridation
- * working to **extend water fluoridation** within the UK where children's tooth decay levels require an effective, community-based response, and working at the same time to **safeguard existing water fluoridation schemes** currently serving 6 million people
- * contributing to **the body of scientific knowledge** on water fluoridation and dental public health
- * researching and producing **scientifically sound, reader-friendly publications** on water fluoridation
- * responding to **requests for information about water fluoridation** from individuals and organisations nationally and internationally
- * continuing to **support the fluoridation-related activities of the Departments of Health and healthcare providers and commissioners** throughout the UK
- * providing **evidence-based information and advice to local authorities** interested in introducing new fluoridation schemes or extending existing ones
- * **defending fluoridation against repeated attacks by committed opponents** and ensuring that unsubstantiated claims about its efficacy and safety are rigorously rebuffed with the best available evidence from around the world
- * **maintaining links and sharing information with colleagues worldwide** to ensure that they benefit from our expertise and that the BFS benefits from theirs.
- * continually **updating its well visited *One in a Million* online database** about all aspects of water fluoridation;
- * providing **intensive support and training to Local Dental Committees** in the run up to and during public consultations on the introduction of water fluoridations schemes;
- * **training health professionals to put the case for water fluoridation** in the news media, at public meetings and in one-to-one discussions with patients;

The bottom line

A final point. Apart from BFS members' annual subscriptions, which are modest, the only funding on offer comes from primary care dental organisations. So if none is forthcoming, the BFS will wither and disappear as the organisation it has been for over 40 years. Its expertise will be dissipated and is unlikely to be replaced. The need for funding is urgent.

Taking it forward

We hope very much that you will consider, at least in principle, the possibility of helping us to help you. Any contributions would be most welcome and will make a difference to our ability

to provide a strong and continuing service. If a number of LDCs were to contribute £500 as a minimum, say up to £1000 (we realise not all will be able to) it would help us survive, improve the prospects for dental health and show what a big contribution primary dental care makes to this worthy cause.

For further information and to discuss what your organisation might be able to do, please contact: Dr Ray Lowry, honorary secretary and treasurer at info@bfsweb.org. LDCs can also use this contact to organise funding donations.

If you wish to donate we suggest this method:

1. Email, ring or post your details (LDC name, address and contact details) and the amount you wish to donate to us: info@bfsweb.org (07947 613 062; BFS PO Box 731 Oldham OL1 9PH)
2. We will then invoice you for your chosen amount and on that invoice will be the details of how to pay and a unique number that you can quote so that we can keep track of your donation.

R J Lowry
Honorary secretary and treasurer