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Tim Davie CBE,
Director-General, BBC
Broadcasting House,
Portland Place,
London, W1A 1AA
tim.davie@bbc.co.uk

cc: Dr Samir Shah CBE, BBC Chairman
samir.shah@bbc.co.uk

Re: The BBC's misrepresentation concerning the dangers posed by water fluoridation and importance of maintaining the public's trust.

Dear Mr. Davie,

Like many others who have grown up in the UK, we the undersigned, a medically qualified developmental toxicologist and a retired professor of chemistry, have trusted the BBC to present unbiased and balanced narratives, especially when it comes to controversial issues such as water fluoridation. If ever that trust was needed on the issue of water fluoridation it is now, as the UK government has sanctioned the addition of fluoride into the public water supply of more communities.

There is an urgent need for the BBC to report with objectivity and professionalism on the latest research into the risks of water fluoridation. In recent years the BBC has failed miserably to do this, presenting a biased, unbalanced and misleading narrative.

My colleagues and I wrote to Sir Kier Starmer, Prime Minister, in October 2024, advising of a U.S. Federal Court Judge's 80-page ruling¹ in September 2024, which determined that water fluoridation posed an "**unreasonable**" risk to the developing brains of America's children. Please find this letter² enclosed which succinctly explains the context.

The Court's ruling was historic as it found the U.S. public health policy of community water fluoridation is putting children at risk. It was reported on by all the U.S. major newspapers and news channels, as well as at least four reports in the UK (three written by science or health

reporters)³⁻⁶. However, the BBC's treatment of this, in November 2024⁷, was both superficial and dismissive. Incredibly, the BBC used a dental researcher and a member of the British Fluoridation Society (the latter being a private UK limited company) to reject out of hand, both the U.S. Federal Judge's ruling as well as the findings of a major 7-year U.S. Governmental review on fluoride's neurotoxicity by the National Toxicology Program (NTP 2024⁸). Much of the latter was the high-level background science presented in court, which assisted the Judge in determining his ruling.

Worryingly, BBC reporters have largely ignored the mother-offspring fluoride IQ studies as well as the other IQ studies published since 1989. For your research department we have attached a listing of 87 of the human IQ-fluoride studies which have found a lowering of IQ associated with fluoride exposure (Table 1⁹) and 12 studies that did not (Table 2¹⁰).

These included two of the U.S. government-funded mother-offspring studies ([Bashash, 2017](#)¹¹ and [Green, 2019](#)¹²) which reported an association between the level of the mother's exposure to fluoride during pregnancy and a lowering of intelligence (IQ) in their offspring. In a third U.S. government-funded study ([Till, 2020](#)¹³) the authors found a large reduction in IQ in infants when comparing bottle-fed babies in fluoridated as opposed to non-fluoridated areas in Canada. The three latest fluoride-IQ studies funded by the U.S. government are: [Hall-2023](#)¹⁴, [Goodman-2022](#)¹⁵, and [Cantoral-2021](#)¹⁶. The optimal level of fluoride added to community fluoridation schemes in Canada and the U.S. is 0.7 ppm whereas the UK optimal level is 1 ppm.

As luck would have it, while writing this letter, an excellent review paper on the public health significance of the fluoride -IQ studies, written by several of the co-authors of the studies discussed above, appeared in the April issue of the *Annual Review of Public Health* entitled, [Health Risks and Benefits of Fluoride Exposure During Pregnancy and Infancy](#).¹⁷ This and the references within would be a very good starting point for reporters to use, to restore balance to the BBC coverage of this issue.

To those who have accepted the mantra that fluoridation is "safe and effective" and that the only people opposed to fluoridation are "conspiracy theorists," these robust scientific revelations and the U.S. court ruling must have come as a shock, but to those who have actually followed the science, they are simply a logical manifestation of three things:

- 1) The fluoride ion can interfere with basic biochemical functions in a multitude of ways¹⁸⁻²³
- 2) Breast-feeding offers some protection from fluoride (the level of fluoride in mothers' milk is extremely low - 0.004 ppm (NRC, 2006²⁴) but that protection is lost if baby formula is made up with fluoridated tap water.
- 3) Fluoride readily crosses the placenta from the moment of conception easily entering the foetus and the developing foetal brain.²⁴

While the major focus of our concerns is on the dangers posed by fluoridation, it is important to note in our view that the purported benefits of this practice have been grossly exaggerated by fluoridation proponents. The scientific evidence – even after over 70 years of this practice -that swallowing fluoride (as opposed to topical application) actually lowers tooth decay to any significant extent has remained elusive (see chapters 6-8 in the book co-authored by one of

us²⁵). In this respect, especially in the context of the government's policy to push this practice onto new communities, the BBC has been remiss in adequately reporting two major UK government studies, Catfish-2022²⁶ (Cumbria) and Lotus-2024²⁷ (NHS dental claims), have found little benefit from the practice and likewise a 2024 Cochrane collaboration review on water fluoridation²⁸. The reported benefits are unlikely to justify the risk of dental fluorosis, let alone a significant threat to the developing brain.

Another example of biased coverage occurred on March 25, 2025, when listeners to the BBC World Service were treated to a disingenuous account in an 11-minute piece (Fluoride: What you need to know²⁹). The reporter made a claim that the lowering of IQ has only occurred at levels of fluoride "much higher" than those used in water fluoridation programs worldwide (0.7 – 1.2 ppm). This claim is a serious error. Let us carefully explain why.

The NTP review⁸ – the most comprehensive governmental review of the issue to date - identified a lowering of IQ at or above 1.5 ppm. This is not "much higher" than the level used in water fluoridation (1.0 ppm in UK and 0.7 ppm in the U.S. and Canada). Crucially, it leaves **no margin of safety** to protect the developing brains of our children. For this protection one would normally use an accepted safety factor of ten (x 10). In other words, to minimize the neurotoxic threat to children, including the most vulnerable, you would not want children drinking water with a fluoride level greater than 0.15 ppm (i.e. ten times less - 1.5 ppm divided by 10). This "protective level" of 0.15 ppm would make water fluoridation at 1 ppm untenable. This margin of safety issue was crucial in the Judge's ruling in the Federal court case. In matters of public health intervention, we must protect ALL children, and nothing, in our view, is more important than protecting our children's brains.

As Lord Reay stated in his speech in the House of Lords³⁰ in 2021, "a broken tooth can be fixed, a damaged brain cannot."

It is important to stress that a small shift downwards of say 5 IQ points, while barely noticeable at the *individual* level, can have very serious consequences at the *population* level. Such a shift would approximately halve the fraction of children who are very bright (IQ above 130) and increase by about 60% the number of children who would require institutional care (IQ less than 70).

Returning to the issue of trust, the concern now looms, what about other issues in which we or the public at large, do not have the luxury of our own research to inform us. Can we, or the public, trust the institution of the BBC to report honestly and thoroughly with balance on these other issues? Once public trust is lost it will be very hard to retrieve.

On this point, we request that you investigate the testimony of a seasoned BBC correspondent who, after following the issue of fluoridation for many years, had recently attempted to post a story on this issue but was told by his "superiors" that the BBC would not allow any inclusion of the NTP Review⁸ or the US Federal lawsuit ruling¹ within his report. He has recently resigned his position at the BBC because of this.

In conclusion, we call upon you, as the Director General, to restore balance on the BBC's coverage of this issue which, due to its seriousness, we have asked our respective Members of Parliament to forward this letter to you and the BBC Chairman, via their Parliamentary Offices.

We look forward to your prompt reply and of course, we are available to respond to any questions that you may have.

Yours Sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Paul Connett, PhD
Professor Emeritus Vyvyan Howard, MB, ChB, PhD, FRCPATH

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