



**South West  
Surgery in Children  
Operational Delivery Network**

# 2020/21 Annual Report

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Clinical Director  
&  
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Network Manager

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## Introduction from the Clinical Director

Welcome to the first Annual Report of the South West Surgery in Children Operational Delivery Network (SW SIC ODN).

The SW SIC ODN has been operational for just over 12 months and this report summarises our achievements and reflections from the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to March 2021 which, as anyone reading this report will be aware, has been an exceptionally challenging time for those of us working in the NHS and wider healthcare community. We have however



been able to make significant positive progress in the establishment of the SW SIC ODN and been able to begin to properly establish ourselves and our vision. We have developed our governance and operational structures which are now fully operational and the pandemic allowed us to expedite the bringing together of colleagues from across the region to start discussions around ways to improve children's surgical services.

Despite the significant challenges faced we have been able to make progress in establishing our core infrastructure and facilitate wider network collaborations. We developed our operational structure to include three clinical working groups focused on the areas of General Surgery & Urology, Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT) and Trauma & Orthopaedics (T&O). These groups, comprised of clinical and managerial representatives from across our geographical footprint, have met (virtually) and agreed regional priorities for pathway planning and development. The pandemic expedited our use of virtual meeting platforms and has enabled our network to progress our planning phase in a virtual manner that may not have been considered or accepted quite so readily prior to this time.

The pandemic also highlighted the necessity for regional collaboration to overcome operational challenges and the SW SIC ODN was able to rapidly establish regional restoration and recovery meetings so teams across the region could come together to raise issues, challenges and share potential solutions with regards to the immediate problems they faced during the pandemic. Many of these issues such as swabbing, personal protective equipment usage and managing pathways for potential COVID positive patients were new challenges for everyone in the NHS and staff found it valuable to bring local challenges to discuss with network colleagues and share solutions being developed. These meetings expedited our engagement programme and demonstrated the importance of networks to facilitate peer support and collaboration across a geographical footprint. The SW SIC ODN core team were able to act as an escalation point and share regional challenges with national colleagues where appropriate and seek national assurance and solutions.

The past 12 months have provided an extremely unorthodox start to establishing a network, however much positive progress has been made and I look forward to moving beyond the pandemic and focusing our efforts on encouraging regional collaboration and driving service improvements locally, regional and nationally.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Courtman', written in a cursive style.

Dr Simon Courtman, Clinical Director, SW SIC ODN

## About Us

The South West Surgery in Children Operational Delivery Network was formally commissioned at the end of the 2019/20 financial year following recommendations made as part of the paediatric critical care and surgery in children review which reported in November 2019. The network aims to bring together clinicians, managers, commissioners, and children and their carers to work together to support improvement in children's surgical services across the South West.

The network covers a broad geographical area with 11 hospital provider organisations involved in the provision of surgical services for children across the South West region. The network is hosted by University Hospitals Bristol & Weston Trust and accountable to NHS England & NHS Improvement South West regional team.

The core network team is comprised of the Clinical Director, Network Manager, Lead Nurse (starting July 2021) and Support Manager who aim to facilitate collaboration and drive cross-regional working with colleagues across the South West:

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |
| <b>Dr Simon Courtman</b><br>Clinical Director                                      | <b>Catherine Carpenter-Clawson</b><br>Network Manager                              | <b>Tania Sparks</b><br>Support Manager   |

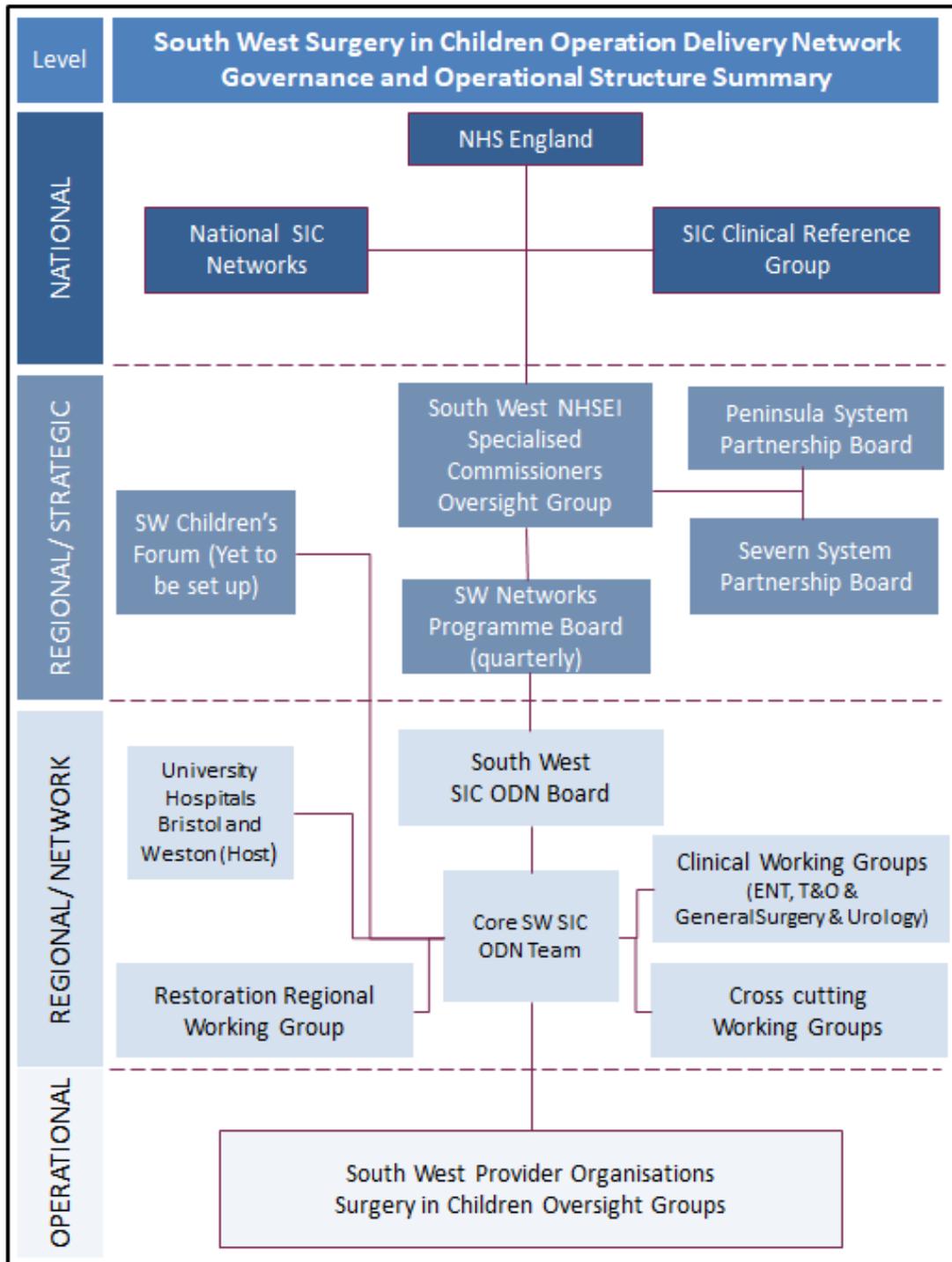
## Our Objectives

The objectives for the Surgery in Children Operational Delivery Networks were outlined as part of the review of paediatric services delivered by NHS England & NHS Improvement; these were summarised as:

- Improve quality of care
  - Concentrate work appropriately
  - Improve equitable access to services
  - Ensure appropriate services are available
- Reduce variation in care
  - Network driven standards
  - Network driven clinical pathways
- Increase safe staffing
  - Consolidate skills and expertise
  - Sustainable work force
- Deliver best value for the SW and the NHS
  - Sustainable Model of service
  - Reduce unnecessary surgery in specialist centre
  - Optimise existing resources
- Reduce gaps and duplication in provision

## Our Governance

The oversight of the SW SIC ODN is through the SW SIC ODN Partnership Board, with a number of agreed clinical and cross cutting working groups feeding into the priorities and planning. The operational and governance structure is illustrated through the diagram below:



## Our Network in Numbers

| Our scope   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p><b>~1.1 million</b><br/><b>children</b><br/>in the regional<br/>footprint</p>  |  <p>Map created using Google Maps</p> <p><b>12 hospitals</b><br/>providing children's surgical services across region</p> |   |
| <p><b>&gt;30,000</b><br/><b>surgical</b><br/><b>procedures</b><br/>undertaken each year<br/>on children in region</p>   |   |   |
| Our engagement in 2020/21   |   |   |
| <p><b>&gt;200 contacts</b><br/>established and involved in<br/>network activities</p>   | <p><b>&gt;100 colleagues</b><br/>signed up to regional<br/>restoration group updates</p>  | <p><b>&gt;45 updates</b><br/>shared regarding national<br/>updates and guidance</p>                                   |
|  <p><b>12 restoration meetings</b><br/>facilitated virtually across the region</p> | <p>Represented region at<br/><b>&gt;20 national</b><br/><b>ODN meetings</b></p>   | <p><b>&gt;20 regional</b><br/><b>engagement activities</b><br/>participated in by the core team<br/>within region</p> |
|   |   |   |
| Our clinical focus and governance   |   |   |
| <p><b>3 Clinical</b><br/><b>Working Groups</b><br/>established and collaborating</p>  | <p><b>&gt;20 potential</b><br/><b>priorities identified</b><br/>and reviewed with clinical teams</p>  | <p><b>2 Board meetings</b><br/>held with cross region<br/>representation</p>  |

## What We Have Achieved

### Leading the national development of ODNs

The SW SIC ODN is one of 10 networks that are currently in the process of being established across England. The leadership team of the SW SIC ODN recognise the importance of taking a national approach to both tackling certain challenges and also in sharing opportunities. The Clinical Director, Simon Courtman and Network Manager, Catherine Carpenter-Clawson have worked with colleagues across England to drive national collaboration and facilitate the development of the national network of ODNs over the past 12 months. The core team continue to support the growth of and learning from ODN colleagues across England; participating in national initiatives to review guidelines, supporting national clinical working groups to review good practice and driving the development of appropriate governance to facilitate ongoing national ODN working.

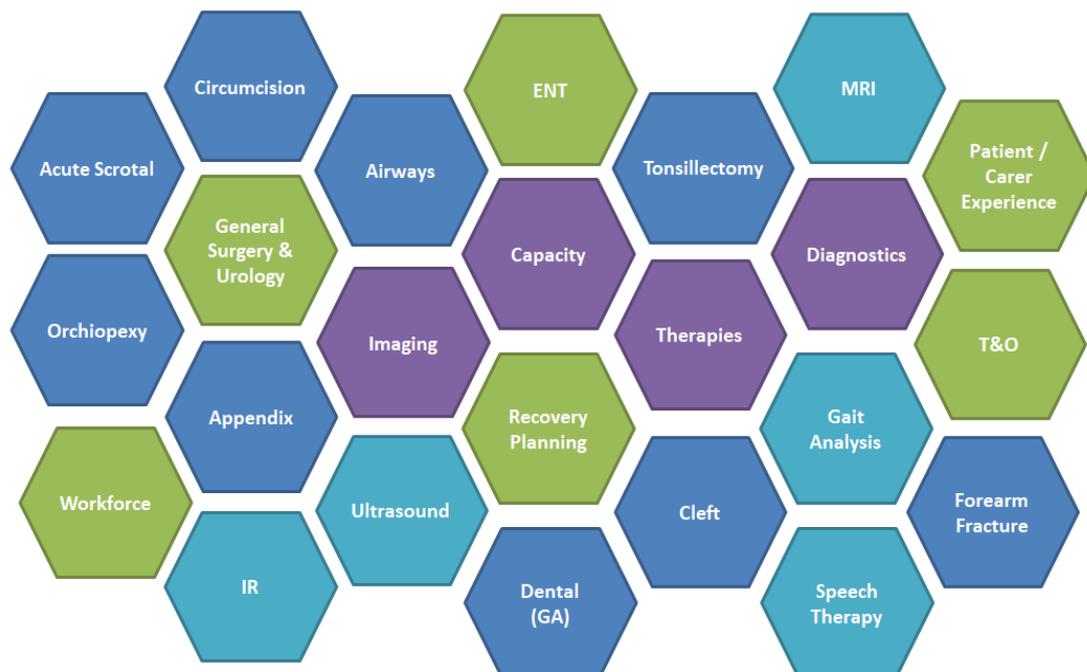
Diagram 1:  
Footprint of the 10  
ODNs across England



### Engaging with stakeholders to identify network opportunities

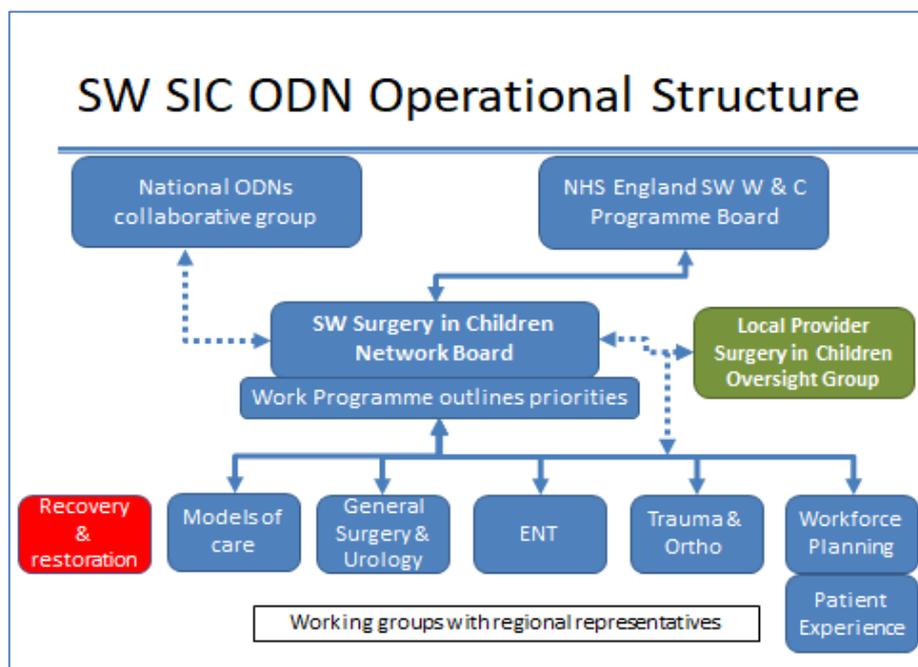
It is acknowledged that the remit of the SIC ODNs includes a large number of specialities and specialists which presents a challenge in prioritisation and delivery. During the past 12 months the core team have engaged with stakeholders across the region to request input into the work programme, prioritisation and operational structure of the network. Meetings were held with stakeholders from provider organisations across the South West to provide an introduction to the role and aspirations of the network and to collate perceived opportunities and priorities for the network. Following this period of engagement a list of potential workstreams were shared and discussed with stakeholders - the diagram below summarises some of the topics and areas of interest that were highlighted for consideration.

The suggested topics for network prioritisation is greater than demonstrated in the image; however the engagement exercise and grouping that followed led to the development of an operational structure for the network to allow further prioritisation of activities and agreement of regional operational model to lead further progress.



## Agreeing an operational structure and commencement of clinical groups

Following identification of the workstream priorities, an operational structure was agreed for the network consisting of three clinical working groups, two cross cutting groups (focussed on models of care and workforce planning & patient experience) plus a targeted restoration and recovery group. The core team's immediate focus was on the recovery and restoration workstream and establishment of the clinical working groups. There was enthusiasm across the region for the establishment of the clinical work groups and all clinical groups commenced their activities in 2021 with positive cross-regional representation.



## Facilitating regional restoration and support during the pandemic



Being established just at the outset of the global pandemic the SW SIC ODN needed to rapidly redefine its priorities and look at ways to support colleagues across the South West in managing many areas of uncertainty over this time. A regional cross-speciality working group was rapidly developed to facilitate discussion, sharing of good practice and collaboration to address issues across the region. Over 100 managerial and clinical colleagues joined the distribution list for the SW SIC ODN restoration meeting. The meetings were held virtually (via MS Teams) and met 12 times over the 12 months

from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. The agenda and priorities for this meeting evolved to reflect the changing needs and priorities of the region, however core to the purpose of this group was to support local teams in ensuring continued provision of surgical services for children over the pandemic. The meeting aimed to ensure national guidance (and changes to it) was circulated and discussed, local challenges were voiced and reviewed, and that regional restoration of children's surgery remained a priority. This group was well attended and feedback was positive and highlighted that the group provided much needed regional peer support during an extremely challenging period for colleagues across the country. The group will continue into 2021 with plans to review its remit and focus according to changes in response to the impact of the pandemic on children's surgical services.

## Financial Summary

Funding for the SW SIC ODN was allocated as part of the block contract for services in 2020/21 with total expenditure for the network being **£77,357**; this was comprised of £75,311 in staff pay and £2,027 in non-pay costs primarily associated with IT equipment purchasing.

## Risks & Challenges

### Delays to appointment of core staffing

Due to the block funding allocation in place across the NHS in the 2020/21 financial year there were delays to the agreement to release funds to support appointment to the core staff within the SW SIC ODN. The Clinical Director and Network Manager were in post at the start of the financial year, however the, much needed Support Manager position was delayed in its appointment and the post holder was only able to join the team at the end of the 2020/21 financial year. As of 31st March 2021 the Lead Nurse post (0.6 WTE) was still not active in post, though the post had been appointed to with an agreed start date for the new post holder scheduled in early summer 2021. The delays to appointing core staff have impacted the SW SIC ODNs ability to deliver core aspects of its work programme; in particular the workforce development and patient experience aspects of the programme are due to be led by the Lead Nurse and as such their formal commencement has been delayed.

### Restoring services and re-establishing priorities

The SW SIC ODN has quite appropriately realigned its focus over the past 12 months to supporting the restoration and recovery programme during the pandemic; however this has meant core workstreams originally identified for the ODN have been delayed in their establishment and delivery. The SW SIC ODN will need to balance priorities moving forward as a significant focus will remain on ensuring a safe and equitable restoration of surgical services, and the ODN will have a key role in addressing any variation or inequity that is likely to arise as services return to more standard operational practice. The ODN will need to ensure that support is provided to delivering sustainable and equitable restoration of services as appropriate, however this work will need to be managed carefully to ensure that other priorities are appropriately considered.

## Our Future Vision

Establishing ourselves as an ODN during a global pandemic has presented some unique challenges but also some interesting opportunities that we will aim to build on over the coming months. We believe we have an exciting year ahead within the SW SIC ODN with many areas to develop and explore in collaboration with our colleagues across the South West and beyond.

### **Recovery and restoration**

As an ODN we will need to continue our support to local teams in restoring and recovering from the pandemic over the next 12 months. We cannot underestimate the impact the pandemic has had not only on waiting lists and demand for services but the wider challenges it continues to present in terms of our resources. Our colleagues across the region all have vital roles to play in the recovery of surgical services, however we must also acknowledge the impact the pandemic has had on many individuals personally and professionally and consider this alongside ambitious strategies to resume our activities and ensure we put our children, young people, parents and staff at the centre of our service developments and improvements.

The pandemic forced on us new ways of working with remote teams and remote meetings becoming a daily occurrence and an accepted part of the NHS model of operation. We will build on these new technologies and new and widely accepted ways of working to build our collaborations and communications strategies to maximise the benefits that virtual teams offers.

### **Data to drive decisions and planning**

Underpinning our strategy and work programme for the next 12 months is a clear drive towards regional and national improvements in our data and ensuring that accurate, transparent, and timely data is available to provide benchmarking against national and regional Key Performance Indicators. The core SW SIC ODN team are already collaborating at national and regional levels to push this agenda forward and to make sure that good data informs our proposals for improvement over the next 12 months.

### **Clinical collaborations and managing new models of care**

Central to the vision of the SW SIC ODN is using clinical collaboration to develop and drive new models of care that will improve clinical services for children, carers and staff across our region. We will continue to grow our operational structure comprised of regional clinical working groups focused on either targeted clinical areas (general surgery & urology, ENT and T&O) or mutually agreed regional developments such as workforce development and patient engagement. These groups will drive developments based on regional and national standards, guidelines and recommendations. The ODN will ensure that the priorities and focus of these groups is on the region as a whole and that a system wide approach to service improvement is undertaken that is underpinned by robust governance process and positive system wide engagement.

If you wish to see a detailed copy of our work programme or provide your feedback and comments related to this Annual Report or the SW SIC ODN in general please do not hesitate to contact us at: [ubh-tr.swsicodn@nhs.net](mailto:ubh-tr.swsicodn@nhs.net)

Many thanks,

SW SIC ODN team