

# Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Paediatric Dental General Anaesthetic Procedures within The South West

E Endean, S Courtman; University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust. C Carpenter-Clawson; South West Surgery in Children Operational Delivery Network

During the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, all non-urgent elective paediatric dental operations in the South-West of England were cancelled.

The majority of these cases were straightforward procedures in fit and well children that were delivered in every district general hospital within the region.

The South West Surgery in Children Operational Delivery Network' (SW SIC ODN) was tasked with evaluating:

- The impact of the first wave of the pandemic on paediatric dental general anaesthesia (GA) waiting lists
- The progress made with restoring surgical services
- The challenges encountered by individual healthcare providers.

## The Problem

Emergency case numbers had increased during the first wave.

By October 2020 healthcare providers within the South West had expressed concerns regarding the increasing waiting lists for paediatric dental GA procedures, with some having yet to restart services.

The South West differs from other regions by predominantly having organisations outside of the NHS trusts provide these services.

It had been raised that within the dental network this lack of a joined up system can cause additional complexities with data recording, waiting list management, recording safeguarding concerns and communications with the primary care providers.

## Strategy

In October 2020 the SW SIC ODN sent out questionnaires to all community dental GA providers within the southwest asking:

- Current paediatric dental GA list capacity
- Waiting lists numbers (pre and post pandemic)
- If dental services had resumed
- What challenges they faced.

## Recommendations

The SW SIC ODN actively engaged dental practitioners in the South West, with of the aim of helping to resume all paediatric dental GA services.

Different strategies considered include increasing capacity at individual trusts, and providing support with surgical pathways.

The network recommended introducing integrated care services (ICS), which would help to co-ordinate care and provide a link between secondary care, and externally commissioned organisations.

There is a need for a common database, where all information regarding paediatric dental GA services within the southwest can be recorded and easily accessed; this should include safeguarding concerns.

## Results

As of November 2020:

**Restoration of Service Provision:**

- Varied between different NHS Trusts.
- Of those that had restarted there was an additional variation in weekly capacity compared to pre-pandemic levels.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
Plymouth	Green	Green	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Exeter	Green	Green	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Torbay	Green	Green	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
North Devon	Green	Green	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Truro	Green	Green	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Bath	Green	Green	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Gloucester	Green	Green	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Swindon	Green	Green	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Bristol	Green	Green	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Taunton	Green	Green	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Yeovil	Green	Green	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

Fig 1. Green boxes indicates services running, grey boxes indicates services stopped.

**Waiting List Numbers:**

- Had generally increased compared to pre-pandemic levels.

	Pre Pandemic Waiting List	Post Wave 1 Waiting List	Predicted Waiting List
Plymouth	288	360	554
Exeter	118	142	331
Torbay	Grey	21	Grey
North Devon	71	22	188
Truro	25	35	287
Bath	Grey	415	Grey
Gloucester	45	36	173
Taunton / Yeovil	146	152	365

Fig 2. Waiting list data. In some trusts waiting list numbers had reduced, which in part was thought to reflect increased operating capacity when services resumed (grey indicates missing data).

**Commonly Reported Challenges to Restarting Services:**

- Issues surrounding swabbing
- Theatre allocation
- Surgical pathways.

In the majority of hospitals, organisations outside of the NHS trust were commission to deliver paediatric dental GA procedures.

This caused additional challenges with data collection, resuming operating, and with linking into primary care services.