

16th March 2021

Thomas Gould, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 11154/21

“To ask the Minister for Health the status of the continued closure of SouthDoc Blackpool and Listowel.”

PQ ref 11155/21

“To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a situation in which SouthDoc could be in breach of a service level agreement with the HSE worth almost €7.3 million; the steps he has taken or plans to take to investigate this possible breach; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Dear Deputy Gould

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

As you will be aware from recent correspondence from my office, SouthDoc out of hours GP services were curtailed since the commencement of the Covid pandemic in March 2020. In the intervening period, and taking account of the requirements of public health measures, SouthDoc has gradually reinstated many of its services. The remaining services to be restored at this point in time include the re-opening of the Blackpool and Listowel centres.

Earlier this year the HSE was advised by SouthDoc that, following consideration of their position in relation to delivering services in the context of Covid activity, the Blackpool and Listowel treatment centres would reopen by appointment from January 18th 2021. The HSE was subsequently informed on January 15th 2021 that SouthDoc had changed its position and had decided not to resume service in these two centres in the context of the sharp increase in Covid numbers that were being experienced at that time.

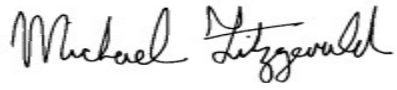
While SouthDoc's position was appreciated in light of the changing pandemic situation, the HSE sought further information and assurance on the re instatement of the services as well as the need for closer consultation on such decisions which it had not been party to. While the HSE received a response from SouthDoc on the matter on February 2nd 2021, on consideration there was a need for further clarity. The HSE advised SouthDoc on a number of occasions that further information and assurances were required on the matter.

The HSE was subsequently advised on February 25th that the Board of Directors of SouthDoc would meet shortly to plan the reopening of Blackpool and Listowel centres for scheduled appointments and that SouthDoc would revert after the Board meeting with an update, including the agreed reopening date. Upon receipt of this information the HSE immediately reiterated to SouthDoc the need to develop a pathway to fully restore service in Blackpool and Listowel once public health conditions allow it to do so.

I am advised that the Board of SouthDoc is due to meet very shortly following which the HSE expects to receive the reopening plan for the Blackpool and Listowel centres and formal confirmation of the SouthDoc's intention to restore the Blackpoll and Listowel treatment centres to their pre-covid levels of service. I will revert to you with an update as soon as we have formally heard back from SouthDoc.

If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Fitzgerald
Chief Officer
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare

