

25<sup>th</sup> June, 2024

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

**PQ ref: 26767/24**

**"To ask the Minister for Health the number of patients seen in the SouthDoc Blackpool centre, excluding those seen in their own homes by a doctor, in each month to date in 2024 and in each of the first six months of 2019, in tabular form."**

Dear Deputy Gould,

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

South West Doctors-on-Call Limited is an Out-of-Hours Family Doctor service for urgent medical care in Counties Cork and Kerry, with its administrative headquarters and call centre in Killarney, Co Kerry. SouthDoc is accredited by the NSAI to ISO 9001:2015 QMS standard. It has a membership of over 500 General Practitioners (GP) and a network of 26 treatment centres, of which seven are overnight. This network is supported by a fleet of vehicles, which are fully equipped for home visit situations.

SouthDoc provides a medical service to a population of approximately 736,000 in addition to the 3.3 million visitors to the area and dealt with over 212,000 patient contacts in 2023.

The following is a summary of patient numbers in the SouthDoc Cork Blackpool Treatment Centre for the January 2019 to June 2019, and January to May 2024.

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2024</b>
<b>January</b>	2399	230
<b>February</b>	1819	253
<b>March</b>	2159	295
<b>April</b>	1979	276
<b>May</b>	1840	268
<b>June</b>	1961	170 to 20.06.2024

As a dynamic, community-based Out-of-Hours Family Doctor service, which is provided across the two counties of Cork and Kerry, SouthDoc constantly reviews the service provision to ensure its continued viability. There are many factors involved in the delivery of the service including local doctors, locum doctors, local staff, and infrastructure. All these elements are supported by a bespoke IT system, Patient Management System, as well as a Call Centre where patient calls are acknowledged, documented, and triaged.

A series of significant service innovations have been introduced since 2019, such as the introduction and use of telemedicine. Where a clinician has assessed a patient and deemed them suitable for a teleconsultation, this can be dealt with by any Doctor on Duty across the service. This ensures the best possible response time for patients. Tele consults are also complimented by the rollout of electronic prescriptions. Where a clinician has assessed a patient and deems an in-person consultation necessary, the time and location of this appointment is a matter for the patient and treating Doctor. The SouthDoc Cork Blackpool Treatment Centre remains available for in-person consultations to support the work of the Consulting Doctors and to ensure patients receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

SouthDoc continues to deliver the service in response to the patient needs in a manner, which assures safety, ease and equity of access. All patients are dealt with in accordance with their clinical needs.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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

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**Priscilla Lynch**  
**Head of Service - Primary Care,**  
**Cork Kerry Community Health**