

25th June, 2024

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

PQ ref: 26769/24

"To ask the Minister for Health the number of doctors available for house calls; and number of cars in each of the SouthDoc Centres in 2019 and in 2024, 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 (GPs) and a network of 26 Treatment Centres, of which seven are regional overnight centres. 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 3.3M visitors to the area and dealt with over 212,000 patient contacts in 2023.

The following is a summary of the Doctors available for Home Visit situations, and the size of the SouthDoc fleet in 2019 and 2024 respectively.

	2019	2024
Doctors available for House Calls	18 Mainline Doctors	4 Mainline Doctors 7 Home Visit Division Doctors
SouthDoc Fleet – Per Treatment Centre	18 in total	11 in total

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, one of which was the creation of the dedicated Home Visit Division. Whilst the table above may indicate a reduction in capacity for Home Visit situations, the opposite has occurred. The core work of a Dedicated Home Visit Division Doctor is to undertake home visits only, whereas a Mainline Doctor was in the past dividing

their time between attending Treatment Centre appointments and attending home visits. Each of the seven regional centres now has a dedicated Home Visit Division Doctor assigned to it, and they support the work of the Mainline Doctor in these centres. Mainline Doctors continue to attend to Home Visits in the peninsulas.

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', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

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