

8th May, 2024

Ms. Holly Cairns, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 19678/24

"To ask the Minister for Health the weekday and weekend opening hours for the SouthDoc service in Clonakilty, by month, from November 2023 to date."

Dear Deputy Cairns,

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.

Since July 2023, SouthDoc commenced the transition to a regionalised service delivery model to ensure a more effective utilisation of Doctors and safe delivery of clinical services to patients. Due to the limited number of Doctors in Clonakilty, support is provided to them by the Doctors based in Bandon. To that end, the Clonakilty TC transitioned through the following hours:

2023	Monday-Friday	Saturday	Sunday/PH
November	18.00-22.00	13.00-21.00	09.00-21.00
December	18.00-22.00	09.00-21.00	09.00-21.00
2024			
January onwards	18.00-21.00	09.00-18.00	09.00-18.00

When the Doctors in the Clonakilty Treatment Centre complete their duty, the service is transferred to the Doctors in Bandon. This has been the established practice in South Cork, and there is no change to this service support process or provision.

It is important to note that when a patient makes contact with SouthDoc, all the relevant data is captured and an electronic patient record is created. This record proceeds through the service in parallel with the patient's clinical progression. The nature of the clinical condition of the patient will determine the type and nature of treatment. Patients may close out their consultation with a Nurse, if not; it may proceed to either a duty Doctor or the emergency services.

If it is determined that the appropriate course of clinical action is a consultation with a Doctor, the electronic record is sent to that Doctor in the most suitable treatment centre. The Doctor makes the clinical judgement as to the most appropriate treatment, including the location of that treatment. It may be engagement with the emergency services, a tele consult, a visit to the patient's home, or an in-person consultation in a treatment centre including Clonakilty or Bandon. It is the consulting Doctor who, based on the clinical condition of the patient, decides the most appropriate course of treatment.

It is important to emphasise that if an individual in Clonakilty requires care, that care will be provided by appointment in the Clonakilty or Bandon Treatment Centre or via Home Visit depending on clinical condition of the patient as assessed by the consulting Doctor. While SouthDoc works closely with the Emergency services, SouthDoc is not an emergency service provider. Should an emergency clinical situation arise, the appropriate emergency service providers should be contacted for the patient, in that event.

To point out in 2024, 77% of patients were seen in the Clonakilty Treatment Centre, 6% had a home visit and 17% were treated via tele consult. 84% of all patients were dealt with and exited the service within 4 hours. These outcomes for these patients and treatment times are in line with those throughout the service. 83% of the patient calls were routine and non-urgent.

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.

In summary, the SouthDoc Out of Hours service remains available to the patients and full access to the services provided by them. The SouthDoc Treatment Centre facilities in the South Cork area will continue to be by appointment only. There are no plans to change the clinical, operational or electronic infrastructure of the service in South Cork at this time.

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.

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