



Mari O'Donovan,
Interim Head of Service,
Cúram Príomhúil
FSS an Iardheiscirt

Áras na Ceachan,
Páirc Ghnó agus Teicneolaíochta,
Bóthar na Modh Feirme,
Corcaigh. T12 XHT4

Mari O'Donovan,
Interim Head of Service,
Primary Care
HSE South West

Caha House,
Business and Technology Park,
Model Farm Road,
Cork. T12 XHT4

southwest.hse.ie
E: Mari.ODonovan@hse.ie

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

PQ ref 26968/25

"To ask the Minister for Health the date on which the HSE gave formal approval for the amalgamation of Southdoc routine appointments to the Kinsale Road location."

PQ ref 26969/25

"To ask the Minister for Health the grade level at which the HSE gave formal approval for the amalgamation of Southdoc routine appointments to the Kinsale Road location."

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.

South West Doctors-on-Call Limited (known as SouthDoc) provides an Out-of-Hours non-urgent GP service to a population of approximately 736,000 in Cork and Kerry, in addition to the 3.3M visitors to the area. The HSE has a Service Level Agreement with SouthDoc for the provision of out-of-hours cover for medical card holders. The Head of Service for Primary Care chairs these meetings on a quarterly basis with SouthDoc. SouthDoc continually evaluates their service provision, formally with the HSE and on an ongoing basis internally.

It is important to emphasise that if an individual in Cork city requires care, that care will be provided by appointment in either the Blackpool or Kinsale Road Treatment Centre, or via a home visit; depending on clinical condition of the patient, as assessed by the consulting doctor. There is no reduction in service to city patients and existing resources can meet the demand comfortably.

The Blackpool Treatment Centre remains operational for appointments where there is a clearly established clinical need. Since September 2023, however, routine appointments have been scheduled at the primary treatment centre on Kinsale Road.

This operational adjustment was implemented as part of an organisation-wide service review aimed at optimising resources and service delivery while maintaining patient care standards within the available budget.

That said, there are instances where the attending doctor may determine—based on clinical need—that a patient should be seen at the Blackpool Centre. In 2025 to date, 22 patients have been seen at the Blackpool Centre under such circumstances. In addition, approx. 410 home visits were carried out in the Blackpool area, supporting patients who met the clinical criteria and were unable to travel to the Tramore Road centre.

We trust this information will help to demonstrate that the Blackpool Centre remains in use for appropriate clinical cases, even though it is no longer a site for routine appointments.



HSE South West appreciates the ongoing commitment of SouthDoc to improving service delivery and patient care. Ninety per cent of patients are seen within four hours, and we acknowledge the continued efforts by SouthDoc and its staff to maintain this high level of service. The current average call waiting time at peak hours is 7.18 minutes.

The activity data for each SouthDoc treatment centre for the first four months of 2025 is below. Please note that the figures for each treatment centre include all consultations carried out by doctors at the centre, including:

- Tele consults
- In-person appointments at the centre
- Home visits
- Engagement with the emergency services (in rare cases)

Activity Data (January–April 2025): Total – 63,738

Treatment Centre	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Caherciveen	204	176	222	181
Call Centre – nurse advice	2209	2124	2248	2132
Castletownbere	51	55	50	50
Clonakilty	370	321	411	297
Cork Blackpool	481	384	567	466
Cork City	4319	4086	4520	3952
Dingle	132	129	134	162
East Cork - Midleton	1476	1311	1535	1341
Kenmare	136	149	153	172
North Cork – Mallow and Kanturk	1614	1525	1633	1412
North East Cork - Fermoy	726	691	786	659
North Kerry – Tralee, Castleisland and Listowel	1312	1331	1627	1447
South Cork – Bandon and Kinsale	991	922	1079	990
South Kerry – Killarney and Killorglin	1303	1258	1504	1378
West Cork – Bantry and Dunmanway	682	631	786	745
Total	16006	15093	17255	15384



By way of context, it's worth setting out the process for patient engagement with SouthDoc:

- Patients contact the SouthDoc call centre.
- Relevant data is collected, and an electronic patient record is created. This record follows the patient through the service.
- The clinical condition of the patient determines the type and nature of their treatment, which may include:
 - a phone consultation with a nurse. Some patients can have their treatment closed off at this point
 - a consultation with a duty doctor at a treatment centre
 - referral to emergency services (in rare cases)
- If a doctor consultation is required, the patient's record is sent electronically to a doctor at a treatment centre.
- The doctor determines the most appropriate treatment and its location, and options may include a tele-consultation, a home visit, or an in-person consultation at a SouthDoc treatment centre.
- After the consultation, the patient's GP receives a copy of the visit and treatment record.

HSE South West appreciates the ongoing commitment of SouthDoc to improving service delivery and patient care and continue to monitor performance to ensure the highest standards of care is provided to service users in the region.

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

Yours sincerely,

Mari O'Donovan
Interim Head of Service - Primary Care,
HSE South West