



15th October 2025

Deputy Michael Cahill,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 51844/25

“To ask the Minister for Health if she will support the establishment of a dedicated pilot study focused on all aspects of the health service in the Iveragh and Dingle peninsulas, including staffing challenges, mental health, day care, primary care, home care, respite, palliative care, community hospital beds and ambulance provision, with a view to developing a model for service delivery in similarly remote areas across the country.”

Dear Deputy Cahill,

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.

HSE South West acknowledges the concerns raised regarding the provision of healthcare services in remote areas within the Kerry and Cork region, including the Iveragh and Dingle peninsulas. Providing health services in rural and remote areas such as these presents well-recognised challenges, particularly in recruiting and retaining healthcare staff. These difficulties arise from a combination of factors, including geographic location, growing demand for services, and national shortages of key healthcare professionals such as nurses and allied health staff.

The HSE uses a multi-pronged approach to deliver services in remote areas, focusing on community-based care, digital health technologies, and restructured regional management.

A key component of the Sláintecare reform program is the shift towards integrated care, with funding and decision-making devolved to the new Health Regions. This decentralisation is intended to benefit remote areas by focusing resources on community-based health services. The HSE is now organised into six larger health regions, each responsible for delivering and integrating health and social services in its area. This structure aims to put patients first by organizing services around the specific needs of local populations. The HSE South West covers the region of Kerry and Cork. There are 14 Community Healthcare Networks (CHNs) in the HSE South West, three of which are in Kerry. Each CHN serves a population of around 50,000. CHNs are the foundational units for delivering primary and community care and they are designed to bring multidisciplinary teams and integrated care closer to people's homes.

To facilitate the delivery of health services in remote areas the HSE uses a broad range of initiatives such as:

- mobile and outreach clinics - teams of healthcare professionals, such as specialist geriatric practitioners, bring services directly to people in rural communities and offshore islands
- Telehealth: The HSE's Telehealth Roadmap 2024–2027 outlines the expansion of remote healthcare via technology, including remote consultations, online therapies, and remote health monitoring. This reduces travel time, costs, and emissions for patients in remote areas.
- Digital care infrastructure: The Digital for Care 2030 framework includes initiatives like a National Shared Care Record and the Health App, which gives patients access to their health information. Digital tools are seen as a way to enhance accessibility and provide care closer to home.

Despite these initiatives, we recognise that significant challenges remain, particularly regarding workforce shortages and equitable access to services. HSE South West will continue to make every possible effort to address staffing shortages across our acute hospital services, community based services and our ambulance service, and we are committed to improving service availability and accessibility to ensure equitable healthcare for all residents across Kerry, regardless of location.

I trust this clarifies the position and if you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Julie O' Neill
Integrated Healthcare Area Manager Kerry
HSE South West