

7th May, 2024.

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

PQ ref 18597/24

"To ask the Minister for Health the number of patients seen by the SouthDoc service in Skibbereen, by week, from 1 January 2024 to date, in tabular form."

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 redesignated the West Cork Service delivery process from individual Treatment Centres to Regionalised areas. To that end, SouthDoc does not report on individual treatment centres in West Cork, rather as "West Cork". This effectively means that in West Cork all statistics are recorded on a regional basis. This is as a result of the consolidation of the service delivery and the safe processing of the electronic patient records through the regionalised Treatment Centres. 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 West Cork. 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 Skibbereen. It is the consulting doctor who, based on the clinical condition of the patient, decides the most appropriate course of treatment.

In relation to Skibbereen, all patient records are electronically transferred to "West Cork" where the duty Doctor will make the appropriate clinical determination in relation to the type and location of the consultation. Therefore, all data is captured to "West Cork".

So far this year in West Cork, 52% of all patients were seen and dealt within two hours, a further 25% within 2-3 hours, and 13% within 3-4 hours. Therefore, within four hours 90% of patients successfully exited the service. Patients seen in their own home make up 7% of all treatment types. Regardless of where a patient is seen, the record will be closed out in "West Cork".

It is important to emphasise that if an individual in Skibbereen requires care, that care will be provided by appointment in the Skibbereen 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.

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 West Cork will continue to be by appointment only. There are no plans to change the clinical, operational or electronic infrastructure of the service in West Cork.

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 Healthcare