



Priscilla Lynch
Head of Service, Primary Care,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare,
Coolnagarrane, Skibbereen, Co. Cork
Email: Priscilla.Lynch@hse.ie

8th February, 2024

Mr. Pa Daly, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 1652/24

"To ask the Minister for Health if, given the reduction in services provided by SouthDoc, the contract for the service with the HSE has been altered, or if the amount being paid to SouthDoc has reduced in any way."

Dear Deputy Daly,

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 appointment based 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. It has a membership of over 500 GPs and a network of Treatment Centres of which eight are overnight and supported by a fleet of vehicles, which are fully equipped for home visit situations. The peninsulas are also supported with a specific model of service provision.

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 231,000 patient contacts in 2022. As of December 13, 2023 we have already looked after 198,000 patients with our busiest period of the year to come.

As a dynamic community based service delivered 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 not least the capacity / availability of Doctors, Locum Doctors, staff and infrastructure. All these elements are supported by a bespoke Patient Management System as well as a Call Centre where the patient calls are acknowledged, documented and triaged.

SouthDoc continually evaluates the service provision, formally with the HSE and on an ongoing basis internally. As there are numerous stakeholders concerned, any service reviews, which would potentially vary the delivery model, would involve appropriate advance engagement. Such advance engagement, also ensures the outcome guarantees that patients receive the same standard of care whilst at the same time maximising the utilisation of the clinical personnel available.

SouthDoc, like all agencies funded by the HSE through a Section 39 Service Level Agreement (SLA), provide services to the HSE based on the terms agreed within the SLA which are agreed on an annual basis. The SLA sets out the terms of engagement between the HSE and the agency, which is recognised as the 'Provider' of services, and the quantum of services to be delivered by the Provider and the funding which the HSE will pay to the Provider for, provision of such services.

As a service provider funded by the HSE pursuant to Section 39 of the Health Act 2004 South West Doctors on Call Company Limited by Guarantee receives an annual funding allocation for the provision of the above out of hour's service.



In essence, the Governance is covered under the Internal Controls Framework and Principles and National Financial Regulations and this is evidenced through the Service Level Agreement (SLA) contract management process. SLA are legal contracts entered into by HSE and providers, funding provided is set out in SLA approved in Quarter 1 each year and updated at end of year to reflect the amount of funding for the Quantum of service agreed. The contract management process include Performance Management, engagement with agencies such as SouthDoc to regularly review their performance and their financial information, including Annual Financial Statements and Annual Financial Monitoring Report (AFMR).

It is important to note that at this point there is no reduction in service provided by SouthDoc and their services remain available across Cork and Kerry.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Priscilla Lynch', written over a horizontal line.

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