

Issued by the Medical Laboratory Scientists Association (MLSA).
Tuesday May 3, 2022.

Medical Scientists serve notice of Industrial Action for May 18th

Medical Scientists to take action to resolve 20% unfilled posts

Medical Scientists have served notice of Industrial Action for Wednesday May 18th in frustration over long-standing pay and career development issues that are affecting recruitment and retention in the sector.

The notice follows an unsuccessful latest round of talks after the Public Service Agreement Group (PSAG) referred the parties to re-engage on the matters in dispute.

The Medical Laboratory Scientists Association (MLSA) had earlier served notice for Industrial Action on March 30th, however this was suspended after being invited into new talks under the dispute resolution mechanism of the *Building Momentum* Public Service Pay Agreement.

However, no satisfactory outcome has been achieved in recent weeks and the Union has today served notice to now proceed with the action.

MLSA Chairperson Kevin O'Boyle said Medical Scientists are highly frustrated and want their long-standing issues properly resolved by the HSE, DOH and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER).

"The latest failure by the HSE and Department of Health to put forward any proposal has added insult to injury. The MLSA withdrew notice for strike action on March 30th in good faith, yet the employer side has offered nothing to address our issues, causing further anger and frustration among our membership."

"We regret the difficulties it will cause to an already over-burdened health service and to patients awaiting treatment, but there is huge frustration and burn-out among our members because the severe recruitment and retention problems in the sector have been ignored for years."

"Up to 20% of approved medical scientist posts are unfilled in hospitals across the country. We have tried to avoid this action but have been left with no alternative."

MLSA General Secretary Terry Casey said that the Union's door will remain open to any meaningful approach or solution from the employer.

"There has been a long build up to this action. The Union served its claim in January 2020 and has been involved in numerous rounds of Sectoral Bargaining talks and also in a series of talks with the HSE and Department of Health at the Workplace Relations Commission since the summer of 2020."

The MLSA is today notifying employers that strike action will take place between 8am and 8pm on Wednesday May 18th. If no progress is made a further two days of action are planned for May 24th and 25th.

Three further days of action are planned for the following week on May 31st, June 1st and June 2nd. Routine laboratory services will be withdrawn, which will affect routine hospital and GP services.

In a ballot of MLSA members last November 98% voted in favour of taking industrial action. In January 2021, 96% of members voted to reject the *Building Momentum* public sector agreement. Previously, at the MLSA AGM in September 2020, 99% of attendees voted in favour of holding a ballot for industrial action.

Terry Casey continued: “There remains an ongoing significant national shortage of Medical Scientists across the public health service. This is in no small part due to inferior pay and conditions, poor career structure and limited promotional opportunities. This must be addressed so that the Irish health service can have the clinical diagnostic laboratory service it requires.”

“The Medical Scientists’ dispute dates back to 2002 and involves a claim for restoration of pay parity with scientific colleagues who work in Biochemistry Laboratories. Parity was awarded in 2001 following an Expert Group Report, but was lost due to an unintentional procedural effect of the 2002 benchmarking process.

“Medical Scientists carry out identical work, with the same responsibilities, and yet are paid on average 8% less, with fewer promotional and career development opportunities and less support for training and education.

“Public Sector health workers from Nurses, Consultants to Lab Aides have secured significant pay increases in recent years. For Medical Scientists this, combined with the advancing role of laboratory diagnostics, increased responsibility, increased workloads and the long-standing challenges in recruitment and retention mean these employment issues need to be addressed”, Mr Casey concluded.

Medical Laboratory Scientists Association (MLSA)

The MLSA is the Trade Union representing Medical Scientists, the scientific professionals who carry out critical diagnostic testing of patient samples. It represents more than 1,800 Medical Scientists employed in public voluntary hospitals, HSE hospitals, private hospitals and the Irish Blood Transfusion Service. www.mlsa.ie