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Medical Scientists taking Industrial Action this Wednesday, May 18th

Medical Scientists to take action to resolve 20% unfilled posts, pay parity, career development and increasing demands

Medical Scientists are taking Industrial Action this Wednesday May 18th – in frustration over long-standing pay and career development issues.

The action means that routine laboratory services are being withdrawn from 8am-8pm on Wednesday May 18th, which will affect routine hospital and GP services across the country.

The workplace of the majority of Medical Scientists is at laboratories in public hospitals.

The Union representing Medical Scientists – the Medical Laboratory Scientists Association (MLSA) – said it has made every effort to avoid disruption to patients and fellow healthcare workers, but has been left with no alternative.

The action follows many rounds of unsuccessful talks with HSE, Department of Health, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Public Service Agreement Group.

In a ballot of MLSA members last November 98% voted in favour of taking the action.

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 May 31st, June 1st and June 2nd.

Why is the action being taken?

MLSA Chairperson Kevin O'Boyle said there is huge frustration and burn-out among Medical Scientists because of a severe recruitment and retention problem which have been ignored by the employer for many years and he set out the issues needing to be resolved:

- “Up to 20% of approved Medical Scientist posts are unfilled in hospitals
- Medical Scientists carry out identical work to other colleagues in hospital laboratories, yet are paid on average 8% less
- Medical Scientists have fewer career development opportunities and less support for training and education than comparable colleagues
- The role for laboratory diagnostics is currently expanding with increasing responsibility and workloads.

“We need to achieve a sustainable work structure for the profession and this will benefit patients and the quality and efficiency of health services they receive.”

MLSA General Secretary Terry Casey said the Union is seeking meaningful talks with the HSE and Department of Health. He said it is a long-standing dispute which the MLSA has made repeated efforts to resolve.

“The MLSA’s claim for parity with clinical biochemist colleagues dates back to 2001 when an Expert Group Report recommended pay parity between the grades. The then awarded pay parity was lost within months as a result of an inadvertent procedural error in the first public service benchmarking awards in June 2002.

In January 2020, against a backdrop of a severe and worsening recruitment and retention crisis, the MLSA renewed its longstanding claim for parity of pay and career progression with Clinical Biochemists and sought engagement with the HSE and Department of Health (DOH).

More than two years on, and after many rounds of proposals and talks, these issues have not been resolved and there is now an even more significant nationwide shortage of Medical Scientists.

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 2,100 Medical Scientists employed in public voluntary hospitals, HSE hospitals, private hospitals and the Irish Blood Transfusion Service.

www.mlsa.ie