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Medical Scientists begin Industrial Action

Medical Scientists take to picket lines to resolve – unfilled posts, pay parity, career pathway and increasing demands

Medical Scientists have begun industrial action today – in frustration over long-standing pay and career development issues.

Today's action (Wednesday, May 18) involves the withdrawal of routine laboratory services from 8am to 8pm, which is affecting routine hospital and GP services across the country.

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

MLSA has 2,100 members and said the vast majority were on picket lines today at all public voluntary and HSE hospitals.

The action follows many rounds of unsuccessful talks with the 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% had 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.

Reasons for the Action

MLSA Chairperson Kevin O'Boyle said Medical Scientists did not want to be taking this action today and it was only the second time in the sectors' 60 year history that action had been taken. However, there is huge frustration and burn-out because of a severe recruitment and retention problem which have been ignored by the HSE and Department of Health for many years.

“Up to 20% of approved Medical Scientist posts are unfilled in public hospitals and this problem is worsening. Medical Scientists carry out identical work to other colleagues in hospital laboratories, yet are paid on average 8% less. Medical Laboratory Aides who report to Medical Scientists start on a higher salary.

“Medical Scientists have fewer career development opportunities and less training and education supports than comparable colleagues. Against this the role for laboratory diagnostics is expanding with increasing responsibility and workloads.

“It is not sustainable to continue like this. We need an effective work structure for this profession which can secure and retain the staffing levels required. Resolving these issues will benefit patients and the 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.

“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 procedural error in the 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 this longstanding claim for parity of pay and career progression. 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 shortage of Medical Scientists, affecting all regions of the country.”

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

Further Information

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