

Issued by the Medical Laboratory Scientists Association (MLSA)
Industrial Action Week 2
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Medical Scientists to Step Up Industrial Action

Two days of Action to be taken by Medical Scientists this week

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

Medical Scientists are stepping up their industrial action this week – in frustration over long-standing pay and career development issues.

Two days of action are taking place on Tuesday May 24 and Wednesday May 25, following an initial one day of action last week.

No approach has been made by the HSE or Department of Health to the MLSA since last week's stoppage, despite comments from HSE representatives implying talks were ongoing.

The action will again involve the withdrawal of routine laboratory services from 8am to 8pm on both days, 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 regrettable disruption to patients and fellow healthcare workers but has been left with no alternative.

MLSA has 2,100 members and the vast majority will be on picket lines this week, at all public voluntary and HSE hospitals and the Irish Blood Transfusion Service, which will join the pickets for the first time.

If no progress is made a further three days of action are planned for next week on May 31st, June 1st and June 2nd. In a ballot of MLSA members last November 98% had voted in favour of taking the action.

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, particularly during the past two years.

Reasons for the Action

MLSA Chairperson Kevin O'Boyle said Medical Scientists did not want to be stepping up the action but severe problems and burn out in the sector are being ignored by the HSE and Department of Health – and these must be addressed.

Mr O'Boyle said the issues causing the staffing crisis in the sector are:

- Medical Scientists carry out identical work to other colleagues in hospital laboratories (Clinical Biochemists), 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 progression opportunities, less training supports and less continuous education supports than comparable colleagues.
- Against these increasing shortages, the role for laboratory diagnostics within the health services is expanding with increasing.

“All of these issues are leading to a recruitment and retention crisis. 20% of approved hospital posts are unfilled and it is not sustainable to continue like this. We need an effective structure for this

profession which can secure the staff needed to do the work that is required. Resolving these issues will benefit patients and the health services they receive.”

MLSA General Secretary Terry Casey said the Union is this week continuing to seek meaningful talks with the HSE and Department of Health.

“Since last week’s action neither the HSE nor the Department of Health have come to us with a meaningful proposal or invitation to talks that could address the issues involved. It because of this that Members throughout the country are stepping up the action.

“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 staffing 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.”

www.mlsa.ie

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.

Further Information

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