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Medical Scientists vote overwhelmingly for industrial action

More Medical Scientist posts needed to meet needs of public

In a ballot of members of the Medical Laboratory Scientists Association (MLSA), Medical Scientists have voted overwhelmingly for industrial action due to the HSE's suppression of posts vacant on 31st December 2023, and failure to replace posts vacant since then.

A vote on industrial action over the HSE's Pay and Numbers Strategy and the suppression of Medical Scientist posts was passed by 93% of members employed by the HSE and HSE-funded hospitals, strongly endorsing the recommendation of the MLSA Executive Committee. The turnout in the ballot was 66.9%.

The mandate includes industrial action up to and including work to rule and/or work stoppages/strikes on dates and times agreed by the Executive Committee.

MLSA Chairperson Mairead Ní Mhuimhneacháin said: "The MLSA will meet with other health service unions before Christmas to discuss the most effective way to pursue industrial action in 2025. The Executive Committee will then meet with MLSA agents in early January to discuss the nature and timing of any action."

The background to the dispute is that many Medical Scientist posts were vacant on 31st December 2023 due to a longstanding recruitment and retention crisis in the profession, and the situation has worsened since then with most vacancies since 1st January 2024 not being approved or prioritised.

"The HSE has suppressed these frontline posts without assessing the impact on the service of the permanent loss of these posts and has refused to share data with Trade Unions on how many funded and approved vacancies have been suppressed", Ms Ní Mhuimhneacháin said.

HSE census figures show that there has been only a minimal increase in Medical Scientist posts since 2019, despite exponential growth of laboratory workloads during that period. The HSE constantly refers to the considerable increase in HSE staff since 2019 but this growth has not been across all sectors.

Medical Scientists carry out critical diagnostic testing of patient samples in public hospitals across the country and have been warning the HSE for many years about serious risks to laboratory services, due to its failure to train sufficient numbers of registered Medical Scientists.

MLSA General Secretary Terry Casey said: "The demands on laboratory services continue to grow and Medical Scientists continue to try to keep services going at great personal cost. Medical Scientists can no longer sustain current levels of service and cannot afford to let the situation go unchallenged."

The MLSA mandate parallels other moves towards industrial action which are being sought and planned by other health care unions including ForSa, INMO, Unite and Connect because of the serious risk to patient and staff health, safety and welfare.

Further Information

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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 2,000 Medical Scientists

employed in public voluntary hospitals, HSE hospitals, private hospitals and the Irish Blood Transfusion Service. www.mlsa.ie