

Issued by the Medical Laboratory Scientists Association (MLSA).
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Medical Scientists vote to ballot for Industrial Action if early progress not made on pay dispute

Medical Scientists have voted at their AGM to ballot for industrial action if early progress is not made on a longstanding pay dispute.

Medical Laboratory Scientists Association (MLSA) Chairperson, Kevin O'Boyle said members have voted to seek a substantial pay increase and if this is not achieved the sector will ballot for industrial action – up to and including strike action.

Medical Scientists carry out critical diagnostic testing of patient samples in public hospitals, including urgent testing for COVID-19.

Mr. O'Boyle said the pay disparity between Medical Scientists and other laboratory scientists must be addressed without delay and prior to the next National Pay Talks.

“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 lab diagnostics, increased responsibility, increased workloads and longstanding challenges in recruitment and retention, urgently require pay issues to be addressed.”

The MLSA is the Trade Union representing more than 1,800 Medical Scientists employed nationwide in public voluntary hospitals, HSE hospitals, private hospitals and the Irish Blood Transfusion Service.

MLSA General Secretary Terry Casey said early engagement is needed with the HSE, Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Expenditure and Public Reform (DEPR), following members' strong mandate to potentially escalate towards full industrial action.

“This long-running pay dispute requires immediate resolution to avoid widespread disruption to laboratory diagnostic services as we enter the Winter Flu season, and with the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to cause grave concern,” Mr Casey said.

Medical Scientists' dispute dates back to 2002 and involves a claim for pay parity with scientific colleagues who work in Biochemistry Laboratories. Medical Scientists carry out identical work, with the same responsibilities, and yet are paid on average 8% less.

Last weekend's remote AGM had a record attendance and members voted to demand full pay parity with Biochemists and to seek the creation of a Consultant Grade for Medical Scientists akin to the existing Consultant Grade Biochemist.

The MLSA said there is a significant national shortage of Medical Scientists across the public health service with up to 130 posts unfilled – and that the reasons for this are inferior pay and conditions, poor career structure and limited promotional opportunities.

“The COVID-19 pandemic, and the requirement to provide urgent additional testing capacity in all hospital laboratories, have turned an already difficult situation into an emergency – and this now needs to be addressed with urgency,” Mr Casey said.

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 (including urgent testing for Covid-19). 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

Kind regards,
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