

Ballot for Industrial Action

Why is there a ballot for industrial action?

In 2018, as part of the Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) Agreement, the HSE agreed to establish a Career Pathway Review to review the Expert Group Report 2000 and the Mc Hugh Doran Report 2004. Five years on, there has been very little progress for our members and a number of key issues are now in dispute between the HSE and Fórsa.

More information is set out below under 'Background to the dispute'.

Who is the ballot for?

The ballot is for anyone, working for the HSE or a Section 38 organisation, working at any grade, in the following eight professions:

- Dietitians
- Physiotherapy
- Social Work
- Orthoptics
- Podiatry
- Social Care Work
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech and Language Therapy

The ballot is for every member of each profession regardless of their current grade. The dispute is centred on the failure to implement the staff to senior pathway **and** on the failure to progress discussions on clinical specialisms, advanced practise and management ratios. It is relevant to everyone who is seeking career progression in their chosen discipline.

Background to the dispute

- 2018:** Fórsa and the HSE agreed, under the auspices of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) the CHO Agreement 2018. This collective agreement provided for the following: *"The parties acknowledge that the criteria set down in the Expert Review Group on AHP's 2000, supplemented by the McHugh Doran report of 2004 requires review to take account of the changes to working practices within the professions since the production of the reports. Terms of reference to be agreed between the parties. This process to commence in January 2019."*
- 2019:** Mr Robbie Ryan is agreed as the independent chair for the Career Pathway Review. Both the HSE and Fórsa nominate individuals to the process and each of the professions makes a submission for consideration.
- 2020:** In December, Mr Ryan issues an interim report setting out the imperative need for a specific staff to senior career pathway process. It is Fórsa's clear understanding and recollection that this report was accepted by the HSE in December 2020.
- 2021:** The parties engage in discussions on how best to implement the recommendations contained within the interim report. The HSE at that juncture indicated a desire to limit implementation in the first instance to primary care due to the influx of additional funding in the area. Fórsa did not object at the time **solely on the proviso** that there was agreement to the implementation of the report across all areas of the HSE.
- 2022:** In primary care, the staff to senior pathway remains open until 7th November at which point it closes and over 400 staff are identified as eligible. Outside of primary care, Fórsa seek engagement with the HSE on implementing the interim report outside of primary care. There is no substantive response from the employer.

2023:

- March:** The HSE agree to meet to discuss implementing the interim report outside of primary care at which point they indicate that, in their view, there was no agreement to the interim report being implemented outside of primary care. This is significant point of dispute between the parties. Fórsa does not accept the revised position as set out on the 30th March and is grossly disappointed that the HSE is choosing to renege on it's previous commitments to HSCP staff.
- April:** The Divisional Executive Committee unanimously sanctions a ballot for industrial action. They make that decision taking the HSE's revised position into account and having considered the poor progress made in primary care where only 120 staff have been progressed and where there is no agreement on the appropriate senior social work role. The Divisional Executive Committee is also gravely concerned that there has been no progress on all other aspects of the Career Pathway Review including clinical specialisms, advanced practise and management ratios. Given the negative impact that the management position has on all members working in the eight professions, a ballot for industrial action is seen as the only viable next step.
- May:** Delegates to the Health and Welfare Divisional Conference call for progress on the Career Pathway Review and preparations commence for a ballot.

Is Fórsa's Health and Welfare Divisional Executive Committee recommending we support this ballot?

Yes. The union's elected Divisional Executive Committee at its recent meeting voted overwhelmingly to recommend that its members support this ballot for industrial action.

Next steps

1. Members are being asked to update their information as a matter of urgency to ensure that they receive an opportunity to vote in this ballot.
2. General meetings will be conducted over the next couple weeks, either within your workplace or online. Please look out for further information from your Branch Executive.
3. We will commence an electronic ballot of all members working for the HSE or a Section 38 organisation within the eight professions listed on Monday 3rd July for a period of six weeks.
4. A ballot helpdesk will be in operation during this time and queries can be directed to hwballot2023@forsa.ie
5. When the ballot has concluded we will inform members of the outcome before writing to employers.

Members should note that if the result of the ballot is in favour of taking industrial action up to and including strike action, we are obliged to serve three weeks' notice upon the employer of our intention to commence any form of industrial action.

What can you do?

- Talk to your colleagues about the importance of the Career Pathway Review for your profession.
- Participate in any workplace information meetings arranged by your Branch Executive.
- Encourage your colleagues to participate also.
- Ensure you cast your vote as early as possible, once the electronic ballot opens on Monday 3rd July 2023.

Encourage your colleagues to stand up
and help us win a better deal. Join Fórsa.

VOTE YES

www.forsa.ie/join

