

Settlements in more than 100 civil actions over child molester surgeon Michael Shine

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Settlements have been made in civil actions taken by more than 100 people who claimed to have been abused by convicted child molester Michael Shine. The elderly former surgeon at our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Drogheda, Co. Louth, has twice been jailed for indecent and sexual assault.

The overall size of the settlement, reached with the hospital's former operators, the Medical Missionaries of Mercy, has yet to be disclosed. A previous settlement made by the order in another case involving a similar number of plaintiffs in 2012 is believed to have totalled €8m.

The High Court was told last week that a lead case against Shine and the order would no longer need a trial date because it had been settled. Lawyers instead asked Ms Justice Leonie Reynolds for a date for the making of final orders, and the matter is due to be mentioned again next month.

The plaintiff is part of a group of 113 people who filed claims over the activities of the struck-off surgeon. It is understood virtually all of the litigants have ratified settlement offers, made by the order's insurers, Allianz.

The complainants are represented by Dublin law firm Galligan Johnston. It declined to comment. A spokesman for Crowley Millar, the firm representing the religious order, could not be reached.

Previous efforts to mediate a settlement in 2018 failed. The claims involved allegations dating between 1964 and 1995. Shine (89), with an address at Wellington Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin, never admitted any of the abuse.

In November 2017, he was convicted and sentenced to 20 months in prison for three offences of indecent assault on two teenage boys in the mid-1970s. Judge Cormac Quinn said the crimes were a severe breach of trust by a senior doctor at the pinnacle of his profession. Shine appealed against his conviction and sentence, but was dismissed in 2019.

In February 2019, he was convicted of 12 counts of indecent assault and one of sexual assault on seven complainants and was sentenced to four years in jail. The indecent assault victims were six boys aged between 11 and 15, while the sexual assault victim was aged 16. The offences occurred during medical examination at the hospital and two private clinics in Drogheda between 1971 to 1992. Judge Martin Nolan said the offending was part of a "serious pattern of misbehaviour" and Shine had shown no remorse. He appealed against the conviction, but this was dismissed last November.

Although an indemnity fund containing more than €5m was put in place due to concerns about Shine, this does not form part of the settlement. It was set up by agreement with the religious order when the hospital was bought by the former North Eastern Health Board in 1997.

At the time, state authorities were aware of around 60 complaints against Shine and wanted to be indemnified by the order against potential claims. What now becomes of these funds is unclear, because the 113 are believed to be the last group of people to file claims over Shine's conduct.

The HSE had been listed as a third defendant in the civil actions. However, the High Court was told in 2019 that the actions, insofar as they related to the HSE, had been settled. It is understood that settlement did not involve any payment to the plaintiffs.

Shine retired in 1995 on a full pension from Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, having worked in Drogheda for 30 years. He was struck off the medical register in 2008 after the Medical Council found he had abused his professional position by making sexual advances toward three patients. The council said Shine breached the trust inherent in the doctor/patient relationship and brought the profession in disrepute.