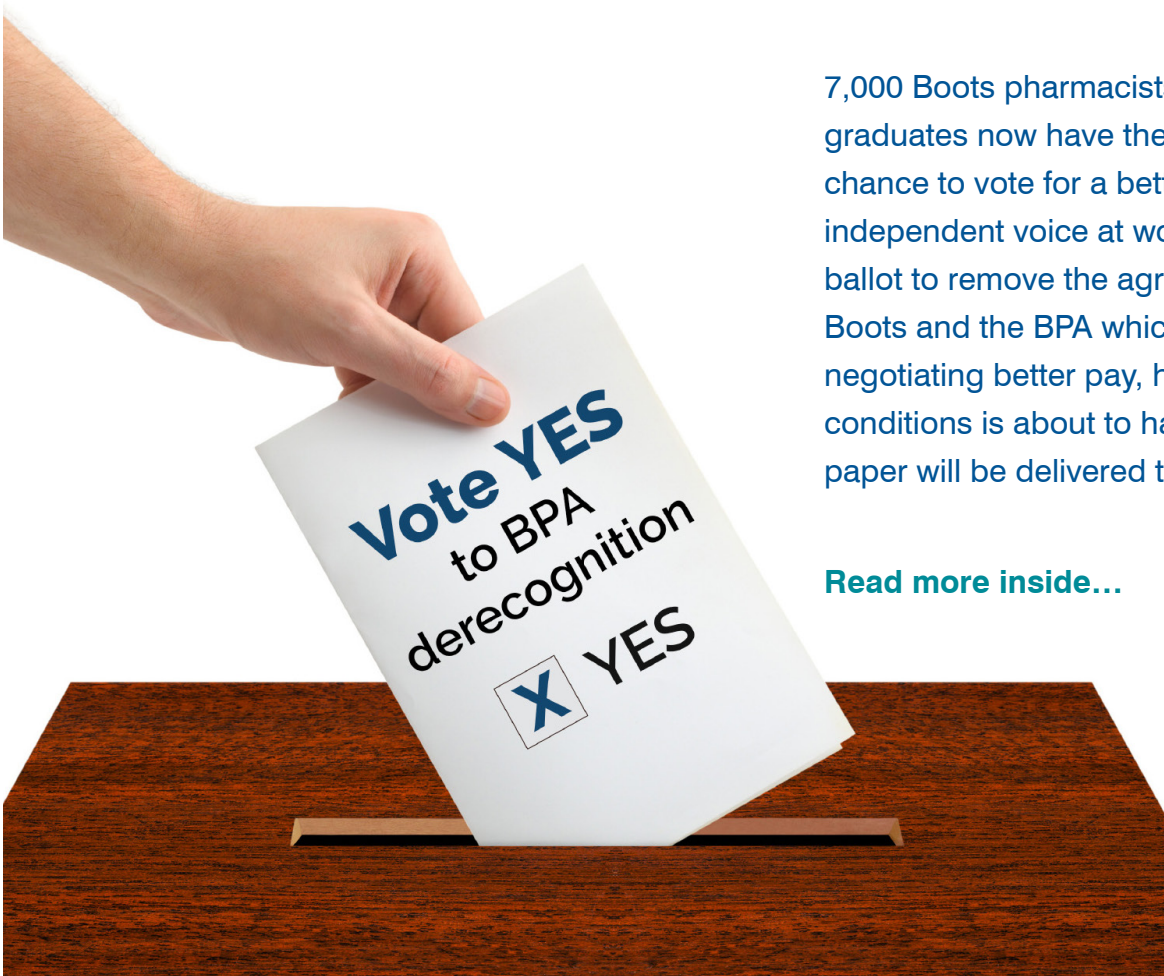


VOTE FOR A BETTER FUTURE

7,000 Boots pharmacists and pre-registration graduates now have their opportunity: the chance to vote for a better future and an independent voice at work. The confidential ballot to remove the agreement between Boots and the BPA which prevents you from negotiating better pay, hours and other working conditions is about to happen. Your ballot paper will be delivered to your home address.

[Read more inside...](#)



www.pdaurecognition.co.uk

We have set up a website with a lot more information about this process. Please go online and read so that you are fully informed



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video message

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Foreword from Mark Pitt

Assistant General Secretary

In 2012, the rights of Boots pharmacists and pre-registration graduates at work suffered a major blow, due to an agreement set up between Boots and the Boots Pharmacists' Association (BPA). The agreement was set up between Boots and the BPA to prevent Boots pharmacists and pre-reg graduates from negotiating better pay, hours and other working conditions with the company through an independent trade union, the PDA Union.

Your opportunity to remove that agreement, and secure a better future and an independent voice at work, has now arrived. If at least 2,780 Boots pharmacists and pre-reg graduates vote to remove the Boots/BPA agreement, it will pave the way for positive change.

You will receive your ballot paper through the post to your home address. The ballot is entirely confidential. Neither Boots, the BPA or the PDA Union will ever know how you voted. In casting your vote, we ask you to consider the substantial benefits to you of removing the Boots/BPA agreement.



Whatever Boots' motive, for six years it has opposed setting up a constructive relationship with the PDA Union, which is seeking to represent the interests of pharmacists. Pharmacists tell us they are unhappy at being denied the opportunity to negotiate better working conditions, and this vote gives you the power to bring about positive change. The vote will not stop the BPA meeting with Boots just as it does now, but it will give you the chance to have an independent voice, the PDA Union, to speak on your behalf at work. We wish you good luck.

What's at stake?

If the agreement between Boots and the BPA is removed through this ballot, the PDA Union will be able to apply to negotiate (or "collectively bargain" for) better pay, hours and other working conditions on behalf of Boots pharmacists. Here are some of the things the PDA Union could negotiate for, if it gains recognition:

- Better pay
- Improved working conditions such as ensuring pharmacists can take rest breaks
- A fairer performance review process
- Better and more transparent bonus payments
- An improved whistleblowing culture and support for raising concerns
- Increased professional autonomy
- Disclosure of information you need as a professional e.g. on company staffing policies and time standards
- On the job training and training time

- Improvements to the expenses process.

Boots is a very profitable global retailer and has the capacity to improve the working lives of both pharmacists and pre-reg graduates. It spends a significant amount of money and time influencing the future of the profession and the conditions under which pharmacists practice pharmacy.

The PDA Union, as the only independent trade union in the UK exclusively for pharmacists, wants help to improve not only the future for Boots pharmacists, but also that of the profession. If the PDA Union gains recognition with Boots following this ballot, we'd be setting up a professional network of Boots pharmacists across the UK interested in working with us to communicate with and represent their colleagues, with full PDAU support. We'd be delighted and honoured to be able to represent your interests at work.

What is “collective bargaining”?

Collective bargaining is the process of negotiation between the representatives of workers (trade unions) and the representatives of employers (senior management) covering terms and conditions such as pay, hours of work and working conditions. The negotiations are ‘collective’ because a trade union acts on behalf of the employees as a group, rather than each employee negotiating on his/her own.

Collective bargaining provides employees with a voice to negotiate on their behalf with their employers. Through give-and-take, employers and unions are able to reach an agreement that not only benefits union members, but also meets the objectives of the business. A collective agreement provides both employers and employees with certainty on the issues that have been agreed.

Collective approaches in the workplace support



stronger industry standards, pensions, workforce pay and progression, safety standards, and prevalence and maintenance of workplace conditions. The trusting relationships that underpin collective bargaining unlock knowledge, aid conflict resolution and focuses on prosperity and productivity.

How would collective bargaining via the PDA Union be different from what the BPA does now?

How would PDA Union collective bargaining be different from what the BPA does now?

Under the current situation, the BPA is restricted to negotiations with Boots over inconsequential matters such as whether the BPA Chief Executive gets a company laptop, and the location or frequency of the BPA’s meetings with the company. These issues are of little interest to the vast majority of pharmacists and pre-registration graduates; the BPA is prohibited by the agreement it signed six years ago from collectively bargaining over any other topics. The BPA executive do not want to negotiate over your pay, hours or other working conditions; worse still, they do not want anyone else to be able to negotiate over these important matters.

Under a PDA Union collective bargaining agreement

with Boots, senior company managers would be obliged to put forward their pay proposals and supporting evidence to a committee comprising of company representatives and elected Boots pharmacists, who would consider the offer and seek the views of other Boots pharmacists on what is being proposed. The PDA Union may provide additional evidence to support an improved pay offer and through a process of give-and-take, a mutually beneficial agreement could be reached. In the event of an impasse, there would be a defined dispute resolution process. The whole process would be far more transparent, and pharmacists would have the opportunity to input into the discussions.

Where does the PDAU stand on Boots policies

SALARIES AND MARKET-BASED PAY

For the last 10 years, salaries for newly-qualified Boots pharmacists have remained almost static.

Boots newly qualified pharmacist salary 2007: £33,000

Equivalent salary in 2017, taking into account inflation: Circa £43,527

Actual Boots newly qualified pharmacist salary 2017/18: £34,000

In addition, hundreds of Boots pharmacists have been disadvantaged by market-based pay which was introduced in 2014. Pharmacists' salaries are based on undisclosed "market data" from an unspecified source.

We think pharmacists should be told exactly how their salaries are being determined, and have the opportunity to negotiate better ones.

LUNCH BREAKS

Boots pharmacists tell us they often have to work through their lunch, or stay signed in as the Responsible Pharmacist without pay so that the company can continue to trade.

You have a legal right to take a break, and it's safer for patients when you're enabled to do that. We also think you should be paid whenever you're on duty.

PERFORMANCE AND REWARD SYSTEM

Boots pharmacists have told us they feel the performance rating, pay and reward system is unfair and not objective.

We think you should know your objectives clearly, before someone can judge whether you achieved them. These should be reasonable and the goalposts shouldn't move.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Boots pharmacists tell us they've already lost benefits such as half-day Christmas shopping time, two days (pro-rata) study time for CPD and 100% attendance allowance. The company imposes those decisions unilaterally.

We think pharmacists should retain and seek to enhance their existing benefits, not have them removed.

REPRESENTATION OF YOUR INTERESTS

The BPA is an "in-house, non-independent consultative body" (Judge Sir Brian Keith), which the regulator of Trades Unions, the Certification Officer, said is "liable to interference, tending towards domination or control" by Boots. The BPA has been described as a "sweetheart union" in various legal publications.

We think that a body representing your interests should be independent and free from interference. The PDA Union has been certified as being independent by the Certification Officer and is an independent professional union for pharmacists. The BPA as the in house staff association is simply no match for Walgreens Boots Alliance, which is a global pharmacy company with significant resources at its disposal.

BONUS

Your bonus is based on an undisclosed "company performance target" that you can't see.

We think how your bonus is determined should be transparent, and you should get regular, clear updates on your own bonus position.

Top ten reasons to derecognise the BPA

1. Derecognition of the BPA is an essential first step for the PDA Union to be recognised by Boots

The PDA Union is an independent trade union with over 27,000 members. We're committed to improving your working conditions and benefits. Once the BPA is derecognised the PDA Union will be able to negotiate your pay, hours and working conditions – but this will only happen if Boots pharmacists vote to remove the agreement between Boots and the BPA.

2. The PDA Union is a certified independent trade union and one of the 30 largest unions in the UK

Independent Trade Union recognition is commonplace in the UK and helps ensure employees' interests are properly represented and protected. A contented workforce is good for business and we're keen to work with the company to make things better for Boots pharmacists. The BPA is not independent; an independent government adjudicator decided the BPA is liable to interference by Boots and dependant upon the goodwill of the company.

3. Boots and the BPA are blocking pharmacists from being able to negotiate over their pay, hours and working conditions

In 2012 the BPA signed a secret agreement with Boots without consulting Boots pharmacists. The agreement was designed to prevent Boots pharmacists from being able to negotiate over better terms and conditions. This agreement infringes the human rights of pharmacists and derecognition of the BPA will help to restore these rights.

4. The PDA Union employs a team of specialist solicitors, pharmacists and paralegals to defend and support members

Each week on average eight Boots pharmacists contact the PDA Union for advice and support.



The PDA Union provides specialist legal and pharmacy advice and we have detailed knowledge of how the company operates. Our professional teams work closely together on cases in purpose built modern offices where members can meet the team who are representing them.

The BPA provides support through well-meaning individuals who work for Boots and who are not qualified to offer legal advice. The BPA directs members to a generic legal helpline for any legal support required and operates from the home address of its part time chief executive whose other role is to represent the interests of pharmacy contractors, such as Boots.

5. The PDA Union fights for your rights

In 2011, Boots cut pharmacists' premium payments for Sunday and bank holiday working. The BPA decided the cuts were legal and permitted the company to proceed unchallenged. The PDA Union supported many Boots pharmacists in challenging the cuts through an employment tribunal hearing. These cuts were declared unlawful by a judge and compensation awarded. The PDA routinely supports members with employment tribunal claims against Boots and we have secured compensation running into hundreds of thousands of pounds over the years. We are unaware of the BPA having represented, or funded the representation of a pharmacist before an employment tribunal.

6. *The PDA Union could do so much more for Boots pharmacists under a recognition agreement*

The PDA Union has an excellent track record in getting the right outcome in disciplinary and grievance hearings. Currently our interventions only tackle the symptoms of a problem, rather than deal with the root cause. We know that some Boots pharmacists are unhappy about how their performance is judged, how their holidays are allocated, and others report poor treatment from managers that do not understand pharmacy. Boots pharmacists tell us that they are concerned about low staffing levels and unrealistic expectations placed upon them by managers. A collective bargaining arrangement would give the PDA Union the ability to directly negotiate with the company over these important topics and so much more besides.

7. *The BPA will continue to exist if it is derecognised*

The BPA has been in existence for almost forty years without needing an agreement such as the one signed in 2012. There is no reason why it cannot continue alongside the PDA Union if it is derecognised. A senior company director has confirmed in court that Boots relationship with the BPA would continue if the derecognition vote was successful.

8. *It is in your best interests for the BPA to be derecognised*

The PDA Union feels strongly that a recognition agreement with Boots serves the best interests of pharmacists. We are proud of the fact that more than 2,400 of your fellow pharmacists agree and have joined the PDA Union. Under a recognition agreement we will strive to give you good working conditions, competitive wages, improved benefits and the personal respect each pharmacist deserves.

9. *You will be more in control of your working life*

A recognition agreement will involve setting up democratic structures within Boots specifically to discuss pay hours and other working conditions ready for negotiations with the company. Pharmacists will be able to seek election to these committees to represent their colleagues and have a true independent voice.

10. *You can help change the wider pharmacy working environment*

Voting to derecognise the BPA, which will lead to the recognition of the PDA Union is just the first step. A successful collective bargaining agreement which benefits both pharmacists and Boots can be used as a template for other organisations. You can help start a movement that will change for the better how pharmacists are treated by other employers.



Some of the PDA Union team (L to R): Paul Day, National Officer; John Murphy, General Secretary; Helen Lewis, Regional Official, Wales & West; Mark Pitt, Assistant General Secretary; Mark Koziol, Assistant General Secretary

PDA Union/BPA Comparison Table

A comparison of the Pharmacists' Defence Association Union and the Boots Pharmacists' Association.

| | PDA Union | BPA |
|---|-----------|--------|
| Number of members (total) | >27,000 | <1,300 |
| Number of members within Boots | >2,200 | <1,300 |
| Independent trade union | ✓ | ✗ |
| Seeking to collectively bargain for better terms and conditions (e.g. pay, hours, holiday entitlement) on behalf of Boots pharmacists | ✓ | ✗ |
| Free from interference, tending towards domination or control by Boots (according to the Trades Union Certification Officer) | ✓ | ✗ |
| National executive extensive experience of working for Boots | ✓ | ✓ |
| Directly employs legal advisors (solicitors and paralegals) | ✓ | ✗ |
| Directly employs dedicated advisors (who are pharmacists) | ✓ | ✗ |
| Highly active in influencing national pharmacy policy on behalf of individual pharmacists | ✓ | ✗ |
| Evidence of willingness to legally challenge Boots and other organisations when necessary | ✓ | ✗ |
| Successful employment tribunal action on behalf of members | ✓ | ✗ |
| Legal defence costs insurance administered independently of pharmacy employers | ✓ | ✗ |

What Boots pharmacists say about the PDA Union

“Once again I thank you both for the great work you have done on my behalf. I’m now starting to get some peace of mind from the financial stability obtained from getting the settlement.”

“Thank you for all your support, I have received excellent advice and even just the supporting ‘listening ear’ from the PDA really does make such a difference.”

“Thank you again for everything you and the PDA are doing for me.”

“May I take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for all the help and advice you have provided for me throughout this case. I couldn’t have done it without your kind guidance.”

“Thank you soooooo much, Your support has meant the world to me, You are fantastic at your job.”

“I cannot thank you enough for your support throughout this process and just knowing someone is there has been so reassuring. Without the advice of the PDA this would have been so much more stressful and lonely, so thank-you all.”

“I will continue to champion the work of the PDA among fellow pharmacists especially the ones in employment who perhaps do not see the need to belong to a union.”

“I have found this a very stressful situation, which I know you realised. I’d just like to say an enormous “THANK YOU” to you and your team. Your professionalism and guidance has been exemplary and I’m really not sure what would have happened without you on my side. I can’t bring myself to imagine the various terrible possibilities. Yes I know it’s your job, but to those of us who find ourselves at this end of the process you are very much more than just someone doing a job.”

Getting in touch

The Pharmacists’ Defence Association
The Old Fire Station
69 Albion Street
Birmingham, B1 3EA
Tel: 0121 694 7000
Email: enquires@the-pda.org
Website: www.the-pda.org

Let’s stay connected. Follow us on social media!

Find us by entering the words ‘**Pharmacists’ Defence Association**’ into the search bar on the following sites:

