

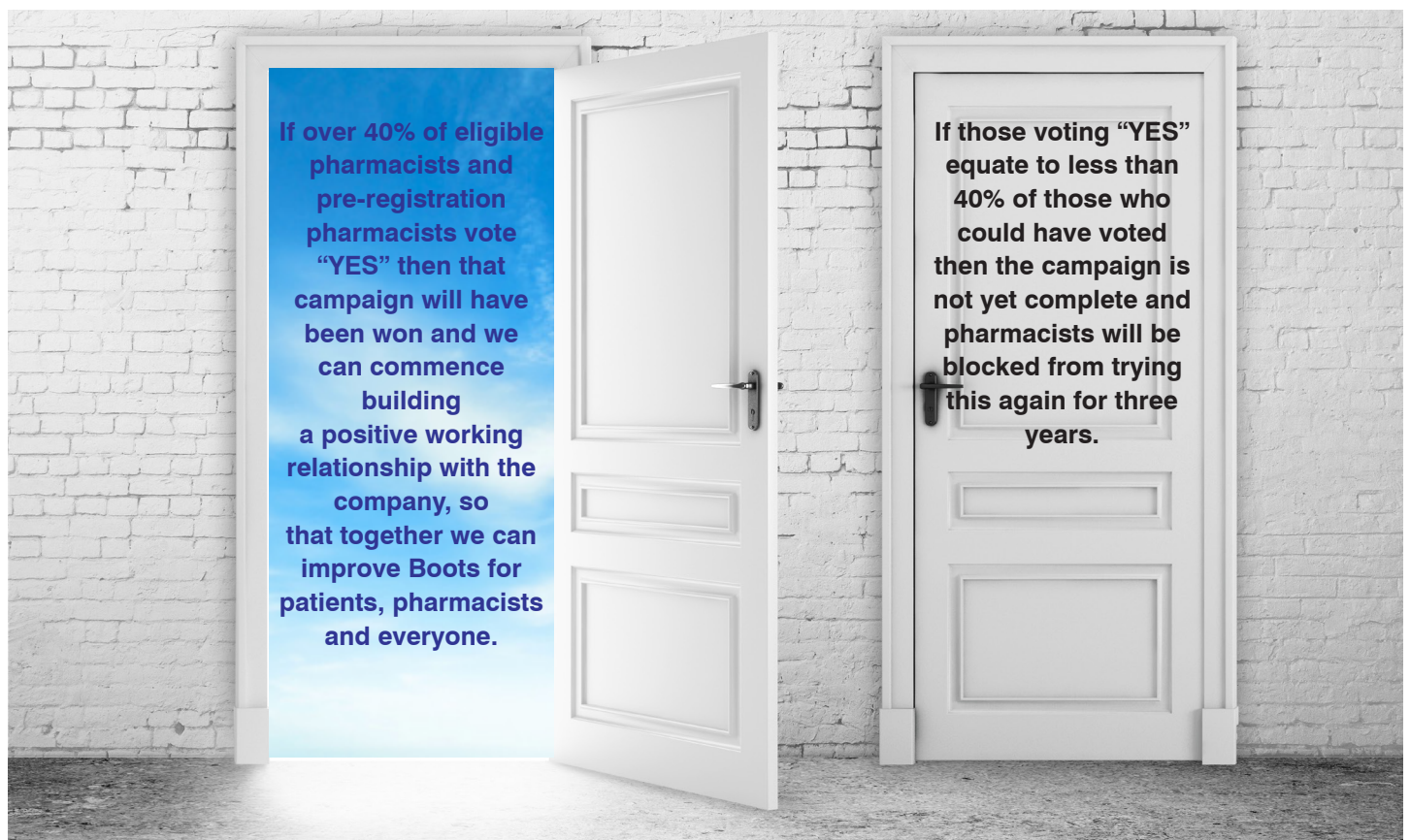
Boots Pharmacists News

February
2019

Time to be taken seriously Time to choose TIME TO VOTE

Now, it's up to you

Pharmacists have been trying to secure recognition for the PDA Union at Boots for 8 years. Last year's vote showed that pharmacists overwhelmingly want the PDA Union to be recognised, but with the company still trying to prevent it from happening, the law requires this final ballot. **What happens next really is up to you.**



That is the choice you have, and that is why you cannot leave it to others. Every single vote counts and your vote could be the one that tips the YES vote from 39.9% to over 40% and secures an independent voice at work for all pharmacists.

As we've pointed out in other publications there is no legal obligation for the company to meet any promises they have made if the ballot fails, but it will be a matter of law that you cannot try to secure recognition for the PDAU again for 3 years. Please make up your mind now and please vote when the ballot paper is received.

We are pharmacists

The PDA Union is now the largest membership organisation of individual pharmacists in the UK. We've grown to that size in just 10 years because over 28,000 members, including more than 2,500 Boots pharmacists, trust us to represent their interests, defend their reputation and help them get on in their career.

If an employer behaves unlawfully or if an individual pharmacist is being treated unfairly by their manager/employer we take action and we make no apologies for looking after the interests of individual pharmacists.

If management are not used to challenge and expects to be able to do whatever they want regardless of pharmacists' opinions, then we can see how they might not like a trade union. But individuals and groups of pharmacists have rights, so we will take action to support them.

We work for the benefits of pharmacists



Pictured are some of the PDAU central team

All members of the bargaining unit are welcome to apply for membership of the PDA Union but it isn't compulsory. Of course, we'd like you to join, and encourage you to do so, because we exist to help pharmacists and if you need individual help we want to be able to help you fully as a member and because we hope you'll agree with 28,000+ colleagues that PDAU membership gives value to you as a pharmacist.

We work for the benefit of all pharmacists. For example, we took a judicial review of the new GPhC standards to make sure they didn't unfairly intrude on your private life; when we campaign for our Safer Pharmacies Charter; with our support for the charity "Pharmacist Support" to enable them to do more to help pharmacists and their families; and when we discuss with government its work on rebalancing of medicines legislation. These are just some examples and similarly, once pharmacists secure recognition for us the improvements we negotiate will apply to all pharmacists in the bargaining unit.

Over 2,500 Boots pharmacists have already joined PDA Union and they are a diverse group of pharmacists and are representative of the mix of people who make up all 7,000 pharmacists in the bargaining unit. Those individuals who choose to be PDAU members gain access to individual guidance and support (sometimes worth £10,000s if it requires legal representation), and to our training and membership benefits. Members also enable the union to support other members and can stand for election and become our leaders.

Just Not Credible: Groundhog day proposal just shows Boots doesn't listen

Ever since the PDA Union first sought union recognition at Boots in 2011, the company has used a series of arrangements to try to give the impression of listening to its pharmacists, using structures that were not actually free of company control or influence. Less than a year ago, more than 2,800 pharmacists at Boots sent a clear message through the ballot box to the company's senior management that they rejected such structures, but the senior management are behaving as if that vote never happened.

On the last working day before the recognition ballot commenced, the company wrote to all pharmacists proposing yet another variation on what has previously been rejected by pharmacists, which Boots are calling a JNC.

Mark Pitt, Assistant General Secretary of the PDA Union said **“Following the company’s statement we immediately heard from pharmacists who felt insulted at the company’s total disregard for their previous vote and pointing out serious flaws in the management’s proposals.**

While it’s consistent with how the company have behaved for years, pharmacists had hoped that senior management were finally moving forwards. It’s a disappointment that they are still stuck in their old behaviours, but pharmacists tell us they won’t be fooled by yet another management device to stop them having an independent voice at work.

It feels like ‘groundhog day’ as the company repeat their earlier failed attempts to prevent pharmacists securing a genuinely independent voice at work.”



Some instant concerns about the company proposal raised by pharmacists

- The company proposal appropriates a term used when management and genuine trade unions agree to work together through a “Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC)” and suggests they are going to create their own in-house JNC, but this is misleading because an organisation can’t be “joint” with itself, this phrase only applies when two separate legal entities are involved.
- Pharmacists know the importance of professionals being regulated and the PDA Union is regulated by the Trade Union Certification Officer, in fact even the Boots Pharmacist Association (BPA) is regulated by the Certification Officer, but the management seem to be proposing an entirely unregulated arrangement giving pharmacists nowhere to go if they are unhappy.
- The PDA Union has its own funds, employ our own lawyers and where necessary can take legal action against the company, such as when Boots unlawfully cut premium pay for pharmacists in 2012

...continued overleaf

- The PDA Union will have legal rights to appoint safety officers to act upon health & safety concerns and plans to use those rights to tackle stress, support those with poor mental health and remove risks to physical safety. Similarly, there are legal rights for recognised independent trade unions to be consulted on major business changes. These rights do not exist for an in-house committee.
- Individual PDA Union representatives also have the legal protections afforded to trade union officials. No such rights exist for members of an in-house committee and a well-meaning pharmacist could find themselves exposed if they tried to stand up against the might of the company under such an arrangement.
- There are legally defined and well-established dispute resolution processes when independent unions are recognised.

This proposal is a further shining example of what the PDA Union have already described as a “charm offensive” and fits the company’s usual tactics over many years of promising improvements to block independent representation. However, pharmacists are now wise to such constant promises and know that they don’t deliver the improvements pharmacists need to see.

Mark Pitt continued: **“We have constantly questioned why senior management spend so much time and effort on fighting against their own employees and once this ballot concludes we hope they will finally redirect that effort into working with us to improve working conditions for pharmacists.”**

Have you received your ballot paper?



Ballot papers will be distributed to eligible Boots’ pharmacists and pre-registration pharmacists on Monday **18 February 2019** by mail to their home address.

If you received this publication by post then you should also receive your ballot paper to the same address, however there is always a chance items go missing in post, so here is what to do if you don’t receive yours by 22 February:

If you consider that you are eligible to vote and have not received a ballot paper by **22 February 2019**, please contact the CAC Case Manager, Linda Lehan, by email at llehan@cac.gov.uk giving your full name and address.