

# Boots Newsletter - April 2019

## Collective Bargaining Update

The first item we need to negotiate with the company is the agreement which will bring structure to our discussions in the months and years ahead. As we have said before, it's time to draw a line under past conflict and create a positive employee relations environment that benefits pharmacists, the company and patients too. Boots have also told us they want to reset the relationship between the company and the union.

The recognition ballot result gives us some basic legal entitlements to act on behalf of pharmacists and pre-registration pharmacists in the bargaining unit which the company have no choice but to implement; however we are talking to senior managers about arrangements that go beyond the legal minimum, because that is what pharmacists want us to do..

### Example: Redundancy

If Boots is making 20 or more employees redundant at the same time, there must be a consultation between company representatives and the PDA Union. Collective consultations must cover:

- ways to avoid redundancies
- the reasons for redundancies
- how to keep the number of dismissals to a minimum
- how to limit the effects for employees involved, for example by offering retraining

However, we think every individual deserves the full support and input from their trade union so we are inviting the company to go beyond this legal minimum arrangement and agree that they would do the same, even if there is just one individual at risk of redundancy.

What is agreed, will be a part of the agreement we are currently discussing

The agreement will also confirm what topics the company will Inform us about in advance of making changes; the matters they will consult us about (i.e. they will actively consider our opinions and alternative suggestion before implementing) and what they will negotiate with us (i.e. agree with us before making any changes).

The PDA Union approach to the overall agreement is that we should structure it to encourage positive outcomes. As workers represented by an independent trade union, pharmacists have a number of options available to them if we don't agree matters with the company on their behalf, such as legal action in the courts, industrial action, public/media campaigns or groups of individuals raising collective grievances to challenge company action.

However, we would much rather the agreement gives enough opportunity to avoid these and other ways we can be in conflict with the company by incorporating dispute resolution procedures when a matter is unresolved locally and external arbitration through an independent body such as ACAS (the government's Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service).

Ultimately we want matters to be resolved locally, quickly, fairly and avoiding win:lose outcomes wherever possible. We want win:win where management, employer, colleagues and company all benefit from improved employee relations.

Following our first meeting we agreed a joint statement with Boots and we hope to issue similar jointly agreed statements after each formal meeting of the joint body we are now creating.

# Joint Statement



The Central Arbitration Committee (CAC) recently confirmed that the Pharmacists' Defence Association Union (PDAU) had been successful in its application to be recognised for the purposes of collective bargaining with Boots.

The first meeting between Boots and the PDAU took place on 1 April 2019 in Leicester and we're writing to you together with an update.

The meeting was co-chaired by Anne Higgins, Director of Stores Scotland and Northern Ireland and Paul Day, PDA Union National Officer. Anne was partnered by Matthew Blain, Director of HR Operations; and Kirsty Pitcher, Director of HR Retail & Opticians. The PDAU were also represented by: Mark Pitt, Assistant General Secretary and Michael Radcliffe.

It marked the start of negotiations about the terms of the collective bargaining agreement, how it will work and what it will cover. We talked through the outline of a recognition agreement and the cooperation needed to define our future work.

We're at the start of a new relationship in which both sides are committed to creating a productive, trusting, positive and successful partnership that will work to keep the best interests of the profession and business at its heart.

It's not always going to be easy, and there will be some things we aren't in agreement on, but equally, we have common ground and shared goals that we can work together to develop.

We have both listened to the voice of our pharmacists and will continue to do so to build the future of Pharmacy at Boots. We care passionately about doing the right thing for our pharmacists – to create an exciting, innovative and sustainable future for us all, and we will continue with our negotiations with this in mind.

For Boots UK:

Matthew Blain, Director of HR Operations,  
Kirsty Pitcher, Director of HR Retail & Opticians,  
Anne Higgins, Director of Stores Scotland and Northern Ireland – Boots UK

For PDA Union:

Mark Pitt, Assistant General Secretary,  
Paul Day National Officer, PDA Union

# Boots Quarterly Results

You will have seen the company statement on their quarterly results which they described as the “most difficult quarter” since Walgreens Boots Alliance was formed. As you’d expect we received a lot of enquiries from the media on this topic and informed them of our concerns.

We confirmed we’ll be doing all we can to stop our members being made redundant and will want to see any individuals subject to potential redundancy supported properly and fairly compensated for that situation.

We are aware that redundancies are not the only consequence of this announcement and the company has said that poor trading results may also adversely impact on future pay and bonuses for Boots pharmacists.

We also know that redundancies don’t only affect those whose employment ends, but also those who remain and may have to pick up extra workload or deal with new issues brought about by the company shrinking. You can also read our statement, which includes a link to our guide on redundancy, on our website: <https://www.the-pda.org/wba-financials-0419/>

## From black box to transparency

We are already starting to consider the pay negotiations in which we will submit a claim for fairer reward for Boots pharmacists, but it’s clear to us that a key first step is to make the pay system more transparent.

Many pharmacists say they consider the pay system to currently be a “black box” with local managers also unaware how it really works.



The company are now obliged to collectively bargain with the PDAU on behalf of the c.7,000 pharmacists and we want to make sure pharmacists understand how the system works and what the consequences of the current pay system are.

In pay negotiations we’ll be finding ways to make sure the pay system improves and as professionals you deserve to have a transparent, understandable and fair pay system in which you feel appropriately rewarded. We’ll be asking PDAU members their opinions on what our priorities should be in the coming period before submitting our pay claim.

## B3

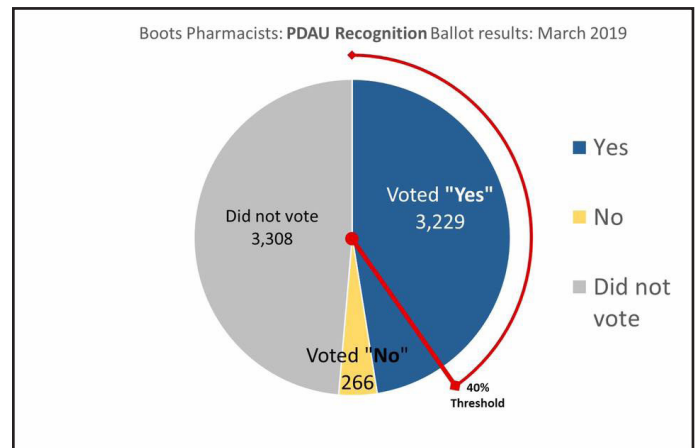
From now on we’ll be reaching agreements with the company which will become part of your working conditions. Over time, this will develop into a fuller book of agreements made on behalf of pharmacists following the involvement of their democratically run union.

Managers throughout the company will have to make sure they comply with the agreements made. We’re calling that the Boots Blue Book , or “B3” for short and we will make sure pharmacists at Boots have ready access to the agreements that confirm their rights, entitlements and choices at work.

## Charitable giving

You may remember that we offered to donate £1 to charity for every vote cast in the recognition ballot. Adding together the 3,229 “Yes” votes with the “266” No votes that means we will be giving a total of £3,495 to charity.

We’ll let you know more about this in a future issue.



## Become part of the PDAU network at Boots

PDAU members employed at Boots have the opportunity to volunteer to become part of our network at the company. We will need to fill a number of positions and to begin with we would like you to express initial interest in becoming part of the team.

We want to appoint a wide range of representatives from different backgrounds who reflect the pharmacy population. You don’t need to commit fully at this time, but if you are interested, or would like to find out more, please follow this link and tell us some more about you.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/BootsNetwork1>

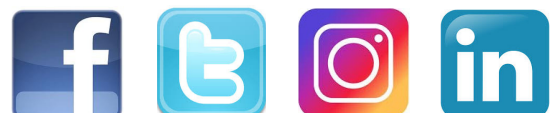
We will create a network that represents the four UK nations and organise the necessary training. Please be assured that we will never ask you to undertake activity that you don’t feel confident doing; we will train, support and coach you to do that role.

Trade Union representatives are also protected in law from detriment or discrimination, so you should not be treated negatively or suffer any penalty for serving as a representative. On the contrary, being a union representative often brings useful personal development for colleagues who learn new skills from their activity and gain confidence in their substantive job.



## 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:





# Everyone who works should be in a trade union and there is a trade union suitable for each of us.

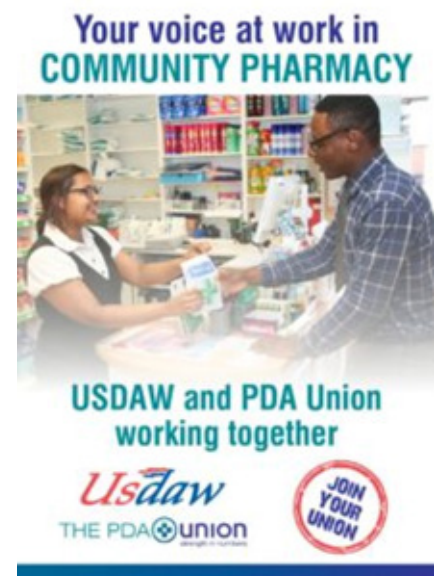
PDA Union is the only independent trade union in the UK exclusively for pharmacists and those training to become pharmacists; we welcome pharmacists from every sector. However, from time to time we are also contacted by non-pharmacist members of the community pharmacy team asking if we will either extend PDAU membership to include them or if we will create an organisation for them which would replicate what the PDAU does for pharmacists.

Neither of those things fit within the purpose of PDAU, but we can and do recommend that those other colleagues join another existing independent trade union that is appropriate for their role and for where they work.

We've now published a leaflet giving some more details about how pharmacists can join PDAU and other members of the community pharmacy team can join USDAW. You can download the leaflet from our website.

While we will listen to all Boots pharmacists, to have the full benefit of belonging to a union, pharmacists and pre-registration pharmacists at Boots need to be members of the PDA Union.

<https://www.the-pda.org/join/>



## Can you help name this newsletter?

Now that we are recognised by Boots, we will be communicating to members with updates on discussions with management, our negotiations and other activity in the company. Transparency is important to us and we want to keep you informed so that you can contribute to and influence our work. Until now we've called these newsletters "Boots News" but we'd welcome any appropriate suggestions from members for a better title of what we hope will become a regular read for all pharmacists at Boots. If you've got an idea, please let us know by emailing: [recognition@the-pda.org](mailto:recognition@the-pda.org)

## 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](mailto:enquires@the-pda.org)  
Website: [www.the-pda.org](http://www.the-pda.org)