

# Boots Pharmacists News

April  
2018

## Time to act: use your vote



7,000 Boots pharmacists and pre-reg's 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](http://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.



**Also  
Inside:**

Foreword from Mark Pitt, Assistant General Secretary | What's at stake?  
What is "collective bargaining"? | How would PDAU collective bargaining  
be different from what the BPA does now?

# Foreword from Mark Pitt

## Assistant General Secretary

In 2012, the rights of Boots pharmacists and pre-reg graduates at work suffered a major blow, due to an agreement set up between Boots and the Boots Pharmacists' Association (BPA). The agreement prevents 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, 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. 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 over 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
- The provision of 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. 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 PDAU be different from what the BPA does now?

How would PDAU 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 PDAU 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 PDAU 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" 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.***