

PDA Update in Boots

March 2024



Welcome to your March 2024 PDA Update in Boots

Keeping you informed of all the PDA Union activities within Boots

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We encourage you to share this newsletter with your pharmacy colleagues that are not yet members of the PDA.

PDA Reps in Boots support members with Pharmacy First Service implementation

By Nav Bhogal, National Representative



Your PDA Reps in Boots recently held a member meeting attended by nearly 200 Boots pharmacists to discuss the positives and the challenges posed by the rapid introduction of the Pharmacy First Service.

During the meeting, the reps highlighted the PDA's [Safer Pharmacies Charter](#), which commitments include safe staffing, respect for professional judgement, and the ability to raise concerns without fear or reprisal.

These commitments define basic standards to ensure safe practice wherever pharmacists work and are at the heart of many of the concerns heard by your PDA Reps in relation to Pharmacy First.

You can read about the event [here](#).

Following this meeting of members, the PDA Reps Network met with the employer in their regular Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) meeting, where a commitment was secured by your reps that if a pharmacist could not provide the Pharmacy First Service with justifiable reasons, no pressure to deliver the service would be placed on the RP by clinical or non-clinical managers. If you experience any issues around decisions you make as the RP, please do contact your [local PDA Rep](#) for advice.

Learn more

- [Pharmacy First Service](#)

What is a Health and Safety Rep?

By Gordon Finlayson, National Representative

It was not that long ago that pharmacists in Boots did not have an independent voice within the company. Since 2019 however, the company has recognised the Pharmacists' Defence Association as the representative voice for frontline pharmacists and there is now a network of PDA Reps throughout the whole of the UK, all of whom are also trained Health and Safety Reps.



In simplistic terms, a Health and Safety Rep (HSR) is there to ensure all our workplaces are as safe as possible and that the risks from any hazards are minimised. This can apply to our physical surroundings and to the pressures put on us at work which affect our mental health and wellbeing.

Your HSR has the legal right to inspect the workplaces where PDA members work. An inspection may take place after a serious incident has occurred, at the request of a member, or as part of a regular inspection calendar. They also have the legal right to request and review documents that are relevant to any inspection.

Prior to our involvement, Boots had no independent oversight of the health and safety within pharmacies. Boots investigated any incidents, reviewed the findings, and implemented any recommendations. That is not the case now.

If an incident occurs in-store which results in a colleague absence of three days or more, the company alerts the appropriate PDA HSR and a union investigation takes place. In most cases, the recommendations of the company are supported by the safety rep. However, in some instances, the HSR has requested additional steps to be taken to enhance the safety of the workplace, with a full report including recommendations sent to the Boots Health and Safety Team in Nottingham after every visit.

Learn more

- [Health and Safety Reps guide](#)

Health and Safety update

By Richard Evans, Regional Representative for Northern Ireland



Over the last few months our Health and Safety group, which consists of three PDA Health and Safety Reps and two health and safety managers from Boots Head Office, has investigated the main causes of accidents in our dispensaries. Although we have seen a decrease in overall pharmacy accidents – a trend that is improving each year – we are still working to reduce accidents further with a particular focus on increasing awareness of potential hazards. The three most reported hazards are currently trips over totes of stock at ground level,

falls from working at height, and equipment and drawer units sliding out too far or being left open for colleagues to collide with.

The Health and Safety group started by ensuring that our store leaders have more knowledge on how to conduct inspections and replace faulty units and how colleagues can work safely in their pharmacy by being more vigilant around keeping floor areas clear. By doing this, we believe we can drastically reduce the risk of colleagues getting injured as well as the detrimental effect this can have on work and family time.

We have also looked at needlestick data, which is showing an increase this year, mainly at the used needle disposal stage. Your PDA Health and Safety Reps urge all members to follow the safety triangle process and set out the administration area safely to avoid injury.

We all have the right to work in safe and hazard-free environments and we are making health and safety our top priority over these winter months. There are many potential health and safety hazards in a workplace, and your PDA Health and Safety Reps have recently supported members with problems such as faulty heating, broken drawer units, trip hazards, damp walls and worn floors that might have been logged but not actioned or still awaiting the next part of the remedial process. If you have followed the reporting process but are experiencing issues, your rep can help get things moving in the right direction. If you would like us to help you with any health and safety issue, please contact your [local PDA Rep](#).

Learn more

- [It's Time to Stay Safe at Work](#)

Boots and PDA work together to increase trainee pharmacist pay rates

The PDA is pleased to have agreed another increase for the trainee pharmacist roles in England and Northern Ireland with Boots. While NHS England provides a grant to employers to take on a trainee and some employers passport the entire grant to their trainees, as a salary in real terms this has lost its value over recent years and leaves many trainees in England worryingly close to minimum wage levels, which is not appropriate for the role they undertake. Boots is acting responsibly to have recognised this and the PDA welcomes that it is now paying in excess of that.

The new pay rate for trainee pharmacists will increase as follows from 1 April 2024:

- Trainee pharmacist – Zone A in England/Northern Ireland: £12.69
- Trainee pharmacist – Zone B in England: £13.79

- Trainee pharmacist – Zone C in England: £14.05

This increase will be applied centrally in the April pay run. Your PDA Reps in Boots encourage all trainee pharmacists to contact your local rep if you experience any issues with your pay in April. If you are trainee pharmacist working in Boots and not yet a PDA member, you can [join for free today!](#)

Learn more

- [Joint statement from Boots and the PDA Union on trainee pharmacist pay rates](#)

Taking action against workplace stress

By Clare Hirst, PDA Organiser and Health and Safety lead

The recent addition of the Pharmacy First Service in England has only highlighted the growing workplace demands being placed on pharmacists, and we are working closely with members to tackle stress and poor wellbeing in the workplace where necessary.



We launched the ‘It’s Time to Address Stress’ campaign during Stress Awareness Month in April 2022 with the goal of improving members’ working lives and their health. As the next step in the campaign, we’ve now developed an action plan containing guidance for members on steps they can take to look after themselves and ensure that their employer complies with their legal duty to protect an employee’s mental health. The plan includes a risk assessment request template that will help you feel empowered to raise the issue of stress with your line manager in a clear and factual way.

If you would like additional support from the PDA in relation to stress, please contact the [PDA Member Support Centre](#).

Learn more

- [It’s Time to Address Stress: Action plan](#)
- [It’s Time to Address Stress](#)
- [Pharmacist Support](#)

My experience as a Health and Safety Rep

By Gordon Finlayson, National Representative

As you have already read, a PDA Health and Safety Rep (HSR) is a Boots pharmacist colleague who is here to support you in ensuring you work in a safe and healthy workplace, and as a HSR I have undertaken many inspections of workplaces.

My very first inspection involved visiting a store where a colleague had been injured when a dispensary shelf hit them. An internal inspection had already taken place and the outcome was that no faults were found. However, when I inspected the dispensary shelves, I found several that were obviously defective and required remedial attention. The store manager and pharmacist agreed, and measures were put in place to resolve the issues.

When a rep visits a store, even if it is as the result of a specific incident, other areas will be inspected too. On my first inspection, as well as the dispensary drawers, I noticed that floor tiles in the dispensary were raised and presented an obvious trip hazard. Again, the store team took immediate remedial action.

I can honestly say that because of my visit, the risks of injury to all colleagues in that store were minimised.

This winter we have had a lot of issues around store temperatures caused by faulty, broken or poorly maintained heating systems. I have visited numerous stores and worked with company reps to seek solutions.

I am sure you have heard it before though – health and safety is everyone’s responsibility. If you notice anything in your store that does not look right or that you feel is a risk to the health and safety of you and your colleagues, let your [local PDA Rep](#) know.

Boots Pension Scheme update

We continue to support our members who are affected by the changes to the Boots Pension scheme which closed in 2010. You can read about our support to date [here](#).

We have requested all information from the scheme that we are entitled to under pension legislation. The company has now provided this and it is being analysed by our legal advisors.

Paul Moloney, PDA National Officer said, “The company has provided significant amounts of information but to date has still not provided anything that suggests that

members should have been fully aware the ability to take an unreduced pension at 60 was not a right but dependent on the discretion of the trustees.”

You can read our latest update to members [here](#).

Member feedback

We love to hear from members we've supported! Here's just some of our recent feedback.

“I would like to give some good feedback about how helpful the PDA was, especially the Boots PDA Representative for the North West and West Yorkshire region, Jayesh Ladva. Jayesh is very helpful, knowledgeable, and understanding, which filled me with confidence in difficult times. Jayesh helped me with pay review and a grievance about the working pattern. I'm very grateful for all the support from Jayesh and the PDA.”

“Hi Gordon, I wanted to say thank you for your support and guidance during the consultation process for the closure of my store. It was a stressful time and you helped answer so many questions and concerns that I had. Your support is much appreciated.”

“Hi Mithul, just wanted to say thanks again for providing such excellent support for me throughout this incident and at yesterday's meeting. I'm so appreciative that I had you there on my team, thank you so much!”

“I just wanted to say a huge thank you to Nicola for being amazing! Through these difficult time of store closures, she has been my biggest support. She went up and beyond her duties. She is an amazing human with great empathy for others which makes you feel you're in great hands and confident that the outcome of this whole journey will be in my best interest.”

PDA responds to DHSC consultation on pharmacy supervision

After many years of debate around the governance framework for pharmacy supervision, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) launched a consultation which concluded on 29 February 2024. This consultation is the most significant for pharmacy practice in decades and the PDA was able to submit a comprehensive analysis and response. PDA members are encouraged to read the full PDA submission [here](#).

Learn more

- [PDA responds to DHSC consultation on pharmacy supervision](#)
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Join us today!

The PDA is the only independent trade union exclusively for pharmacists and is the recognised trade union for pharmacists employed at Boots. This means that the PDA negotiates with the employer on pay and other terms and conditions, as well as holding consultative meetings on a range of topics.

PDA membership is built around professional indemnity insurance but also includes employment advice and support, along with the opportunity to connect with other pharmacists to improve pharmacy for all.

You can read more about PDA membership [here](#).

If you are a pharmacist and not yet a member, please [join us now!](#)