

# Boots Recognition Update

October  
2018



This is an update about the PDA Union's efforts to secure an independent voice at work for pharmacists and pre-registration pharmacists at Boots, so that we can improve their working lives. Please read and share this information and let us know your views, which are important to us. You can contact us by phone on +44 (0)121 694 7000, email at: [enquiries@the-pda.org](mailto:enquiries@the-pda.org), or follow us on any of the below social media platforms.

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



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# A better future?

Following a ballot of 7,000 Boots pharmacists in June, in which 87% of voters favoured changes to the trade union arrangements for pharmacists at Boots, the PDA Union are now following a legal process to become the recognised independent voice of pharmacists at the company. Formal recognition will give the PDA Union the ability to negotiate on your behalf.

Regrettably, senior Boots managers have continued to place obstacles in the way of an independent voice at work for pharmacists, and show no sign of changing their position. The company would not agree a voluntary recognition agreement with the PDA Union following the ballot and remains opposed to pharmacists having an independent voice at work.

**We believe a better way is possible. We have made it clear that we want to work positively to create an environment where patients, pharmacists and the company's shareholders all benefit. We want job security, fair treatment, professional respect and appropriate reward for pharmacists. We want to work collaboratively with management to solve challenges and make the most of opportunities together.**

Boots management want there to be a second ballot, in order to try to overturn the clear view of pharmacists expressed last time, we hope you will vote again when the time comes. Once an independent trade union is recognised through this process, the law prevents management from any attempt to end the recognition arrangements for a minimum of 3 years.



## How we already help

Under UK employment law, skilled PDA Union representatives are already able to support and represent colleagues formally in internal disciplinary and grievance meetings. If things escalate to an employment tribunal, coroner's inquest, Fatal Accident Inquiry or regulatory hearing, our team can continue to support members with their cases.

While the company's actions continue to delay you getting an independent voice at work, our team continues to help pharmacists at Boots with the issues they face and as we are an independent trade union, members can be assured that they can talk to us in confidence under legal privilege about their concerns.

In the last 12 months alone, we have dealt with hundreds of cases affecting Boots employees and successfully supported many Boots pharmacists through disciplinary and grievance hearings.

We know so much more can be achieved if we are recognised and prevent these sorts of cases reaching these stages in the first place. We want to resolve issues locally and quickly before they become disputes, allowing all those involved to reach an appropriate outcome and get on with their lives and careers. Prevention is, after all, better than cure.

# ACAS talks end without agreement

In September two sets of talks facilitated by the government's conciliation service ended without agreement. These talks were an attempt to reach a voluntary agreement between the two parties before the deadline of Monday 17th September expired.

"We are disappointed that the talks have ended without agreement, but we'd like to thank ACAS for their efforts in helping both sides. Confidentiality of the process means we cannot report the details of discussions. The PDA Union remains open to the option of further facilitated talks and would still work towards a voluntary agreement as an alternative to following a legal route.

We'd also like to extend our thanks to Boots negotiating team for their input. Although we did not reach agreement at this stage of the process, we expect to continue talking to Andrew Caplan and his colleagues again over the next few months", said PDA Union Assistant General Secretary, Mark Pitt.

The group of employees who voted for change to trade union arrangements, known as a "Bargaining Unit" consists of almost 7,000 pharmacists working in stores, head office and field roles. This population voted to remove the previous arrangements the employer had with the Boots Pharmacist Association and so currently they have no trade union recognition. PDA Union are determined that all pharmacists and pre-registration pharmacists in this population come out of this process with appropriate arrangements for them to be represented by an independent trade union.

Mark Pitt concluded: "The PDA Union is a independent trade union. We want to work



positively with the management to create improved employee relations and working conditions that benefit the company, employees and patients alike. We are a sensible, modern Trade Union prepared to listen to management proposals, to consider alternatives and where necessary to compromise within a mutually respectful relationship.

We found these talks useful as they are the foundations of a healthy and challenging relationship where both parties will be able to speak and be heard, once our ambition to become the recognised union at Boots is achieved."

Before the ballot, company managers said they would respect the democratic process. Regrettably they have continued to resist their employees from having an independent voice at work despite an overwhelming vote. Although these ACAS talks have ended, the option for management to agree terms with the PDA Union is always there. In the meantime, the PDA Union will continue with the legal process and the CAC will now be asked to confirm which pharmacists constitute the bargaining unit.



## Charity donation

After promising to give £1 to charity for each Boots pharmacist and pre-registration graduate who voted in the recent derecognition ballot, the PDA Union donated £3,308 to Macmillan Cancer Support, which was selected by asking voters for their preferred charity to receive the donation.

“We are delighted to present Macmillan Cancer Support with this charity donation and we would once again like to thank everyone who voted in the Boots ballot, regardless of which way they voted,” said Mark Pitt, Assistant General Secretary at the PDA Union.

“This charitable donation was not dependent on how people voted and was a way to encourage participation in an important ballot whilst at the same time supporting a very worthy cause.”

“Thank you so much to the PDA Union for their support, and all of the Boots staff who



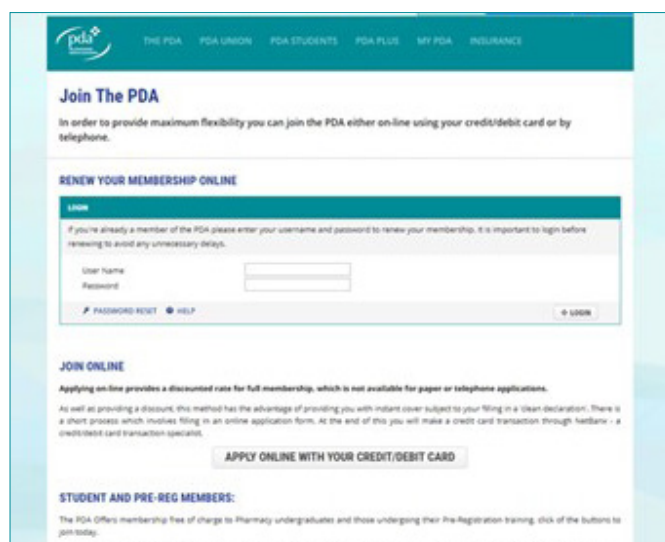
Pictured L-R: Sara Johnson, Macmillan Fundraising Manager, Rajani Patel, derecognition applicant, Mark Pitt, PDA Union Assistant General Secretary

voted. We wouldn't be able to support people living with cancer without the help and support of local organisations like the PDA Union. This donation will help us be there for the thousands of people living with cancer right now and their families,” said Sara Johnson, Regional Fundraising Manager at Macmillan Cancer Support.

## PDA Union support

This communication has initially been distributed to PDA Union members employed at Boots, but we know that hundreds of other pharmacists voted positively in the recent ballot and want positive, sustainable change too. You will probably be reassured to know that while we act for the benefit of all pharmacists, we only take on the individual cases of those who are our members.

We exist in order to help pharmacists and never want to turn anyone away, so please share this communication with every colleague you know and encourage those



who are not already PDA Union members to join us without delay.