

## TOP STORY:

### Pharmacists secure a vote in historic attempt to get an independent voice at work



Thousands of pharmacists employed by Boots have moved a step closer to securing an independent voice at work. This is the latest development in a long-running campaign by pharmacists to overcome their employer's attempts to prevent them being able to negotiate their working conditions through an independent trade union of their choice. This includes important topics such as pay, hours and holidays. **Read more inside...**

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# A message from John Murphy

Pharmacists want to do their very best to deliver a high-quality service that keeps patients safe. They are health professionals and employees and should be treated with respect as both.

**In the workplace, employers have management to represent them, so why shouldn't employees have someone speaking up for them too?**



Competent management who act fairly have nothing to fear from their employees choosing to be represented by an independent trade union, so I'd like to know why the senior management at Boots don't want to work with an independent trade union there.

A union is a method by which the employees can have a collective voice and work together to stop things going wrong or to fix things if they do go wrong. It's a positive, professional and grown-up way to work together.

However, Boots have gone to extraordinary lengths over the past six years to prevent pharmacists from having an

independent voice at work.

The agreement between Boots and the Boots Pharmacists Association (BPA) prevents negotiations over important topics such as salary and other conditions of employment. The BPA signed away these important negotiating rights without consulting pharmacists or seeking any approval from its membership to do so. The vote to remove the agreement is a rare opportunity to take control over your working life. Once the agreement is removed the PDA Union will be able to secure negotiating rights for all Boots pharmacists in the bargaining unit and we will be working

hard to improve your terms and conditions.

To overcome this barrier, an independent public body - the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC) - will hold a secret ballot of employees to determine what should happen. The CAC can then make sure the employer acts appropriately on the outcome of the ballot.

We've responded to requests from our members to help with this process and the CAC has accepted an application for the process to commence. This bulletin gives you more information about what happens next.

**You can hear more from John here: <https://youtu.be/0OLfacTD5AM>**

## What are other pharmacists saying about this process?



**Over 1,000 Boots pharmacists have pledged to vote in favour of derecognising the BPA and recognising the PDA Union.**

You can read some of their comments here:

[www.pdaurecognition.co.uk/pharmacists-views](http://www.pdaurecognition.co.uk/pharmacists-views)

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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.



## Your Questions Answered – the Voting Process

### Q: What is the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC)?

A: The CAC is a public body that helps resolve workplace disputes of this nature. You can read more here: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/central-arbitration-committee](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/central-arbitration-committee)

### Q: Do you have to be a union member to vote?

A: No. Around 2,500 employees at Boots are already PDA Union members, but it is important to note that all front-line pharmacists employed by Boots should get a vote and it doesn't matter if you are a member of the PDA Union, the BPA, both, or neither - your vote still counts.

### Q: Who gets to vote in the ballot?

A: It is pharmacists and pre-reg trainees at levels 5,6 and 7 that are eligible to vote. The exact job codes will be confirmed in due course.

### Q: What happens to the BPA if they are derecognised?

A: Boots have confirmed that their relationship with the BPA will continue in these circumstances.

### Q Is my vote confidential?

A: Yes. The ballot is managed independently by the CAC and just like voting in elections, how you vote is strictly confidential. Neither the PDA Union, the BPA nor Boots will ever know how any individual voted. It is also unlawful for the company to try

and pressure you into voting one way or the other.

### Q Is it a simple majority that decides the outcome?

A: There is a minimum turn out required to make the vote count. At least 40% of those entitled to vote must vote in favour in order for things to change. It is therefore essential that anyone that has a vote, uses it.

### Q Where will I find out about voting papers, deadlines, etc?

A: The CAC will make sure all eligible voters get the necessary information in due course. Please note that it will be a postal ballot and the voting papers will be delivered to your home address.

## Who are the PDA Union?

- Created in 2008 by pharmacists, for pharmacists, we are the only independent Trade Union in the UK exclusively for pharmacists.
- A not-for-profit organisation supporting your professional and employment needs throughout your educational study and career.
- We are a strong voice for pharmacists, standing up for our members to have:
  - Job security and decent treatment at work.
  - Safe working environments.
  - Reasonable working practice that delivers patient safety.
  - Fair regulation and respect as professionals.
- 27,000+ members across the community, hospital and primary care sectors throughout the four nations of the UK.
- Because we only represent individuals, we can challenge employers, regulators and the government on behalf of our members without any conflict of interest.
- We provide insurance cover to safeguard and defend the individual pharmacist and their reputation.
- The only UK member of Employed Community Pharmacists in Europe (EPheU).

## If you are not already a member of the PDA Union, please join now.

By joining the PDA Union and supporting our formal recognition by Boots you can have a real influence in shaping your working life, both now and for the future.

If you are already a PDA Union member – thank you for your continuing support and please encourage your colleagues to join us. If you are not, then we urge you to join without delay. If ever there was a time for Boots pharmacists to have their rights protected by the PDA Union - then that time is now!

- ✓ More than £1,000,000 compensation already secured from employers who have treated pharmacists unfairly or illegally
- ✓ £500,000 worth of Legal Defence Costs Insurance
- ✓ £5,000,000 worth of Professional Indemnity Insurance

To join, visit our website: [www.the-pda.org](http://www.the-pda.org) or call us on 0121 694 7000.

## Finally, a message to managers:



Working with a Trade Union isn't just good for employees, it's also good for managers at all levels. Many managers were previously front-line pharmacists themselves and we understand that they can find themselves in situations where they have pressure from above to achieve sometimes impossible results from the resources available.

Having an independent voice that can raise issues to those at the very top of the company should help everybody by ensuring the front-line challenges, sometimes created by strategic decisions, are better communicated and understood. It can also help to keep senior management accountable for the consequences of their decisions.

We would ask managers reading this to consider how a future where senior management are more engaged with the views of employees, discussed through an independent trade union, could make their working lives better too. **Please encourage your team to vote!**