



## The PDA Union view about some of the claims being made by Boots

**We are pharmacists and at the PDA Union, it's important to us that Boots pharmacists and pre-registration pharmacists have all the facts they need to make an informed decision when voting on PDA Union recognition. Recognition means you would be able to negotiate with the company for better terms & conditions through an independent trade union, the PDA Union.**

The PDA Union has extensive experience in pharmacy and is one of the largest unions in the UK. It has a passion for the profession, including over 250 years of combined experience of working for Boots, in its national team.

Earlier in this recognition journey, in a 2012 court judgement, it was found that Boots senior management had been "disingenuous" and "deliberately misled the [PDA] union" so it could sign an agreement with the BPA, which was specifically designed to stop you from being able to negotiate better terms and conditions at work. At the hearing, the Boots HR Director at the time agreed that the intended effect of the agreement, in its totality, was to ensure that no Boots pharmacists could have any negotiating rights over their terms and conditions whatsoever. Senior directors resorted to disingenuous behaviour just stop you from being able to negotiate over your pay, hours and other important working conditions. That agreement was finally removed in 2018 by an overwhelming majority vote from Boots pharmacists and pre-reg.

After eight years in the making, Boots pharmacists and pre-reg now have the opportunity to vote YES for PDA Union recognition.

In recent communications from Boots, there are some statements which we believe are potentially misleading or confusing. We believe it is important to let you have the facts.

## 1 ...Your future working conditions

Boots told you	The PDA Union view
<p>“The outcome [of the ballot] will have a direct impact on the future of pharmacy, on your voice in its creation, and on how we work together to make it happen.”</p>	<p>Boots seems to be exaggerating here; this vote is fundamentally about your pay and other important terms of employment, not the entire future of pharmacy at Boots.</p> <p>Under law, negotiations may be on matters <u>related to</u> and including pay, hours and holiday (including the performance appraisal system, for example) and the Union can also appoint Safety representatives. Through an increased focus on health &amp; safety, you will benefit from a network of specially trained safety officers supporting you with any safety concerns you have.</p> <p>Union recognition will not stop you meeting and interacting with the company or your manager just as you do now; however, it will give you an independent voice to speak on your behalf at work and will allow you to negotiate better working conditions.</p>

## 2 ...Anti-union stance

Boots told you	The PDA Union view
<p>“We are not anti-union.”</p>	<p>Boots uses a variety of tactics which are recognised as being anti-union, and documented as such in academic research. It's trying to deprive pharmacists and pre-registration pharmacists of the ability to negotiate better terms and conditions through the independent PDA trade union.</p> <p>Some pharmacists have told us they're scared about Boots finding out that they support the PDA Union. If the PDA Union is recognised, we will work to change that very quickly so that pharmacists don't have that concern.</p> <p>The ballot for recognition is secret; neither Boots nor the PDA Union will ever know how you voted.</p>

## 3 ...Negotiating committee

Boots told you	The PDA Union view
<p>“A formal collective bargaining relationship with the PDAU [would mean] three union members of a negotiating committee [would be] speaking for you.”</p>	<p>Whoever wrote this at Boots seems to be unfamiliar with how negotiations work. Naturally, 1,000s of pharmacists aren't going to assemble in one room together and negotiate over pay and other topics. Boots pharmacists will have Boots employed representatives to do that detailed work for them.</p> <p>Even though three negotiators would be three more than we currently have, there is no limit on the size of the committee that meets with representatives from Boots to ensure pharmacists' views are listened to, but this will need to be agreed with the company after the ballot.</p> <p>The law allows the employer and union to agree how many people make up each side of the negotiating committee, but whatever the number, the representative would be listening to the views of fellow pharmacists first and then speaking on their behalf.</p> <p>Trade unions are democratic bodies and so the view of front-line pharmacists will dictate the negotiating position of the union negotiators. The PDA Union will establish a representative structure to allow Boots pharmacists to give their views before negotiations begin.</p>

## 4 ...Respect for democracy

Boots told you	The PDA Union view
<p>“We would prefer to respect a democratic process of allowing all of our eligible registered and pre-registration pharmacists an opportunity to vote on issues relating to trade union recognition.”</p>	<p>Pharmacists may recall that Boots set up a secret agreement with the BPA in 2012 to prevent anyone negotiating better terms and conditions with the company. It did not consult with Boots pharmacists and pre-reg's before doing so and the BPA Chief Executive signed away fundamental employment rights for pharmacists in this deal, without any discussion with those it would affect.</p> <p>Even after an 87% vote by pharmacists to derecognise the BPA, the company tried to continue that arrangement indefinitely until it could put alternative arrangements in place, but the Central Arbitration Committee ordered Boots to cease immediately.</p> <p>We hope the company maintains its respect for democracy after the forthcoming vote. If enough pharmacists and pre-reg's vote for PDAU recognition, senior management will finally have to respect the view of its own front-line pharmacists.</p>

## 5 ...Respecting your rights

Boots told you	The PDA Union view
<p>“We respect your right to belong to a trade union of your choice.”</p>	<p>Boots doesn't have any choice in whether it respects your rights in this matter. Those rights are protected by UK law. Walgreens, the American pharmacy giant who now owns Boots, told its American pharmacy workers in 2013 – <b>“We believe that unionization is not in the best interest of the company or our employees”</b></p>

## 6 ...Listening to pharmacists

Boots told you	The PDA Union view
<p>“Through the Forum, the PPP and all our other feedback channels, we are constantly hearing and acting on feedback from all our pharmacists.”</p> <p>“We have a strong track record of... delivering a greater voice for you and acting on your feedback.”</p>	<p>After the BPA signed away the rights of all pharmacists to negotiate over their pay and other important working conditions, Boots' HR Director said in court that wherever the company disagrees with the BPA, the company position will always prevail. Like the BPA, the PPP and National Forum have no means at all to require the company to listen or act upon issues raised.</p> <p>When Boots pharmacists overwhelmingly voted to derecognise the BPA (2,826 (87%) in favour, 436 (13%) against), the government body responsible for overseeing it said <b>“the Panel concludes that the workers who voted for de-recognition of the BPA did so as support for the Union's application for recognition. No other explanation has been proffered by the Employer, and nor can the Panel think of one.”</b> Despite this, Boots has since continued to try to prevent you getting recognition and defeat the vote. These aren't the actions of a company that's listening.</p> <p>At present, Boots doesn't have to do anything about pharmacists' views that it doesn't already want to do. No sensible person can believe that there is no room for improvement at Boots, and pharmacists tell us the current arrangements are just not effective.</p> <p>You can find the commitments the company has made in the past here, and decide for yourself whether these have been met <a href="http://www.the-pda.org/boots-recognition/boots-promises">www.the-pda.org/boots-recognition/boots-promises</a></p>



## 7 ...Long standing relationships

Boots told you	The PDA Union view
<p>“Boots has a long-standing relationship with “a number” of unions, including USDAW”</p>	<p>Most of the current generation of management have inherited existing arrangements with other unions and so it was not able to prevent them being established. Independent recognition for pharmacists would be a new arrangement.</p> <p>When we spoke to USDAW about this ballot they said:</p> <p><b>“USDAW firmly believes that all workers should have access to independent trade union representation and recognises the ongoing recognition campaign by the PDAU for Pharmacists within Boots.</b></p> <p><b>USDAW would hope that the Company engages constructively with the PDAU and a positive agreement is reached soon for the mutual benefit of all parties involved.”</b></p>

## 8 ...Accelerating business performance by listening to the profession it employs

Boots told you	The PDA Union view
<p>“It will considerably slow down the pace of getting things done in our business.”</p> <p>“As their views are fundamentally different to ours they will slow us down and add extra complexity to all our working lives.”</p>	<p>A Union, we’d expect the business to be <b>more</b> successful and to get to where it needs to <b>faster</b>, because it will have to listen to what its pharmacists want. The most successful businesses are those which listen to and involve their staff in shaping their working environment.</p> <p>This statement suggests to us that the company considers acting before listening to pharmacists, and that it believes making unilateral decisions about their working conditions is right. We don’t agree with that.</p> <p>The views of the PDA Union are shaped by Boots pharmacists. We do believe that the company should be successful, make the most of its people and ensure patient safety. We hope that view isn’t fundamentally different from the views of senior management.</p> <p>The statement also suggests that senior management doesn’t welcome views that are different to its own, which would undermine its claim that it listens to pharmacists at present.</p>

## 9 ...PDA Union representation

Boots told you	The PDA Union view
<p>“The PDAU does not represent all our pharmacists.”</p>	<p>More than 2,500 Boots pharmacists and pre-reg's are PDAU members.</p> <p>If at least 2,800 of the 7,000 pharmacists and pre-reg's working in Boots vote YES, they will gain an independent voice through the PDA Union.</p> <p>Boots was previously content to say that the BPA represented the interests of all pharmacists in the company, even though the BPA had around half as many Boots pharmacists in membership as the PDA Union has. The company has previously claimed that the interests of very senior pharmacists such as Richard Bradley and Marc Donovan are represented through the BPA. A scenario that a court has rejected.</p> <p>Boots also claims to work with other unions such as USDAW in its warehousing and logistics businesses. Those unions don't have all employees in membership either, yet it doesn't seem to be a problem for the company there.</p> <p>In 2018, Boots fought in the courts to exclude pre-registration pharmacists and pharmacists in field, store management and head office roles from being able to negotiate better terms and conditions through the PDA Union. Boots senior management failed in their bid to disenfranchise so many of their pharmacists, but did ultimately manage to block those working in field, head office and flagship store management roles from being able to secure representation.</p>



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## 10 ...\$1 billion cuts

Boots told you	The PDA Union view
<p>Walgreens Boots Alliance announced that it plans to cut \$1 billion <u>per year</u> in spending, within three years, with a focus on the UK.</p> <p>“When asked by C+D whether the programme would result in pharmacy closures or staff redundancies in the UK, the parent company said it could not comment further on the announcement.”</p> <p><a href="https://www.chemistanddruggist.co.uk/news/boots-parent-company-outlines-1bn-cost-saving-programme">https://www.chemistanddruggist.co.uk/news/boots-parent-company-outlines-1bn-cost-saving-programme</a></p>	<p>Your employer controls your pay and other working conditions, which stores and pharmacies to open or close and how many staff to employ.</p> <p>If the PDA Union is recognised, there will be legal obligations for the company to consult with the recognised trade union before making certain decisions relating to redundancies or business transfers.</p> <p>In a company that's looking to make substantial financial cuts, our view is that now, more than ever, Boots pharmacists need a strong independent union to protect and represent their interests.</p>

## 11 ...A union is its members; members are the union

Boots told you	The PDA Union view
<p>“Happy 2019... our Boots Pharmacist community will be worse off by adding the bureaucracy and complexity of an outside third party.”</p>	<p>Boots should not regard the thousands of pharmacists and pre-registration pharmacists, represented by the PDA Union, as a third party. It is not “complex” or “bureaucratic” for a company to listen to the voice of its own staff.</p> <p>The company appears to be attempting to marginalise front-line pharmacists and pre-regs by describing them as a “third party”. We find this concerning in a huge multinational company, that claims to be pharmacy-led.</p>

## 12 ...Your ability to have a say

Boots told you	The PDA Union view
<p>“We need all our pharmacists to have a strong, clear say in our future direction; not just those who are members of a union.”</p>	<p>There is nothing to stop you having a strong, clear say in the future direction of Boots; under a PDAU recognition agreement your voice will be even stronger and clearer. Pharmacists have told us that the previous arrangements for their voice to be heard through the BPA or the PPP just did not work.</p> <p>We’d welcome it if all 7,000 members of the bargaining unit wanted to become members of the PDA Union; however, it isn’t compulsory and any improvements we negotiate once recognised will benefit store and relief pharmacists and pre-registration pharmacists whether or not they are a member of the PDA Union. The more members who join the PDA Union, the greater our ability to secure better benefits and working conditions for you.</p> <p>If you choose to join, the advantages of being a member include contributing to the PDA Union’s activity and policy. If you need our specific help with something like a disciplinary or grievance, we’ll be there by your side providing expert advice and support. Some of our cases end up in Employment Tribunals, Coroners’ inquests and before the GPhC where we pay the legal costs for our members to receive expert representation and that just isn’t something we can do for someone who isn’t a member when the problem arose. Strength in numbers is a very true adage here.</p> <p>We’d also just reiterate that managers can still listen to employees directly whether or not there is a recognised union and that any improvements we negotiate to pay, etc. will apply to all employees, not just PDA Union members.</p>

## What next

Last year, Walgreens Boots Alliance made £4 billion profit, and we think it’s time it started treating pharmacists better.

It’s time to be taken seriously. Instead of working against pharmacists’ wishes to have their trade union recognised, Boots senior management could direct their energy into working with the PDA union representatives, listening to the pharmacy profession and working in ways that provide a better environment for pharmacists to provide services to patients.

We want to see contented pharmacists delivering high quality pharmaceutical care and providing medicines to patients in a profitable business with the highest standards of safety. We want Boots to, once again, become the place where more pharmacists aspire to work and develop their careers.

We want to see fair reward, meaningful career development, job security and the opportunity for pharmacists to deliver to their potential as the qualified health professionals that they have trained to be.

Please vote YES to PDAU recognition in this ballot and let’s work together to improve Boots.