

REPS IN-DEPTH



RICHARD EVANS

I have been a pharmacist for nearly 30 years; mainly in pharmacist store manager roles and I have undertaken various roles for our local health board in my own time. I have worked for Boots through acquisitions and mergers for 22 of these years and have spent a considerable amount of time working alongside other pharmacists in an extended hours pharmacy.

In the last few years, I noticed some disillusionment with some of my younger and more recently qualified colleagues, many asking me for advice, so I was happy and privileged to have the opportunity to help, support and advise colleagues by being their PDA Union representative for the Northern Ireland region.

The PDA Union offers excellent training to help us carry out our roles and includes health and safety training to help keep our members safe at work. We have a great network of representatives and although I work further away from the rest of the network, I find great strength in working with my fellow representatives to answer members' queries.

Membership of the PDA Union is on the increase. At this time of uncertainty, members may find themselves in need of a little reassurance and guidance from the PDA.

Attending meetings such as our quarterly Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) meeting with Boots representatives and with people representing various departments from our head office has helped me to gain a better understanding of how the business operates, meeting many who are key implementers of company directives.

It is here that we put forward queries and problems that our members face and it is good to know that the PDA Union are actively involved in tailoring the directives so that pharmacists are not disadvantaged and this will lead to a healthy, happier, safer and more productive pharmacy working environment. For me, this is what our union is all about.

The members I represent in Northern Ireland welcome the current drive in our pay submission for pay parity with the rest of the UK. Our newly qualified pharmacists have benefited from a substantial increase to their pay with the change in starting scales in January and a next step is to move that trend along the pay scales.

The cost of living, although lower than some areas of the UK, is higher than other areas. We also need to recruit and retain pharmacists in the province.