

STUC Youth Conference

By Soh Xi Ken, trainee pharmacist in NHS Scotland, PDA Trainee Rep, and co-opted member of the PDA LGBT+ Network



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I had an amazing time at the STUC Youth Conference, being in a space with so many young workers who are fighting tooth and nail for their, and by extension, our collective liberation was incredibly inspiring. Speaking to other people made me realise we have so much in common and how pharmacists should be standing in solidarity with other workers, for better pay and better working conditions which ultimately will result in better care for our patients and service users. I enjoyed educating people on what a pharmacist does too, to help people recognise how vital pharmacies and community pharmacists are to communities.

Representing the PDA, I spoke regarding fighting fascism in Scotland, citing my work done during my time as the Honorary Secretary of the PDA LGBT+ Network and the rising transphobia and queerphobia we face in the media and from the Westminster government. I also highlighted the issues that community pharmacy is facing, in terms of instability in the community pharmacy contract, poor working conditions, and massive amounts of pharmacists leaving due to this. Ultimately, this will affect patient care, survival, and the ability to thrive as community pharmacy is essential to public health.

Listening to young people undertaking industrial action was really inspiring too, highlighting how the most vulnerable fight for a better job and therefore a better life. There was also talk about how sometimes young workers are disempowered and patronised just because they are young or might be inexperienced. The phrase *"I'm not the future of the trade union, I am the now of the trade union"* spoke true to how trade unions should be listening to young workers. At the PDA there are numerous structures to support, network, and develop young members, whether students or trainees.

Finally, we had an opportunity to listen to a panel about peace and climate. Both are inextricably linked. Maggie Chapman, MSP was fantastic. Maggie described how she has come to the conclusion that funding war would only lead to climate destruction and continuous escalating warfare. That was a great panel to round off the weekend at the STUC Youth Conference and I would encourage any young pharmacists or those in training to join one in the future.