

## TOP STORY:

### Pharmacists stand up to Boots in historic attempt to get an independent voice at work



A group of pharmacists employed by Boots have commenced a legal challenge, with the full support of the PDA Union, in order to get an independent voice at work. This is the latest development in a long-running campaign by pharmacists to overcome Boots' attempts to deny them their rights as workers being formally negotiated by an independent trade union.

[\*\(Read more inside...\)\*](#)

**Also  
Inside:**

Statement from John Murphy, PDAU's General Secretary ∴

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# The PDAU perspective

As you may know, Boots has gone to extraordinary lengths over the past few years to prevent its pharmacists from having an independent voice at work to collectively bargain on their behalf for better terms and conditions of employment. This means that the only process left open to pharmacist employees under trade union law to secure these rights was to apply for the derecognition of the Boots Pharmacists' Association (BPA) to the Central Arbitration Committee. This process is about to be tested for the very first time, making this situation truly historic.

John Murphy, General Secretary of the Pharmacists' Defence Association Union (PDAU) said: *"It is shocking that Boots is so determined to deny an independent voice to the pharmacists that it employs. The company has systematically challenged the PDAU in the courts to prevent us exercising any statutory right to collectively bargain for better terms and conditions on behalf of our members and Boots pharmacists generally."*

*The individuals taking this action are representative of many thousands of Boots pharmacists who have been frustrated by their employer's actions. We are happy to support their case and have been asked to speak on their behalf."*

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Boots is the most well-known high street pharmacy and the "face" of the sector for many UK citizens. The company's actions have included signing an agreement with the BPA, an organisation which was deemed liable to interference from Boots and so denied a certificate of independence by the government's Certification Officer.<sup>1</sup> The agreement specifically prohibits any negotiations on many of the important matters like terms and conditions, and was designed to block the ability of the PDAU to collectively bargain on behalf of Boots pharmacists. The only way that this can be reversed, as concluded by the High Court, is if the agreement is voluntarily rescinded or pharmacists force the situation by securing enough support amongst their ranks.

The action commenced by these brave employees should lead to a secret ballot of all those employed below Area Manager level as pharmacists and pre-registration graduates at Boots in order to dissolve the agreement between the company and the BPA, leaving the way clear for a second ballot that could lead to Boots recognising the PDA Union.

*"Pharmacists at Boots deserve to be treated fairly and with respect at work," continued John Murphy. "They should have job security, fair reward and a good working environment. They want to be able to put patient safety and professional*



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*standards first as clinical, autonomous health professionals. The PDA Union, as an independent trade union, seeks an agreement with Boots to allow us to negotiate formally on behalf of Boots pharmacists to secure these reasonable conditions.*

*We want to work with Boots to ensure those things become reality for all its pharmacists. I think any sensible person would have to ask why the senior management of Boots opposes that. Just what are they afraid of?"*

He concluded: *"Either Boots or the leadership of the BPA could voluntarily terminate their agreement at any time, but instead they are continuing to use it as a mechanism to prevent pharmacists having the independent representation they want, which is the full recognition of the PDA Union."*

*We will never give up fighting for, and supporting, our members.*

1. Refusal of certificate of independence for BPA: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/certificate-of-independence-decision-boots-pharmacists-association-bpa>

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



We have set up a website with a lot more information about this process. Please go online and read through so that you are fully informed.

## What next?

We will let you know once we receive a response from Boots management and from the BPA what will happen next. Right now, we are asking Boots pharmacists to pledge their support to remove the agreement between Boots and the BPA and to subsequently recognise the PDA Union to negotiate on their behalf.

We hope that in the interests of better employee relations at Boots, the BPA and Boots will voluntarily terminate their agreement and recognise the PDAU as the independent voice of pharmacists at Boots. However, if they do not then the application for the derecognition of the BPA will continue and a government body, the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC) <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/central-arbitrationcommittee> will oversee the legal process. In due course, there will be a secret ballot of pharmacists and

pre-reg graduates to determine whether the agreement between Boots and the BPA should be removed. If the majority vote in favour of this, it will leave the field clear for the PDA Union to apply for recognition to represent Boots pharmacists on their pay and other terms and conditions.

That said, we would welcome non-members to join the PDAU so that we can directly represent you as individuals should you need support.

*The secret ballot is managed entirely by the CAC and like voting in elections, how you vote is confidential. Neither the PDAU, the BPA nor Boots will know how any individual voted. It is also unlawful for the company to try and pressure you into voting one way or the other.*

All pharmacists below Area Manager level and pre-reg graduates employed by Boots will get a vote and it doesn't matter if you are a member of the PDAU, the BPA, both or neither – your voice still counts.



## Pledge your support

Whether or not you are already a PDAU member, if you support the idea of the PDAU being recognised as the independent voice of Boots pharmacists and pre-reg graduates, you can pledge your support online on our website. Your details will not be shared with Boots or the BPA.

Go to [www.pdaurecognition.co.uk/pledge-your-support](http://www.pdaurecognition.co.uk/pledge-your-support)

## Who are the PDAU?

- 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 providing support for legal, practice and employment needs during study, pre-registration 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.
- 25,000+ members across the community, hospital and primary care sectors throughout the four nations of the United Kingdom.
- Because we don't represent employers, 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.
- We are the only UK member of Employed Community Pharmacists in Europe (EPHEU).

## I'll get by with a little help from my friends

Pharmacists want to do their very best to deliver a high quality safe service for patients. They expect their performance to be fairly judged and to be rewarded for their contribution. Pharmacists need proper rest breaks and to feel supported if things go wrong, whilst being able to raise concerns in a supportive culture.

Getting the right balance between generating increasing profits and providing a safe pharmacy service, underpinned by individual professional autonomy, is not always easy.

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 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 – 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**



Visit our website: [www.the-pda.org](http://www.the-pda.org) :: Call us: 0121 694 7000