

Opportunity knocks — choosing a career with Boots The Chemists

Clare Karia is a young pharmacist whose career with Boots The Chemists has progressed at lightning speed. Gemma Cleveland finds out more about Clare's current role and the career benefits that Boots The Chemists has to offer

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There are “loads of options”, says Clare Karia, referring to the career opportunities provided by Boots The Chemists. She would know. Having benefited from its fast track scheme, Clare now works at Boots The Chemists head office, supporting thousands of pharmacists in stores across Great Britain and in the Republic of Ireland. Clare joined the pharmacy superintendent's office on secondment as a project manager three months ago. Her current project involves supporting pharmacists as they adopt and adjust to the new advanced and enhanced services introduced by the NHS. When asked what she likes about her role she said: “I get to speak to loads of different people. I get a lot out of motivating pharmacists and helping them achieve their goals.”

Only three years ago Clare was a preregistration trainee at a Boots The Chemists store in Cardiff. She was awarded Boots The Chemists Preregistration Trainee of the Year and after registering she spent her first few months working as a second pharmacist in a busy Nottingham store. Clare joined the Boots The Chemists fast track management scheme and was promoted to pharmacy manager within a few months. After a couple of years she became a group pharmacy manager, where she was responsible for driving the pharmacy business, not only in her base store, but in a number of stores in her area.

Summer placement programme

Clare is an inspiration for all students who are ambitious for their career in pharmacy. Her advice for students who would like to benefit from the best available training is to get themselves onto the “summer placement

programme” — developed by Boots The Chemists for pharmacy undergraduates. Students undertake the programme during their summer break and, over the course of the programme, practical experience is combined with further vocational learning. The high level of training Boots The Chemists provides continues in the preregistration year and for students who want to work for Boots The Chemists after they graduate, the third year “summer placement programme” is critical to them gaining one of these sought after places. Over the course of the eight weeks, third-year students are assessed and preregistration placements are offered based on students' performance.

Preregistration benefits, training and support

When you are offered a preregistration position with Boots The Chemists, the benefits are numerous. There is a structured programme of training and support comes from all levels. Preregistration trainees receive additional guidance and support from fully trained tutors, group pharmacy managers and area pharmacy managers. Peer support is also a large part of the preregistration programme and trainees meet up with other trainees in their area to attend clinical sessions and to discuss learning and progress. With allocated time specifically set aside each week for study, it is no wonder that Boots The Chemists has the highest registration examination pass rate.

A career with Boots

A career with Boots The Chemists comes with many additional entitlements — paid time to undertake continuing professional development, location subsidies for some geographical



areas and an excellent pension scheme are just a few of the financial attractions. Boots The Chemists also offers generous staff discounts and well as flexible working hours and a good number of days holiday.

Boots The Chemists continues to train and support its staff post registration with its ASPIRE programme. This programme gives pharmacists the opportunity to increase their knowledge of issues such as clinical governance and risk management. Newly qualified pharmacists may also join the fast track scheme to management if they have aspirations to become a store manager.

Boots The Chemists is the leading community chemist with more than 1,400 stores, which means that opportunities really are UK-wide. Whether you want to specialise in a clinical role, a managerial role or something entirely new, there is an avenue for you to pursue your ideal career. Under the terms of the new pharmacy contract, pharmacists are able to get involved in providing health care services such as cholesterol screening, obesity and weight management, smoking cessation and medicines use reviews to the local community.

Career progression

Boots The Chemists provides the stepping stones for those who aspire to move into management and beyond.

Pharmacists who have a couple of years' experience or who have completed the fast track management scheme can move into a store management position, and then move to the group and regional pharmacy manager roles, taking responsibility for clinical governance issues, resourcing and training. However, career progression does not follow a strict format and there are opportunities throughout the business. These include supporting the commercial side of pharmacy by moving into marketing or the "Dispensing category". The latter sector of Boots the Chemists is responsible for developing the dispensary and MDS business. This involves considering how the role of pharmacists is evolving and the impact this is having on dispensary business.

What attributes does Boots The Chemists look for when recruiting its pharmacists?

With the new advanced and enhanced services, and with accuracy checking technicians supporting the dispensing operations, pharmacists now have, more than ever, an active role in providing health care services. Boots The Chemists's most successful pharmacists are those who are confident and comfortable interacting with customers about a range of health care issues.

Flexibility is also important, with Boots The Chemists stores opening seven days

a week and in some places having extended opening hours. The business is forever changing and, as new services are implemented and new operations are introduced, the business is set to continue its growth, making Boots The Chemists an exciting employment prospect today and in the future.

If this has ignited your interest and you see yourself in a successful career with Boots The Chemists, visit its recruitment website www.bootsjobs.com to get started.

