

Tharndeeep: Hi, my name is Tharndeeep Sembhi, I'm a pharmacy store manager in Coventry and I've been in that role for eighteen months. I heard about the stepping-stones programme during pre-reg. I got informed it was a programme which was also available as a fast-track to become a pharmacy store manager. I got offered it at the time, and I jumped at the chance.

The programme itself was a twelve week programme, every week you spent two days in your own store, two days in a host store, and you had one day training where you learnt a lot of stuff about the different parts of the programme. The training was pretty much all over the country, the main thing was you spent two days with another pharmacy manager who informed you how things were done and in your own store so you could try and apply it in your own store. Every week you get a different module which needs to be done and then your next training day you go back and you go over the work that's been completed in the modules. Throughout the programme itself you get plenty of support, also you've got different people on your course as well so that helps, you can discuss how they'd handle different situations to how you would and how you applied it.

Once you finished the programme itself because you've been spending a couple of days in your own store anyway your literally going in there full-time as being the pharmacy store manager so you can put your own marker on your own store. Being a pharmacy store manager in a local pharmacy you've never got a dull moment, there's always something to do, it's always fun, it's very energetic, and you've got strong links with the community, you get your regular patients, they come in just to get their prescriptions, to have a chat.

Benefits of working at Boots; you get support, it's friendly and most of all it's a name that's trusted so it's always nice being a part of that. Career wise; I've personally been on stepping-stones programme, after a month after being qualified so I'm a good example of the development you can make with Boots. I'd recommend being a pharmacy store manager to any pharmacist, you get the support, you got the opportunities, quite a few challenges, very rewarding, your part of the community, and you got your own little team that you're in charge of. I've been through it and I've never looked back.

Rishi: My name is Rishi Kohli, and I'm the pharmacist store manager in Hull. I've been in this job now for six months, and I started it as soon as I qualified; so my first day as a pharmacist was as a pharmacy store manager.

I completed my pre-reg in a flagship store in Newcastle Upon-Tyne and throughout my pre-reg my intention was to do relief in the North-East area. However, when we had career discussions I found out that there was opportunities in Hull, and that these opportunities involved being a manager. I wanted the responsibility of leading a team and delivering good customer care, and I wanted the chance to develop and progress in my career, and I was lucky enough to be enrolled on the stepping stones development programme. I feel that this has helped me become a better pharmacist and also a better store manager.

I already knew that Boots had an excellent support network but I only really felt the impact of this once I moved out to Hull and relocated. In my first day as manager, my line-manager visited me and checked I was settling in okay, and throughout this, the support has been excellent.

I have been in this position now for 6 months, and it has been very rewarding. As a team we have delivered four-hundred medicine check-ups for our patients, with this we have been able to develop our customer care. I firmly believe that being a pharmacist store manager is the most rewarding position for a pharmacist; the reason for this is that you get to see your team develop around you, and you also get to build excellent relationships with your customers. My advice for any pharmacists who are thinking about becoming a pharmacy store manager is to be confident in your own ability. When I first took on the role as pharmacy store manager I was very nervous and apprehensive. Now I'm loving every moment of it. At the age of twenty-three I haven't had to make too many difficult decisions, this decision is one of the most important I've made and it's one that I'll never regret.

Sophia: My name is Sophia Janjua, I'm a pharmacy store manager and my store is based in Wakefield, and I've been a manager for three months now.

Before I became a store manager I was a locum, I was locumming for three years, I worked in the Wakefield area mainly. I worked for a number of multiples and independents and during this time I worked for Alliance Boots which is how I came to hear about this position; it sounded really exciting to me so I went for it. As a locum I felt limited as to what I could do and I really wanted to be part of a team. Boots is a supportive organisation to work for, there is always someone to talk to, and also I have to say that the training was absolutely fabulous. Being a new manager I've been put on the stepping-stones programme to go through any issue or any questions I may have as a new manager.

Since I started my new role as a pharmacy store manager I find I have more balance in my life both at work and outside of work and I have a great team behind me. The staff are very well trained and they're very well informed. They are always friendly to the customers, so at the end of the day it just means that I can do my job, and I can do it better.

What I find challenging about being a pharmacy store manager, is the management side; it's being a manager alongside with being a pharmacist, but I have to say due the great support I get from my area managers I can always talk to them and there's always advice there. Also I would say that the business side is quite exciting because I have my own shop, I can take it forward and shape it however I like. The major benefits of working for Boots for me personally are definitely the training and the development I get. They provide excellent training which means there's lots of opportunity for me for progression in the future, and also I would say the staff discount.

What I find most rewarding about working for a local pharmacy is the chance to get to know my customers; I love interacting with them, getting to know them, and making a difference to their everyday lives.