

# **AHP PrBL Recovery**



**Prosthetics & Orthotics 2023**

## **AHP Practice-based Learning (PrBL) Recovery: Prosthetics & Orthotics 2023**

### **Situation / Background**

**Problem:** Prosthetic and Orthotic (P&O) placement provision in Scotland is insufficient to meet the educational requirements for students. COVID19 disrupted placement delivery, impacting on students' clinical experiences and preparation for joining the workforce.

**Aim statement:** The tripartite project aim was to raise awareness of the unique workforce related issues impacting the professions, highlight facilitators and barriers to P&O PrBL provision in Scotland and support Practice Educators (PEs) to provide increased numbers of sustainable PrBL placement models and experiences, by March 2023.

**Scope of Project and Objectives:** The project scope was defined, and objectives identified to 1: establish the unique challenges facing P&O professions from all perspectives, 2: provide support to PEs and promote different models of PrBL, for, 3: increased sustainable placement offers.

### **Stakeholders and Scoping Exercise**

**Stakeholders:** NES Practice Education Lead (PEL); University of Strathclyde (UoS); NHS Orthotists; NHS Prosthetists; Buchanan Orthotics; UoS Students; British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists (BAPO).

**Scoping Review Task:** In-depth meetings were held with stakeholders, to establish accurate background information and explore PrBL challenges. Students' perceptions were also considered. Reports were re-shared to ensure accuracy. Thorough thematic analyses of barriers and facilitators of PrBL were collated, agreed and further merged, also considering the P&O results of the NES AHP PE Survey (open through May / June 2022).

**Scoping Review Findings:** Comprehensive clarification of the P&O workforce and programme was established. Key areas for PrBL interventions were identified as: training and support for PEs, preparing for placements, knowledge and understanding of alternate models of PrBL, and communication.

**Scoping Review Actions:** P&O workforce / programme findings and PrBL actions follow.

## **Prosthetics & Orthotics Facts and Figures**

**NHS Scotland P&O Workforce:** There are five NHS Boards providing prosthetic services (31wte, B5 and above) and fourteen NHS Boards offering orthotic services (78WTE, B5 and above), (NES Workforce Statistics, June 2022). These statistics incorporate B5/6 Technicians who are not HCPC registered AHPs. Following a significant Scottish Orthotic Service Review (R. Rooney, 2005), most Scottish Boards now have dedicated NHS funded Orthotic Service Leads. However, some Boards have orthotic services provided under the Orthotics National Service Contract (ONSC), currently Buchanan Orthotics, Glasgow. This is due to the small number of orthotists required by smaller boards, often 1WTE or less, and the risk to service provision should NHS directly employed staff leave without the appropriately skilled replacement being readily recruited. In addition, some services do not have access to clinical workshop facilities for orthotic manufacture. Although Buchanan Orthotics currently provide this vital role for safeguarding provision of orthotic services, the service provider can change in line with any new service contracts as these are tendered on a regular basis. There are currently 13.95WTE Orthotists and 0.3WTE Clinical Assistants employed under the ONSC. These numbers are not included in NES Workforce Statistics (June 2022).

**Higher Education Institution:** The National Centre for Prosthetics & Orthotics (NCPO) at the University of Strathclyde (UoS), is the only Scottish University which offers the four-year BSc (Hons) Prosthetics and Orthotics degree, producing graduates with a dual qualification. Students must complete two 18-week clinical placements; one in prosthetics and one in orthotics (incorporating 5 days protected leave). Placement sites need to be UoS approved clinical facilities in order to meet the practical and technical criteria requirements of all PrBL Procedural Based Assessments (PBAs). UoS utilise placement sites outside Scotland for several reasons, as further explored.

**Placement requirements:** UoS student intake varies year to year, with approximately 35 students reaching 4th-year. This requires provision of 630 prosthetic Placement Weeks (PWs) and 630 orthotic PWs each academic year; where  $630 = 35 \times 18$ . In order to meet

UoS student PrBL provision, Scottish NHS services would theoretically need to support over 20 PWs per whole-time equivalent (WTE) prosthetist and 8 PWs per WTE orthotist, which is a high demand when compared with other AHPs (generally 3-4 PWs per WTE).

**Placement allocation and funding:** Due to placement length and limited PrBL capacity within Scotland, students can indicate a preference of UoS approved placement sites from across the UK, Republic of Ireland and Norway. Students often opt to be in bigger cities whilst others prefer being located closer to home, or to stay with friends or family due to cost-of-living, travel and accommodation. Scottish students can access Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) funding for travel and accommodation for placements, provided these are within Scotland. However, UoS are reliant upon access to prosthetic placement sites outside Scotland and at present [guidance](#) from SAAS advises that expenses may only be claimed for placements within Scotland.

**Funding and risks:** The UoS P&O course only recently became regulated by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). UoS report the target set by SFC for intake of Scottish students is 25, and that recent applications have dropped from an average of 20 to around 10 (current cohort) which could be attributed to the lack of SAAS funding (for placements outside Scotland). Not only does this reduce the number of Scottish graduates entering the workforce but it poses a risk to the ongoing SFC funding for the P&O programme at UoS.

**Impact of COVID19:** Pre 2020, placements took place throughout Trimester B of Year 3 and Trimester A of Year 4. Disruption resulted in both placements being completed in Year 4 which challenges retention of skill acquisition developed in Years 1 and 2. This disruption remains. Consequently, students complete extension/resits in the summer months following completion of their final placement which may delay graduation.

### **Practice-based Learning Actions**

In addition to scoping and identification of the challenges facing P&O PrBL in Scotland, the following four interventions were carried out to address agreed priority areas:

**PE Training & Support:** Profession specific PE training from UoS was ranked as the most important factor when facilitating student practice education (AHP PE Survey, 2022). NES

P&O PEL facilitated a consultation to collaborate with UoS and PEs for revision of P&O training. Four different P&O PE support sessions were delivered along with two P&O PE Virtual Cafés. Infographics and resources were designed, developed and disseminated.

**Preparing for Placement:** There was multifaceted reporting relating to the perception of students not being prepared for placement, causing stress for students and PEs, and impacting on placement outcomes. UoS facilitated 4 weeks of practical skills refresher training for 3rd Year students in April 2022 (2 weeks each of prosthetics and orthotics). The P&O PEL undertook promotion of established BAPO resources through stakeholder meetings, PE support sessions and developed animated guides. A student placement infographic was created which remains widely available for students and PEs.

**Alternate models of PrBL:** PEs reported that increased understanding and awareness of different models of PrBL may contribute to alleviating pressures of supporting students. Practical application of different modes and models of placement was incorporated into the delivered PE support sessions. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (GGC) Adult Orthotic Services engaged with a PrBL workshop and were supported to pilot a blended model within their service. AHP Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) workshops were facilitated nationally and offered locally.

**Communication:** Communication challenges were widely reported as a contributing factor towards PrBL provision. Additional detail was captured through the NES AHP PrBL survey and addressed within the collaboration for revised UoS P&O PE Training to increase clarity on communication responsibilities for both UoS and placement sites. Engagement with the new Scottish AHP PrBL Virtual Community was actively promoted.

## **Impact**

**Engagement Impact:** Initial engagement was achieved through connections with stakeholder groups with scoping interviews and meetings.

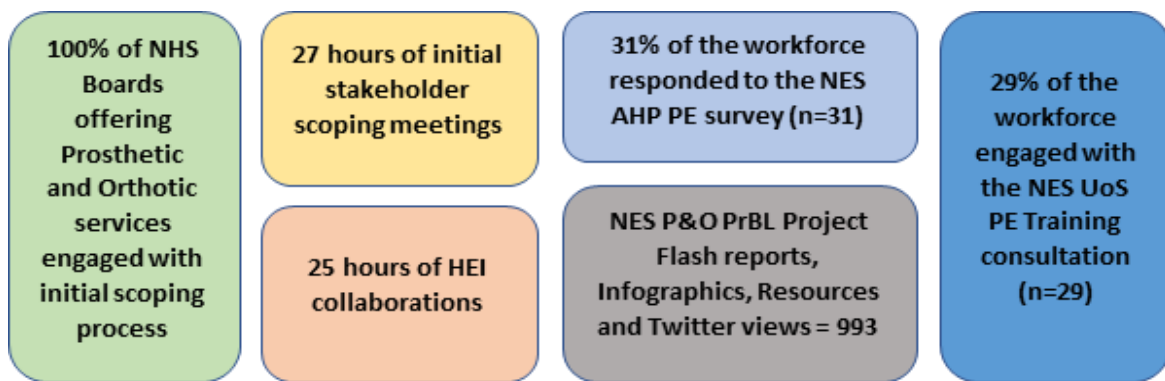


Figure 1: Prosthetics and orthotics engagement impact

**Educational Impact:** Support sessions were greatly appreciated. Evaluations (n=28) demonstrated agreement that learning objectives were met in terms of increased awareness, knowledge, and confidence for:



Figure 2: Prosthetics and orthotics educational impact

**Performance Impact:** UoS / PE consultation for reviewed PE training was novel for all involved, with participants reporting high satisfaction and intent to seek out future opportunities to collaborate. A blended online PAL model was successfully piloted across NHS GGC Adult Orthotics and remains in practice for their next student cohort.

**Service Impact:** For the first time in over six years, orthotic placement offers were made by NHS Highland. In total, NHS Scotland services offer 180 prosthetic PWs and 486 orthotic PWs annually. Unfortunately, not all offers are utilised due to the placement allocation model (previously discussed) which skews Red/Amber/Green (RAG) data. No student failed to graduate due to a lack of placement.

**Project Objective Achievement:** Whilst there is early evidence of engagement with alternate models of PrBL and increased sustainable placement offers, the project clearly outlines the complex workforce and programme structure and highlights the unique P&O PrBL differences and challenges.

## **Learning / Recommendations**

- Capacity for increasing Scottish prosthetic placements is limited, therefore, UoS are reliant upon prosthetic placements outside Scotland. Funding needs to be available for Scottish students to engage with the necessary PrBL opportunities.
- Not all orthotic offers in Scotland are utilised by UoS which impacts on the ability of PEs to develop skills for supporting facilitation of learning. It would be beneficial if UoS could promote and prioritise Scottish offers.
- Due to the small size of the workforce, both professions would benefit from opportunities to share PrBL-related developments across Scotland, such as outcomes from piloting different models. The new Scottish AHP PrBL Virtual Community may be a platform to enable this.
- UoS and PEs have benefitted from collaborating and feel more engaged with each other. They should continue to reach out and encourage this.

For more information on this project see: <https://api.ltb.io/show/ABRRC>

This resource may be made available, in full or summary form, in alternative formats and community languages. Please contact us on **0131 656 3200** or email **[altformats@nes.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:altformats@nes.scot.nhs.uk)** to discuss how we can best meet your requirements.



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