

# Introducing Modern Apprenticeships in Prosthetics and Orthotics Technical Services

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## Introduction

Prosthetic and Orthotic (P&O) workshops within the SMART Centre at NHS Lothian have faced longstanding challenges in recruiting qualified technical staff. Nationally, limited training pathways and an ageing workforce\* have constrained succession planning and increased the risk of losing essential specialist skills. To address these issues and support a sustainable workforce pipeline, a Modern Apprenticeship Training Programme was developed specifically for P&O technical roles.

\* (in 2022 the average age was 50-55)



## Methodology

### Programme Development

- Co-designed with NHS Lothian Education Lead for Workforce Development.
- Structured SVQ Level 7 qualification tailored to Prosthetics and Orthotics.
- Collaboration with NHS Lothian partner colleges and training providers.

### Curriculum Design

- Integrated engineering principles, anatomy, pathology, and profession-specific competencies.
- Combined academic learning with supervised workplace practice.

### Strategic Alignment

- Supported NHS Lothian's sustainable workforce planning.
- Utilised apprenticeship levy funding.
- Contributed to youth employment and widening access.
- Reflected the Scottish National Workforce Strategy's focus on alternative recruitment routes and retention of young people.

### Workforce Challenges



### Workforce Solution



Figure 1: Challenge and solution



## Results and Discussion

### Apprentice Progress

- Two Modern Apprentices began in January 2023 and are on target to complete their Apprenticeship January 2027.
- Both have completed all academic components.
- Strong engagement demonstrated in workplace learning and peer support has been valuable.
- Remaining requirements include portfolio development and competency-based assessments.
- Considering next cohort intake towards the end of 2026.

### Workforce Challenges



### Workforce Solution



Figure 2: Challenge and early outcomes

### Early Impact

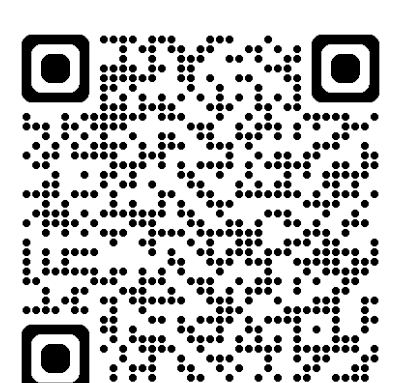
- Improved workforce resilience and reduced vulnerability to skill loss.
- Challenges with supporting inhouse training and other training roles were created within the service to overcome this.
- Enhanced knowledge transfer between experienced staff and new entrants.
- Established a structured, accessible entry route into a profession with historically limited training pathways.
- Supported NHS Lothian's anchor commitments by creating opportunities for local young people and enhancing long-term workforce sustainability.



## Conclusion

The NHS Lothian P&O Modern Apprenticeship Programme provides a strategic and sustainable response to longstanding recruitment and succession challenges. By formalising training, widening access, and aligning with organisational and national workforce priorities, the programme is helping to secure the future technical workforce and safeguard essential Prosthetics and Orthotics expertise.

Find out more about the SMART Centre:



[www.smart.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.smart.scot.nhs.uk)