



**Enhanced practice for
prosthetists and orthotists**

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Introduction

This document provides an overview of enhanced practice for prosthetists and orthotists, with links to further resources at the end.

This document is primarily for prosthetists and orthotists in England. However, we have provided some information about enhanced practice in the other UK countries at the end of this document.

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Author

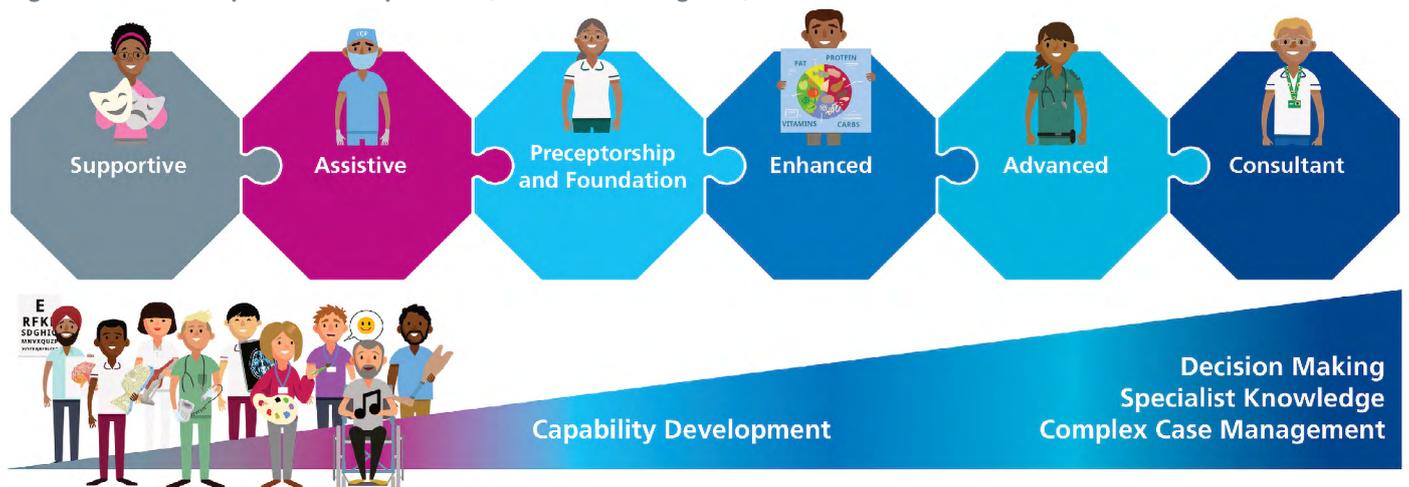
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What is enhanced practice?

Enhanced practice is a level of professional practice – see Figure 1 below – which sits between entry to practice and advanced-level practice. **This level of practice describes experienced, knowledgeable health and care professionals who are able to manage a level of complexity of work and risk which is beyond entry to practice.** A health and care professional working at this level of practice will typically have undertaken post-registration and/or postgraduate education and training relevant to their area of practice and role. They usually work as part of a multi-disciplinary team to manage discrete episodes of care within an area of practice.

Figure 1: Levels of professional practice (Source: NHS England)



What does enhanced practice look like in prosthetics and orthotics?

Whilst the language will be new for many, enhanced practice as a level of practice is not new and already exists in prosthetics and orthotics.

At this level of practice, prosthetists and orthotists will have undertaken post-registration and/or postgraduate education and training to develop their knowledge and skills in particular clinical areas or in carrying out particular clinical interventions. At this level, they are likely to act as clinical leads and have responsibility for mentoring more junior colleagues. They are likely to have expertise to manage the care of more complex clinical presentations and patient groups, sometimes in specialist clinics. They might have developed focused knowledge and skills related to particular conditions and groups of patients.

Enhanced practice is a level of practice and not a job role, title or salary band. However, to help in understanding what enhanced practice might look like in the profession, Table 1 below gives some indicative job titles, qualifications and bandings for enhanced practice in prosthetics and orthotics.

Table 1: Enhanced practice in prosthetics and orthotics

Indicative job titles	Qualifications (from)	Indicative NHS Agenda for Change band (from)
Specialist prosthetist Specialist orthotist Senior prosthetist Senior orthotist	Post-registration and/or postgraduate qualifications and experience	6

Please note that Agenda for Change bandings are indicative only and may vary between different employers and the UK countries.

Why does enhanced practice matter in prosthetics and orthotics?

We know that:

- prosthetists and orthotists have the highest attrition rate of the allied health professions, but the demand for our services is increasing;
- employers struggle to attract and retain a limited pool of prosthetists and orthotists who have the skills and experience they need for specific roles; and
- career development opportunities for prosthetists and orthotists can be limited which can lead to them leaving the workforce prematurely.

For many, enhanced practice will be a fulfilling career destination in its own right. For others, it might be one step on a career journey on the way to advanced practice and consultant practice.

Whilst not new, by naming this large and important part of the workforce, we can make sure it gets the attention it deserves. By using our influence to encourage employers to invest in the career development of prosthetists and orthotists, we can help build fulfilling professional careers, retaining more of our talented workforce to provide high quality, timely, inclusive care for patients and carers.

What does enhanced practice mean for me?

I can make the most of the opportunity of enhanced practice by:

BEING ACTIVE IN MY OWN CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Prosthetists and orthotists at all levels of practice need to be active in their own career development. This means being clear about their career aspirations and learning needs. Good, open career conversations with employers are crucial. These might be part of annual performance development reviews or during one-to-one meetings with managers.

We know that opportunities for education, training and career progression can sometimes be frustratingly limited. There is no one pathway to enhanced practice. By being open about their career aspirations and development needs, prosthetists and orthotists can work with their employers to identify how they can best be supported to develop their knowledge and skills. For example, this might include identifying opportunities to develop and demonstrate the skills of the job above them, so that they are well positioned when a promotion opportunity becomes available.

CONSIDERING WHAT CAREER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY MIGHT BE SUITABLE FOR ME

There is no single career development pathway for enhanced practice. Many prosthetists and orthotists will gain post-registration and/or postgraduate education and training relevant to their practice, together with substantial experience, to enable them to work at the level of enhanced practice.

There is now an 'Enhanced Clinical Practitioner' apprenticeship, which provides an additional development pathway for enhanced practice. Using the apprenticeship can provide a structured way for an employer to develop prosthetists and orthotists to undertake more complex work.

The apprenticeship is most likely to suit prosthetists and orthotists who have completed their pre-registration education and training and preceptorship period. They will either be newly promoted, or working towards a job role (normally at Band 6) that requires them to develop the complex knowledge and expertise required to handle more complex patient presentations.

The apprenticeship programme is around 18 months in duration and is made up of a mixture of taught content (often delivered online) and work-based learning. A prosthetist and orthotist would normally complete the apprenticeship at level 7 (Master's level).

Some universities are already offering apprenticeship programmes and many programmes are open to a range of different professions. However, the apprenticeship is relatively new, so more programmes might be developed in future. Apprenticeship course fees are paid by employers, who are able to access funding for this.

Prosthetists and orthotists who think the apprenticeship might be suitable for them should look at information about apprenticeship programmes available online and speak to their employers.

Other prosthetists and orthotists will already be in Band 6 roles and above and have significant experience and knowledge underpinned by post-registration education and training. Completing the apprenticeship might not be necessary or helpful for this group because it might not provide them with significant additional skills and knowledge. Prosthetists and orthotists in this situation should still be active in their own career development – speaking with their employers to explore what education, training and development opportunities they might need to develop in their roles and progress in their careers. This might include exploring opportunities to train to become advanced practitioners.

Enhanced practice in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

Language for enhanced practice varies in the other countries of the UK. In Scotland and Northern Ireland 'specialist' is used to describe the same level of practice.

Whilst Enhanced Clinical Practitioner apprenticeship programmes are only available in England, prosthetists and orthotists in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are encouraged to look at the professional frameworks in place in their countries and be active in their own career development.



Resources

What is enhanced practice?

- [Principles of enhanced practice](#)
- [Enhanced practice on the NHS England website](#)

What does enhanced practice look like in prosthetics and orthotics?

- [Advanced practice in prosthetics and orthotics](#) – includes information about enhanced, advanced and consultant level practice
- [Enhanced level practice Schemas with Model Curricula](#) – includes descriptors for enhanced practice in the profession, primarily for education providers but can be helpful in understanding what enhanced practice looks like in different areas of practice

The Enhanced Clinical Practitioner apprenticeship

- [Employer's guide to the apprenticeship](#) – includes how enhanced practice is different from advanced practice and information to help decide which staff might be suitable
- [Enhanced Clinical Practitioner apprenticeship information pack](#)
- [Apprenticeship standard](#)
- [List of university apprenticeship programmes](#)

Developing the existing workforce

- [AHP career conversations based on growth](#)

Enhanced/specialist practice in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

- [Wales](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)



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