The Journey of an Orthotics Apprentice: Bridging Knowledge and Practice Manuela Mundy¹

¹The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust

Introduction 1

As an apprentice in the field of orthotics, I would like to share my transformative journey. I began my interest in healthcare when I volunteered at St Johns Ambulance in Italy. This led to further healthcare roles which created the foundation of transferable skills that lead to my final question: How would I like to progress? The answer was simple, and here I am completing a level 6 apprenticeship in Prosthetics and Orthotics.

The apprenticeship degree program integrates theoretical knowledge and hands-on practice. It serves as an essential platform for developing the following skills:

- Assessing, designing, fabricating, and fitting orthotic and prosthetic devices
- To communicate effectively with individuals who have complex needs or disabilities
- Communication with my colleagues and collaborating within the multidisciplinary team
- Following professional standards to improve patient outcomes both clinically and holistically

The apprenticeship has shown me that it is not only a pathway to becoming a skilled healthcare practitioner but also an intense journey filled with daily satisfaction. I remember the first time I took an impression or measured for compression stockings, the first home visit in the community, and the first time I wrote notes at the end of a clinic that I completed independently from start to finish.

Ultimately, it is about personal growth that contributes to the collective well-being of the team and our patients.

My first cast only 5 weeks in!

My Previous Experience 2	Aim 3
I started as a volunteer at St. John Ambulance in Italy before transitioning into a healthcare career at The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust in 2018. My healthcare roles included Ward Assistant, HCA, CNS team assistant, prescription management and Clinical Research Project Assistant with NIHR.	The purpose of sharing my journey as an adult learner is to inspire others. Never give up and always listen to your inner voice, regardless of societal labels, past education, background, or age. Remember that you are not defined by your past; you reflect your future. Have the courage to step out of your comfort zone—where stagnation lies—and pursue your dreams and passions. By moving forward, you will thrive and blossom.
Challenges 4	Support 5
 I have faced several challenges so far including: Transitioning into a patient facing role Balancing academic learning and clinical practice Long hours of studying Feeling overwhelmed by the vast principles and practices that come with learning orthotics. Imposter syndrome/self doubt due to working in an experienced team as someone with no existing knowledge of orthotics. However, overcoming these challenges has strengthened my resilience and reinforced my commitment to learning and growing in this field. 	 I've been fortunate to receive tremendous support throughout my journey. A combined network of support has been instrumental to my development. This has been through several formats: Colleagues offering mentorship, guidance, and encouragement. The culture of teamwork and collaboration boosts my understanding and confidence. Friends and family have also been a constant source of emotional support and motivation. The apprenticeship program at Derby provides has structured learning and access to experienced tutors. Emotional support and practical solutions provided by
Take Home Message 6	my tutors.
An orthotic apprenticeship offers an amazing opportunity for individuals seeking a rewarding career. The prosthetics and orthotics field is constantly evolving, providing numerous career paths. Whether you are starting fresh or transitioning into something new, the apprenticeship route is worth considering. It's a chance to earn while you learn and develop the skills necessary for a successful career. If you're thinking about it, give it a go—there's a whole world of possibility waiting!	Image: Non-Structure to com/user/University of DerbyImage: Non-Structure to com/user/University to com/use





