

Building a Sustainable Prosthetics and Orthotics Technical Workforce



Nicola McCormack, Head of Prosthetics and Orthotics Services, SMART Centre
Dr Michael Dolan, Head of SMART Services, SMART Centre



Introduction

Challenge: Like many Prosthetics and Orthotics services, NHS Lothian has found recruitment and retention of skilled, qualified Prosthetics and Orthotics technicians challenging for many years. The roles were split with staff working in either Prosthetics or Orthotics. There were limited opportunities for career progression and an aging workforce.

Team Snapshot: Maximum of 6 Prosthetics and 6 Orthotics technicians all at AFC Band 4, with 2 Technical team leads at AFC band. 5 of the 12 technicians were over 60.

Our Solution: We launched a Modern Apprenticeship Programme using the Annexe 21 training scheme:

- Dual-role posts in Prosthetics & Orthotics
- 4-year pathway to HNC qualification
- Custom curriculum: engineering, biology, and work-based assessments
- On-the-job training + formal education



Methodology

Once we had worked with NHS Lothian workforce development team to develop our Modern Apprenticeship programme, it became apparent that there was a need for additional technical training and supervision capacity than could be provided within the current structure.

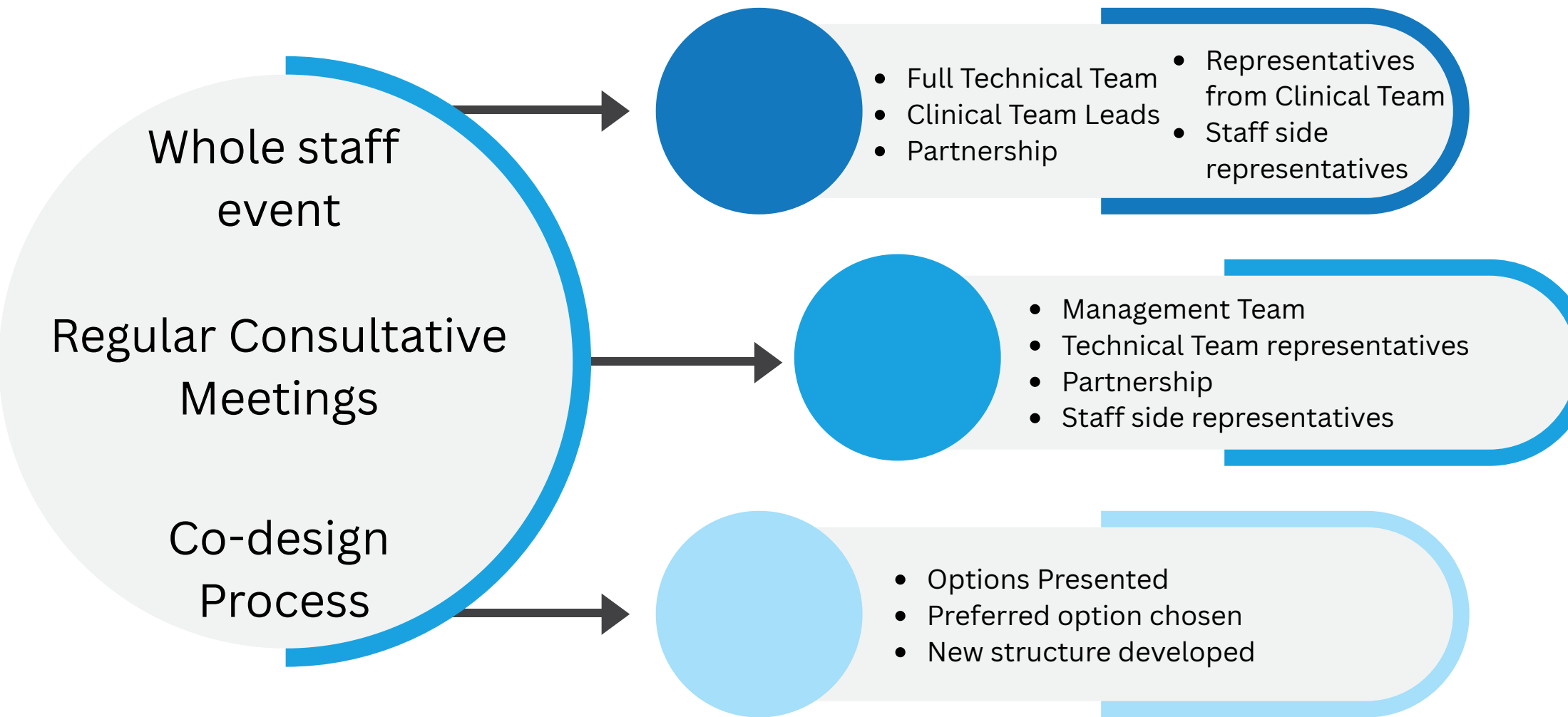


Figure 1 . Co-Design

The service presented a workforce organisational paper and developed new Job Descriptions in consultation with staff, partnership and staff side representatives.



Results and Discussion

The final structure (Figure 1) was agreed upon as it offered the following advantages:-

- Provides a career structure for all technicians including Modern Apprentices
- Provides option of career advancement without line management responsibilities
- Provides option for advancement with line management responsibilities
- Supports provision of technical team taking on patient facing role for repairs, maintenance and fault finding (releasing clinical staff)
- Supports training, mentoring and supervision of Modern Apprentices
- Recognises that advanced technical expertise is required to meet new Medical Device Regulations within UK, and the need to keep up to date with technological developments to support service improvement

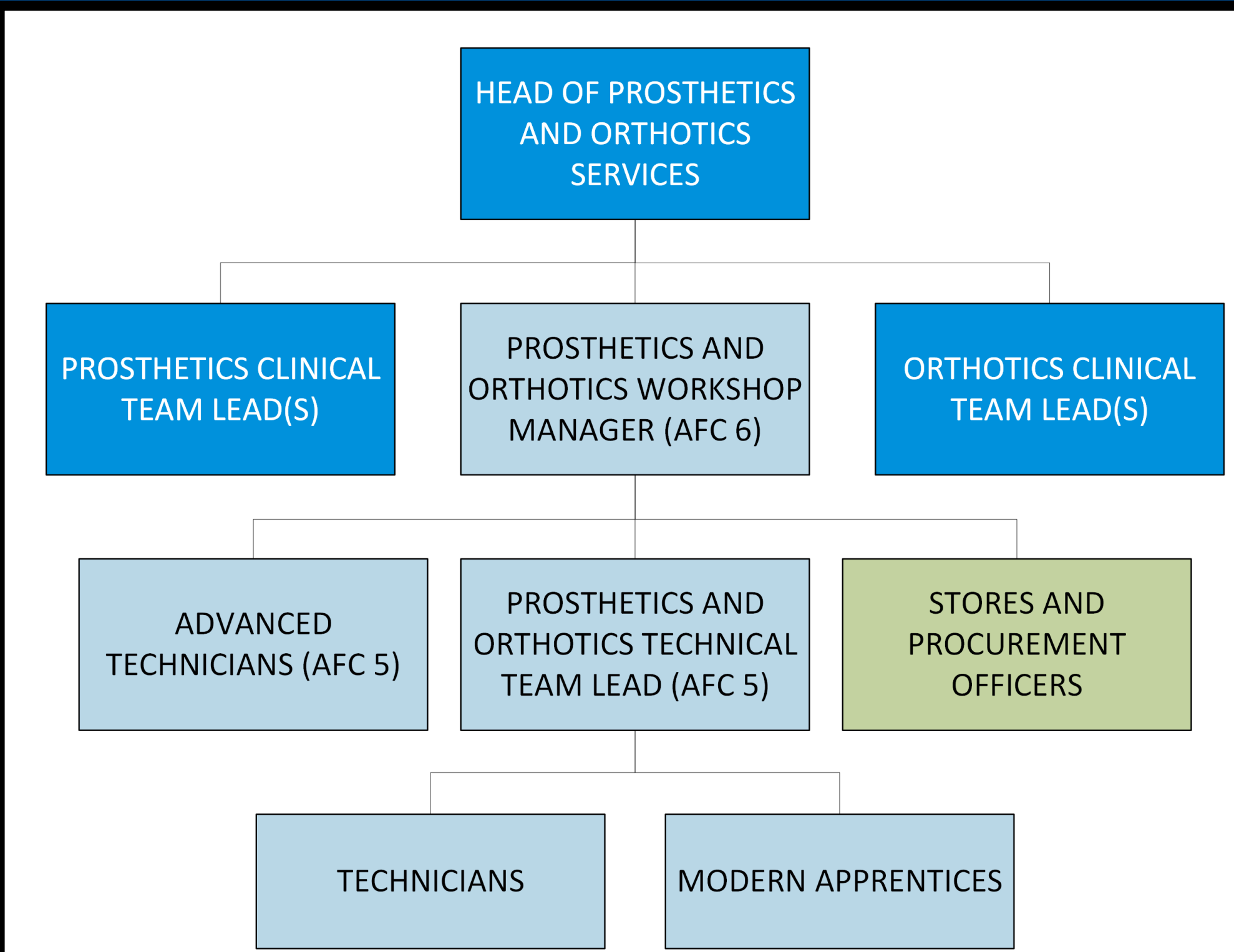


Figure 2 . New Structure



Conclusion

The service has now recruited to all roles , with two modern apprentices approximately two thirds of the way through their training. We have developed clear guidelines for the Advanced Technician clinics and are currently gathering data on the demand for these to establish our next steps.

Find out more about the SMART Centre:
www.smart.scot.nhs.uk



Reference

BAPO Workforce Report 2023 by Staffordshire University

