

### Introduction

Orthotists play an essential role in the assessment, design, and provision of orthoses for individuals with musculoskeletal, neurological, and congenital conditions. Despite this, public awareness of the profession remains low, particularly among school-aged individuals considering career options<sup>1</sup>. As one of the smallest Allied Health Professions, orthotics faces unique recruitment challenges, underscoring the need for targeted engagement to ensure workforce sustainability<sup>2</sup>.

### Method

A local school mapping exercise identified primary and secondary schools in Wolverhampton using publicly available education databases. As part of the pilot phase, 23 local secondary schools were contacted in aim to gain interest and valuable contacts, which could also be used to develop a relationship for work experience. Tailored outreach materials designed by BAPO (Figures 1-4), including career leaflets, posters, and digital resources, were used to explain the role of an orthotist, training pathways, and patient impact. Schools were contacted via email and phone to offer free career talks, interactive Q&A sessions, and resource packs, with follow-up to encourage uptake and gather feedback.

### Results

Initial engagement resulted in multiple schools expressing interest in hosting career talks and integrating orthotics into STEM and health curricula. Early qualitative feedback indicates improved student awareness and curiosity about the profession. Local Secondary schools have welcomed the opportunity of inviting us to discuss orthotics with their students. This has resulted us being invited into 15 schools. Initial interest has highlighted an issue that only Health and Social students are being considered to attend the talks. This is a concern Prosthetics and Orthotics is a career opportunity for all due to its broad range of interest The BAPO work experience information guide should also help break down barriers.



Figure 1

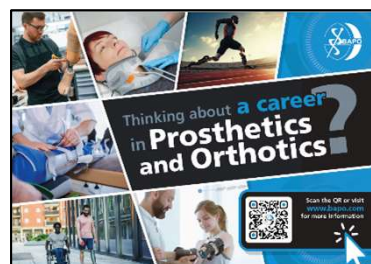


Figure 2



Figure 3

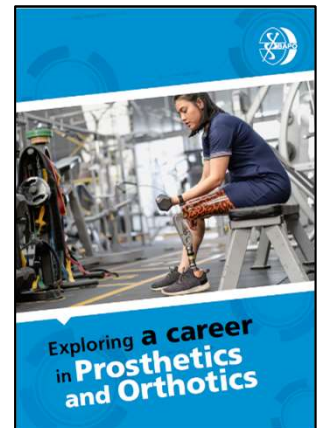


Figure 4

### Discussion

Proactive school engagement demonstrates strong potential as a long-term strategy for raising the profile of orthotists and inspiring the next generation of practitioners. However, securing the future workforce pipeline will require a coordinated, profession-wide collaboration involving BAPO, clinicians, educators, and policymakers. By aligning with updated BAPO guidance on career pathways and working collectively to promote the profession, the prosthetics and orthotics community can enhance accessibility, increase recruitment, and ensure the sustainability of this vital Allied Health Profession.

BAPO has a range of career resources available which can be utilised for career talks to introduce prospective learners to a career in prosthetics and orthotics. BAPO's new career outreach team are also producing a 'careers toolkit' which can be utilised by all sectors of the profession to help raise the profile of prosthetics and orthotics as a career option.

### References

1. Career Pathways into Prosthetics and Orthotics. Health Education England. (2020). *Allied Health Professions: Careers in Prosthetics and Orthotics*.
2. NHS England. (2019). *The NHS Long Term Plan*.

Scan to access BAPO career resources

