



The British Association of Prosthetics and Orthotics

Dr Nicky Eddison
Chair, BAPO
Clyde Offices, 2nd Floor
48 West George Street
Glasgow
G2 1BP

The Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

5th December 2025

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing as Chair of the British Association of Prosthetics and Orthotics (BAPO) to express deep concern about the potential closure of the prosthetics and orthotics apprenticeship programmes at the University of Derby. The development threatens the already fragile workforce that supports one of the most vulnerable groups in society: people living with limb difference.

You witnessed the importance of this work first hand during your meeting with Lord Craig Mackinlay of Richborough, BAPO, and prosthetic service users in 2024. The stories shared that day made the impact of prosthetic and orthotic treatment impossible to ignore. People described how the right support enabled them to work, study, parent, return to sport, rebuild independence, and contribute to their communities. Their experiences were powerful reminders that this profession is not optional; it is a lifeline.

The UK prosthetic and orthotic workforce is already operating far beyond its capacity while the need for services continues to rise. Diabetes UK reports that more than 180 diabetes related amputations take place each week nationwide, and in 2015 NHS England estimated that 10,000 amputations take place each year. Between 2001 and 2023, a total of 304 UK Armed Service Personnel sustained a traumatic or surgical amputation, further adding to the demand for lifelong prosthetic care. In addition, NHS England estimates that around 2 million people in England rely on orthotic services.

The cost of the high intensity healthcare required, along with the broader socio-economic impact when prosthetic and orthotic service users cannot access timely and effective care, is substantial.

British Association of Prosthetics and Orthotics
Clyde Offices, 2nd Floor
48 West George Street
Glasgow
G2 1BP

It is not realistic or safe for such a large and ever-growing group of patients to depend on fewer than a thousand prosthetists and orthotists alongside a depleted technical workforce. Against this background, removing one third of England's training pipeline by losing the Derby apprenticeship route places the profession at real risk of collapse. It undermines the future supply of prosthetists, orthotists, and technicians, and threatens the stability of NHS prosthetic and orthotic services nationwide.

I am requesting clarity on several urgent issues that, if addressed, would help stabilise the prosthetic and orthotic profession for the benefit of service users.

- Why has NHS England still not provided the funds for prosthetic/orthotic apprenticeships for 2026 even though the funding has been agreed for several months?
- Why has the agreed funding for employers of prosthetic/orthotic apprentices, promised by NHS England in 2024, still not been delivered, creating understandable doubt about the viability of the apprenticeship route?
- Why is the promised work on small and vulnerable professions, led by NHS England, not yet in place, and why is there still no regional presence with a focus on supporting and developing the apprenticeship pipeline?
- BAPO has repeatedly highlighted that the current model in which NHS prosthetic and orthotic services are commissioned to private contractors provides no flexibility or support for training and education within the contracts, leading to significant disparities in professional development. NHS run services face a similar challenge because their teams are so small that any absence for training, places too much strain on the remaining staff, which effectively limits opportunities for professional development. What are the government's plans to review this commissioning model and support the development of the profession? Can the government sign post BAPO to who has overall responsibility for the commissioning of prosthetic and orthotic services?
- What are the government's plans to support the small and vulnerable professions in the current financial climate?

The consequences of these delays are not administrative; they are profoundly human. Prosthetic and orthotic services help people reclaim independence, keep people in work, support children and young people to remain in education, improve quality of life, and prevent further ill health. These benefits flow from a small and focused investment in a profession that consistently delivers life changing outcomes.

Following the global call for support from the World Health Organisation and Handicap International in response to the "*staggering number of amputations in conflict zones*", the fact the UK government cannot provide the modest assistance needed to stabilise and sustain the prosthetic and orthotic profession, raises serious concerns about how this will be perceived.

British Association of Prosthetics and Orthotics

Clyde Offices, 2nd Floor
48 West George Street
Glasgow
G2 1BP

I urge you to ensure NHS England follows through on its commitments to commissioning, funding, and workforce support and that the University of Derby prosthetic and orthotic apprenticeship programmes are protected. Without decisive action, the long-term sustainability of the prosthetic and orthotic services in England will be at risk, along with the wellbeing of the millions of people who depend on them.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Nicky Eddison
Chair, BAPO

Cc. The Rt Hon Pat McFadden
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

The Rt Hon Sir Stephen Timms
Minister of State for Social Security and Disability

The Rt Hon John Healey
Secretary of State for Defence