

Rethinking Practice-Based Learning:

Case Study: Building Peer-Supported Learning in Prosthetics and Orthotics Apprenticeships



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Peer-supported
apprenticeship learning



BACKGROUND

A Prosthetics and Orthotics service in Leicestershire has developed an innovative approach to supporting apprentices through a peer-supported learning model.

The service hosts three apprentices at different stages of training. Learners gain experience across prosthetics and orthotics within a large multidisciplinary team and attend the University of Derby alongside clinical practice.

The team initially viewed multiple apprentices as an opportunity to build workforce capacity and shared learning, but quickly recognised that supporting several learners simultaneously also presented educational and pastoral challenges.



THE CHALLENGE

The greatest challenge was supporting apprentices as both employees and degree learners while they developed self-directed learning, time management, professional behaviours, deadline management and university-level study skills.

Managing three learners at different stages required careful planning to provide varied clinical experience while maintaining continuity of learning and patient care.

The additional educational support required had initially been underestimated. This became the catalyst for a more collaborative learning environment.



THE APPROACH

Rather than assigning each apprentice to a single educator, the service adopted distributed supervision. Apprentices work with multiple clinicians across prosthetics, orthotics, paediatrics, diabetic foot clinics and community services. Most receive feedback from at least three educators in a typical week.

Peer-supported activities include:

- Case-based simulated patient exercises and structured peer feedback.
- Apprentice-led presentations on challenging clinical topics.
- Group quizzes, flashcards and academic review.
- Practical rehearsal of assessment skills using peers as simulated patients.



THE OUTCOME

The approach has created a strong learning community. Apprentices support one another academically and clinically, while educators share responsibility for supervision across a wider team.

Peer feedback, simulated assessments and collaborative presentations encourage active learning and critical reflection. Different year groups also create informal mentoring opportunities, with more experienced learners supporting newer apprentices through university study and clinical practice.



KEY LEARNING POINTS

- Peer-supported learning can be highly effective with flexible supervision and a collaborative team culture.
- Supporting multiple apprentices requires significant investment but can strengthen engagement and feedback.
- Shared supervision exposes learners to diverse perspectives and supports professional networks.
- Successful delivery requires adaptation, reflection and ongoing support.



LOOKING AHEAD

The team continues to refine its approach, recognising that successful apprenticeship delivery requires adaptation, reflection and ongoing support for both learners and educators.



**A collaborative
approach today, a
stronger workforce
tomorrow.**



CONCLUSION

This case study demonstrates how reframing learning as a shared, continuous process can enhance professional development, improve workforce capability and support safer, more effective patient care.

By combining peer learning, flexible supervision and a commitment to supporting apprentices, the service has created an innovative approach that benefits both learners and educators.

