The British Association of Prosthetics and Orthotics

British Association of Prosthetics and Orthotics
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BAPO Position Statement: The Naming of Prosthetic and Orthotic Services within Healthcare

The British Association of Prosthetics and Orthotics (BAPO) believes that healthcare departments providing prosthetic and orthotic services should be appropriately named and recognised as Prosthetics Departments or Prosthetic Services, and Orthotics Departments or Orthotic Services, rather than using outdated terminology such as "Artificial Limb and Appliance Centre", "Surgical Appliances" or "Appliance Department".

The terminology used to describe a healthcare service is important. It reflects the professional identity of those working within it, communicates the nature of the care provided, and influences how the service is perceived by patients, healthcare colleagues, and healthcare organisations.

Prosthetists and orthotists are highly skilled, HCPC-registered allied health professionals who undertake complex clinical assessments, formulate treatment plans, prescribe and provide prosthetic and orthotic interventions, and evaluate patient outcomes. Terms such as "Artificial Limb and Appliance Centre" and "Surgical Appliances" do not adequately reflect the clinical expertise, professional autonomy, or scope of practice of modern prosthetists and orthotists.

Prosthetics and orthotics are clinical professions, not merely services that supply artificial limbs or appliances. Continuing to use terminology that focuses on products rather than clinical expertise risks reinforcing misconceptions about both professions and undervaluing their contributions to patient care.

BAPO recognises that some NHS organisations retain historical service names for administrative or contractual reasons, including the term "Artificial Limb and Appliance Centre". However, these arrangements should not prevent services from adopting terminology that accurately reflects contemporary clinical practice.

Therefore, BAPO advocates that all NHS organisations and other healthcare providers adopt the terms "Prosthetics Department" or "Prosthetic Service" and "Orthotics Department" or "Orthotic Service" as appropriate, across departmental signage, patient communications, referral pathways, organisational structures, service specifications, and contractual documentation.

This is more than a matter of terminology. It is about professional recognition, ensuring that patients understand the clinical services they receive, and acknowledging the contribution prosthetic and orthotic services make to improving mobility, independence, and quality of life.

BAPO encourages healthcare organisations to review their existing terminology and work with prosthetic and orthotic service providers to ensure that department and centre names accurately reflect the professions and clinical services delivered.

The language we use to describe our professions matters. Prosthetists and orthotists should be recognised as autonomous healthcare professionals, and the services they deliver should be named accordingly.