



**Consultant practice for prosthetists  
and orthotists and employers**



# Contents

Introduction	3
Funding	3
Author	3
What is consultant practice?	4
What does consultant practice look like in prosthetics and orthotics?	4
How do you become a consultant prosthetist or orthotist?	5
What should prosthetists and orthotists do if they aspire to being a consultant in the future?	7
What should employers do when they are thinking about developing or recruiting to consultant roles?	7
Consultant practice in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland	8
Resources	9



# Introduction

This document provides an overview of consultant practice for prosthetists and orthotists and employers, with links to further resources at the end.

This document is primarily for prosthetists and orthotists and employers in England. However, we have provided some information about consultant practice in the other UK countries at the end of this document.

## Funding

This document was commissioned by BAPO, with funding from the Workforce, Training and Education Directorate, NHS England.

## Author

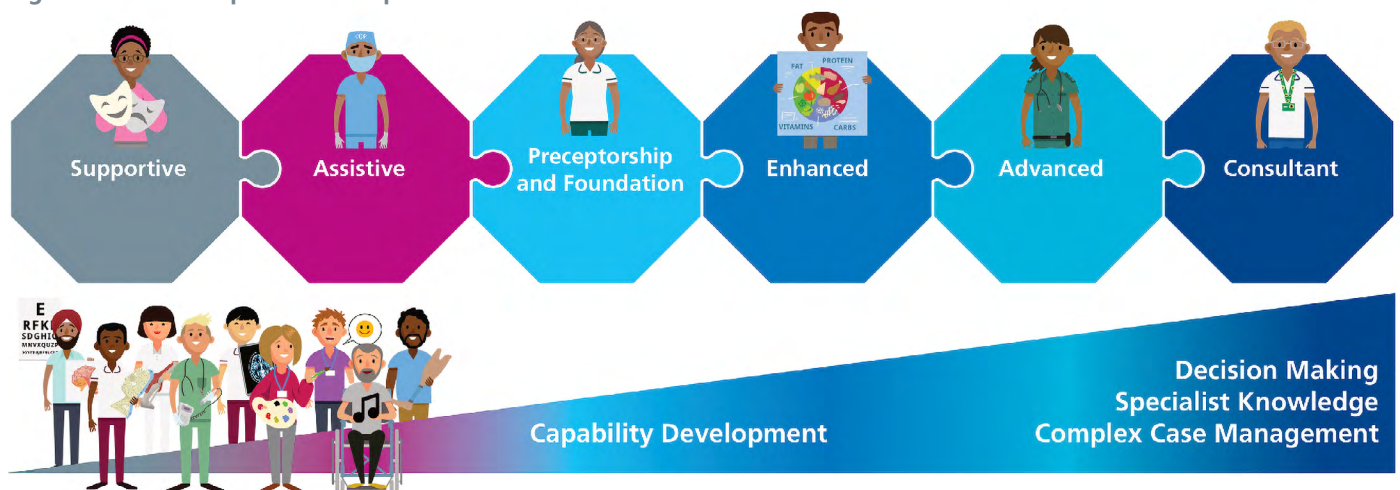
Michael Guthrie is a freelance consultant. He was formerly Director of Policy and Standards at the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and formerly Policy Lead for Advancing Practice at Health Education England.



# What is consultant practice?

Consultant practice is a level of professional practice – see Figure 1 below. **This level of practice is characterised by the ability to make a significant contribution to services and systems at a strategic level.** At this level, health and care professionals will normally have completed, or be working towards, a doctorate. Their qualifications and experience will demonstrate their expertise at a strategic level across all four pillars of practice. They will have high levels of clinical credibility within their chosen field, coupled with the skills to lead and transform healthcare systems for the benefit of services, the workforce, and patients and carers.

Figure 1: Levels of professional practice



Source: NHS England

# What does consultant practice look like in prosthetics and orthotics?

Consultant practice is in its relative infancy in prosthetics and orthotics and, at the time of writing, there were relatively few practitioners working at this level of practice.

Prosthetists and orthotists working at this level of practice will have substantial senior level professional experience, demonstrating a strong track record of leadership and expertise across all four pillars of practice at a strategic level. They will often have strategic level responsibility for a complete care pathway or pathways and will lead and drive activity which aims to redesign how care is delivered to optimise the use of resources and improve patient outcomes.

To help in understanding what consultant practice might look like in the profession, Table 1 below gives some indicative job titles, qualifications and bandings for consultant practice in prosthetics and orthotics.

Table 1: Consultant practice in prosthetics and orthotics

Indicative job titles	Qualifications (from)	Indicative NHS Agenda for Change band (from)
Consultant prosthetist Consultant orthotist	Doctorate	8c

Please note that Agenda for Change bandings are indicative only and may vary between different employers and the UK countries.

# How do you become a consultant prosthetist or orthotist?

There is no single development pathway for becoming a consultant which will vary based on a prosthetist or orthotist's area of practice and learning and development needs. The entry requirements and scope of consultant roles will be determined by each employer based on their service needs and priorities.

Across the Allied Health Professions (AHPs), some may progress to consultant practice roles having first become an advanced practitioner. Others will follow a range of different career pathways.

Whatever their background, all consultants need to demonstrate substantial professional expertise, experience and standing at a strategic level. 'Strategic level' means being able to demonstrate not only team leadership, but also leadership of organisations and systems. This means demonstrating their impact at local, regional and national levels.

To be appointed to a consultant position, a prosthetist or orthotist will normally have completed (or be working towards) a doctorate. They will have a portfolio of evidence which demonstrates their capabilities at consultant level.

NHS England has published the 'Multi-professional consultant-level practice capability and impact framework' ('the multi-professional consultant framework') which sets out the capabilities that describe practice at this level.

Table 2 on page 6 helps to illustrate what consultant practice looks like. It gives examples (inexhaustive) of what prosthetists and orthotists might evidence in their portfolios to demonstrate their capability at consultant level.



Table 2: Consultant practice across four domains

DOMAINS OF CONSULTANT PRACTICE	EXAMPLES
<p><b>Expert Practice</b> Help firmly establish values-based professional practice across pathways, services, organisations and systems, working with individuals, families, carers, communities and others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands the individual and national health burden of conditions which require prosthetic or orthotic input and how this impacts patients and services.</li> <li>• Practices within complex, unpredictable and normally specialised contexts demanding innovative work which may involve extending the current limits of knowledge.</li> <li>• Demonstrates a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of professional practice.</li> <li>• Advanced knowledge of prosthetic or orthotic management, innovations treatments, patient care standards and development of service strategies at local and national level.</li> <li>• Leading and overseeing peer review, audit and evaluation activity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic, Enabling Leadership</b> Provide values-based leadership across the care pathway, services and systems in complex and changing situations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leading and overseeing development of strategic plans and local/ regional/national policy.</li> <li>• Knowledge of organisational change and leadership models including the characteristics of effective leadership styles, development and succession planning, and concepts associated with vision, strategy, goals and objectives.</li> <li>• Leads / participates in consultation on national or international publications and guidelines.</li> <li>• Leadership roles that impact at a national level.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Learning, developing, improving across the system</b> Develop staff potential, add to, and transform the workforce, help people to learn, develop and improve (in and from practice) to promote excellence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Driving workplace culture by leading activity to improve workforce satisfaction, retention and productivity.</li> <li>• Collaborating with higher education providers to develop education and training.</li> <li>• Devising and delivering education and training at regional / national level.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Research &amp; innovation</b> Develop a 'knowledge-rich and inquiry' culture across the service and system that contributes to research outputs and has a positive effect on development, quality, innovation, increasing capacity and capability, and making systems more effective.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leading and sponsoring research activity, translating research findings into practice.</li> <li>• Presentations at national and international conferences</li> <li>• Acts as national resource, expert, adviser, researcher and author with a portfolio of peer reviewed internationally published research.</li> <li>• Empowers and educates others to engage with research.</li> </ul>

Note: Domains of consultant practice are from NHS England Multi-professional consultant-level practice capability and impact framework (2023).

# What should prosthetists and orthotists do if they aspire to being a consultant in the future?

**Prosthetists and orthotists at all levels of practice need to be active in their own career development.**

This means being clear about their career aspirations and learning needs. Good, open career conversations with employers are crucial. These might be part of annual performance reviews or during one-to-one meetings with managers.

By being open about their career aspirations and development needs, prosthetists and orthotists can work with their employers to identify how they can best be supported to develop their knowledge and skills. This might include, for example, identifying opportunities to lead activities which would demonstrate consultant level capability.

Alongside the multi-professional consultant framework, NHS England has published a self-assessment tool. This allows the aspiring consultant to self-assess their development against the required capabilities. This can help identify career development needs and put in place plans to address them, so the aspiring consultant is well positioned when a new consultant post is being discussed in their workplace or being advertised.

# What should employers do when they are thinking about developing or recruiting to consultant roles?

Consultant practice in the AHPs has developed over time. 'Consultant' is not a protected professional title. As a result, consultant job roles have sometimes varied considerably in their scope and content.

The multi-professional consultant framework provides an important, consistent benchmark for what practice at this level looks like.

Employers who are developing consultant roles should use this benchmark to help them develop consultant roles which are appropriate to the particular needs and priorities of their services. When recruiting to consultant positions, employers can require candidates to provide a portfolio of evidence which demonstrates the required consultant level capabilities for appointment.

The multi-professional consultant framework recognises that capability at consultant level develops over time, outlining the capabilities demonstrated by consultants after one to three years in role and three to five years in role. It can therefore be used to support employer arrangements for annual performance review / appraisal.

# Consultant practice in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

There are separate frameworks which set out the capabilities for consultant practice in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Prosthetists and orthotists and employers in these countries are encouraged to use the applicable professional framework to inform career and role development.





# Resources

## What is consultant practice?

- [Multi-professional consultant-level practice capability and impact framework](#) – includes required capabilities across four domains.
- [Multi-professional consultant-level practice capability and impact framework - self assesment tool](#)

## What does consultant practice look like in prosthetics and orthotics?

- [Advanced practice in prosthetics and orthotics](#) – includes information about enhanced, advanced and consultant practice with case studies of consultant orthotists.

## Consultant practice in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

### WALES

- [Professional framework for enhanced, advanced and consultant clinical practice](#)

### SCOTLAND

- [Consultant level practice](#) – includes case studies of consultant AHPs
- [Nursing, midwifery and allied health professionals \(NMAHP\) development framework - post-registration framework](#)

### NORTHERN IRELAND

- [Advanced AHP practice framework](#) – includes capabilities for consultant practice





Registered address:

Clyde Offices, 2/3 48 West George Street, Glasgow G2 1BP

Tel: 0141 561 7217 E-mail: [enquiries@bapo.com](mailto:enquiries@bapo.com)

[www.bapo.com](http://www.bapo.com)