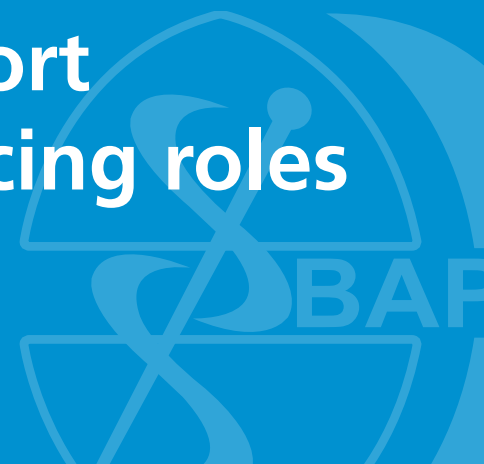




**Expanding the potential of the  
P&O Technician and Support  
workforce into patient-facing roles**



# Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Funding</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Authors</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>What do we know about P&amp;O Technicians and Support workers?</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>What do Technicians and Support workers do in patient-facing roles?</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Clinical and Technical Practice.....	<b>6</b>
Education and Facilitating Learning.....	<b>6</b>
Leadership and Management.....	<b>6</b>
Evidence, Research and Development.....	<b>6</b>
<b>Resources to support the expansion of P&amp;O Technicians and Support workers into patient-facing roles</b> .....	<b>7</b>
The Support Worker Framework and the Career Development Framework (BAPO 2023).....	<b>7</b>
International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO) Education standards for Prosthetic/Orthotic occupations.....	<b>8</b>
The Allied Health Professions' Support Worker Competency, Education and Career Development Framework.....	<b>8</b>
OETT Funding.....	<b>8</b>
BAPO web pages.....	<b>9</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>10</b>





# Introduction

The traditional workshop-based Technician role is well established in the Prosthetics and Orthotics profession (P&O). Some Technician roles are situated within the clinical setting and involve limb maintenance and repairs while others are in Central Fabrication (e.g. an offsite manufacturing facility).

Roles that provide direct patient care and treatment e.g., Support worker roles, are at an emergent stage of development. The majority of other Allied Health Profession (AHP) Services - e.g. physiotherapy, occupational therapy - employ Technicians and Support workers who work alongside the registered professionals, with appropriate supervision and delegation.

This document provides an overview of the current and potential contributions for P&O Technicians and Support Workers into patient-facing roles. The expansion is an addition to the established workshop-based Technician role. This document also provides an overview of some of the existing resources to help further develop this essential segment of the workforce.

The information in this report is gathered from multiple resources including the [BAPO workforce review](#) (BAPO 2023a), a UK wide survey (n=45) with Technicians and Support workers, including those already working in patient-facing roles (unpublished, 2024), and from discussions with members of the Task and Finish Group for this project alongside registered P&O staff, managers and academics.



# Funding

This work was commissioned and funded by NHS England.

# Authors

Dr Stephanie Tempest is a freelance consultant and co-founder / co-director of The Creative Health Alliance. She is an occupational therapist (OT), with a career across clinical practice, education, national strategic leadership and research, including with OT Technicians and Support workers. She is also a Chartered Fellow at the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development.



Anushika Dayananda is Orthotics Associate Practitioner at Cambridge Prosthetics & Orthotics Service (MSc, HND, ISPO cat II). A qualified Prosthetist and Orthotist from Sri Lanka, currently awaiting HCPC registration. Passionate about research and dedicated to creating opportunities for support workforce development across clinical settings.

Brian Clements has fifteen years experience as a prosthetic/orthotic technician, the last five years being the workshop supervisor at Blatchford's Luton clinic overseeing manufacturing, maintenance and repair of prosthetic devices. Recent member of the ISPO UK committee and attending ISPO Stockholm 2025 as a member and moderator of the technical track that is new for this year.



# What do we know about P&O Technicians and Support workers?

From the data available (including the [Workforce Review](#), BAPO 2023a), we know the following about P&O Technicians and Support workers:

- There are 877 P&O Technicians or Support workers in the UK, working alongside 1174 registered P&Os
- Of the 877 people, 819 are P&O Technicians (most in traditional workshop roles) and 58 are Support workers (most working in patient-facing roles)
- An additional 1133 to 1803 Technicians and Support workers are required to meet World Health Organisation standards
- Almost a third of Technician and Support workers responding to the workforce review feel they do not currently have the skills to carry out their job
- Almost a third of Technician and Support workers responding to the workforce review report having skills that are not used
- There are opportunities to develop services, and invest in the learning and development of staff, to make effective use of Technicians and Support workers, as part of a strategic response to the workforce shortage
- The development of more patient-facing roles for Technicians and Support workers may offer a significant and affordable route for future workforce development expansion
- In addition to valuing the Technician and Support Worker roles as career destinations in their own right, 43% of P&O Technicians and Support Workers have expressed an interest in becoming registered P&Os, which the Level 6 programme could support via apprenticeship funding (England only) or alternative employer funding (across UK)

There is not a single role with a single job title for the workforce, and this presents broad development opportunities. Technician and Support worker roles are defined by local service needs including but not limited to:

- Prosthetic Technician
- Dual-practicing P&O Technician
- Clinical assistant
- Prosthetic Support Worker
- Dual practicing P&O Support Worker
- Orthotic Associate Practitioner
- Service administrators
- Orthotic Technician
- Assistant
- Rehabilitation Technician
- Orthotic Support Worker
- Workshop manager
- Clinical Support Technician

The P&O Technician and Support workforce is diverse and inclusive. The wide variety of roles means there is variation in the requirements and educational qualifications in job descriptions, including GCSEs or equivalent, Apprenticeships (Level 3 onwards) and A levels. There are also P&O Technicians and Support workers who choose to enter the workforce with first degrees and Masters. Relevant life experiences and other practical skills are also in demand.

Upon entry into the workforce, P&O Technicians and Support workers learn through in-house training, via additional academic experiences e.g. apprenticeships and other qualifications and from the experiences they acquire in the workplace.

# What do Technicians and Support workers do in patient-facing roles?

The launch of the [BAPO Support worker Framework](#) (BAPO 2023b) for the P&O workforce provides a structure for developing patient-facing roles, including delegated prosthetic and / or orthotics duties and responsibilities.

Survey respondents (n=45) for this project (unpublished, 2024), all Technicians and Support workers including in patient-facing roles, identified the tasks that some (but not all) of them already do. With appropriate delegation and supervision, P&O Technicians and Support workers already provide a range of patient-facing services including:



## CLINICAL AND TECHNICAL PRACTICE

- Run their own delegated clinics, including as part of a multidisciplinary team
- Undertake manufacturing alterations within their scope of practice
- Undertake telephone reviews
- Know when to refer to registered P&O colleagues for clinical assessment
- Support patients and their families e.g. through providing information
- Provide administration and service support
- Manage and maintain stock
- Maintain a safe environment



## EDUCATION AND FACILITATING LEARNING

- Work as Assistant supervisors for P&O pre-registration learners and other students
- Undertake career talks and promotional activities, including via social media



## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- Assist and provide transitional support / preceptorship for newly qualified staff
- Provide onboarding and induction support for new staff
- Line management e.g. for the Workshop Team



## EVIDENCE, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

- Undertake patient evaluation sessions
- Contribute to audits and service evaluation
- Contribute to quality improvement projects
- Collect and analyse audit data including outcome measures



# Resources to support the expansion of P&O Technicians and Support workers into patient-facing roles

There are a number of resources to guide the learning and development of P&O Technicians and Support workers, including into patient-facing roles. The learning needs and requirements (including those that extend beyond mandatory training requirements) will vary according to the individual role and the needs of the service.

## The Support Worker Framework and the Career Development Framework (BAPO 2023)



**Career Development Framework for Prosthetists and Orthotists**  
Building Career Dividends



**Support worker framework for the prosthetic and orthotic workforce**

Use the [Support Worker Framework](#) and [Career Development Framework](#):

- As an existing P&O Support worker or Technician to identify potential areas to develop your role
- As a manager to identify potential areas of growth for job planning including for your existing team or for the development of future roles
- Refer to the information on supervision and delegation
- Refer and use the information on profession-specific and multiprofessional apprenticeships (see Figure 1)

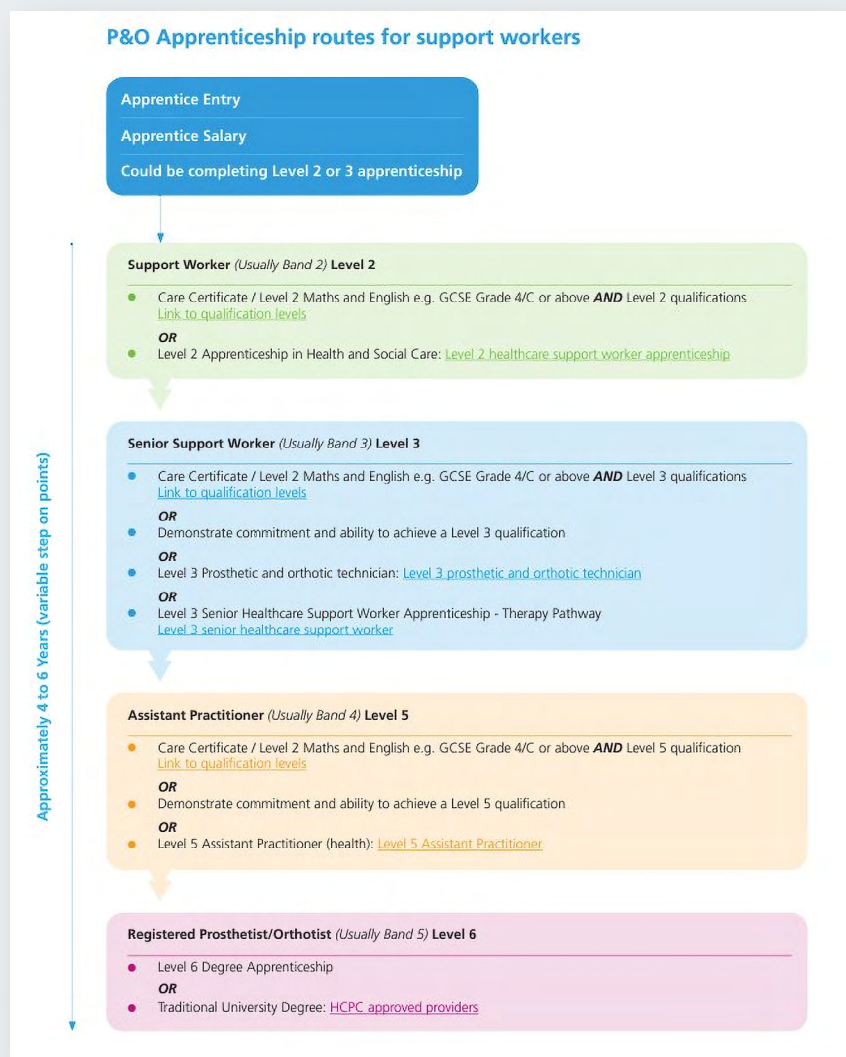


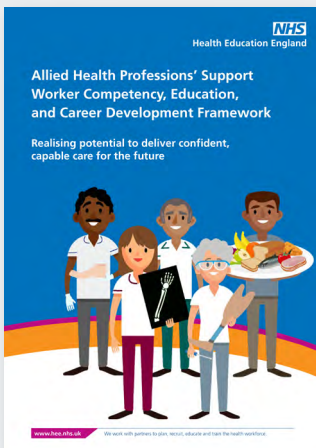
Figure 1: Apprenticeship routes for P&O Support workforce and Technicians (BAPO23b)

## International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO) Education standards for Prosthetic/Orthotic occupations



Use these international **standards** to benchmark the roles of Prosthetic/Orthotic Technicians who work as part of the healthcare team to enable service recipients to have equal opportunities to fully participate in society (ISPO 2018, pg. 11)

## The Allied Health Professions' Support Worker Competency, Education and Career Development Framework



Use this **Framework** (England) for development opportunities within the multiprofessional context e.g. Care Certificate.

Also use this Framework to support job planning including to describe different levels within the Support workforce:

- Support worker
- Senior support worker
- Assistant practitioner

## OETT Funding

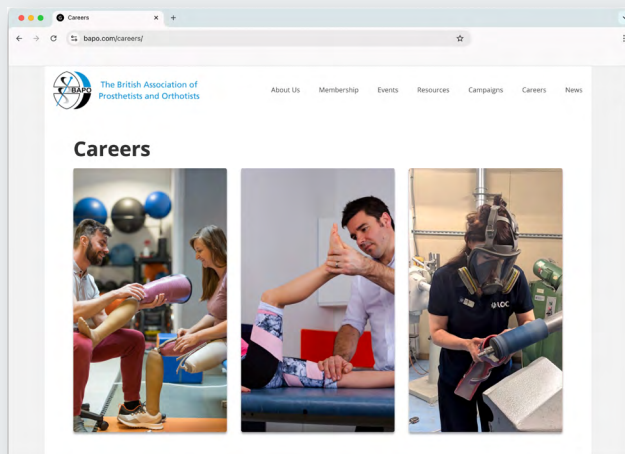
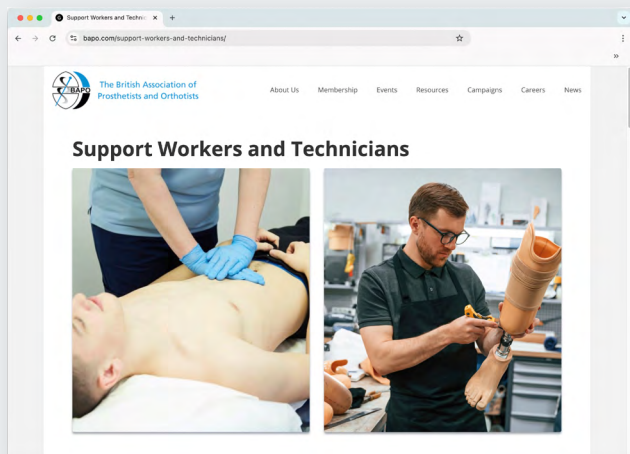


Consider an application to the **Orthotic Education and Training Trust** (OETT) for funding to support the learning and development of Orthotic Support Workers and Technicians



## BAPO web pages

Review the information on the dedicated Support Workers and Technicians webpages on the [BAPO website](#) including the Human Library collection sharing a range of role examples, educational resources and the BAPO [Careers](#) webpages





# Conclusion

This report shares insights into ways to expand the potential of Technicians and Support workers, with a particular focus on patient-facing activities, in addition to traditional workshop-based roles.

With appropriate delegation, supervision and training, expanding these roles can bring many benefits. They can help improve patient services, make better use of existing skills, address workforce shortages, and create an affordable pathway for future registered professionals. Job planning and commissioning requirements need to be considered as part of a strategic response, including for NHS safe staffing initiatives.

# References

**BAPO (2023a)**

[BAPO Profile of the UK prosthetic and orthotic workforce and mapping of the workforce for the 21st century](#)

**BAPO (2023b)**

[Support worker framework for the prosthetic and orthotic workforce](#)





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)