

BAPO Guidance paper on the supervision of Assistant Practitioners

This document should be read in conjunction with the BAPO Standards for Best Practice

The BAPO Standards for Best Practice cover both the Role & Scope of Practice of the Prosthetist/Orthotist (Section 1) and the Role of the Prosthetic/Orthotic Assistant Practitioner (Section 2). This document seeks to further clarify the supervisory aspect of that professional relationship in addition to the professional and legal responsibilities of both practitioners

Point 1.3 of the BAPO Standards for Best Practice states that:

The role of the Prosthetist/Orthotist is to take the lead in the assessment and provision of prosthetic/orthotic interventions, to effectively supervise Assistants and advise other health care workers and service users.

Also under NHS clinical governance arrangements, Assistant Practitioners treating patients within the NHS must be supervised by the appropriately registered healthcare professional. For example: in the case of an Assistant Practitioner carrying out duties which would ordinarily be carried out by a registered Prosthetist/Orthotist, the supervising registered healthcare professional must be a Prosthetist/Orthotist.

BAPO recommend that before agreeing to act in a supervisory role the P/O should ensure that:

- The Assistant Practitioner has satisfactorily completed a competency framework appropriate for the work that they are being asked to supervise. For example: The discontinued BAPO Limited Orthotic Practitioner (LOP) course provided training at a level which is consistent with working as an Assistant Practitioner
- They are able to provide a level and type of supervision that is consistent with the demonstrated competencies and experience of the Assistant Practitioner
- The Assistant Practitioner will be working to an agreed protocol which include checks to ensure that the patient is suitable to be treated within that protocol. *This is particularly important if the supervision will be anything less than direct supervision.*

BAPO must remind the supervising Prosthetist / Orthotist that it is their registration that is at risk if the Assistant Practitioner is allowed, by them, to work in a way that is inconsistent with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) Professional Standards and Code of Conduct.

Point 2.4.3 of the BAPO Standards for Best Practice states that:

Prosthetic and Orthotic Assistants must not work in isolation, beyond authorised protocols, or beyond agreed competencies, but only within protocols written in accordance with the NHS Litigation “Risk Management Standards”. Assistants working outside of clear protocols or beyond their scope of practice, do so at their own legal and clinical risk.

BAPO advises that:

- While Assistant Practitioners are not required by law to be registered , as members of BAPO they are expected to adhere to BAPO guidelines regarding the scope and practice of their role
- Training approved and/or delivered by BAPO which is intended to support staff in carrying out their role as an Assistant Practitioner, does not confer any right to practice without the appropriate level of supervision
- While Assistant Practitioners may have skills and competencies in multiple areas such as fitting of compression hosiery, fabric supports, soft collars, specialist footwear etc. any **non-registered staff** carrying out such activities, must be supervised by an appropriately registered Prosthetist/Orthotist