

"There's nothing better than seeing a patient walk out of the clinic with a smile on their face because of something I've done."

Meet Lauren to learn about her important role as an orthotist.

Lauren Jennings

Orthotist

Lauren always wanted a career in healthcare and once she discovered prosthetics and orthotics, she knew it was the job for her.



Why did you decide to become an orthotist?

I didn't want to be a doctor or nurse, but I wanted to do something in healthcare so I researched all the possible options. As soon as I learned about prosthetics and orthotics, I knew it was the job for me. It's people centred - you really get to know your patients - but it also requires a sound knowledge of biomechanics and problem solving skills.

The degree course has a nice ^[1] mix of practical learning, lectures and placements. After university, I chose to specialise in orthotics.

What's your day-to-day like?

I work with a small team and run general clinics, as well as a specialist clinic in paediatrics. As a team, we also visit the specialist schools in our area and take part in a clinic with other healthcare professionals for patients with diabetes.

I might start the day seeing a young child with cerebral palsy. Once I've assessed their muscle power and range of movement, I take a plaster mould of the leg set at the correct angle to maximise their walking potential. At that point, an orthosis or brace can be designed to help support the foot and ankle.

The next patient might be an elderly gentleman with a partial foot amputation and I'll assess how the support inside his footwear is working.

I also work on the inpatient wards with [stroke](#) ^[2] physiotherapists or orthopaedic surgeons to get people safely moving and out of bed, or to protect them from pressure ulcers.

What are some of the challenges?

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One of the challenges is that some patients have very complex conditions and just when you've got something right, something else can go wrong. Orthotics is an area where you can make a real difference. Getting a patient to stand may seem small, but it can truly impact their overall health.

The best part of your role?

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I love seeing children learning to walk and becoming independent. There's nothing better than seeing a patient walk out of the clinic with a smile on their face because of something I've done.

What's life like outside of work?

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I enjoy spending time with my family and looking after my nieces and nephew – my knowledge of current children's TV and toys can be very useful in the clinic when I'm trying to distract the youngsters.

I also enjoy crafts such as knitting, sewing and woodwork and I think it's helped me to understand how different orthotic devices are manufactured.

Top tips for others?

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Working in prosthetics and orthotics isn't glamorous or easy, but it's really rewarding. I know very few other professions where you can say you helped a child walk today or prevented a patient from needing an amputation.

If you're willing to put in the hard work and engage with your patients, you can make a real difference. It's important to have good communication and problem solving skills, too.

Source URL:<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/prosthetistorthotist/real-life-story-lauren-jennings>

Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#NICE> [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Stroke>