

Northern Ireland
Prosthetics Service Survey
Executive Summary

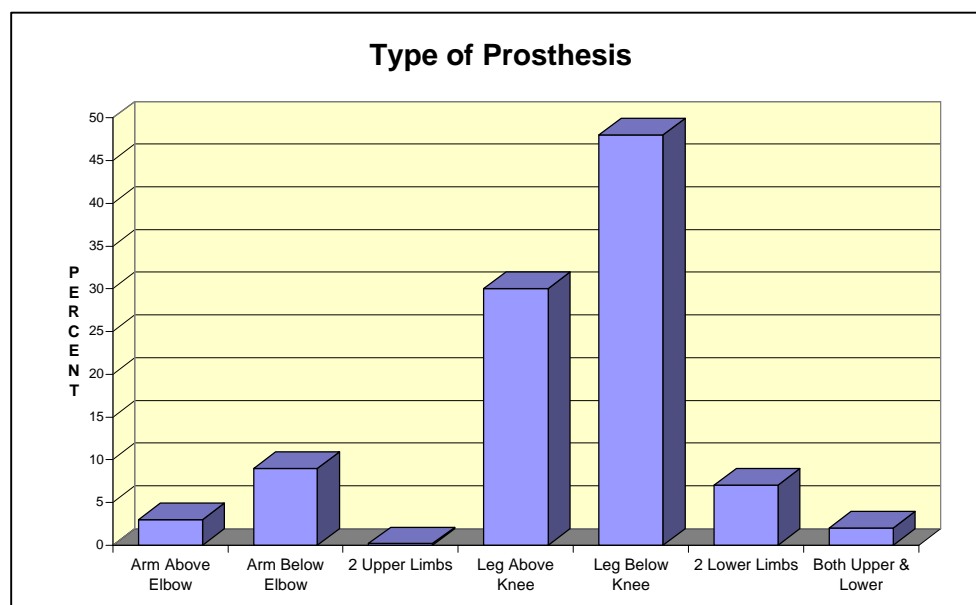
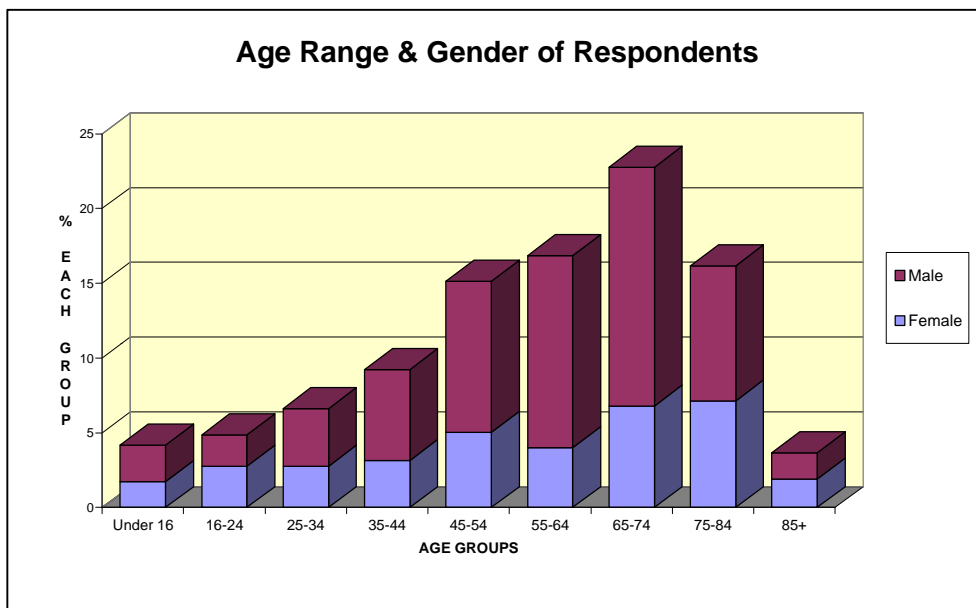


For The NI Health Boards & HSS Councils

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By Dr Reg Race - Quality Health

1. ABOUT THE SURVEY

- 1.1. The survey was conducted by an independent organisation, **Quality Health**, on behalf of all the Health Boards and Health and Social Services Councils in Northern Ireland. It was undertaken between December 2000 and March 2001.
- 1.2. All 1,084 patients who had been in touch with the Limb Service during the past two years were sent a survey. 54% responded (589 people).
- 1.3. The biggest group of respondents were patients aged 65 and over; 43% were in this group. 25% were aged under 45. Just over a third of the patients were women; 64% were men.
- 1.4. Most patients (88%) had had an amputation, but 7% were born with an incomplete limb. 3% had both an amputation and an incomplete limb. The largest group of limb-users were those who had an artificial limb which fitted below the knee.
- 1.5. About 1 in 5 limb-users had a job; most of them were in full time work, but 3% were part-timers.

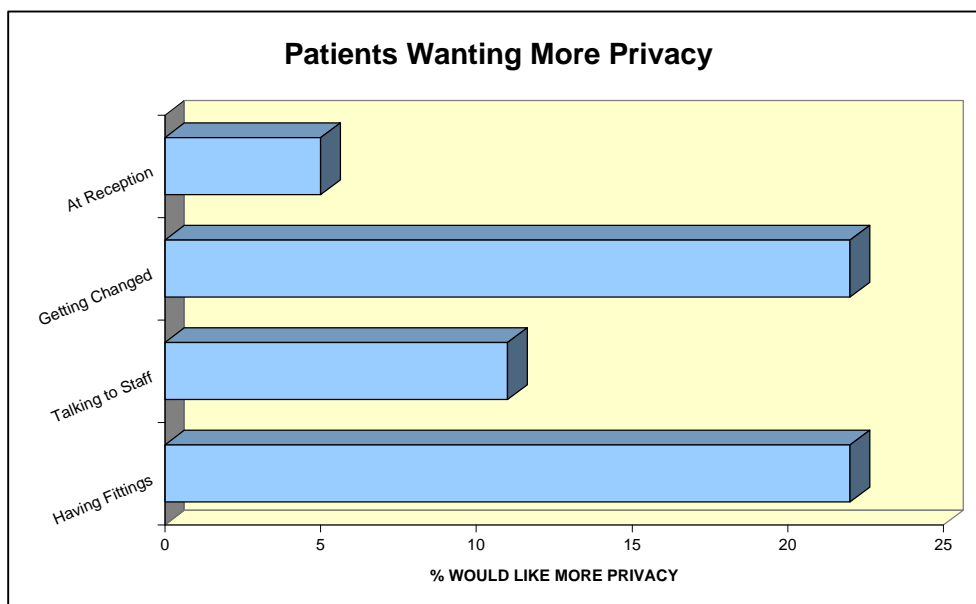


2. GOING TO THE CENTRE

- 2.1. Many patients had had contact with the limb centre for a considerable time. Almost half the patients had been going to the Centre for over 10 years.
- 2.2. Although a majority of patients said that their appointment date had never been changed, 36% said it had been changed once or twice.
- 2.3. Most patients (81%) got to the Centre by private car. Nearly all the patients who went by private car said it was easy to park. Of those going to the Centre by ambulance or hospital car, only 7% said they arrived late for their appointments. The same percentage (7%) said that it took over 2 hours to get home by hospital transport.
- 2.4. The great majority of patients (87%) felt that they were made welcome on arrival at the Centre.

3. ABOUT THE CENTRE

- 3.1. Most patients were greeted by a member of staff at Centre Reception (89%). Only 4% said that they had to wait more than 30 minutes after their appointment time.
- 3.2. Most patients thought that the Centre was clean, was nicely decorated, and had a comfortable temperature.
- 3.3. There was criticism about the tea bar. Over 1 in 5 patients said it was often shut when they were there, and 51% wanted more facilities to buy drinks.
- 3.4. A substantial number of patients (22%) wanted more privacy when they were getting dressed/undressed and when having fittings. The patients most likely to want more privacy were those using an artificial lower limb.

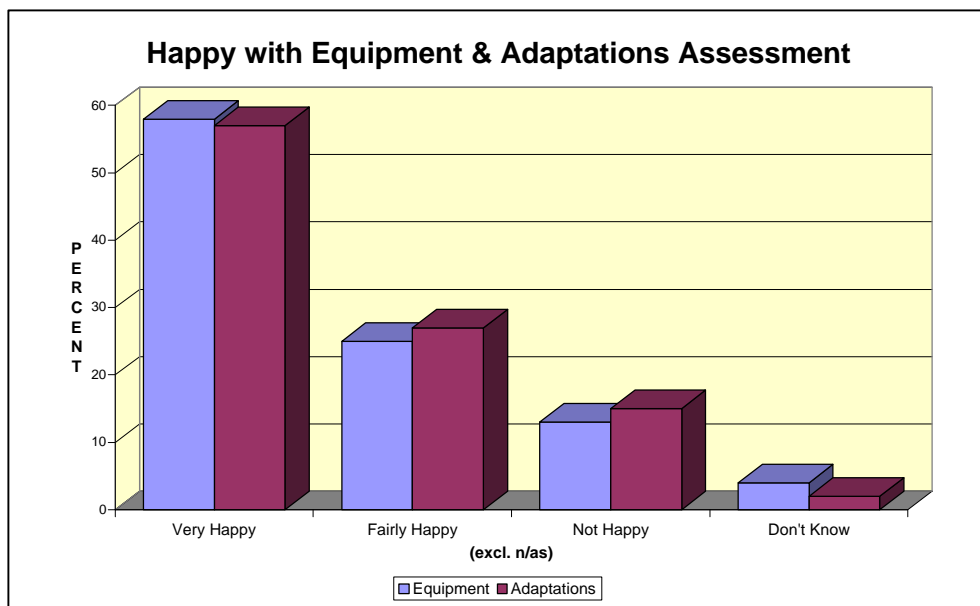


4. THE STAFF SEEN BY THE PATIENT

- 4.1. The ratings given by patients to staff were very positive on respect given, time spent, and staff being pleasant and polite. This applied to Receptionists, Doctors, Prosthetists (fitters) and other staff.
- 4.2. Although 64% of patients thought that regular appointments with the Doctor were very helpful, 11% said that they were unnecessary.

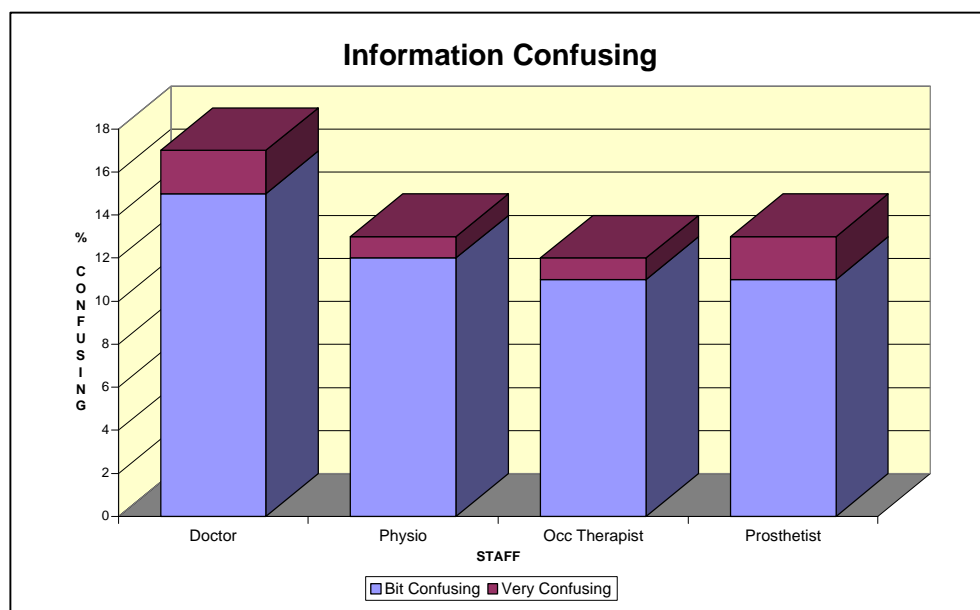
5. ABOUT THE TREATMENT

- 5.1. More detailed questions were asked about the work done by the Professions Allied to Medicine. Key points arising from the survey were:
 - Most patients having physiotherapy were not given a personal care plan to keep, or personal goals to achieve.
 - A majority of patients who had physiotherapy said their mobility had been improved a lot by the treatment (58%).
 - Most patients who had walking training found it very useful (82%).
 - A minority of patients had not been told about help available from Occupational Therapists (for example, on housing adaptations and equipment to help around the home or at work).



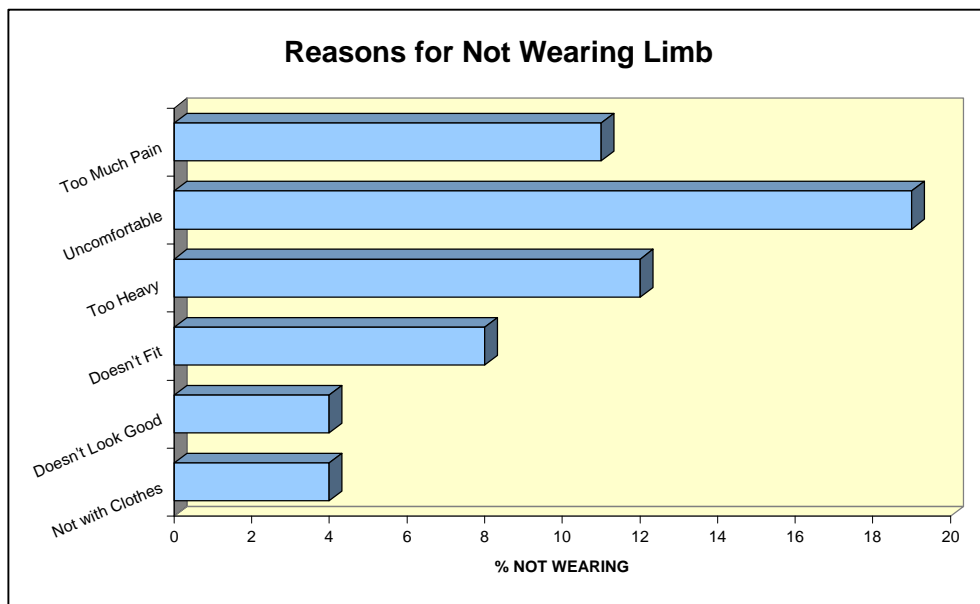
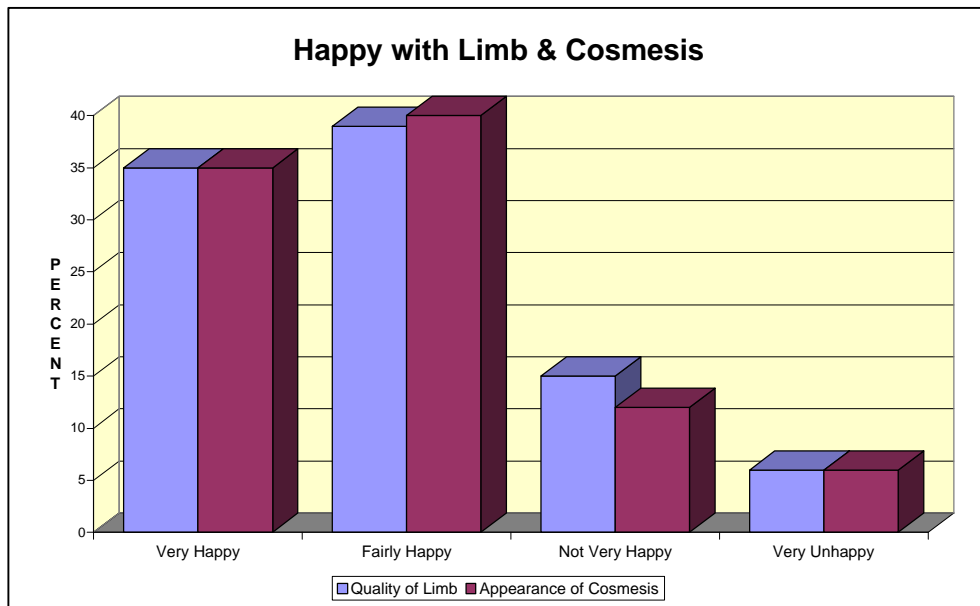
6. INFORMATION AND ADVICE

- 6.1. Most patients found information given by staff clear. They also thought they were given enough information about their treatment. However, a minority of patients were confused by the information given by staff. 15% of patients seeing the Doctor thought that information from them was a bit confusing and 2% said it was very confusing.
- 6.2. A majority of patients were not given written information to take home with them (53%).
- 6.3. Over a third of all patients said they were not told enough about new limbs and coverings, and a further 17% said they were only sometimes told enough.



7. ABOUT LIMBS

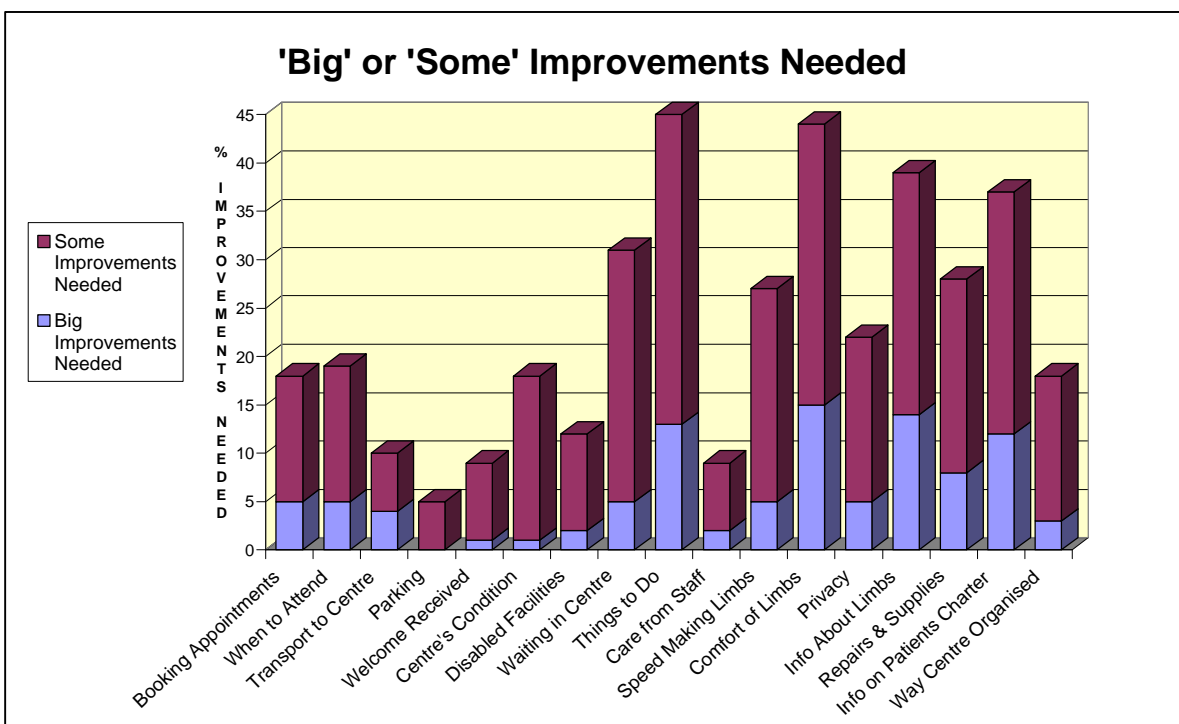
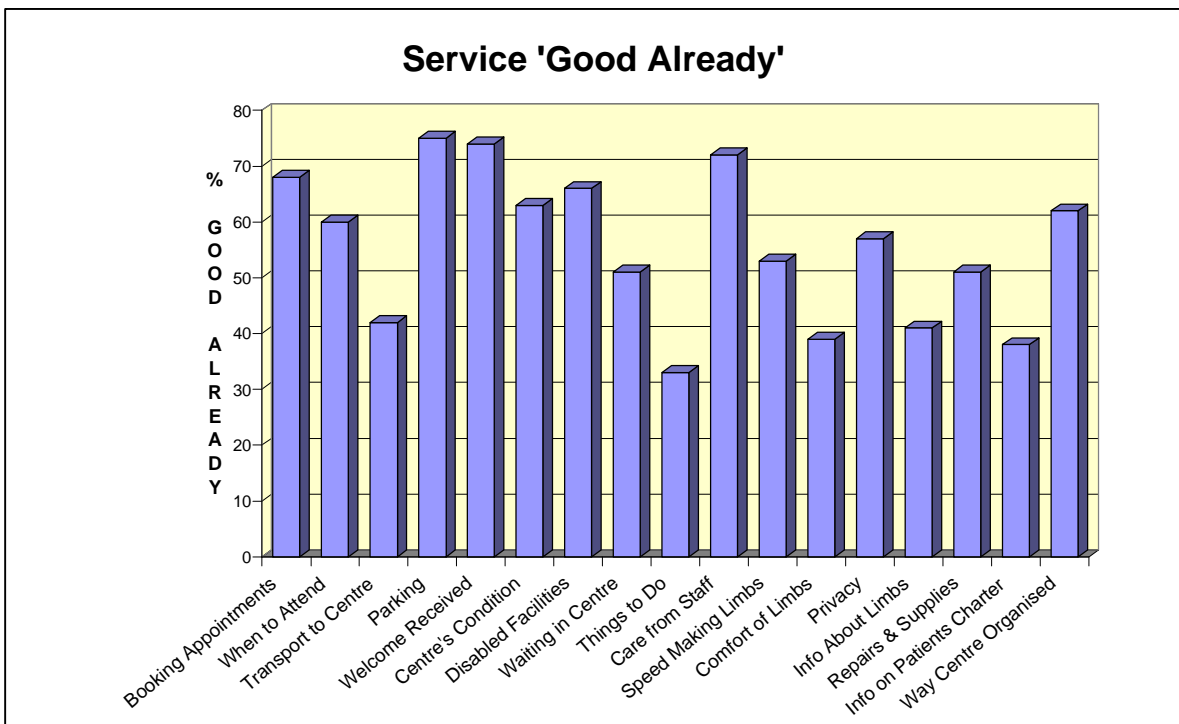
- 7.1. Most patients (75%) saw the same Prosthetist (fitter) each time they visited the Centre, but almost 1 in 5 did not.
- 7.2. Key points about the limb itself were as follows:
 - Nearly half the patients thought their limb was not how they expected it to be (48%).
 - A majority of patients wanted to choose what kind of limb and covering they had. But only 1 in 5 of them had a choice of both limb and covering, and 58% said they couldn't choose either.
 - A significant minority of patients said they were not very happy (12%) or very unhappy (6%) with the quality of their limb.
 - Only 3 out of 4 patients said they always wore their limb outdoors (76%), with two-thirds (67%) saying they always wore their limb indoors.



- Half the patients (50%) said that their limb caused them some pain, with a further 7% saying that it caused them a great deal of pain.
- Almost 1 in 3 patients said that their limb did not help them as much as they would like.
- A minority of patients said they were not given enough stump socks (19%).
- Nearly 2 out of 3 patients said that they were told clearly how to look after their stump.
- 1 In 10 patients said that they never used their spare limb and 21% hardly ever used it.
- Almost 1 in 4 patients said that their new stump socket was less comfortable than the old.
- 18% of those who had had a repair to their limb said it took over 5 days to complete. But 69% said the repair was done within 24 hours.

8. THE PATIENTS VERDICT

- 8.1. Patients were asked which parts of the limb service were “good already” and which needed “Big” or “Some” improvement. The charts show the way in which patients answered; the parts of service which patients thought required most improvement were on things to do at the Centre, speed of making limbs, comfort of limbs, information about limbs, repairs and supplies, and information on the patients charter.
- 8.2. The overall ratings for the limb service were positive. 69% of patients said they were given “very personal treatment”; and 71% said that the service overall was a good one.



9. THE FOCUS GROUPS

- 9.1. Focus Groups were also held with service users. These included limb-users who had been injured in the Omagh bomb; members of the Disabled Police Officers Association who were users of the service; and a group of general limb-users.
- 9.2. The main features of the Focus Group discussions reinforced the outcomes of the patient survey. Specific concerns were raised about the following:
 - The appearance of the limb and the covering were a real issue for some patients.
 - The quality of limbs and sockets was highly variable.
 - There were policy issues which needed to be resolved, such as the provision of flex feet.
 - Pain was an serious problem for a minority of users.
 - Information to patients and carers, and to PAM staff in the community needed to be substantially improved.
 - There was a need for patients to be given greater choice and freedom, with a better attitude towards choice and modern technology.
 - There was a general lack of awareness by patients as to who could help them in the community.

10. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- 10.1. The Northern Ireland Health Boards, as commissioners of the service, have agreed with the Health and Social Services Councils and the providers of the service, the Green Park Healthcare Trust, that a Quality Improvement Plan should be put in place.
- 10.2. The main features of this Quality Improvement Plan will be:
 - Decisions on the introduction of new products and technologies, such as the greater provision where appropriate of flex feet, modern silicone limb coverings, and myo-electric arms.
 - Further investigation of the quality issues around the production of limbs, with action taken to improve the consistency and quality of production.
 - Action to improve the quality of information given to patients on matters which they are interested in, such as new limb design and development, and practical matters such as access to community services and looking after their stump, etc.
 - Informing new patients about the work of the Centre and how they can be helped.
 - Improving the clarity of explanations to patients by professionals.
 - Ensuring that all patients are told about the provision of social security benefits for people with disabilities, the availability of help from pain clinics, support from voluntary organisations, etc.

- Reviewing the provision of counselling services for patients and relatives.
 - Reviewing the manufacturing and repair process to eliminate unnecessary delays and set Key Performance Indicators for all aspects of manufacture and repair.
 - Reviewing methods and products for cleaning limbs and coverings, with specific reference to those patients who work in “dirty” environments.
 - Reviewing the provision of stump socks and whether they can be made available on prescription from GPs.
 - Ensuring that the information sent to patients for the first appointment is comprehensive.
 - Ensuring that a choice of appointment time is given, especially for patients at work or with other responsibilities.
 - Seeking to extend the opening hours of the tea bar and investigating the provision of snack machines to cover periods when the tea bar cannot be open.
 - Reviewing privacy arrangements in the fitting rooms.
 - Publicising the availability of quiet areas for discussion between the patient and professionals.
 - Ensuring that written care plans are available to tell patients what is being done, what their personal goals are, etc.
- 10.3. Many of these Quality Improvement Plan goals are subject to the availability of finance.