

P-05-817 Specialist prosthetics for child amputees, Correspondence - Petitioner to Chair, 13.05.19

Thank you for forwarding Mr Gething's letter (VG/0504718, 23/01/19) and the update from the WHSSC, both of which I read with great interest.

I was glad to see the Minister's recognition of the benefits that specialist sports prosthetics can bring to young amputees. I am hopeful that the Chief Therapies Advisor's request that the WHSSC develop a business plan will eventually lead to the provision of specialist prosthetics for children.

I was especially glad to note that considerations are being made for once the child reaches adulthood, as it recognises that an active, sporty child is unlikely to cease participation in sports once he/she reaches maturity. As parents we recognise that age, infirmity, illness and weight gain will have a greater negative impact on our daughter than they would on a non-amputee, and understand that it is vitally important for us to instil healthy, active habits at a young age.

Over the past few months we have been fortunate to be under the care of the excellent staff at the Limb Centre in Wrexham, to have received the support of Disability Sports Wales officers, and to have met other amputees, including the inspirational Shaun Stocker – and they have been unanimous in their advice that sports and exercise are essential. The long-term benefits to her health, mobility, confidence and self-esteem have been extolled many times, and now we are trying our best to help her find a hobby which is both accessible and enjoyable. Sports prosthetics would greatly aid her in this regard.

To end, I would like to reiterate a please made in my initial petition. Specialist prosthetics are often known as 'sports prosthetics' and maybe that is their primary use for adults. But having spoken to several parents whose children have been fortunate to get a blade or a non-standard leg, I gather that they are just as essential for play! Specialist prosthetics are not just worn on the race track – they are worn in the playground, the school yard, the garden and the home. Advanced and specialist prosthetics can often remove many of the physical limitations posed by amputation. Their impact in establishing active habits can be life-long, and the benefit of physical activity to a person's mental health and self esteem is well-documented. Children have one childhood, and it should be as care free, stimulating and exciting a time as possible. For my daughter's sake, and for other child amputees in Wales, I sincerely hope that specialist prosthetics are made available to children on the NHS.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Roberts

PS - As to 3D printing – I know it has had a hugely positive impact on the lives of people who have lost upper limbs, but have never met any lower limb amputees who have used it, nor has it ever been mentioned as a possible option by our Limb Team. That being said, if 'guinea pigs' were required to pilot the use of 3D printed legs, I'm sure we'd be happy to volunteer!