

# INFORMATION AND ADVICE

## RUNNING BLADES



### Background

Most adaptive equipment used in athletics is bespoke and custom-made for the individual accounting for size, movement, function and current IPC rules

[www.paralympic.org/Athletics](http://www.paralympic.org/Athletics) For wheelchair racing and seated throws used equipment is a common starting point. However running blades are very specific, plus potentially expensive to purchase and maintain.

For example the cost of a single below-knee blade, socket and fitting is £4,000-£6,000.

### General Advice

- ◆ Before seeking funding support competitive track and road athletes should explore their eligibility for classification, alongside the available events and standards.  
<https://www.uka.org.uk/performance/paralympic-performance-pathway/national-classification/>
- ◆ Whilst there are currently no minimum standards for domestic competitions, UKA Classification is required to enter and be ranked.
- ◆ 'For bilateral amputees (T/F61-T/F62) maximum allowable standing height (MASH) is calculated to ensure that an athletes' height when wearing their

competition prostheses does not exceed their calculated MASH.'

- ◆ Medical advice, consultation and quotation should be sought to consider the options available, risks and potential cost of a blade.

### State Provision of Blades

At present there is no national prescription for the funding of artificial limbs. Generally amputees are given two limbs, an every day limb and a spare limb, you may also be given a shower leg.

Some Artificial Limb Centres will fund a sports/activity limb and some Artificial Limb Centres will not fund a sports/activity limb, as they do not have the funding and their focus has to be to provide limbs for everyday mobility.

If you are at an Artificial Limb Centre that does not fund sports limbs you can;

- Ask them if they will apply to the Primary Care Trust (PCT) on your behalf for exceptional funding, or
- Ask them for a referral to an Artificial Limb Centre, which does fund limbs.

The decision on funding for a sports limb is generally made by the rehabilitation consultant (for satellite centres this may be different) and is based on a clinical assessment.



## What is a Clinical Assessment?

Your rehabilitation consultant and prosthetist will meet with you to discuss why you want a sports/activity limb.

They will look at factors such as;

1. Were you involved in the sport/activity you want to pursue prior to your amputation?
2. Were you active prior to the amputation?
3. Can you prove that if you are given the limb you will make good use of it? Support your request with evidence.
4. You have tried running on your current limb, but are limited by its capability? You can prove that you are trying to participate/compete in the activity on a limb that does not fulfil the function.
5. What is your current health and activity level? Are you exceeding expectations on your everyday limb, taking on exercise or sporting activities that result in your everyday limb breaking?

If it is the opinion of the multidisciplinary team that you have the potential to resume your sporting activity, then a sporting prosthesis maybe available through the NHS. This may be funded through the existing contract. Where PCTs or Clinical Commissioning Groups have stipulated that this should be funded through the individual funding panel, an application is made to the panel for separate funding.

If you want to participate in more than one sport, one limb may be provided through the



NHS and for other sporting activities you may have to look for alternative funding, either through charities, insurance claims, medico legal claims, voluntary organisations or employers.

In exceptional circumstances a patient can be funded through the NHS for more than one sporting activity limb.

## Hints and Tips

- ◆ The first thing you need to do is prove a clinical need. Try running on the leg you have and highlight what the issues are. You then need to research which components would help you overcome the problems you are facing. You can do this by looking at the websites or talking to the manufacturers.

Blatchford [www.blatchford.co.uk](http://www.blatchford.co.uk)

Opcare [www.opcare.co.uk](http://www.opcare.co.uk)

Ossur [www.ossur.co.uk](http://www.ossur.co.uk)

OttoBock [www.ottobock.co.uk](http://www.ottobock.co.uk)

RSLSteeper [www.rslsteeper.com](http://www.rslsteeper.com)

- ◆ Join a club for your chosen sport to prove that you are serious. You can ask a coach at the club to support your application. Advice is available for coaches working with amputees.
- ◆ Some people request a consultation with one of the private clinics. This will normally cost you a consultation fee of around £100, but they will write a report stating whether you will benefit from having the limb you want.
- ◆ If you are turned down for a running/activity limb ask the Rehabilitation Consultant/Prosthetist why?
- ◆ If it is a case of funding you can ask them to apply to the PCT for “exceptional funding”. You will need to put together a strong case to prove that you should be given the limb.
- ◆ If you are still refused because the Artificial Limb Centre doesn’t have the funds you can ask your GP for a referral to another limb centre or an independent rehabilitation provider through an “Exceptional Treatment application”. Do your research and make sure you are asking for a referral to a limb centre that has given out sporting/activity limbs.
- ◆ See the guidance sheet *Primary Care Trust (PCT) Funding For Prosthetic Provision* from PACE Rehabilitation, available at [www.pacerehab.com/referrals](http://www.pacerehab.com/referrals)

## Funding Opportunities

Many athletes will fundraise for their own equipment – and in a few cases may have compensation claims that might cover it. Often, the fastest route to funding is through savings, sponsorship and local support. Applications to regional and national sources are not always processed straight away – especially if trustees are voluntary and there is not a full-time funding officer. If applying for funding it is essential that all information, supporting evidence and references are accurate.

For children, young people and students in full-time education (under 21) there are trusts, charities and grants that may contribute towards cost of a running blade, often termed 'sporting equipment'. The requirements and guidelines can vary considerably, including means testing, personal contributions and preferred suppliers. Adults and those post-education will find that funding from similar sources are limited.

Be aware that all charities and groups are limited by the income they are able to generate through donations and their own fundraising activities. In many cases they have been hit by the financial climate through changes to tax relief, low interest rates etc.

## Information to Include in Funding Applications

- ◆ **Personal contribution**  
Details of any funds raised to date. It looks good if you have raised a contribution already
- ◆ **UKA Classification**  
Confirms your eligibility  
[www.uka.org.uk/performance/paralympic-performance-pathway/national-classification/](http://www.uka.org.uk/performance/paralympic-performance-pathway/national-classification/)
- ◆ **Club & Coach**  
Provide details and training history
- ◆ **Ranking & Performances**  
[www.thepowerof10.info](http://www.thepowerof10.info)  
[www.paralympic.org/athletics/rankings](http://www.paralympic.org/athletics/rankings)
- ◆ **Aspirations**  
For the next season and beyond.  
Be realistic!
- ◆ **Advantages**  
A blade would provide: speed, comfort, capacity to train, reduced injury risk etc
- ◆ **Quote & Report**  
Cost of blade and rationale for design / specification



## Considerations

### Adjustments and Maintenance

The blade and socket will most likely need some adjustments after a period of training – improved running technique, power and physiological changes. Be aware of what is included in the original fitting fee and warranty, plus the expected life-span of the blade.

### NHS Servicing

It is assumed that NHS Limb Centres won't have the capacity or funding to service blades bought privately. However it is worth exploring options with your consultant as this may vary depending on individual circumstances

### Young Athletes

A number of young children are now using smaller blades for school PE and games. These are great for starting in athletics. With growth it is common for athletes to need time out for bone-trimming and adjustments to the blade or socket. Predicted growth and weight gain may also limit the life-span of the blade. Leg amputees are eligible to take part in wheelchair racing. Several younger athletes in the UK are now combining both running and wheelchair training in order to maintain fitness and involvement at their local club when they are unable to run. In competition athletes cannot compete in both running and wheelchair racing at the same event. At international and senior level athletes must choose between ambulant or seated classes – for both track *and* field events.

### IPC Rules & Classifications

Specifications and technological advances are frequently under review by IPC across all events. [www.paralympic.org/athletics](http://www.paralympic.org/athletics)

## IPC World & Paralympics

Athletes with aspirations of competing internationally should be aware of the current events, classifications and qualification criteria. In addition, UKA will stipulate their own selection criteria  
[www.uka.org.uk/performance/2020-selection-policies/](http://www.uka.org.uk/performance/2020-selection-policies/)

## Championship, Club, Open & Mass Participation Events

There are no restrictions on running and racing in domestic competitions, road races and open entry events. This also applies to training with local running and athletics groups.

Some road races may include various running surfaces, often using paths, cobbled streets and possibility of starting / finishing on grass. It is always worth checking with the organiser in advance. Be aware that mass participation races can be very busy in the first part of the race, with lots of pushing and shoving.

Most running magazines and online directories will have information on the terrain, PB potential and general organisation.

Apart from wheelchair racing, it is not common to have separate prize awards for amputees and other ambulant classification groups.



## Finding Your Nearest Club & Additional Support

For local training opportunities including clubs and coaches, plus information on competitions please contact:  
[disability@englandathletics.org](mailto:disability@englandathletics.org)  
 or use the club search facility:  
<http://clubfinder.englandathletics.org>

## Funding Links & Opportunities

### Local Groups

As mentioned previously, local fundraising groups and contacts often result in faster support:

- ◆ County Sport Partnerships will have details of:
  - ◆ Grants
  - ◆ Bursaries
  - ◆ Local trusts, charities, funds etc  
[www.activepartnerships.org](http://www.activepartnerships.org)
- ◆ Local & District Council
- ◆ Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs, Round Table etc
- ◆ Charities and organisations representing specific disability groups (e.g. meningitis)
- ◆ For children and young adults – schools, colleges and universities will often help
- ◆ Citizens Advice Bureau
- ◆ Businesses

### National Charities

#### For Advice & Resources

- ◆ Limbpower  
[www.limbpower.com](http://www.limbpower.com)



### Appendix A:

#### Possible funding opportunities

##### Funding for Children & Young Adults

- ◆ Caudwell Children  
[www.caudwellchildren.com/enable-sport](http://www.caudwellchildren.com/enable-sport)
- ◆ Cash4Kids  
[www.cashforkids.uk.com](http://www.cashforkids.uk.com)
- ◆ Dickie Bird Foundation  
[www.thedickiebirdfoundation.co.uk](http://www.thedickiebirdfoundation.co.uk)
- ◆ Mars Refuel  
[www.marsrefuel.com](http://www.marsrefuel.com)
- ◆ Adam Millichip Foundation  
[www.adammillichipfoundation.org](http://www.adammillichipfoundation.org)
- ◆ READY  
[www.readycharity.org](http://www.readycharity.org)

##### Funding for Adults

- ◆ Challenged Athlete Foundation  
[www.challengedathletes.org](http://www.challengedathletes.org)