

When is a mattress more than just a mattress?

Case Study

Lisa Brown, Clinical Services Advisor

In the interest of confidentiality identifying details in this case study have been altered.

Client Details

Client: Tom

Age: 60– 65 years

Ethnicity: Māori

Primary Diagnosis: Obesity. Co-existing condition Sleep Apnoea

Funding: Long Term Supports–Chronic Health Condition

Details: Initial bariatric foam mattress supplied within the last 5 years. Assessor requested advice from the Enable Clinical Advisory Service for a replacement mattress beyond economic repair.

Assessment Details

Tom presents with significant functional limitations. He mobilises several times per week to access the toilet and shower, otherwise remaining in bed. During the most recent assessment, Tom declined to demonstrate his ability to mobilise or transfer in and out of bed.

Tom previously received physiotherapy at home but was frequently unable to engage with the programme. The physiotherapist reported that although Tom had managed to walk to the lounge, the effort caused considerable distress affecting his breathing, skin colour and sweating.

There is no current equipment in place to assist with bed transfers. It is suspected that Tom relies on whānau for support. In 2021, he declined equipment for transfers and showering, opting for a homemade solution.

The homeowner expressed reluctance to install equipment, citing concerns about liability if the floorboards fail to support it.

Current Issues

- Replacement of foam mattress and cover.
- Referral to an external agency to assist with sourcing an air conditioning unit to help regulate body temperature and manage sweating.
- Ongoing issues with independent mobility and accessing the toilet.

Client Goal

To be comfortable while in bed.

Initial Advisory Input

- Confirmation of eligibility for Long Term Supports – Chronic Health Conditions (LTS-CHC) funding.
- Verification of client's weight and height.
- Clarification of current supports and functional abilities.
- Identification of other agencies involved.
- Specification of mattress requirements and review of options considered.

Tom's weight was initially unknown but was later confirmed during a hospital admission to be approximately 258kg.

The mattress was a standard foam model provided as part of the original bed package. An equipment service technician contacted by the Enable clinical advisor, confirmed that the existing mattress was beyond economic repair. A photo taken during their assessment showed significant deterioration, and it appears that within a very short space of time it had deteriorated to the point that it was no longer meeting Tom's needs.

Additional notes

- The assessor had not seen the mattress during the assessment as Tom declined to get out of bed. The condition of the mattress was therefore not initially known.
- The wider advisory team recommended further NASC input to review services and support.

Assessor and Advisor Clinical Reasoning

- Problem Identification: The current mattress is no longer fit for purpose.
- Equipment Functionality: The previous mattress, though approximately only three years old, is not meeting the client's needs.

- **Replacement Justification:** A like-for-like replacement is not appropriate. A higher-specification mattress is required to meet his needs over a longer period and reduce pressure injury risk.
- **Assessment Needs:** Considerations include temperature regulation, pressure care, weight distribution, and support for bed transfers.
- **Cost Considerations:** Two quotes were initially provided, ranging between \$20,000 and \$26,000. In collaboration with the assessor, more cost-effective options were explored.

Decision Supported

Two mattress options were supported for trial:

1. Mercury Advance Hybrid Bariatric Mattress and Pump
2. Forte Alaise Advanced Hybrid Extra-Wide Mattress

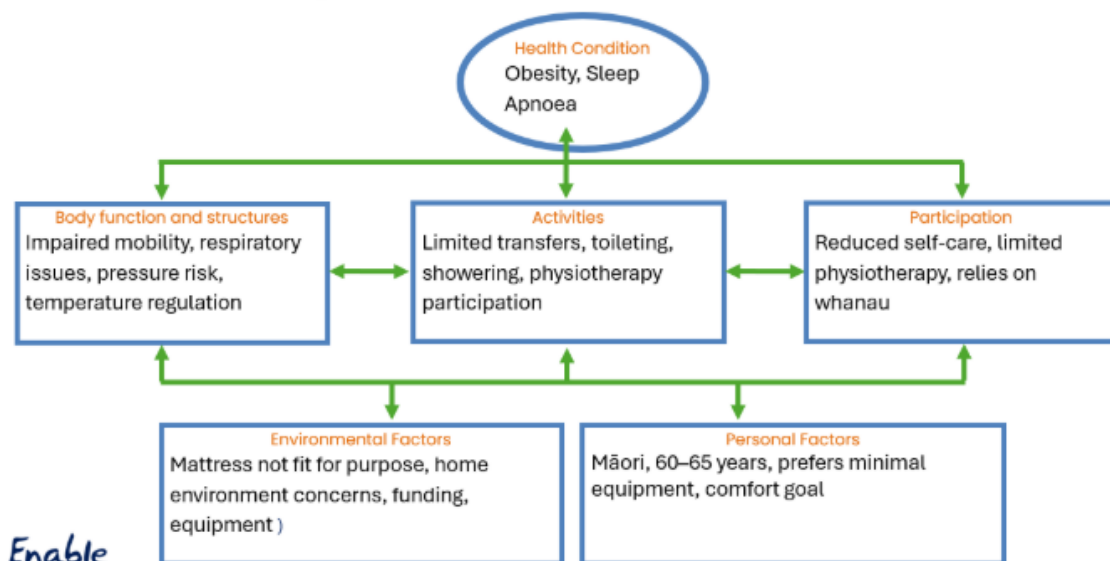
Post-Delivery Trial

The advisor contacted the assessor to follow up on the mattress trial.

- The more cost-effective Mercury Advance Hybrid mattress was trialled successfully. The trial of the alternative option was not required.

ICF consideration for Bariatric Mattress Replacement

Below is an ICF, (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health) diagrammatic summary based on the provided case study, (*World Health Organization [WHO], 2001*). The ICF framework considers function and disability as a dynamic interaction between health conditions, environmental factors, and personal factors.



Key learnings

- This case highlights the importance of reassessing the client and collaboration, particularly in complex cases where equipment, environment, and health factors intersect.
- Don't replace equipment like-for-like without a functional review. Every reassessment is an opportunity to improve quality of life—and ensure public funding is used effectively.
- In this case it was a positive outcome between the three parties involved. Highlighting the benefits for collaborating and not assuming that replacing something like for like is always the best option and an assessment is still required.

Key messages

- Reassessment is critical in complex cases – equipment should not be replaced like-for-like without a functional review.
- Collaboration between assessors, advisors, and service providers leads to better outcomes.
- Client-centred planning ensures that solutions are tailored to individual needs and circumstances.
- Although the final cost of the mattress exceeded the initial estimate based on a like-for-like replacement, Tom is now better supported with a solution that is more appropriate for his long-term needs and comfort.
- Every reassessment is an opportunity to improve quality of life for your clients and ensure that public funding is used effectively.

Reference:

World Health Organization. (2001). *International classification of functioning, disability and health (ICF)*. World Health Organization