

A BASIC GUIDE FOR
HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

Why assisted bathing can be better than adaptive showering

This outline document illustrates the many potential reasons why client access to an assisted bath is more beneficial than an accessible wet room or shower



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Basic guidance for OTs, case managers and grant officers



If your client has a disability or cares for a disabled child or relative with limited mobility, access to an assisted bath can be beneficial on many levels. As a healthcare professional you may recognise the multiple benefits of bathing when compared to the specification of an accessible wet room or shower. Having access to a powered bath at home or in a care centre that is height adjustable, includes a bather transfer seat or has numerous specialist features can provide greater care, safety and comfort for your client.

However despite a bathing culture in the UK, certain grant applications and opinions can tend towards recommending bathroom showering adaptations instead of new hi-lo baths. This viewpoint can be based on the misconception that an accessible bath is more expensive to specify than conversion of a bathroom to an accessible wet room with adapted fixtures and fitting – in many situations this is simply not true.

In addition most households and care centres with disabled residents seem to prefer a bath, however funding for wet room adaptations may be the only solution provided.

Hence if you need assistance with justifying why an accessible bath is better for your client, Abacus has compiled the selection of following key points.

Legislation – key facts relating to the provision of an assisted bath

- Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) legislation states that a bath or shower (or both), can be grant funded
- Children in the UK play in the bath. Play is a fundamental human right (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989)
- No sibling should be affected by their brother or sister's disability (Children's Act, 1989)
- The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act, 1996, states: '...providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a bath or shower (or both)...'

Benefits to Occupational Therapists of prescribing an assisted bath for clients

All Healthcare Professionals understand they have a duty of care to ensure their clients receive the right assistive solutions to maximise care, independence and dignity. Nevertheless local authorities are increasingly under pressure to only grant the cheapest solution that can commonly be regarded as conversion of an existing bathroom to a wet room or provision of an accessible shower.

Meeting available budgets whilst meeting client needs is indeed a challenge these days however installation of an adjustable bath can offer a more cost effective, long-term solution. We all understand needs and wishes of the client should be preferential if possible. Most families prefer to retain a bath at home and respite care centres regard access to bathing as essential for utmost client care.

Hence the following points can be considered if your client wants an assisted bath and your feel it is 'necessary and appropriate' despite potential budget restrictions:

- You are conforming to certain legislation and a specific Human Rights Act
- If your client deems a bath essential, you are helping to achieve a positive outcome for all
- You are promoting greater Occupational Performance
- Moving and handling risks are reduced
- Your client can benefit from greater care, dignity and comfort
- Equipment budget pressures can be eased with recommendation of a price competitive bath that requires minimal servicing costs – such as those from Abacus
- Care budget expenditure can be cut as disabled individuals require less carer intervention
- Assisted baths empower parents and relatives to offer greater support
- Carers remain dry during bath time so more convenient whilst their safety is improved



Safety benefits of choosing an assistive bath instead of an accessible wet room

Most children and adults living with a disability seem to prefer bathing to showering. However access to a standard bath can be unsafe for bathers with limited mobility whilst manual lifting and lowering of disabled children by parents can result in potential back injuries.

With ownership of an electrically-operated adjustable bath, bath time can be more enjoyable and rewarding for both carer and bather. Benefits include:

- Lower risk of bather falls or slippages from shower chairs/stools
- Reduced risk of back or muscle injury for parents and carers – ensuring they can continue to physically aid disabled relatives with other daily activities
- Faster, more efficient changing, drying and bathing process – reduced transfers and the bather is kept warmer. The Abacus Gemini bath with integrated hi-lo platform is ideal for this
- Less challenging and stressful for both bather and carer
- Carers can attend to bathers more fully – delivering responsive assistance when required
- Carers remain dry during bath time so more convenient whilst their safety is improved

Practical and cost benefits of choosing an assisted bath instead of an accessible shower

There are many lifestyle benefits to be gained from ownership of an assisted bath as opposed to an accessible wet room or shower. These can range from improved convenience, safety and peace of mind for a wider range of users or a whole family. An adjustable bath can also be fitted more quickly and easily than a wet room whilst ongoing costs can be less.

The latest assisted baths from specialists such as Abacus include quality and reliable components so require less servicing and maintenance – hence more cost effective than periodical refurbishment of watertight surfaces and fittings. In summary accessible baths offer:

- Faster installation and more cost effective in the long term – wet room ‘tanking’ can be costly to install and maintain
- Reduced upkeep and cleaning – wet rooms generate more moisture, potential bacteria resulting in a greater risk of infection
- Able-bodied relatives still have access to a bath even if a one-bathroom household
- Reduced risk of leaks and drainage problems
- Removal of bath can affect re-sale value of a property

Wellbeing-related benefits of bathing instead of showering

Bathing can have a positive effect on many aspects of life when living with a disability. Having access to a specialist bath does not only provide safe bathing, the act of bathing itself can improve many day-to-day activities outside of the bathroom.

In general terms, wellbeing, engagement, mobility and mood can be improved whilst pain and discomfort can be reduced. Key factors to consider regarding bathing:

- A warm, relaxing experience
- Avoids the ‘car wash’ experience of being sprayed on a transit chair or shower stool
- Induces sleep
- Provides a safe play and learning environment for children
- Enhanced hygiene for greater protection against infection
- More dignity for the bather
- Reduces pain and improves mood
- Increases mobility and reduces muscle or joint stiffness
- Reduces the stress associated with manual moving and handling
- Helps with the use of prescribed ointments
- Delivers a positive experience and promotes carer-bather engagement



Informative client case studies available at:

www.abacusheathcare.co.uk/case-studies

Watch our website videos for further information on:

- Children’s Right To Play As An Occupation
- Using Legislation to Support Assisted Bathing
- The Clinical Reasoning Behind Assistive Bath Recommendation



Presented by *Kate Sheehan, OT*

www.abacusheathcare.co.uk/news

To arrange a free home bathing demonstration:

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