Bite Sized Professional Development
Stepping back from stepping in

Session title

Working with clients and low risk Assistive Technology

Facilitators Guide



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Acknowledgements

This resource was developed by Independent Living Assessment Inc with the support of Laura Coleman – AVIVO, Alison Vella – Aspire4Life and Belinda Robinson – WA Country Health Services who have provided valuable feedback to enhance the information and resources for the series of Bite Size Professional Development sessions. Their understanding and insight into the experiences and challenges of organisations and their staff while working with clients to achieve their goals has enriched these learning resources.

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Training Overview

This bite sized session Working with clients and low risk Assistive Technology is the fifth in a series of professional development sessions developed to assist organisations working in the aged care sector to enhance the knowledge and skills of staff when working with clients to achieve their goals. The approach known as Wellness and Reablement aims to build on people's strengths and promotes independence and autonomy.

Structure

The bite size sessions have been designed for organisations to present face to face in team meetings and/or dedicated professional development workshops.

Target Audience

Staff of aged care organisations working with clients in their home and community.

Purpose

There have been many changes over recent years within the sector, a significant one for all staff has been the philosophical cultural shift in how we support older people who are experiencing difficulties with everyday activities. Instead of the traditional hands-on approach of stepping in and doing things for people, support organisation and staff are now expected to assist people to explore ways to maximise their independence and empower people to have a sense of choice and control. The Wellness and Reablement approach has been shown to have positive outcomes for older people as it acknowledges and builds on their abilities and skills, so they remain more independent, with an improved wellbeing, within the community they wish to live.

The aim of Session 5 – Working with clients and low risk Assistive Technology is to enhance participants understanding of Assistive Technology, their role in supporting clients to use low risk AT and how low risk AT combined with a wellness and reablement approach provides greater opportunities for older people to remain living independently at home.

Session 5 includes two activities. Facilitator to choose the most appropriate activity for the group of participants or conduct both time permitting.

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Training Overview - cont.

Participants of session 5 - Working with clients and low risk Assistive Technology will:

- Increase their understanding of what Assistive Technology is and how its supports people to increase their independence
- Be able to identify what low risk Assistive Technology is and when it should be used
- Increase confidence in using low risk Assistive Technology with clients
- Practice their skills using low risk Assistive Technology
- Enhance awareness of when to refer to Allied Health
- Increase awareness of pathways/resources that can assist people to access AT
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Resources

- Facilitator's Guide (this document)
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Activity Sheet 1
- Activity Sheet 2 (NB. Facilitator to provide sock aids for participants to use in pairs for Activity 2).
- Evaluation Questionnaire

Optional Resources

• Support Workers Tip Sheets. These can be downloaded from the KeepAble website:

https://keepable.com.au/for-homecare-providers/plans-guides-and-roadmaps/support-workers-guide-to-assistive-technology/

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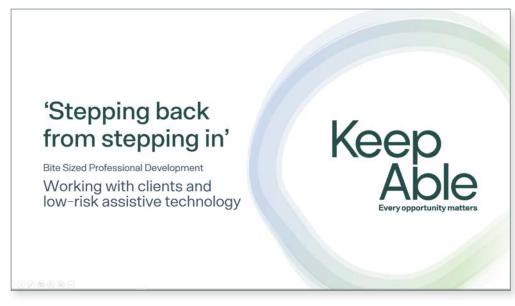
Lesson Plan

Time	Content	Resource
2 minutes	Welcome (introductions if required) Session objectives.	PPP (slide 2)
1 minute	What is Assistive Technology?	PPP (slide 3)
2 minutes	Why is Assistive Technology important?	PPP (slide 4)
1 minute	What is low risk Assistive Technology?	PPP (slide 5)
2 minutes	When should Assistive Technology be used?	PPP (slide 6)
3 minutes	How should Assistive Technology be used?	PPP (slide 7)
10 minutes	Putting Learning into Practice Activity – Identifying low risk AT	PPP (slide 8)
10 minutes	Putting Learning into Practice Activity – Building confidence using low risk AT	PPP (slide 9)
2 minutes	When should I refer to an Allied Health Professional?	PPP (slide 10)
1 minutes	Where to next?	PPP (slide 11)
3 minutes	Questions and feedback	PPP (slide 12)

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Slide 1 - Welcome and Introduction



Acknowledgement of Country

We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, to Elders past, present and emerging, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples including members of the Stolen Generation.

Welcome

Introductions (if required)

About the session

This bite sized session Working with clients and low risk Assistive Technology is the fifth in a series of professional development sessions developed to assist organisations working in the aged care sector to enhance the knowledge and skills of staff when working with clients to achieve their goals.

The aim of Session 5 – Working with clients and low risk Assistive Technology (AT) is to enhance participants understanding of Assistive Technology, their role in supporting clients to use low risk AT and how low risk AT combined with a wellness and reablement approach provides greater opportunities for older people to remain living independently at home.

Through discussion and the opportunity to practice using low risk AT, participants will increase their understanding of the important role they have in providing these opportunities.

Throughout this training Assistive Technology will frequently be abbreviated to AT.

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Slide 2 - Session Objectives

	 Participants this session will: Increase their understanding of what Assistive
Session	Technology (AT) is and how it supports people
36221011	to increase their independence.
objectives	Be able to identify what Assistive Technology is and when it should be used
	 Increase confidence in using low-risk Assistive Technology with clients
	Enhance awareness of when to refer to Allied Health
	 Enhance awareness of pathways/resources that can assist people to access AT

Participants of Session 5 - Working with clients and low risk Assistive Technology will:

• Increase their understanding of what Assistive Technology is and how its supports people to increase their independence

Definition of Assistive Technology and the role it plays in supporting older people to improve and maintain their independence and home.

• Be able to identify what and when low risk Assistive Technology should be used

Review of low risk AT products and the skills needed to determine which AT product is required.

Increase confidence in using low risk Assistive Technology with clients

During this activity participants will discover how familiar they are with low risk AT and be encouraged to consider how AT could potentially reduce the need for support at home. Participants will have the opportunity to practice using low risk AT and improve their confidence when recommending to clients.

Enhance awareness of when to refer to Allied Health

Review the criteria that may indicate a clinical assessment is required to ensure AT is suitable for the client and meets their needs.

• Enhance awareness of pathways/resources that can assist people to access AT

Additional resources that may assist with any gaps in knowledge and be used to facilitate conversations about AT with clients and their families.

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Slide 3 - What is Assistive Technology?



The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines Assistive Technology as the umbrella term to describe systems and products that maintain or improve an individual's functioning and independence, thereby promoting their well-being.

Many of us use Assistive Technology in everyday life to make tasks simpler but for others Assistive Technology allows individuals to perform tasks they would otherwise be unable to do or do safely.

Assistive Technology has many names and can be categorised based on the product type, intended purpose or the complexity of the product.

Assistive Technology doesn't just represent electric equipment; it ranges from simple things like medication organisers and mobility aids through to more complex systems to control the environment.

Approximately 1 in 10 Australians use AT to support their functioning and participation in important areas in their life (*Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004, as cited in ATSA 2014*). Throughout the world more than one billion people need one or more assistive products.

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Slide 4 - Why is Assistive Technology important?

Why is Assistive Technology important?	 Our population is ageing, AT is a key factor in healthy ageing Maintains or improves individuals' function and independence, promoting well-being Increases the ease and safety with which tasks can be performed Increases safety Increases community access Reduces need for formal and ongoing care Enables individuals to live at home and prevent need for residential care
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Our population is ageing, AT is a key factor in healthy ageing

We already know that people are living for longer at home and want to live independently with autonomy and dignity. It requires skills and abilities to complete the daily tasks needed to live independently within the community. The use of low risk AT can reduce the difficulties encountered with daily tasks, increasing the chances of living at home for longer.

Maintains or improves individuals' function and independence, promoting well-being

Assistive Technology provides solutions to specific tasks and enhances the ability of individuals to make choices about when and how they carry out activities. By providing control and supporting a person to gain the greatest level of independence they can, AT improves well-being and quality of life. AT can also support a person for a short period whilst they regain their strength and confidence to return to their previous level of function.

When we see a person using a shower stool and a long flexi shower hose it's easy to understand Assistive Technology improves independence and wellbeing but it's important we don't overlook the importance of Assistive Technology for recreation and leisure.

Maintaining hobbies and interests are important for people of all ages but it is especially important for clients who may have newly found free time. Participation in hobbies can provide a feeling of purpose in life, the ability to manage stressful situations better and prevention of functional decline.

Assistive technologies that promote participation and engagement in hobbies and personal interests, such as adapted sporting equipment and gardening tools also play a significant role in promoting health and well-being in later life.

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Slide 4 - Why is Assistive Technology important? cont.

Increases the ease and safety with which tasks can be performed

Assistive Technology is purpose built to make life easier for everyone but is particularly useful for individuals with specific challenges in day-to-day functioning. Incorporating AT into every day routines enables individuals to manage more daily activities as independently and safely as they can.

Increases safety

Safety is a critical aspect for older adults when it comes to indoor and outdoor activities. Assistive Technology can meet older adults' safety needs through falls prevention and alerts, reminders to support memory loss, emergency responses, warning for potential hazards and home/location finding technology. Research has identified Assistive Technology provides older adults with an enhanced sense of safety, more opportunities to stay at home and have a social life.

Increase community access

Regular social interaction is vital in older adults leading happier and more fulfilled lives. A strong social life has been linked with many health benefits. Psychosocial benefits identified by AT users such as increased confidence, maintenance of valued roles and reduced anxiety are directly linked to increased social event attendance.

For example, people who experience a hearing impairment report that the use of hearing aids leads to greater self-esteem and improved social and emotional well-being.

Reduces need for formal and ongoing care

Assistive Technology considerably lightens the load for carers and families by increasing independence. It can also enhance the capacity of informal carers to sustain care in the home.

Carers and people with dementia use a wide variety and multiple types of AT. For example, a person who experiences difficulties with their cognition and memory may be unable to manage their medication independently and rely on another person for medication prompts. A memory clock can be programmed to provide reminders and alarms to avoid forgetting any important appointments or tasks, help reduce anxiety around the time of day and free up an informal carers time to attend to another care need, or their own needs.

Enables individuals to live at home and prevent need for residential care

Assistive Technology is a key factor in improving outcomes for older people and reducing or delaying the need for more complex aged care services.

For individuals with complex care needs, utilising AT in conjunction with ongoing home care services can provide a safer environment for staff and free up time for them to support clients to do the things they enjoy most.

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Slide 5 – What is low risk Assistive Technology?



Simple aids that support a reablement approach

A wellness and reablement approach to assessment identifies what a person can do, what they want to be able to do and how to achieve it. There may be barriers eg: a person may not be able to reach their feet to put on their socks to complete dressing themselves. A piece of low risk Assistive Technology such as a sock applicator may be introduced to overcome the barriers, enabling the client to dress independently and achieve their goal.

A wellness and reablement approach focuses on goal orientated, time limited supports to strengthen a client's independence in the home and the community. By combining the approach with the use of the low risk AT provides greater opportunities to older people to remain living independently at home and for aged care services to achieve optimum client outcomes.

Modified eating utensils, long handled personal care and cleaning products

Low risk AT is often referred to as simple aids, daily living aids or easy living equipment in the context of aged care. It is any product designed to support independence in the home. For example, large grip handled forks, long handled sponges and extendable dusters.

Unlikely to result in failure, harm or injury

Low risk AT is/are non-complex products which require no or minimal set up. They are unlikely to cause harm and do not require prescription or professional advice.

Can be purchased by the general public

Low risk AT can be purchased by the general public from retail outlets, pharmacies, hardware stores, supermarkets, homeware stores and online.

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Slide 6 - When should Assistive Technology be used?

When should Assistive Technology be used?

- Help clients achieve their individual goals
 When learning or re-learning skills have not been successful
- To find ways around a difficulty
- To reduce reliance on another person
- An Allied Health Professional has recommended it

Help clients achieve their individual goals

Supporting independence and helping clients achieve their goals are core principles of the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP). Many of our clients want to continue or return to engaging in activities that are essential for day-to-day life or important to them.

The use of Assistive Technology can mean that clients don't have to give up the activities they enjoy. These may vary from cooking a meal for family, attending a local mahjong group, planting new flowers each spring and maintaining relationships with family and friends.

When learning or re-learning skills have not been successful

It is important to acknowledge that as human beings we are creatures of habit and participate in our daily tasks the same way we have for many years. Supporting clients to develop a skill or ability that has not yet been developed or to restore a skill or ability should be considered prior to suggesting low risk AT. Motivation and confidence building techniques and alternative ways of carrying out tasks need to be explored first to minimize abandonment of equipment.

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Slide 6 - When should Assistive Technology be used? cont.

To find ways around a difficulty

If a client is motivated to regain or learn a new skill but it remains a challenge to them then introducing low risk AT will reduce the barriers and increase the ability to complete the tasks independently. Small gains using AT can be a great motivator.

For these clients it is important we maximise their opportunity to utilise their current abilities to maintain their skills and prevent any decline. For example, a client living with Parkinson's disease may not be able to improve the strength in their lower legs to the extent of being independent, but a lightweight vacuum could make it easier for them to continue vacuuming their home while maintaining physical fitness and health and slow the progression of the disease.

To reduce reliance on another person

Older adult couples can rely on each other for care and companionship. Traditions, familiar activities, and specific roles define relationships. However, as older couples become more dependent on each other, caregiving roles and informal care can be imperative in remaining safe at home. Introducing AT can assist caregivers by reducing time, levels of energy used for caregiving and physical assistance. For caregivers who identify their caring role as a burden, AT can alleviate some responsibility and help them remain in their caring role for longer.

For an AT user, the AT that enables them to still engage in an activity or task, can be particularly important to continuing the relationship without viewing themselves as a burden.

An Allied Health Professional (AHP) has recommended it

Following an AHP assessment, AT may be recommended to a client. When writing assessments, support plans or following a support plan, it is important AT (low risk or prescribed) is not overlooked. Any AT that is currently being used needs to be included in the relevant documentation, such as the support plan and any new AT that is the key purpose for the referral should be detailed clearly for all parties to understand the correct use.

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Slide 7 - How should Assistive Technology be used?



Assessors and Home Care Providers can actively facilitate the use of low risk AT

Through the use of active assessments, assessors observe clients completing every day activities and identify the tasks or the steps that cause difficulty. Assessors play an important role in providing AT information, advice and recommending it to clients as a solution.

For example, you arrive at a client's house and witness them having difficulty using a key to open the security door. Throughout the assessment the client provides insight into the difficulties she has due to limited hand dexterity and the pain she experiences when cleaning and in specific, dusting her much loved ornament collection. You recommend using a simple key turner with a built-up handle to increase leverage and a glove duster to utilise her entire arm and shoulder rather than just hand strength to grip a dust cloth. You send a referral to a service provider for a short term reablement programme to help your client maintain her independence and participate in meaningful activities.

Home Care providers can provide education on low risk AT to all staff, ensure they are confident in how to use low risk AT and give guidance to encourage clients to use the AT recommended. In partnership, assessors and homecare staff can ensure every opportunity is provided to increase their independence within a task.

For example, you work for the organisation that receives the referral for a short-term reablement programme for dusting. You support the client to set up the key turner on her existing keyring and support her to practice using it. You encourage the client to use her new glove duster, keep an open hand and remind her wearing a mitt uses less hand strength than gripping a cloth. You recommend dusting more often to avoid a build up of dust and breaking up each room into different days. After a few weeks of supporting and encouraging the client to utilise the low risk AT, plan, and self-pace the client is confident she can continue dusting her much loved ornament collection independently and free from pain.

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Slide 7 - How should Assistive Technology be used? cont.

Breaking down tasks and identifying difficulty

Before recommending low risk AT it's important to look at the activity the client finds difficult and breaking it down into smaller steps. This will help identify and problem solve what the barriers are to the activity.

For example, a client might say she is no longer able to prepare her favourite meals because of arthritis in her hands. It would be easy to assume she would benefit from adapted cooking utensils to overcome reduced grip strength. By asking your client questions about the steps involved in making her favorite meal, you were able to identify the difficulty is filling pots of water to boil pasta. You problem solved and suggested using a plastic jug to fill the heavy pots rather than trying to lift heavy pots of water from the sink to the stove.

Recommending strategies and AT

This example highlights AT is not always the answer. Problem solving with simple strategies and techniques may be the solution before AT is considered. This could be energy conservation techniques (planning, pacing and prioritising), changing the way an activity is done (sitting down, push rather than pull) or task simplification (eliminating unnecessary steps in a task). Consideration is needed to the way we educate clients on wellness and reablement techniques and AT to ensure we express concern and caring for them as a unique individual. Simplified information and instructions, regular assistance, and support to adopt the strategies and use AT can all contribute to a client's willingness to try new ways of doing tasks and using AT.

Some clients may experience negative feelings about having to use low risk AT, try to focus on the positive outcomes ie: the AT will enable them to complete the tasks independently.

Demonstrating use of AT

It is essential assessors and providers are appropriately trained and have the required knowledge and skills to provide information, demonstrate use and support clients in their use of low risk AT.

A good approach is to first demonstrate the correct use of low risk AT then request the client to do the same. Giving clients the opportunity to practice the use of the device can help establish a strong sense of commitment to carrying out the recommendation and reaching their goal.

Building confidence

Attention to demonstrating and building confidence with AT together can prevent the abandonment of recommended AT. Use quick wins to build confidence. Encourage clients to start using their low risk AT product as soon as they can and provide the support and encouragement they need. Positive feedback is always welcomed and provides a boost if confidence is low.

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Slide 8 - Putting Learning into Practice 1



The next two slide presents 2 activities related to low risk AT, if time permits both can be delivered or facilitator may choose to only deliver one. Facilitator to provide each of the participants (individual, pairs or group) with Activity Sheet.

Jar Opener

Potential Responses: Difficulty opening jars, poor grip, reduced hand strength, upper body pain and stiffness, reduced dexterity.

Toe Washer

Potential Responses: Difficulty washing toes and feet, recent hip surgery (hip precautions), limited flexibility, reduced balance, limited range of movement in hips, back pain.

Tap Turner

Potential Responses: Difficulty turning taps, opening/closing doors, turning appliance knobs, poor grip, reduced hand strength, upper body pain and stiffness, reduced dexterity.

(Buckingham) Caddy

Potential Responses: Reliant on walking aid for mobilising, transferring items around home safely, lack of formal or informal carers to assist with meals and drinks, unable to sit in kitchen for meals and drinks.

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Slide 8 - Putting Learning into Practice 1 cont.

Handy Bar

Potential Responses: Difficulty getting in/out of car, car transfers, knee or hip injury and surgery, poor sit to stand transfers, reduced mobility.

Sock Aid

Potential Responses: Difficulty putting on socks, recent hip surgery (hip precautions), lower back pain, joint pain, limited range of movement in hips, knees, shoulders and hands, shortness of breath on exertion.

Button Hook

Potential Responses: Difficulty doing up buttons, poor hand dexterity, poor fine motor skills, reduced hand function, tremors, use of one hand.

Elastic shoelaces

Potential Responses: Difficulty tying shoelaces, poor fine motor skills, wrist or hand injury, recent hip surgery (hip precautions), limited flexibility, limited range of movement in hips, back pain, cognitive impairment.

Electric Cleaning Scrubber

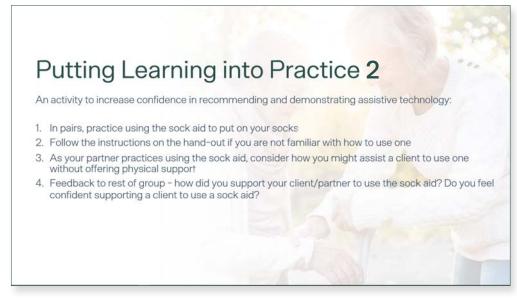
Potential Responses: Difficulty cleaning home, joint pain, limited flexibility, back pain, unable to kneel, restricted movement in shoulders, fatigue, limited exercise tolerance.

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Slide 9 - Putting Learning into Practice 2



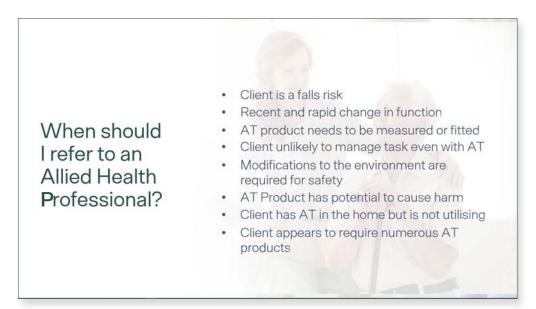
Facilitator to provide each pair with a sock aid and Activity Sheet 2.

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Slide 10 - When to refer to an Allied Health Professional?



The following list may help to identify clients who would benefit from a referral to an Allied Health Professional (AHP).

Client is a falls risk

Clients who present as a high falls risk will require a medical review and AHP intervention to maximise their safety at home. A client who has fallen recently or who you observe to have poorly fitting footwear, unsteady on their feet, an unusual gait or holding onto furniture and walls to mobilise may be considered as a falls risk.

Recent and rapid change in function

When a client's abilities change, or their health condition deteriorates, their AT needs will change. A client may have been independent with showering using a long-handled sponge and a grab rail but since having covid no longer feels able to shower independently and safely.

AT product needs to be measured or fitted

A client's daughter purchases a bed rail to aid bed transfers. A clinical assessment from an AHP is required to fit the product to ensure it meets individual needs and is safe for use.

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Slide 10 - When to refer to an Allied Health Professional? cont.

Client unlikely to manage task even with AT

When a client's health and function is deteriorating, and they are unable to manage several steps involved with their activities of daily living. A client may take a RAS assessors advice and incorporate a grabber into their daily routine for dressing but during service delivery you witness them having difficulty with other tasks involved i.e., choosing appropriate clothing, obtaining clothing out of the wardrobe, and sitting on the edge of the bed to dress.

Modifications to the environment are required for safety

Home modifications are changes made to the home to make it easier and safer to complete every day activities. Examples include adding grab rails, ramps and bathroom redesign and widening doorways.

AT Product has potential to cause harm

High-risk AT products have the potential to cause harm and can be recognised by their complexity and higher cost compared to low risk AT. Examples include adjustable beds and rails, hoists and wheelchairs.

Client has AT in the home but is not utilising

If an AT product has not been used for some time and the client no longer believes it meets their needs an allied health reassessment may be required.

Client appears to require numerous AT products

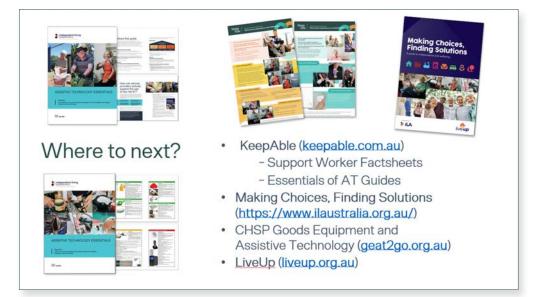
A demand for several AT products indicates the client requires a specialised assessment conducted by an allied health professional to identify their current capabilities and needs.

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Slide 11 - Where to next?



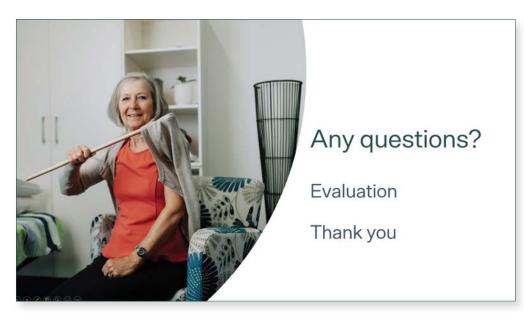
The Keep Able website offers further resources and information around Wellness and Reablement and Assistive Technology. Support Worker tip sheets have been developed to further explain commonly used low risk Assistive Technology and how to use it with clients. Including using a dressing stick, a kettle tipper and a jar opener.

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Slide 7 – Questions, Evaluation and Thank you



Time permitting answer questions raised or where time does not permit reassure the participants that the questions will be answered and forwarded to them via an appropriate organisation communication channel.

Feedback Questionnaire

Request that each participant completes a questionnaire, these can be collated and recorded as one to inform your organisational training records. They may assist you to identify individuals who require additional professional development to apply the wellness and reablement knowledge and skills when working with people to achieve their goals.

Thank the participants for their input and making the session a good learning experience.