Introducing the Pēpi-Pod® Sleep Space Programme

Notes to assist with beginning conversations about providing the programme

What is a Pēpi-Pod® sleep space programme?
The Pēpi-Pod® sleep space programme is one approach being applied in some regions of New Zealand and Australia to enable more vulnerable babies to have a safe space for sleeping every time and place they sleep. It is a programme of ‘portable sleep space (PSS) plus safety education’ that began as an emergency response during the Christchurch earthquakes of 2011. It is now offered to families of babies at increased risk of accidental suffocation. Places of heightened risk for babies include in, or on, an adult bed, on a couch, in makeshift situations or when sleeping away from home.

Who are they for?
PSSs are not for all babies. They are a public health response to the higher risk of sudden infant death for babies who are more vulnerable due to exposure to smoking, especially in pregnancy, being born before 37 weeks or weighing less than 2500 grams, or in family environments where use of alcohol and drugs are prevalent. These babies have a predisposing vulnerability to hypoxic challenges.

Where have they come from?
The PSS is a ‘sister’ to the Wahakura, a sleep space hand woven from flax that has been promoted in Maori communities since 2006. The PSS was developed as a low-cost option to complement Wahakura and enable larger scale supply. The Christchurch earthquake propelled the idea into reality and thanks to the support from community, business and health providers, over 6000 babies have had a PSS through their times of risk. Maori midwife, Alys Brown from Hamilton, and Maori GP Dr David Tipene-Leach, from Hastings, have given cultural support to the initiative from the start.

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Where else are services operating?
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Is there support?
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