

# Introduction to Beds

**New to beds?**

Fast-track your learning with the perfect induction course

# *Is this for me?*

For those with relatively little knowledge about beds or those completely new to the bed industry, this training module will provide you with a good grounding on the sector. It will help you get a better understanding of the market, the different products available and their respective features and benefits. It is unbiased (in that it does not favour one type or brand over another) and is brought to you by the National Bed Federation, the trade association for UK and Irish bed manufacturers and their suppliers.



# *What will I learn?*

**After completing this module, you should be able to demonstrate:**

- An understanding of the UK bed market – size of the market, key industry statistics, major players, brands and which groups they belong to.
- Who the NBF are, what we do and who our members are.
- What the NBF Code of Practice is and what it means to you and to the consumer.
- Good working knowledge of the different types of products available, their features and benefits and how these benefits can be applied to fulfil consumers' bed/mattress requirements, particularly where they have any specific health issues such as allergies, back or shoulder pain, etc.
- A grasp of commonly used terms and what they mean.
- Knowledge of UK bed sizes and their commonly used names.

# Welcome



Welcome to the wonderful world of beds!

Over our lifetime, we spend about one-third of our lives in them. What other household product do we use on average for 7-8 hours per day, every day? It is clearly the most important product that we buy for our homes and yet we almost take it for granted, often choosing to spend more on our TVs, music systems and sofas.

We have a very intimate and personal relationship with our beds. They are with us for all the major events of our lives – our creation, birth, marriage, death. They are the place we retreat to for pleasure, to rest, to grieve, to recover from illness, to be alone, to be together.

They are pivotal in ensuring we get a good, comfortable night's sleep – critical to our physical and mental health and wellbeing and performance levels.

We all have at least one to call our own – and frequently use many others when away from home. It's personal – and you certainly can't criticise our industry for not offering plenty of choice for a product dependent on something as individual as comfort. There are literally thousands of different product specifications and styles at prices ranging from less than £100 to many thousands.

This training module, brought to you by the National Bed Federation, aims to give you a great introduction to our sector. You will quickly get up to speed on the different types of product available, how they're made, what their features and benefits are and what these mean to your customers, so you can direct them to the best products to meet their needs.

You'll also learn some facts and figures about the UK bed sector and what the NBF Approved scheme means to you and your customers. We'll try to demystify many of the commonly used terms so you'll know your rod-edges from your sprung edges and your visco-elastic foams from your gel foams and your CMHR foams.

We hope you enjoy this Introduction to Beds module.

*Product images and videos featured have been generously provided NBF members*

# The NBF – Who are we and what do we do?





The National Bed Federation is the **trade association representing UK manufacturers of beds and mattresses and their suppliers**. It was founded in 1912 and today has around 85 members – two thirds of them are manufacturers and one third suppliers of component parts or manufacturing equipment. We organise the UK **Bed Show**, the biggest and best trade exhibition for anyone involved in the bed industry, held every September at the Telford International Centre since 2010.

We also run the annual **Bed Industry Awards**, presented at a Gala Dinner during the Bed Show. Via our **Bed Advice website** and our **Bed Buyers' Guide**, we provide helpful advice to consumers on choosing a bed to suit their needs.



For retailers, our [Retail Champions Scheme](#) recognises those that stock predominantly NBF brands. They receive free NBF point of sale as well as a free listing on the [Bed Advice website](#) with a search facility enabling the consumer to search for their nearest NBF Retail Champion.

We are the [voice of the UK bed industry](#), both nationally and internationally.

We ensure all our members are kept up to date with any relevant [British and European Standards and Regulations](#).

We liaise closely with [Trading Standards](#) on unfair or fraudulent trading.

We provide [marketing and technical support and expert advice](#) to bed manufacturers and retailers.

We are at the forefront of the [sustainability agenda](#) in the UK bed industry to develop eco-friendly products for both sound sleep and a lighter footprint on the earth's resources.



## The Sleep Charity / The Sleep Council

The **NBF** founded **The Sleep Council** in 1995 with the aim of educating the nation on the importance of a healthy night's sleep and the part that a good bed, regularly replaced, plays in achieving that.

**In 2020, The Sleep Council merged with The Sleep Charity and the NBF became their corporate donor.**

The Sleep Charity, incorporating The Sleep Council, provides advice and support to empower the nation to sleep better. They campaign to improve sleep support and access to high quality information, raise awareness of the value of a good night's sleep and promote understanding around the complexities of sleep.

They want everyone to share their vision that sleep is a vital component of health and wellbeing and that everyone living with sleep issues should have access to effective, consistent, evidence-based support.

# What is the NBF Code of Practice?

Click the image to watch our  
brand strategy video



The NBF Code of Practice sets out **criteria for ensuring processes and procedures are in place** for supply chain scrutiny and compliance with regulatory requirements. It covers **ten key areas of business** – including flammability, health and hygiene, and trade descriptions – in short, are the products safe, clean and honest?

All **NBF members** manufacturing beds, headboards, and other 'finished' products have to undergo a **thorough and rigorous audit**, which is carried out by an external third party. A number of our foam and fillings suppliers also choose to be audited. Only when members have been approved are they allowed to use the 'Made by an Approved NBF Member' logo.

# *The NBF Code of Practice covers...*

1. Flammability
2. Cleanliness of fillings and reuse
3. Trade descriptions
4. Labelling and composition of textile products
5. EU timber legislation
6. Chemical legislation (REACH, POPs, Biocides)
7. Awareness of health & safety compliance
8. Awareness of process controls/ procedures
9. Awareness of PAS 7100 – product safety requirements
10. Awareness of Modern Slavery Act of 2015



The logo has become a familiar sight on members' products and marketing materials. It sends a **clear message of reassurance to consumers** that they can buy from an NBF member with confidence, safe in the knowledge that what they buy is **safe, clean and honest.**

It is important to understand that The NBF Code of Practice is **not a quality mark.** The audits specifically look at **best practice and processes** within each company, rather than checking out every product every company makes – which would be an impossible task!

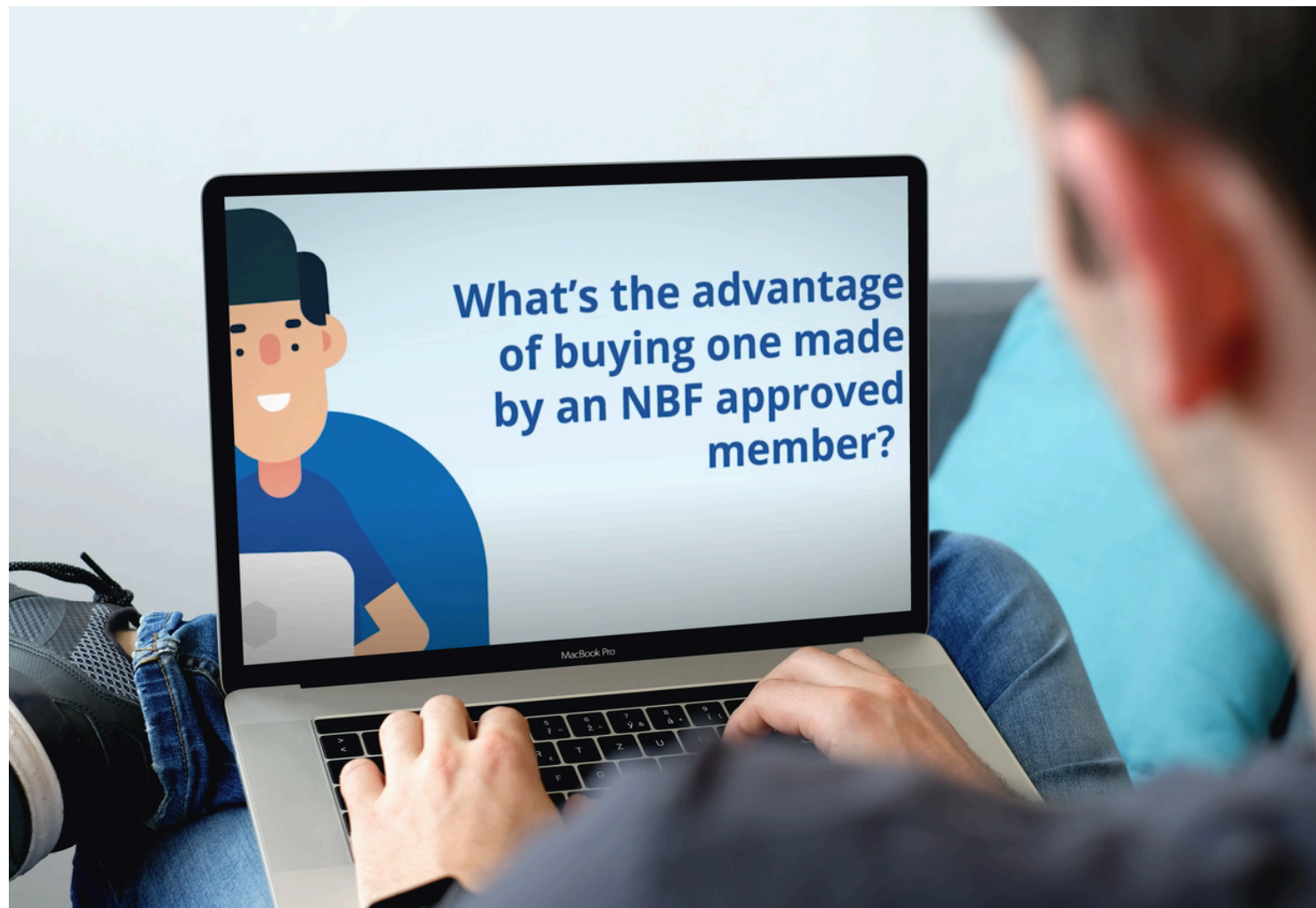
# *What the Code of Practice means to you*

Essentially, we're taking the hard work out of responsible sourcing for retailers. Honest trading has become a hot issue and the media is constantly highlighting transgressions from unscrupulous traders.

As a result, third party auditing is becoming more and more commonplace, particularly by larger retailers, who are more on the front line when it comes to media attention and consumer awareness. Smaller retailers don't have those resources and have to take what they're told by companies on trust. Sadly, that trust is not always respected.



Click the image to watch the video on what  
the Code of Practice means for retailers



Retailers should also remember that they are equally responsible for ensuring the products they source comply with the required laws.

Ignorance isn't an excuse and it is YOUR business, along with the supplier's, which could face court action and financial penalties (or worse) and the consequential loss of face and long term business damage.

[Read more on the NBF website](#)

# Sustainability and NBF Green

# *NBF Green*



Now, more than ever, it is an imperative for all businesses to be planning for a greener approach to their operations and their products. Sustainability is high on the NBF's agenda and it should be on yours as a business too. We have worked on sustainability related projects for several years, and have already:

- Set up an NBF Circular Economy Committee to advise us on what's important for the industry.
- Set an ambitious target of 75% diversion of mattresses from landfill by 2028.
- Researched how many mattresses are disposed of and what happens to them, with our mattress End of Life surveys.
- Published the NBF Policy on the Sale of Used and Reconditioned Mattresses and Used Components and Materials.
- Launched the NBF Pledge for Our Planet, asking the bed industry to take steps in unison that will address global environmental damage.
- Worked closely with mattress recyclers and the Textile Recycling Association on the creation of a Register of Approved Mattress Recyclers (RAMR) - and much more!

[Read more about NBF Green](#)

# *Eco-Design and End of Life*

When a bed has been designed with sustainability in mind, the component products and processes include using recycled materials like refurbished spring units and repurposed fillings, and raw materials such as timber and cotton that have been sustainably and ethically sourced.

It also means that when the mattress comes to the end of its life, it can be given a new lease of life. Springs can be recycled with other scrap metal, and foam may be recycled for carpet underlay or sent to a waste-to-energy plant, along with textile material such as mattress covers. NBF members that taken the NBF Pledge for Our Planet are actively working to create more sustainable bed products.

You should encourage your customers to recycle their old mattress, as opposed to it going into landfill. If you do not offer a service that collects old mattresses and arranges for them to be recycled, visit our Bed Advice website or new Mattress Disposal website for local authority services and legitimate recycling companies we are aware of.

# *CMA Green Claims Code*

The Competitions and Market Authority (CMA) has published guidance to help businesses comply with consumer protection law when making green claims.

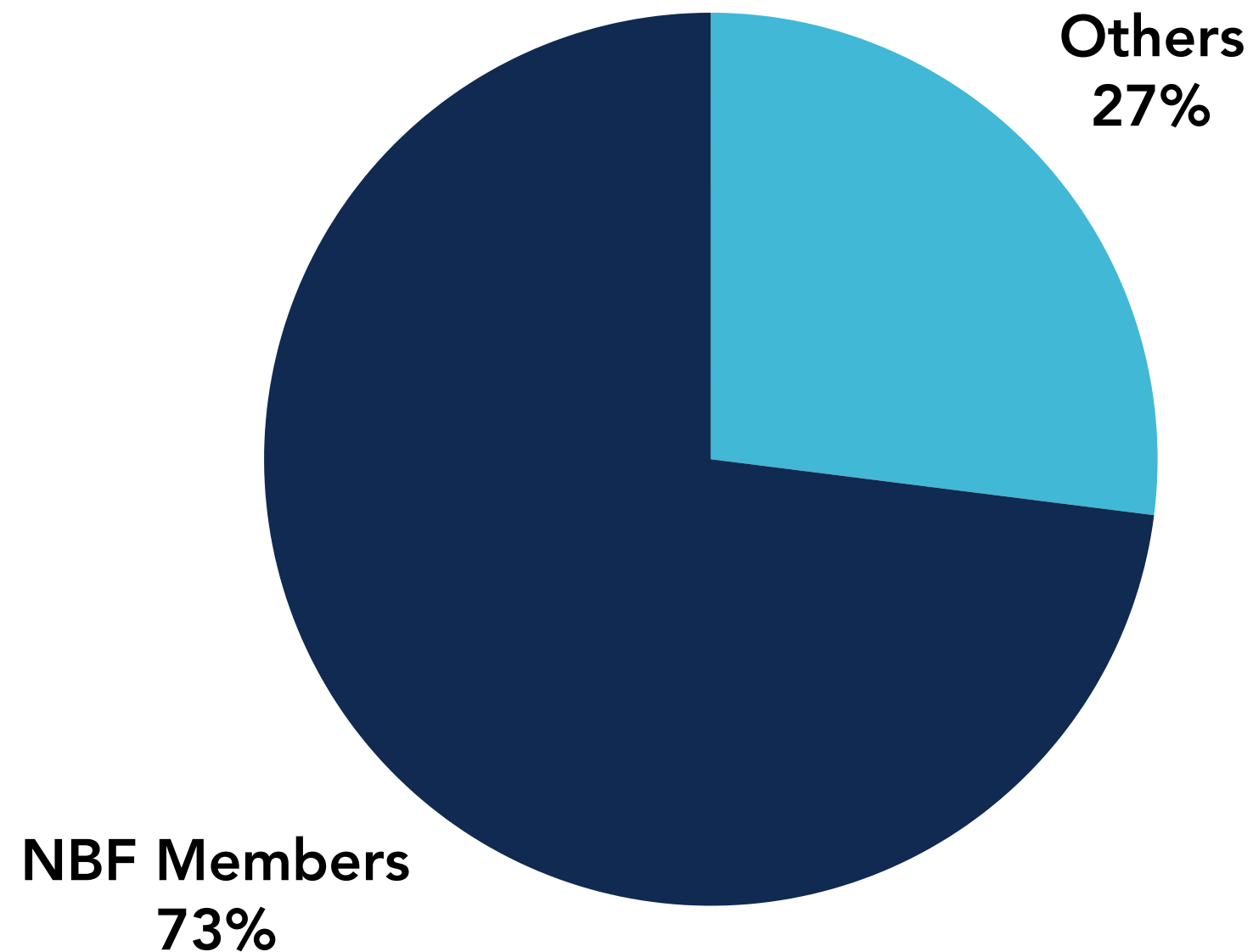
This is just as important for retailers as it is for manufacturers and suppliers. Before making a green claim, businesses should understand how their product, brand or business has an impact – both positively and negatively – on the environment for its whole life cycle.

If a business doesn't comply with consumer protection law, the CMA and other bodies – such as Trading Standards Services or sector regulators – may bring court proceedings. The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) can also take action for misleading green claims which appear in advertising.

[Read more about the CMA Green Claims Code](#)

# The UK Bed Market

## Estimated 2023 total UK sales at retail value in excess of £2 billion



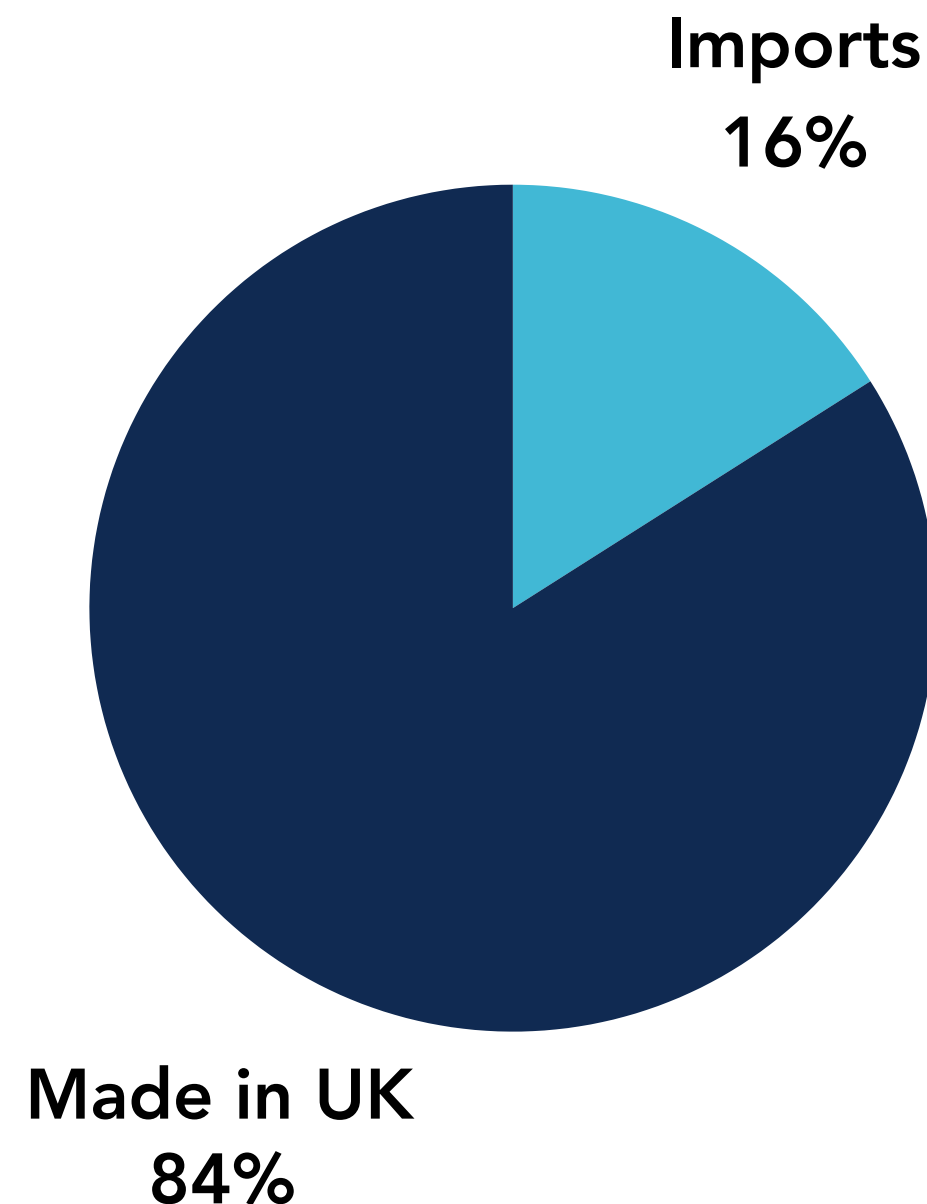
Based on data supplied by NBF members, we estimate that the total UK bed market (at manufacturing prices) in 2023 was worth about £1 billion – so in excess of £2 billion at retail.

We estimate that **NBF members represent about 73% of the UK manufacturing market by value** – and about 50% by volume (units).

Government figures suggest that there are between 240 mattress manufacturing businesses in the UK of which 65% employ fewer than 20 people and over 50% turnover less than half £1 million.

So it could be described as a 'cottage' industry.

## Imports as a percentage of total UK market by £ value



*HMRC and ONS data for 2020*

Imports account for about 20% of the UK home market.

Exports are only 8%.

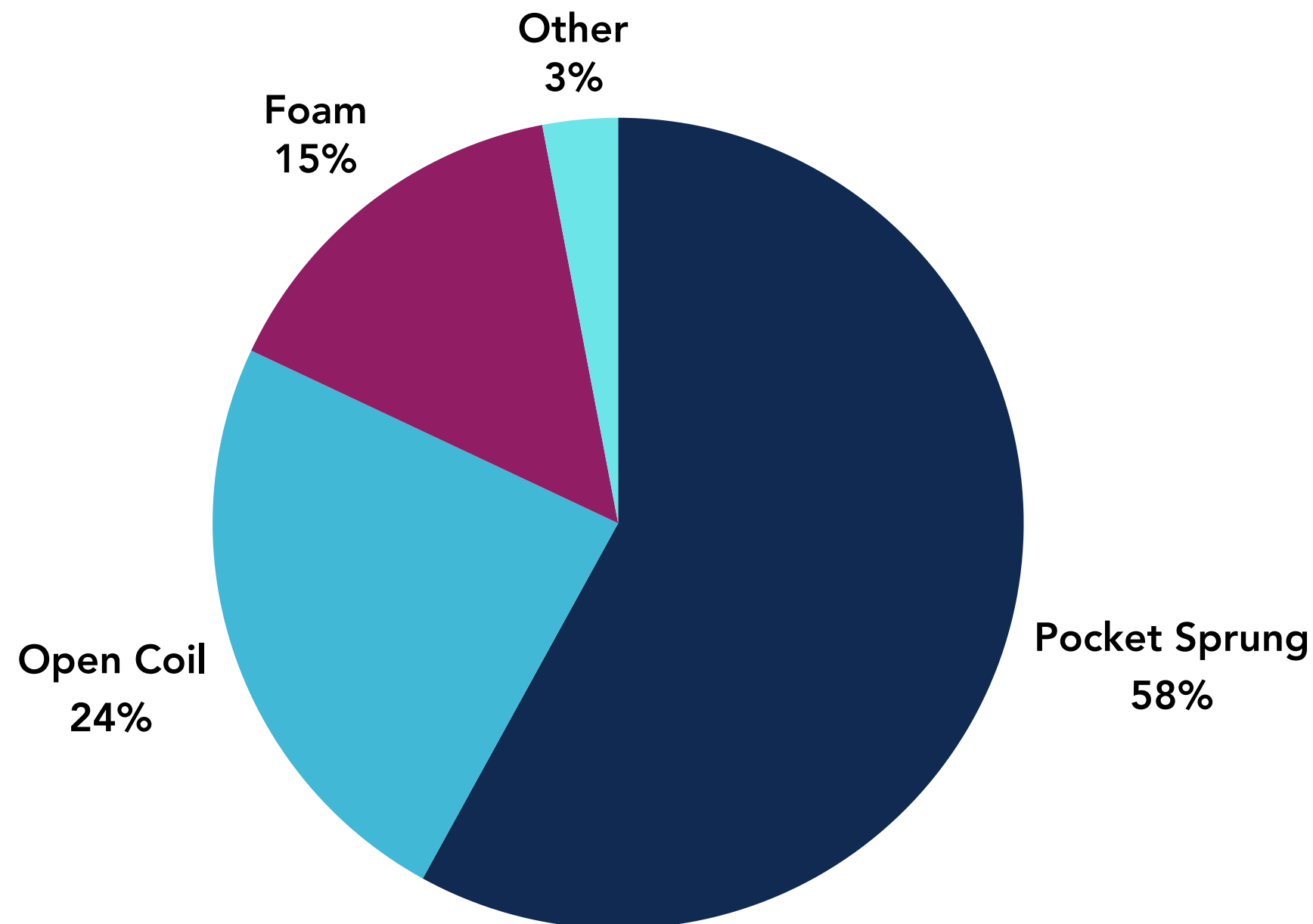
Of foam mattresses sold on the UK market, 69% are imported.

Only 17% of spring interior mattresses sold in the UK are imported.



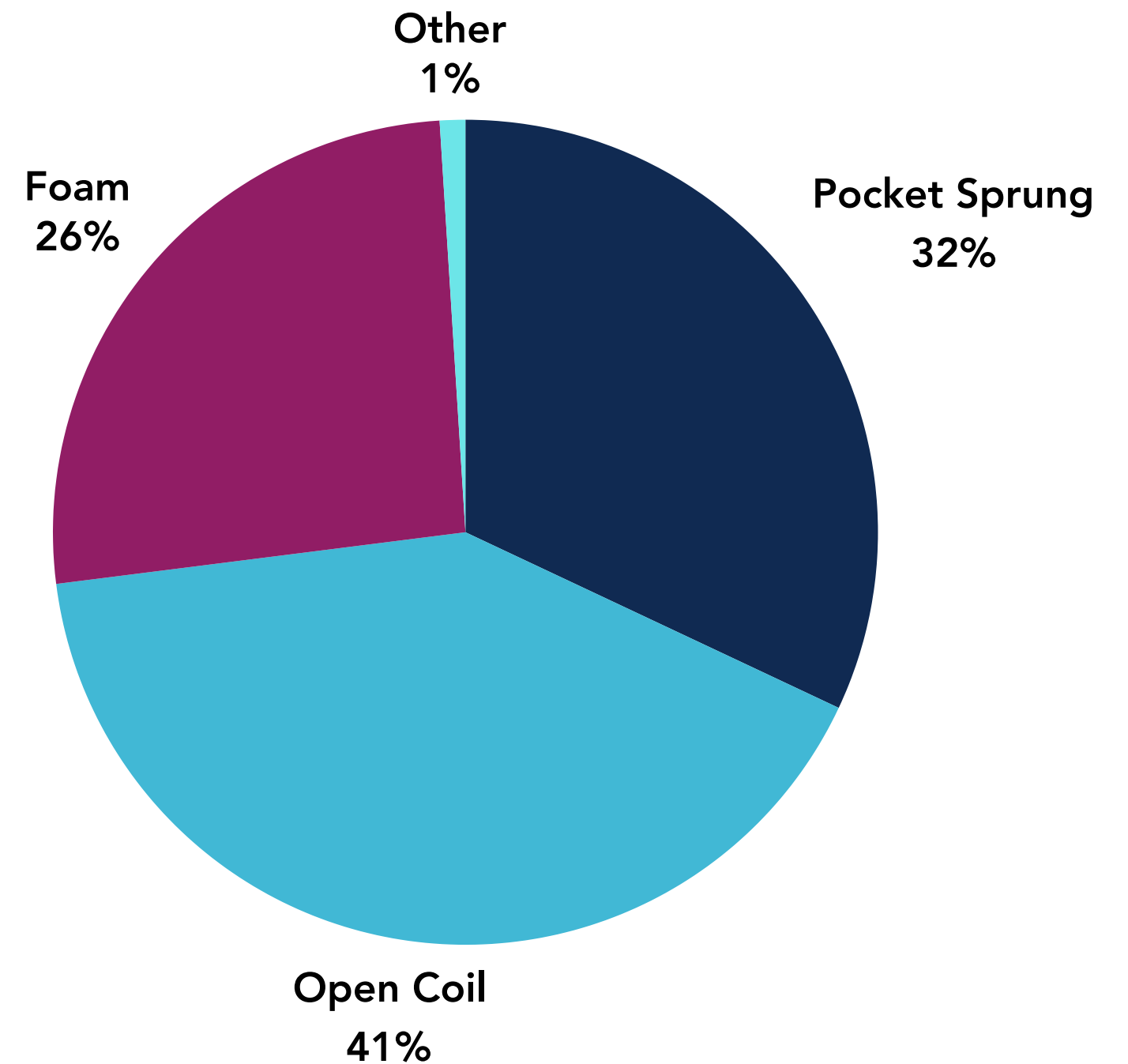
## UK market share by £ value for mattress type

Based on NBF members' 2023 data



## UK market share by volume (units) for mattress type

Based on NBF members' 2023 data



## What Are Consumers Buying?

The NBF has also been carrying out its own consumer research into bed buying habits since 2016. The latest report is from July 2024 where we surveyed 1000 people who had bought a bed in the previous 12 months.

We found 55% of purchases were for a mattress on its own, of which: 31% were flat, 27% were mattress & bedstead and 24% were roll-ups. Foam type mattresses were the most popular overall, surpassing pocket spring mattresses for the first time.

### Type of mattress purchased



Mattress only, flat



Mattress & bedstead/bedframe



Mattress only, roll up (in a box or bag)

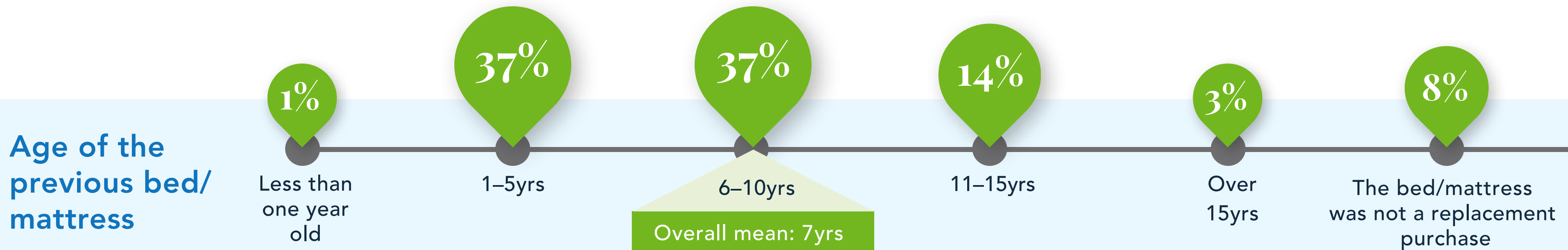


Mattress & divan base i.e. divan set

## How Often Do People Buy a New Mattress?

When it comes to replacing their old mattress, 75% of them are doing so in less than 10 years (up slightly on 2023's 73%), and 38% are replacing it in under 5 years, driven mainly by the younger age groups.

The average replacement cycle was reported as just over 7 years (down slightly from 7.25 years in 2023). With sustainability in mind, it is important you encourage consumers to take good care of their mattresses to get the most out of them and recycle them at end of life.



## The Green Consumer

With growing urgency on a more sustainable bed industry - and planet! - we also asked questions to better understand how sustainability can play a part in consumer shopping habits.

When informed that around 75% of old mattresses go to landfill - but that nowadays some mattresses are eco-designed so they can be completely deconstructed and fully recycled at their end of life (avoiding landfill) - our survey indicated that 73% of consumers are willing to pay more for a mattress if they know it is more sustainable, and on average, they would be prepared to pay about 10% more.

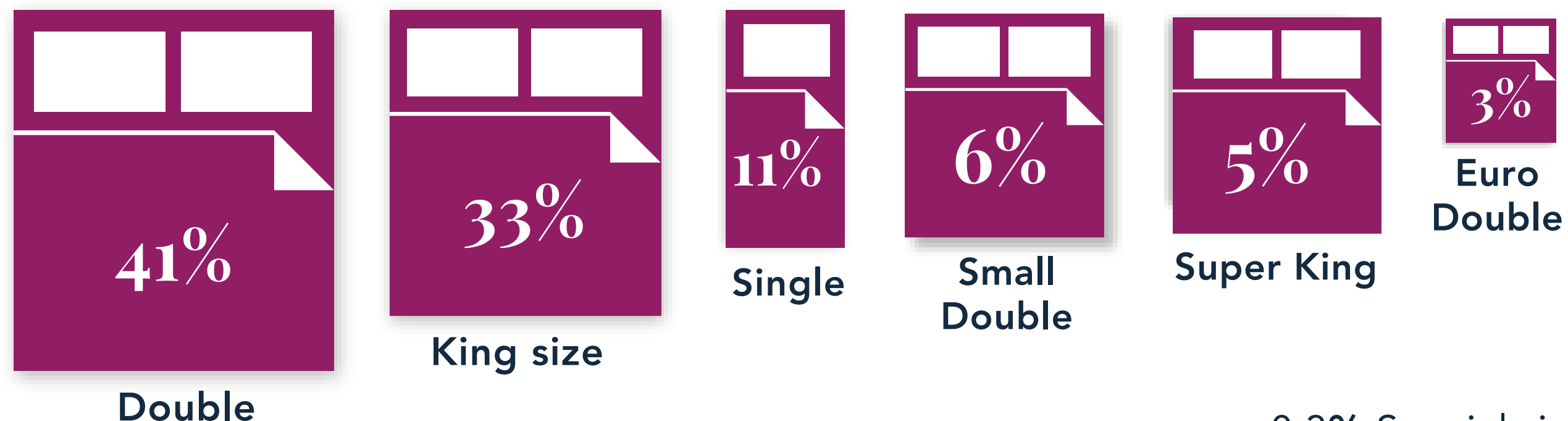


## Size Matters

A double size bed is still the most popular choice in the UK, accounting for around 41% of all sales, up 7% from 2023. The larger king size remains a close second at 33%.

Remind your customers that a standard UK double bed only gives each user about 2ft 3in or 67.5cm each in width, which is about the same as a baby has in a cot! It's no wonder that people sleep better in larger beds (king size or super king size) where they are less likely to be disturbed by their partner - a common reason for not sleeping well.

### Size of bed/mattress

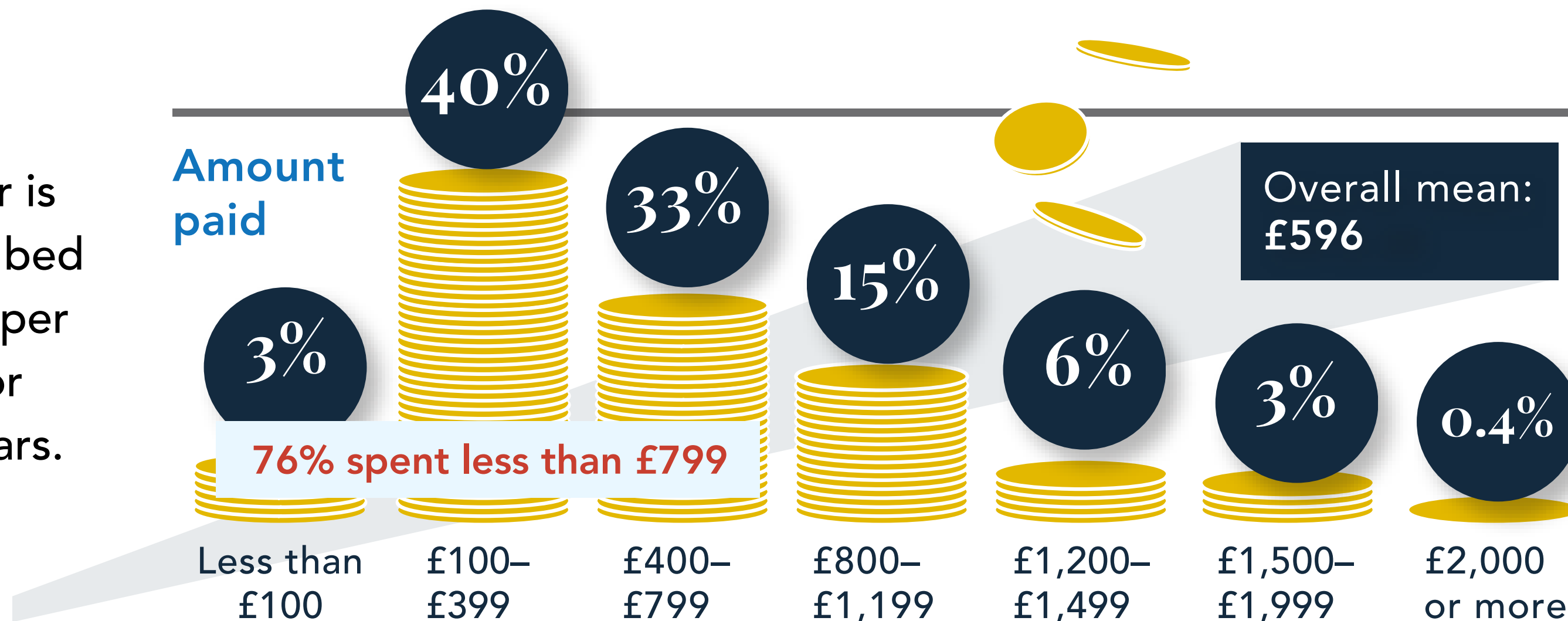


0.3% Special size made to order

## Price

The vast majority of respondents (76%) paid up to £799 for their mattress. However, a significant number (43%) of all respondents paid less than £400. The mean price paid was £595, up from £596 in the last report.

A good point worth remembering when talking to a customer is that a £1000 double bed equates to only 40p per night (or 20p each for two users) over 7 years.

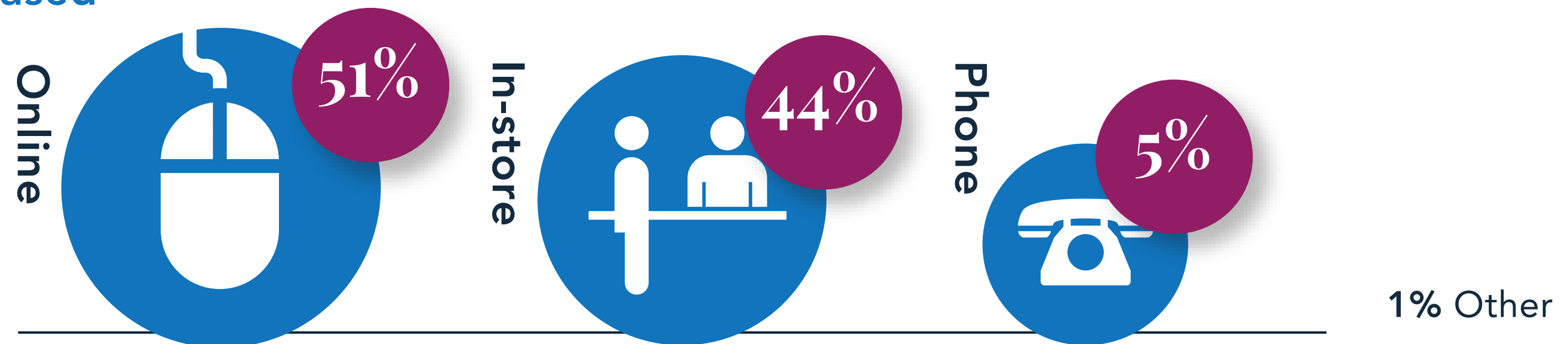


## Online v In-store

In the UK, the percentage of mattress purchases made online has been growing steadily over the last few years, however the latest results reveal more of a levelling out, with 51% buying online (down 7% from 2023) and 44% in-store (up 8%). Reassuring statistics for brick-and-mortar retailers!

Over half of the over 55s chose to buy online, proof that the older generations are becoming more tech savvy.

### How was it purchased



# *Major brands and explanation of groups*

You may well have heard of some of the more well-known brand names in the UK bed sector. Names like Airsprung, Silentnight, Sealy, Harrison Spinks, Relyon, Sleepezee, Hypnos or Vispring.

What you may not be quite so familiar with are some of the group names that these brands are part of. Knowing that certain brands are part of a bigger group will give you a better understanding of the landscape of UK bed manufacturing.



## Here are some of the main groups and their brands

### Silentnight Group

- Silentnight Beds
- Rest Assured
- Layezee
- Silentnight Studio
- Pocket Spring Bed Company



### Airsprung Beds Group

- Airsprung
- Gainsborough
- hushabye



### GNG Group

- Komfi
- Sonlevo



### Harrison Spinks

- Harrison Spinks
- Somnus
- Herdy Sheep
- Adam Henson



### Relyon

- Relyon
- Dunlopillo



# *Major brands and non-members*

Of course, there are some large stand-alone brands in the UK bed market – e.g. Highgrove Beds, Hypnos, Sealy, Vispring as well as many smaller manufacturers. For a full list of NBF manufacturer members and their brands, please go to our [online directory](#).

There are very few recognisable bed brands in the UK and Ireland whose products are not made here and therefore they are not eligible to be NBF members – the most well-known being Tempur, Mlily and Dormeo.

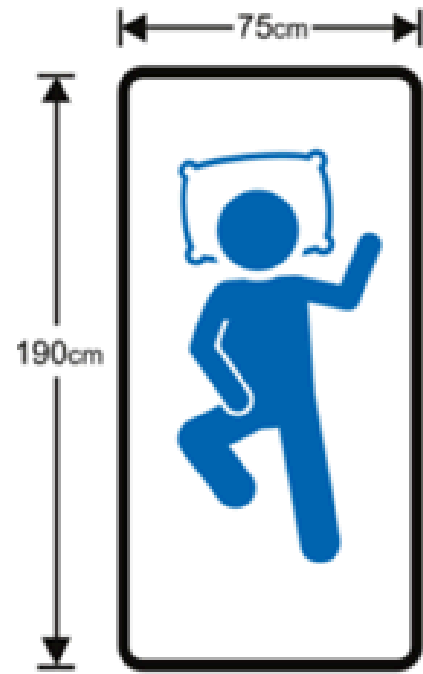
# *Brand Associate Members*



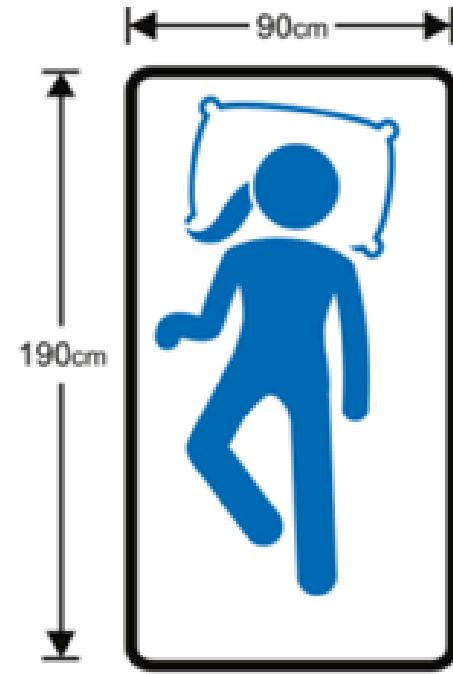
There are also a number of well-known, roll-up mattress brands who do not have their own manufacturing facilities but are selling to UK and Irish retailers.

If 100% of their mattresses sold to UK and Irish retailers are made by NBF Approved members, then they can become a Brand Associate Member. So far, these include Nectar Sleep and Simba Sleep.

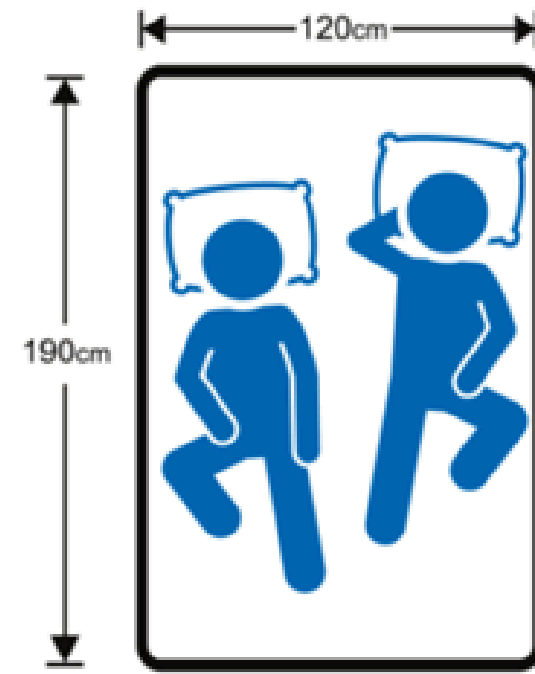
# TYPICAL UK BED SIZES



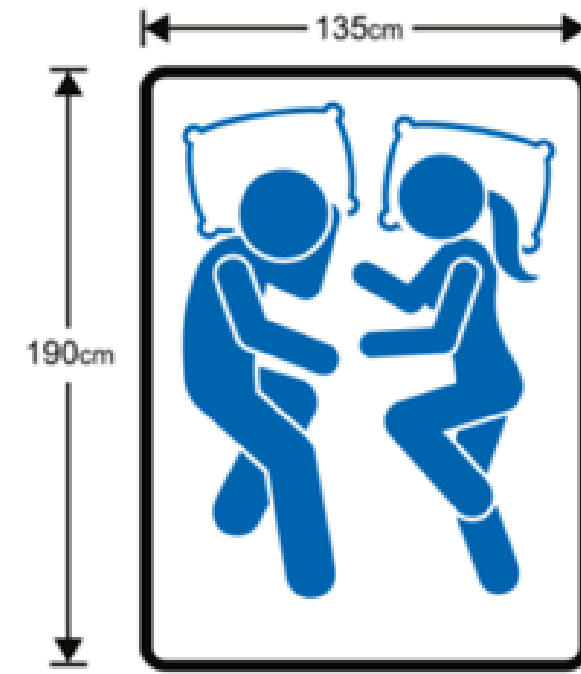
**Small Single**



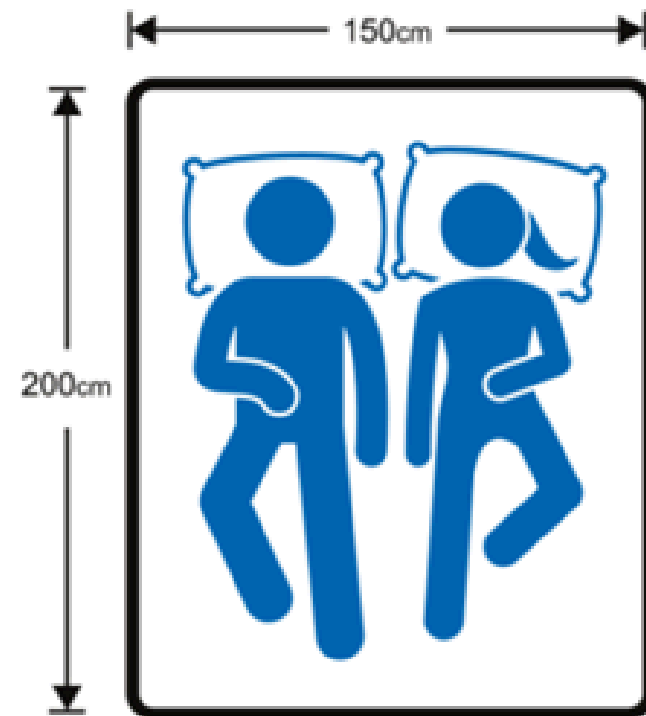
**Single**



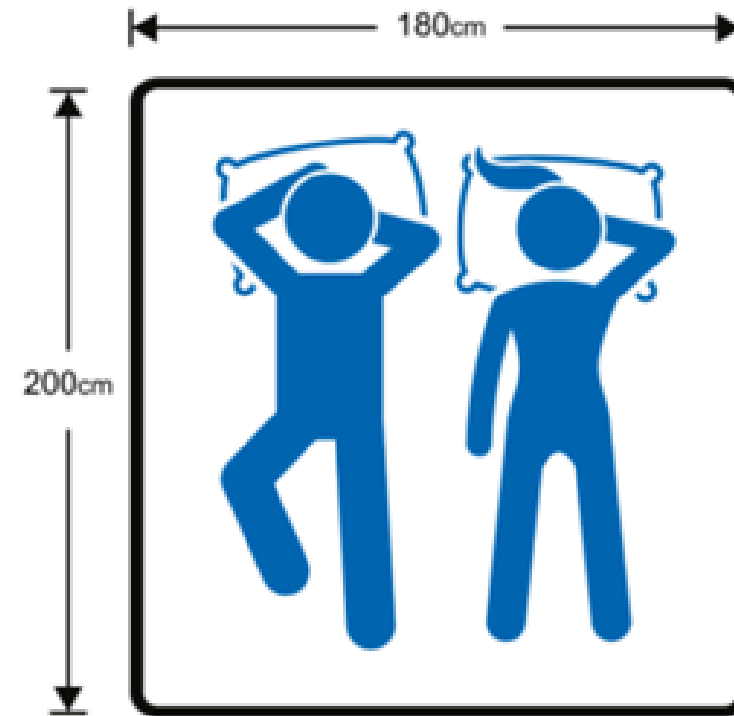
**Small Double**



**Double**



**King**



**Super King**

## UK Bed Sizes

NAME	IMPERIAL SIZE	METRIC SIZE
<b>Small Single</b>	2'6" x 6'3"	75 x 190 cm
<b>Single</b>	3' x 6'3"	90 x 190 cm
<b>Small Double</b>	4' x 6'3"	120 x 190 cm
<b>Double</b>	4'6" x 6'3"	135 x 190 cm
<b>King</b>	5' x 6'6"	150 x 200 cm
<b>Super King</b>	6' x 6'6"	180 x 200 cm

## Other Sizes

KNOWN AS	IMPERIAL SIZE	METRIC SIZE
	2'6" x 6'6"	75 x 200 cm
<b>European single</b>	3' x 6'6"	90 x 200 cm
	3'4" x 6'6"	100 x 200cm
<b>European double</b>	4'8 x 6'6"	140 x 200 cm
<b>European king size</b>	5'4" x 6'6"	160 x 200 cm
	5'6" x 6'6"	165 x 200 cm
	6' x 7'	180 x 215cm
	6'6" x 7'	200 x 215cm
	7' x 7'	215 x 215cm

*N.B. Metric and imperial sizes are not exact equivalents.*

# *What are 'Zip & Links'?*

There are certain sizes that are generally available as 'zip & link' (for varying comfort options where one partner requires a different firmness to the other partner or for ease of handling when negotiating tight stairways).

**The most common combinations are:**

Two 75 x 200cm Z&L = 150 x 200cm

Two 90 x 200cm Z&L = 180 x 200cm



# MATTRESSES EXPLAINED



## Starting from the outside... *Tickling*

The first thing you will notice about a mattress is its cover – known in the trade as ticking. Manufacturers spend a lot of time choosing attractive colours and designs so their mattresses will look good – but remember that 99% of the time it will be covered up with bedclothes!

The ticking is not just there for its good looks: it also needs to be tough and tear-resistant. Better quality cloths are woven or knitted in high-quality viscose or cotton yarns. Cheaper cloths in polyester or polypropylene are often printed. At the budget end of the market are bonded or stitchbond fabrics and some cheaper knits.

 [Watch the ticking in action](#)

## *Ticking continued*

Ticking with special qualities is now also increasingly being used by mattress manufacturers. Some of the options include anti-dust mite/anti-allergy, anti-bacterial, anti-microbial, anti-static, breathable, water-resistant, stain-resistant, highly absorbent, vegan, bamboo fibres, naturally fire retardant etc.

But one of the most popular options are tickings that offer effective thermal regulation through moisture wicking and evaporation technology. There are now quite a few companies offering performance fabrics that move perspiration away from the body and through the fabric where it can evaporate quickly allowing you to feel cooler and more comfortable.

# *Quilting or Tufting?*

Quilting is a decorative effect attaching the outer fabric to the surface fillings; these mattresses tend to have a smoother, flatter surface. Tufting – where tapes are passed right through the mattress at regular intervals and secured each side by tags or washers – prevents loose fillings from being dislodged.



**Watch hand-  
tufting in action**



**Quilting**

# *Borders or Side Panels*

**Diamond quilted  
border**



**Watch hand  
stitching video**



**Hand side  
stitched border**



**Straight quilted  
border**



**Wavy quilted  
border**



The side panels of some higher quality mattresses, particularly traditionally pocket sprung mattresses, are hand side stitched. This traditional skill and lengthy process improves mattress edge support and extends the sleeping area to the very edge of the mattress.

The same visual effect of hand side stitching can be achieved on an automatic quilting machine. This type of border is known as a 'mock stitch border'. There are plenty of other popular quilted border patterns available – straight channel, diamond, wavy etc.



[Watch mattress panels being machine-sewn to the borders](#)

# *Inside a mattress*

There are essentially two main types of mattress construction – those with springs and those without:

## **Spring Interior Mattresses**

The majority of mattresses in the UK have spring interiors, which provide the 'core' support. Changing the spring construction, thickness (gauge) of the wire, the number of coils, height of each spring and the quantity alters the tension, feel and weight distribution properties of each mattress.

Spring interior mattresses can be 'zoned' – across the middle to give extra support for heavier hips and shoulders; half and half, to provide different tensions on each side of the bed; or round the edge of the mattress to give it extra rigidity.

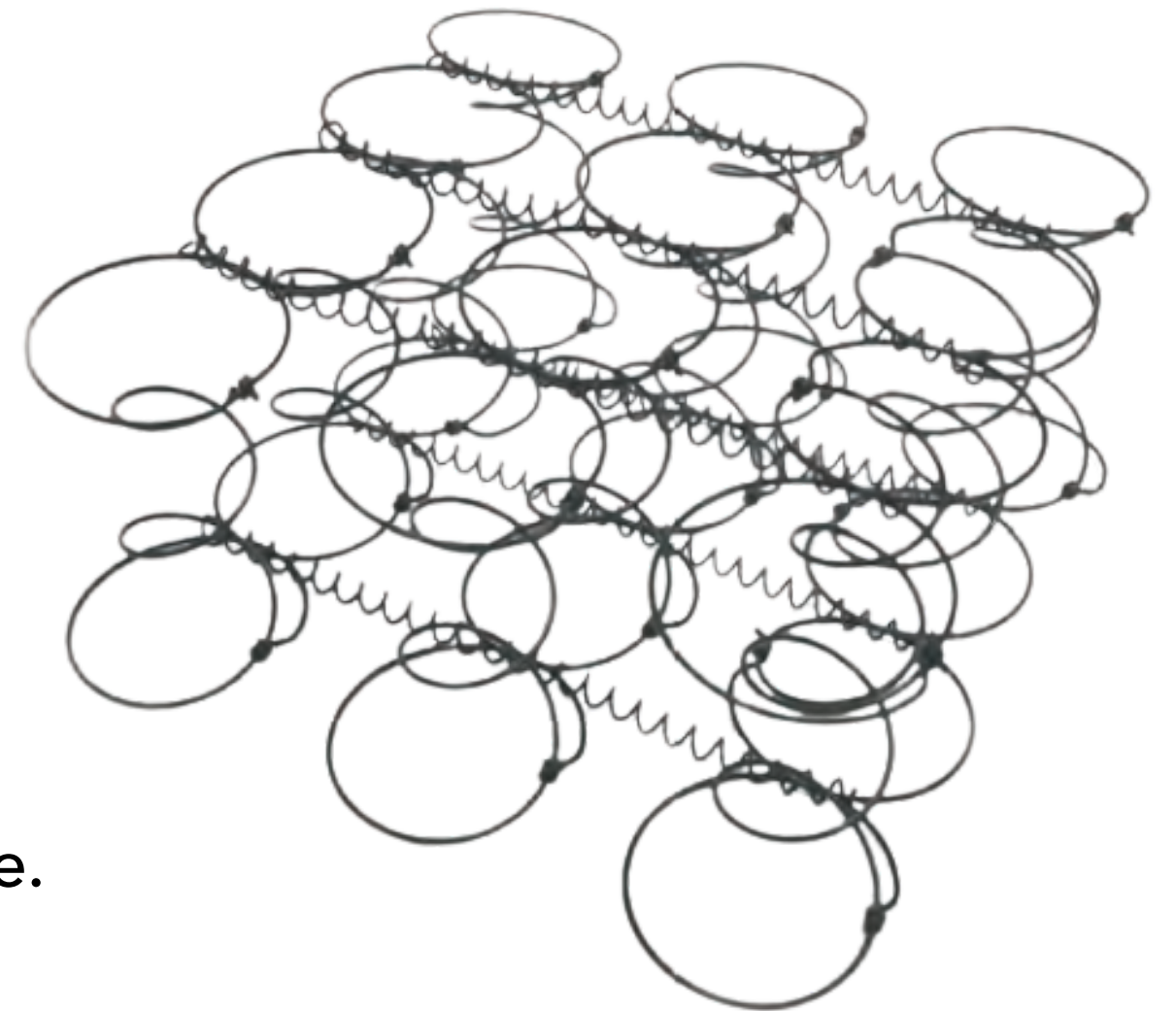
Different tensions can be achieved within the same mattress. Some units also allow the user to adjust the mattress tension themselves.

**There are three types of spring interiors...**

# 1. *Open Coil or Open Sprung*

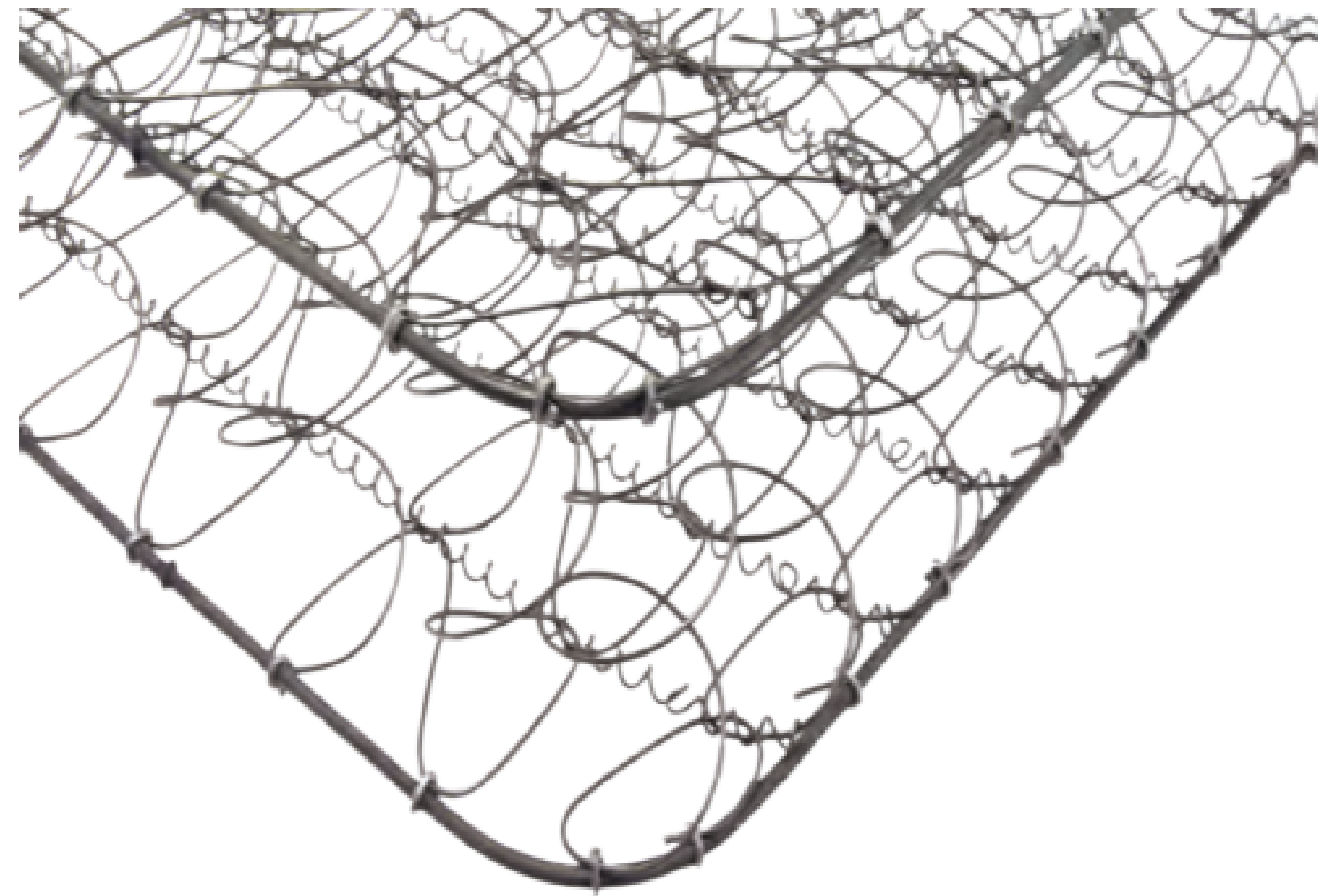
- The most widely used option, also known as the Bonnell spring.
- Springs are arranged in rows and connected to one another, top and bottom, by a spiral helical wire with an outer rod strengthening the perimeter.
- There is usually a minimum of 325 coils in a 5ft/150cm size – but some mattresses may have more.
- Come in a choice of tensions, starting from a very firm 12.5 gauge wire.
- Priced from budget to mid-range.

▶ [Watch our explainer video on coil springs](#)



## 2. *Continuous Spring*

- The continuous spring unit is made from a single length of wire 'knitted' into a series of interwoven springs which usually run up and down the bed and are linked vertically rather than horizontally.
- The gauge of wires used is softer and the size of the 'coils' smaller than an open coil, giving a higher spring count and a more responsive feel.
- Priced from mid-market to premium.



# 3. *Pocket Spring*

- Small, softer springs that work independently from each other.
- Conforms and adjusts to body contours.
- Helps eliminate roll together.
- Spring counts typically vary from 600-800 up to 2,500 but can go up to 3 or even 4,000. Like other types, they are made in a range of tensions.
- Often more expensive and used mainly in higher quality products.
- Better quality pocket springs are encased in calico pockets, hand nested in a honeycomb pattern and hand centre tied with linen cord.
- Less expensive pocket springs are encased in fibretex or stitchbond fabrics and are lightly glued together in linear rows.

Pocket springs  
in fibretex or  
stitched fabrics



Pocket springs  
in calico fibre

- ▶ [Watch our explainer video on pocket springs](#)
- ▶ [Watch the pocket spring manufacturing process](#)



## Mini Spring

A relatively new development in springs is the extra low profile, mini spring, which can have a height under 3cm (1 inch). These units offer an alternative to fillings in providing a highly resilient comfort layer.

They can also be stacked together to form a very soft, high spring count mattress core. Use of these mini spring layers allows the manufacturer to claim very high spring counts in their mattresses - up to as many as 15,000 or more.



# Fillings

Interior sprung mattresses use a wide variety of fillings to create different properties and comfort options, as well as affecting price. Fillings are chosen for their resilience, durability, flexibility and ability to absorb body moisture.

In cheaper mattresses, fillings usually come in compact pads; in better quality models, layers of loose fillings in greater volumes are often preferred.

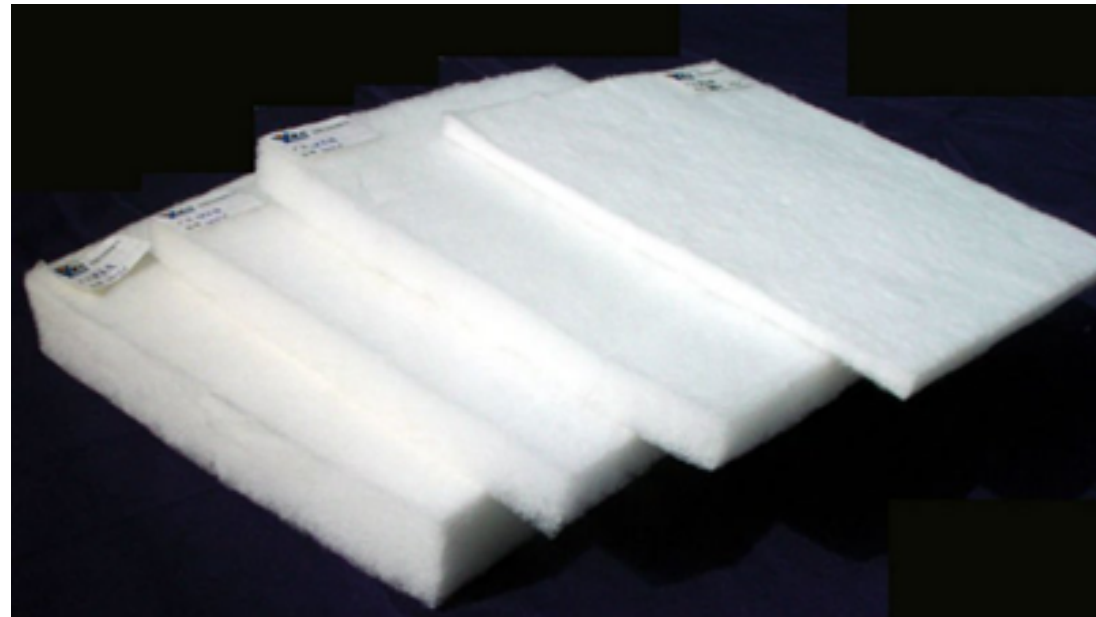
FILLING	FUNCTION
<b>Cotton</b>	Often used near the surface for its soft feel and its ability to breathe, and to absorb moisture.
<b>Wool</b>	Naturally resilient fibre, creating a luxurious feel with good fire retardancy properties, it is also breathable.
<b>Foam</b>	Different types of foam are used for their cushioning effect. They include latex, polyurethane, visco-elastic (memory foam) and gel. Explanations of these different types of foam can be found later.
<b>Polyester</b>	A synthetic material with good recovery properties supplied in pads of varying thickness and density.
<b>Hair</b>	Highly resilient fibre, often described as "nature's spring". Available in pads or loose for high luxury.
<b>Mixed Flock</b>	Made from re-claimed fibres, they are generally used as <b>pads</b> next to the spring to insulate and prevent the spring being felt or penetrating. Alternatives include synthetic pads or coir (coconut) fibre pads.
<b>Silk, cashmere, mohair and other fine, natural fibres</b>	Used for additional luxury and insulation properties.

## Natural fillings: hair, wool, cotton



Watch layers of natural fillings being  
added to the mattress

## Polyester fibre pads



## Mixed flock pad



# *Non-Sprung Mattresses*

There are four main types: **foam, gel, floatation, and futons**

## **Foam:**

Most foam mattresses are made from layers of different densities of foam. By varying their density and depth, it's possible to achieve different levels of comfort and support. They are particularly suitable for use with slatted bases and adjustable beds as they are more pliable than spring interior mattresses.

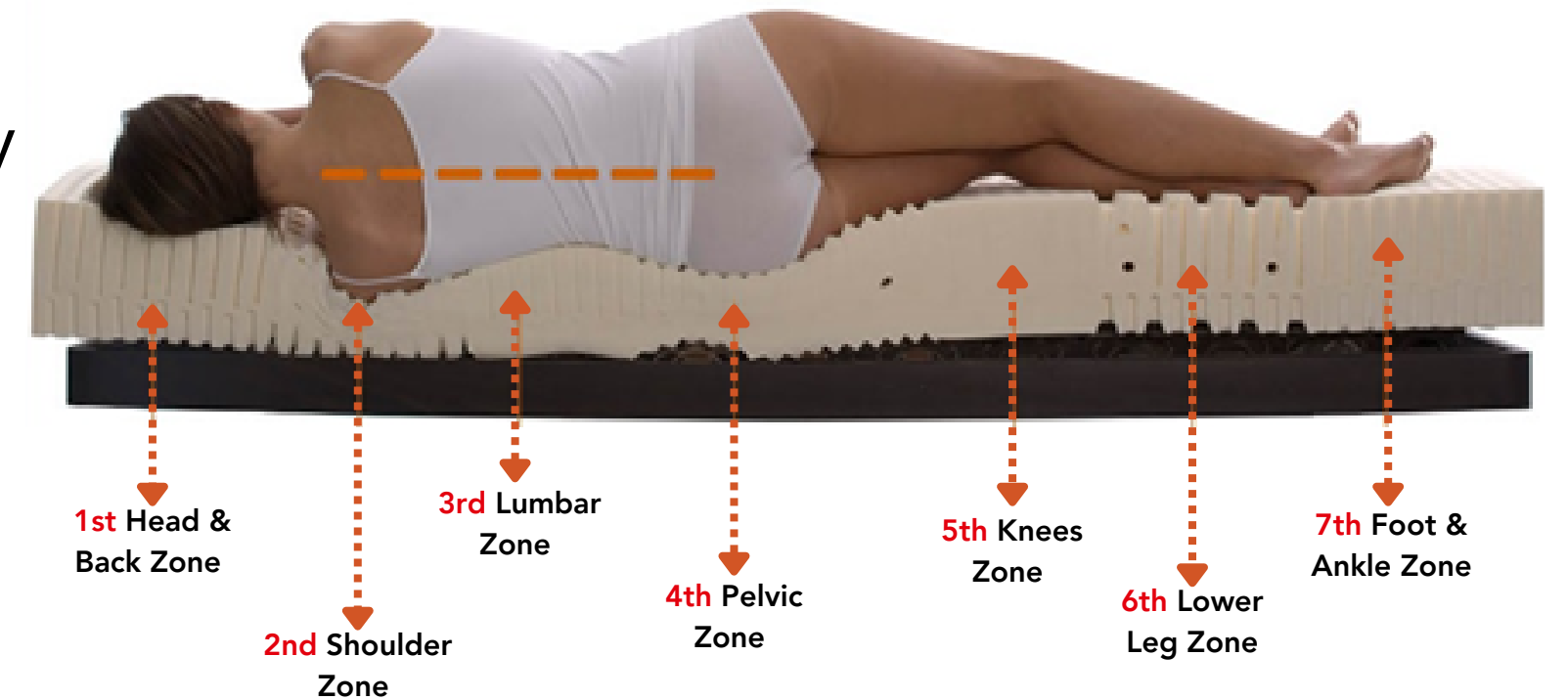
There are three main types of foam in use...

# Latex

- A premium quality material, the natural type is derived from the sap of the rubber tree.
- Has a distinctive, resilient feel, is very durable and has anti-microbial properties that offer benefits to many allergy sufferers.
- Its natural elasticity means it recovers its shape immediately when pressure is removed.
- It also has very good point elasticity resulting in an even distribution of pressure for independent support.
- Through its open cell structure, latex also has excellent ventilation and air circulation properties.
- Can be cut into different profiles to aid ventilation or provide zoning for different levels of support.



Profile cut latex

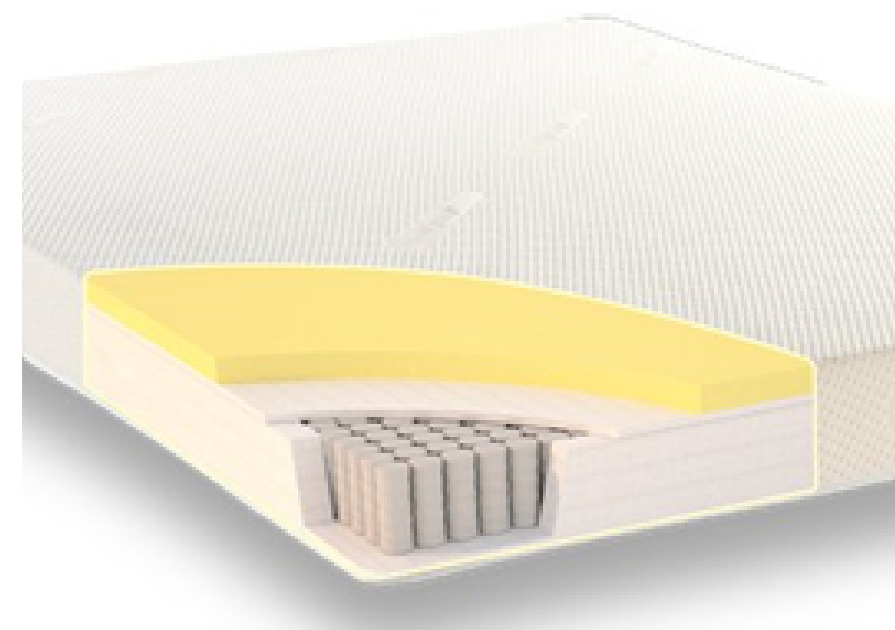


▶ [Watch the manufacturing process of a latex mattress - beginning with gathering sap from the tree](#)

# *Visco Elastic/Memory Foam*

- Responds slowly to individual shape, body heat and pressure.
- Excellent pressure relieving properties.
- Reduces the need to toss and turn during the night by as much as 80%.
- Beneficial to those suffering from arthritic or rheumatic conditions.
- Available in a variety of qualities and densities.
- For memory foam to work correctly, it must have a support layer underneath it, either a spring unit or a layer of foam. There are no 100% memory foam mattresses.
- Can be cut into different profiles to aid ventilation or provide zoning for different levels of support.

Layer of memory foam on  
top of pocket springs



▶ [Watch our explainer video on memory foam v latex](#)

# *Polyurethane (PU) foam*

- A synthetic, petroleum-based foam with performance and price varying according to density and quality.
- It is widely used and very versatile.
- Can be cut into different profiles to aid ventilation or provide zoning for different levels of support.



**PU foam**



**Ventilation  
channels can be  
cut into foam**

# Gel

- A relatively new filling; developed to help overcome the 'heat retention' issues with memory foam.
- Consists of gel particles fused with memory foam to reduce trapped body heat, speed up spring back time and help the mattress feel softer.
- The latest development in this technology now uses gel beads within the foam which, as a 'phase-change material', means the beads change from a solid to a liquid state to regulate the user's body temperature.
- Delivers benefits such as breathability, temperature regulation, pressure relief and body support.





## Floatation Beds

- Support is determined by the amount of water used and the level of motion can also be varied.
- Known for their pressure free support and also good for allergy sufferers.
- Variable temperature heaters keep the bed warm and cosy.



## Futons

- Made from layers of cotton or fibre wadding, which moulds itself to the shape of the body.
- In Japan, they are used on the floor with a mat underneath and rolled away during the day.
- In the UK, they are more often sold as budget priced sofa beds with slatted convertible frames.



# BED BASES EXPLAINED

# *Divans*

Most mattresses are used in combination with one of the various choices of bed bases, such as divans, bedsteads, adjustable beds and bunk beds. Remember to ensure that mattress and base are suitable for use together, especially if your customer is buying them separately.

Divans are still a popular style of base in the UK. They are essentially an upholstered box, fitted with castors (or glides) for mobility on deep bases or on legs with shallow bases to create space beneath. These days there are many beautifully tailored and upholstered bases with matching headboards offered in a range of colours and fabrics.

There are three main types of divan...

# *Sprung Edge Divans*

Sprung edge divans are the most luxurious option and feature a complete open coil or pocket spring unit mounted on a frame that acts like a giant shock absorber, increasing the mattress's durability.

**A sprung edge  
divan with drawer**



# *Solid or Platform Top Divans*

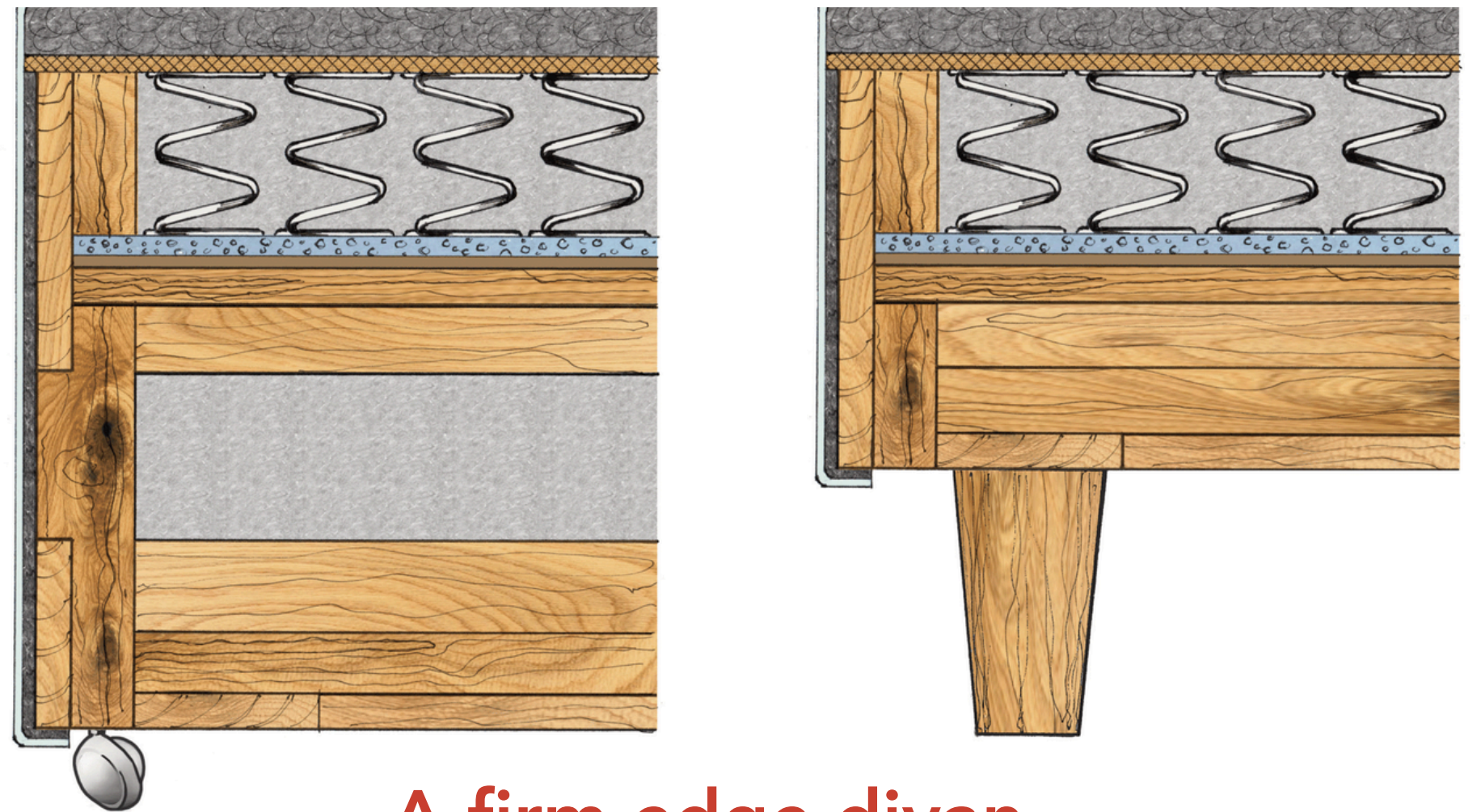
Solid or platform top divans have a rigid, non-sprung top panel, often made from hardboard. Beds with these bases are generally firmer, as well as cheaper than beds with sprung bases.



**A solid platform top divan**

# *Firm Edge Divans*

Firm edge divans generally feature a smaller number of larger, heavy-duty springs set within a rigid, wooden sided frame. Often made as shallow bases on legs.



**A firm edge divan**

# Ottomans

A divan is useful if your customer is tight on space as most are available with drawers or lift-up storage, known as ottomans.

Storage need not affect the comfort or quality of the bed – but it does cost a little more.



**Ottoman  
divan base**



**Drawer  
divan base**

# *Slatted Bases*

Slatted bases are mostly used with bedsteads but can be incorporated into a divan base. These can be either rigid (with no give) or flexible (known as sprung timber).

Flexible slats are made from laminated softwoods mounted in a frame creating a modest level of springiness from their bowed shape. The tension of some slats can be adjusted to suit individual requirements.



**Sprung slats in a bedframe**



## ***Slatted Bases continued***

It is important to ensure the slatted base is compatible with the mattress. There are many different suppliers of slatted bases with differing specifications of slat widths and the space between each slat.

Mattress manufacturers should provide their own recommendations for slat spacing and slat widths to suit their particular mattresses, so we strongly advise that your customers check these before buying as they can vary. A mattress used on an incompatible base can invalidate the guarantee.



**Sprung slats in a divan base**

# *Adjustable Bases*

Adjustable beds are becoming increasingly popular as the bedroom evolves into a multi-functional space. As well as reading or having breakfast in bed, people now watch TV from their beds and spend time on their laptops and mobile devices (although we don't recommend this to poor sleepers!).

Of course, adjustable beds still offer many benefits for a range of medical complaints requiring a raised sleeping position or raised legs, or aid in getting in and out of bed. Styling choices range from a traditional divan look right through to contemporary bedstead designs. Some even incorporate massage units as an optional extra.



## *Adjustable Bases continued*

Available as single beds or as doubles with individually adjustable halves, these beds either feature flexible laminated slats or fully sprung upholstered sections. Some models have five or more individually adjusting sections - for neck, head, upper body, legs and feet; other models might just adjust the head and feet; or even just the upper body.

Some models (known as wall-huggers or headboard-huggers) are designed to slide backwards as the head end comes up, thus keeping the user in more convenient contact with their bedside table! Others fit side tables which can be moved along the side rails.



**A single size adjustable  
divan set**

## *Adjustable Bases continued*

Some mattresses are specially made for adjustable beds, so ideally the base and mattress should be bought together.

It's a good idea for your customers to make sure that any electrical parts are separately guaranteed and fully compatible with UK systems.

**Two linked adjustable beds**



**Double size adjustable bed with one slatted base and one mattress**



# *Bedsteads*

Bedsteads come in a vast array of styles from traditional classics to more modern designs and are available in wood, metal, plastics, upholstered, or any combination of these.

The choice will largely be an aesthetic one but your customers should bear in mind mattress support. This could be fixed or sprung slats or a metal grid or rigid woven wire. It is also possible to have a fully sprung bed base (with the same benefits as a divan) inside. A number of manufacturers make these to order.

Always make sure your customer tries mattresses on the type of base their chosen bedstead has.

As many bedsteads are imported or antique they may not conform to current UK standard sizes, so ensure that they check their mattress and bedstead are the same size!



**Traditional metal bedstead**



**Upholstered bedframe**

# Children's Beds

Bunk beds, high sleepers, mid sleepers, and cabin beds are popular options for parents and children. They are fun as well as practical and space-saving.



Click for more information on all types of [bed bases](#) and specific advice about [children's beds](#).

# ACCESSORIES EXPLAINED

- an important 'add on sale' opportunity

# Headboards

Headboards have grown in popularity and can create a focal point in any bedroom. They are usually an optional extra and can often coordinate with the divan base.

Like most things in the bedroom, the headboard acts as a style statement and will be a dominant feature, so remind your customer that it is worth them doing a bit of research. Ask them what fabrics/colours they have in mind; will the colour choice or pattern blend in with the rest of the room? Are they after a simple rectangular design or a more lavish padded design? All of the different materials and designs have their own merits.

For example, upholstered headboards provide more comfort whereas wooden or metal headboards can be matched with bedroom furniture.





# *Pillows*

If your customer tells you they suffer with neck and shoulder pain, their pillow may be the culprit.

Pillows come in a range of different shapes and sizes, including pre-shaped ones that support your head and neck, as well as a choice of fillings – goosedown, duckdown, feather, fibre filled, memory foam, latex foam, polyurethane foam and even mini springs – plus any number of combinations of these.



## *Pillows continued*

### **Here's what to advise your customers to look for in a good pillow:**

- A good one should hold your head in the correct alignment – that is, in the same relation to your shoulders and spine as if you were standing upright with the correct posture – and be tucked well into the neck and shoulder to support your head fully.
- The thickness and number you need depend on your body shape and your preferred sleeping position. You will need a thicker pillow (or two thinner ones) if you sleep on your side rather than if you sleep on your back.
- It is a good idea to invest in quality pillows and replace them at least every two or three years. When they have lost their 'loft' (height) and become lumpy, discoloured, or misshapen they should be replaced.

Did you know, an old, unwashed pillow could also contain as much as 10% of its weight in skin scale, mould, dead and living dust mites, and their allergen-laden droppings?

# *Toppers*

Overlays and toppers are mostly used to soften the feel of a mattress, by adding extra layers of cushioning. Generally non-sprung, they may be made of a variety of materials: polyester fibre, latex, memory or other foams, or even feathers. The choice is entirely subjective.

Toppers are not a substitute for correct support – your customer will need a mattress of the right tension. Nor are they a substitute for replacing an old, worn-out bed – any impression of improved comfort will probably be short-lived.

Some modern mattresses styles include a fixed topper – often on styles that have been designed to eliminate the need for turning.



# *Mattress Protectors*

A mattress protector should always be recommended to someone purchasing a new mattress. Buying two means their mattress will always be protected when one is in the wash.

They are a fairly inexpensive way to help the mattress stay looking good for years and as well as protecting it from staining caused by accidental spillages or body perspiration etc. They can also aid in reducing allergens, dust mites, and asthma issues.

They are generally made from cotton or polyester and the latest intelligent fabrics now offer complete protection from seepage whilst still being breathable to maintain a cool sleeping surface (unlike some of the old rubber or PVC versions).



# ADVICE TO GIVE YOUR CUSTOMERS ON BED AND MATTRESS MAINTENANCE

**Like most new products, a useful lifespan depends on the amount of tender loving care the bed receives throughout its life. Here's what to advise:**

- Do not bend or roll a new mattress. It will permanently damage the spring unit and invalidate any warranties or guarantees.
- Let the mattress breathe. Like a new car or new carpets, a new bed may initially have a 'new' smell about it. Any odour won't be harmful and will eventually disperse if well aired.
- Follow the care instructions carefully - turn the mattress regularly. Unless it is a non-turn (which has been specifically designed not to be turned but must still be rotated), it is important that the mattress is turned from end to end and side to side every week for the first few months and thereafter about every three months. This will prolong the lifespan of the mattress and minimise body impression marks.

- Body shaped impressions are normal. Impression marks – sometimes known as settlement or dipping – are a normal characteristic of quality mattresses working as intended to conform to the shape of your body. These will be minimised with regular turning if the mattress is two-sided. To help mitigate any potential future queries on 'body impressions' forming, it is a good idea to talk about this during your demonstration to manage your customers' expectations on what to expect of their new mattress.
- Getting used to a new bed. It will take a while to adjust to sleeping on a new surface, so don't worry if the new bed doesn't immediately meet your customers' expectations. Give it time – it could take a few weeks.
- Use a washable mattress and pillow protector to prolong the life of the mattress and pillow.

[Read more about bed care](#)

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS






# FAQs

We list some common questions that consumers ask about their bed purchases on our Bed Advice UK website.

We've suggested appropriate answers which will help you, but you may wish to prepare your own answers.



Read the  
FAQs

# A - Z GLOSSARY OF TERMS

# *A - Z Glossary*

There are a lot of confusing terms and jargon used in every industry and the bed sector is no different.

Quickly get up to speed with our handy A-Z guide of some of the words you'll need to know to make you sound like a bed expert.



# ARE YOU UP TO THE CHALLENGE?

[Please click here to test your new-found knowledge](#)

# That's all folks!

We hope you found this presentation useful and it has given you a better understanding of the 'wonderful world of beds'.

[Please click here to complete our short feedback survey](#)  
[and receive your certificate](#)

If you have any further questions that you'd like to ask us, please email [info@bedfed.org.uk](mailto:info@bedfed.org.uk)