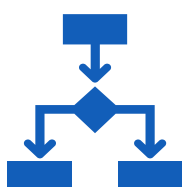


Quality Improvement

Process Mapping

Processes within healthcare have evolved over many years and through many organisational changes, meaning there are often many layers to pathways and complicated systems that have built up over time.



A good way to review systems and/or pathways to understand where improvements are needed is to **work with frontline teams to process map**. This is a simple exercise which facilitates a positive and powerful opportunity to create a **culture of ownership** within the multidisciplinary team to focus on areas for improvement.

A process map is a visual way of representing and understanding a step by step picture of processes, either one aspect or a whole patient pathway. It helps staff to understand the way the system works and review each step of the process to understand those adding value and those that do not currently work well for service users or staff.

As a team, process mapping can support open communication and consideration of all improvement areas, engaging representatives from different parts of the system to consider all interdependencies across the system. This can be a positive strategy for engaging stakeholders, all members of the multidisciplinary team and those resistant to considering new ways of working.



It also provides a measurable baseline on 'where are we now'.

When does it work best?

- Map the process first to make sure that **everyone involved agrees each step** of the process. Avoid focusing on the challenges and solving them before your process map is complete.
- Sessions **facilitated by someone outside the immediate team** can allow all members to participate fully in the mapping exercise, and provide an opportunity for someone who is removed from the process to ask challenging and clarifying questions.
- **Having a large wall space!** If you are mapping the process by hand you will need a long stretch of wall to put up a continuous piece of paper, to identify each step with lots of coloured post-its and flip chart paper and markers to capture comments along the way.
- If mapping electronically during session it is essential that **the team can see** the process as you map; consider using a projector and a confident typist to keep up!
- Put down **all steps** of the process, the map will only be useful to the team if it is an **honest illustration of the system**. The map should show how things are and what happens now, rather than what should happen. Only when you see the current state, warts and all, can you work with staff to make improvements.

- Have **the right people in the room**—it is essential to have representatives from all aspects of the process involved in this mapping activity; **everyone's input is needed to fully understand each step**. This supports highlighting areas where there is variation in understanding the process and capturing if there is duplication of tasks/roles.
- Undertaking this activity close to the environment where the process happens allows the team to 'walk' the process if required to gain further insight or clarity of understanding

Mapping—How You Do It

- The map must have a title, date, and colour key. You can use different colour 'post it' notes, pens or coloured boxes along the process to mark details e.g. **Process Step Issue / Problem Ideas/Suggestions**
- Discuss the key players in the process, write them individually on a post it note and place them on the very left hand side of your process map back drop. This allows you to map when in the process there are transition points between departments/services/ professionals
- Use different shaped boxes or notes to mark decision points along the process, including points of entering or exiting the process
- Consider rating the steps with dots to show large, medium or small value to the patient
- Define the start and end points preferable head of time—not too big a chunk, other processes may be identified and can be parked and dealt with later
- Include time frames on stages in the process if possible
- It is useful to have flip chart/magic white board for ideas, discussion points and 'parking' ideas



Next Steps

Once the map is completed:

1. Identify areas that do not add value and consider removing them
2. Identify bottlenecks, constraints, waste or duplication— understand how you can deal with them
3. Identify and understand variations in clinical practice—how can this be standardised?
4. Identify areas/opportunities for improvement—generate ideas for improvement
5. Using all the above 4 points, talk through the ideas and identify the ones that will convert into actions. Organise/prioritise them within your project and develop an action plan to test them using PDSA Cycle as part of you're an improvement framework.
6. Use what you learn from the current state map to develop your 'future state map'