

LEARNING HANDBOOK

Guidance and tools to support systematic learning before, during and after project activity in health and care

Knowledge café

A knowledge café (also commonly referred to as a world café) is a method of sharing knowledge and experiences surrounding a specific topic. It is a useful method to connect people that may not usually meet and to generate new thinking and ideas by sharing lessons learned across teams, departments, organisations and even sectors.

Tool	Time	Resources	Physicality	Interactivity
Knowledge café	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★★★

When?

A knowledge café can be used at any point in the learning process, however it is likely to be most useful before the start of a project, to help inform its direction and pace.

Who?

All members of a team should be involved and should be encouraged to share all relevant experience. It is essential that all experiences are heard, discussed and noted to ensure full understanding of previous learning.

A facilitator is required to introduce the task and assist participants.

How?

The overall time required for the session is around two to three hours – this time will allow you to include an introductory presentation beforehand and a [closing circle](#) afterwards if desired.

A knowledge café can be carried out in a number of different ways, but the format should focus on structured casual conversation.

The session requires a facilitator to pose the questions to the group. Typically the facilitator will also monitor the time and ensure the session runs smoothly, although someone else could take responsibility for this so that the facilitator focuses entirely on the group discussion.

Depending on the number of people taking part, the facilitator may prefer to split them into smaller groups of four to six people. This makes a discussion more manageable within the time.

The facilitator will pose the first question and each group will have a set amount of time to discuss their relevant experience and knowledge – say 15 minutes as a guide.

Once the time is up people are asked to switch groups and sit with new people. The discussion begins again for a set period of time, tackling the same question. Being with new people encourages new insight to emerge.

This is repeated between three and four times usually, with a knowledge café lasting around 45 to 60 minutes.

It is advised that no more than one to two questions be tackled in any one session, as it can become tiring for participants.

There is no formal process of capturing the conversations of a knowledge café however participants can take notes as they please. If you need to capture the knowledge centrally consider allocating a note-taker to each group and collating all notes afterwards.

It might also be beneficial to take part in a [closing circle](#) where everyone comes back together into one large group to discuss the things they've learned from the knowledge café.

Things you need:

- A facilitator
- A space large enough for the group to break off into smaller groups of four to six
- Enough tables and chairs for participants to hold conversations in comfort
- A stopwatch

Further reading:

- Gurteen Knowledge Community – [How to run a knowledge café](#)
- David Gurteen and Dan Remenyi – [Introduction to the knowledge café](#)