

Online library of Quality,
Service Improvement
and Redesign tools

Role redesign



Role redesign

What is it?

Role redesign is a workforce improvement tool that can help you improve patient services, tackle staff shortages and increase job satisfaction through the development of new and amended roles. Optimising roles along an agreed pathway of care leads to significant improvements for staff and patients, improving patient experience and reducing delays within systems.

By challenging and changing the set patterns of working, role redesign can benefit entire healthcare teams, from support workers to the medical workforce. There are many examples from within the NHS of how role redesign has improved the flow of the patient journey and the quality of care that is provided.

When to use it

If you answer no to any of the following questions, role redesign may be able to help you make improvements to your service or department. Do you feel:

- your team members fully use all their training and skills?
- your team gives enough time to patient care?
- there are enough staff to provide safe, timely and effective care?
- roles are designed around patient needs?
- you and your colleagues use all the technology available to support service delivery?

How to use it

When you implement role redesign, it may not be necessary to create entirely new roles. Instead, you could extend an existing role so it has the capability to undertake an identified task.

You can apply role redesign to a variety of service problems. For example, where there is variation in capacity caused by skills shortages or problems recruiting appropriately skilled staff. Examples from emergency services, primary care, intermediate care, mental health and acute services demonstrate that role redesign helps to ensure staff with the right skills are in the right place, at the right time to deliver high quality care.

There are three main categories of role redesign, which all make a significant difference to patients and staff:

- Administrative and clerical roles – extending these roles can release clinical staff from administrative duties.
- Assistant practitioners – healthcare workers with a level of knowledge and skill beyond that of the traditional healthcare assistant or support worker. They deliver care and undertake tasks that were previously within the remit of registered professional staff.

- Advanced practitioners – experienced clinical professionals who have developed their theoretical knowledge and skills to a very high standard. They can make decisions about care and often have their own caseload. They carry out tasks that would previously have been performed by another professional. For example, nurses and allied health professionals undertaking tasks previously assigned to doctors.

Significant role redesign is a long term activity. It takes time to fully implement roles that require training or re-training. It is important not to assume that someone taking on a new role will immediately be working at the same capacity as those who have traditionally carried out the role. You will need the support of your human resources team, so make sure you engage them early in the process.

Introduce redesigned roles to address specific issues along the patient pathway where role redesign is the best solution to the issue. It is very important to explicitly consider what other solutions there may be. It is also critical that the effectiveness of the redesigned roles are continually monitored. It is easy for those who take up extended roles to feel unsupported and not use some of the new skills they may have developed.

1. Identify and define the service problem or constraint that can be solved by introducing a new role or amending a current role. Ensure that other potential solutions are considered and why role redesign is the best option.
2. Assess the workforce: identify who does what in the current process.
3. Agree opportunities for new or redesigned roles that could be developed with additional skills or training.
4. Define protocols and guidelines that will allow a wider range of professionals with the appropriate skills to provide the appropriate care.
5. Agree a training and development plan.
6. Develop a business case and understand how the new ways of working can be sustained in the longer term.
7. Agree an action plan for initial testing of the new roles and then more widespread implementation.
8. Undertake a recruitment process into new role.