

Online library of Quality,
Service Improvement
and Redesign tools

Mapping the process



Mapping the process

Process mapping techniques can be used to create a visual representation of the patient's journey. Using process mapping tools enables everyone involved in the different steps of the journey to see the overall picture of patient care and understand how complicated the journey can be for patients.

It also indicates how well the processes of care are working – giving people the opportunity to reflect on the way they work, diagnose any problems in the pathway and identify areas for improvement. Process mapping also promotes ownership of the steps in the patient journey, creates team building and helps to increase staff involvement in design and redesign of the processes involved.

These mapping tools can help you to identify points of inefficiency and duplication, highlighting any bottlenecks or constraints that slow down the flow of the patient journey. It also identifies the unhelpful variation in patient journeys that you need to minimise.

When to use it

No healthcare worker can know all the processes and people involved in a patient journey. If you want to give staff a broader perspective on what is happening (rather than what they think is happening) throughout the patient journey, the tools in this section will help.

It is important to map the journey and use the insight gained to test out service changes. Changes are often made based on assumptions and gut reaction rather than fact.

Process mapping is not just for service providers to use: commissioners can use process mapping to support all redesign work and enable high quality commissioning.

How to use it

Mapping processes is a very empowering tool when it is undertaken by the staff who work the processes – the people who really know how things work. The approach prompts good ideas and exposes frustrating problems. This helps teams to know where to start to make improvements that will have the biggest impact for patients, carers and staff.

There are different approaches to mapping patient journeys. Which one you select will depend on:

- What you need to know
- Resources and timescales
- Engagement and capacity of staff.

Each approach gives you a slightly different perspective and you can use more than one approach to help confirm findings. The key is to reflect on how things are currently and then decide what the ideal journey should look like. All approaches will reveal:

- Unnecessary steps, handovers and delays
- Waste, such as duplication of effort
- Things that don't add value in the patient journey
- Bottlenecks and constraints
- Unhelpful variation in clinical and non clinical practice
- Potential for creating safer care
- Understanding of the patient experience
- Where to undertake further analysis, eg understand **demand and capacity** and the flow through particular parts of the journey.

The potential approaches include:

- **Conventional process mapping**
- **Value stream mapping**
- **Spaghetti diagram**
- **Mapping the last 10 patients**
- **Process templates**
- **Tracer study**
- **6S**