



Improvement Cymru Academy Toolkit Guide



Involving Others

Introduction

The core values of NHS Wales place the importance of working in partnership at the heart of its service to ensure high standards of care (1) (please see [Co-Production Toolkit Guide](#)). All quality improvement projects require the involvement of various people at every stage to ensure the project's success. Stakeholders are anyone affected by or with an interest in your project aim and outcome; this could be people within your team, from inside or outside of your organisation and patients, but it is unrealistic to involve everyone. This toolkit guide describes how to identify your key stakeholders, when to involve them, and ensure their motivation and engagement throughout your project to improve your outcomes. In addition to the involvement of stakeholders, each improvement project needs the active engagement of a project team to carry out the project, effectively collaborate and drive the improvement.



Rationale

Involving others maximises the chance of successful implementation of your improvement project. You need your whole team to work collaboratively and cohesively from the start of your project to identify an area for improvement, agree a potential solution to a problem, implement a change and to see whether a change has led to an improvement, and if so, to sustain that improvement. Collaborative working ensures a diverse range of ideas are considered and represented, encourages ownership and commitment to the process and it can also improve cooperation, trust and communication within your team.

Background

In the 1960s the Stanford Research Institute first discussed stakeholders in relation to strategic management. In 1984, Freeman's stakeholder theory (2) emerged which represented a shift in priorities from maximising the value/profit for shareholders towards creating value for a broader range of involved parties who all influenced and are impacted by the business i.e. stakeholders such as staff, customers, service users etc. Translating this to healthcare, the interests of all affected by or involved in healthcare-related decisions and improvement is considered crucial to ensure continuous improvements in care and services you provide.

When to use

It's crucial to identify your project team, (who will carry out the improvement), and the key stakeholders (who will be involved in and/or impacted by the improvement), from the very beginning of your project. Involving others should be an ongoing process, but the most significant stages of the project to engage others are (3):

- **when you start out** to engage key people
- **when scoping the current state** to understand where you are now (please see [Fishbone Diagram Toolkit Guide](#)).
- **when measuring/understanding your problem** to identify root cause (please see toolkit guide on [Family of Measures](#)).
- **when planning your change/improvement** to agree responsibility and involvement (please see toolkit guide on [Model for Improvement](#)).
- **during your pilot stage** to implement, test and assess impact.
- **at the end of your project** to evaluate and communicate the outcome and sustain the change



How to use

Some useful questions to ask yourself are who are your stakeholders and your project team? How do you identify them? What relationships do you need to build and foster? How and when do you do that? There are some tools that can be applied which will now be discussed.

Project team: A project team carry out the improvement and work together to achieve the goal. Involvement of the team enables you to consider the different perspectives of your problem, based on the knowledge, experiences and job roles within the team. A team that supports the project’s vision is more likely to result in successful improvement.

Deciding on your project team will have a huge impact on the outcome of your improvement project so it’s important to start off by identifying exactly who will be in your project team. Typically, they are people within your team, along with key members of the organisation who are directly involved in the process you are focussing on.

Project team analysis example

Stakeholder group or individual	Supportive of change? +ve or -ve	Reason for resisting change	Strategy for dealing with resistance	Power and interest management	Action needed
Senior Manager	Yes	No resistance	NA	Line manager, improvement knowledge	Ongoing support. Support with QI knowledge
Senior Manager	Yes	No resistance	NA	Wishing to increase engagement for learners to join the course.	Lead, will report to and gain feedback about progress, next steps and Academy course future intake.
Lead	Yes	No resistance	NA	Supports intake and service users accessibility	To liaise and feedback results during PDSA cycles
Admin Support	Yes	No resistance	NA	Admin support access to course bookings	Supporting the work ahead

Senior manager/Sponsor support: Every improvement project requires a sponsor who provides senior support to facilitate success and is a key stakeholder. Sponsors are people with high-level responsibilities within your organisation and have the important role of ensuring the project is in line with the needs of the organisation

and to agree the focus of the project from the outset (4). An improvement project sponsor is typically a senior manager, they tend to be the connection between the owner of the improvement project and the senior leadership team but also encourage, support and enable the project team.

On a practical level, the quality improvement sponsor will support with setting up the team at the start of the project and will look at progress reports with the project lead. They arrange meetings with the project leads at a given time, e.g. once per month and can be champions of the improvement project that encourages staff engagement. They truly are allies with the project lead, helping unblock any potential barriers (5) and provide motivation.

Who are your stakeholders? A stakeholder is an employee, customer or supplier that will play a role or have an impact on your improvement project. Some have interest or influence in the field where your problem lies, others have interest or influence in your solution. They can be inside or outside of your organisation and can have a positive influence on your project based on their decisions or experiences.

Your stakeholders can include:

- **Customers/service users**
- **Project managers**
- **Project team members**
- **Project sponsors**
- **Executives**
- **Resource managers**
- **External agencies, for example Welsh Government**
- **Communications team**
- **Contractors**
- **Owners**
- **Service users/patients**

Relationships with stakeholders: With any improvement project, relationships play a pivotal role and can determine the success of your project. Key stakeholders will have the most influence and authority to support a project and influence success. It's important to keep good communication with all your stakeholders, this includes, deadlines, timelines, offer support or actively listening to a concern. Different stakeholders will require a different relationship. Please see [Co-Production Toolkit Guide](#) for further information on involving others in change.

Identifying and managing your stakeholders: The stakeholder matrix below refers to the 6 C's:

- **Commissioners** assess needs and prioritise planning of the project.
- **Customers** can be the reason you are conducting your improvement project. They are your patients, service users or can even be yourselves.
- **Collaborators** are individuals or groups that you work with to achieve your aim.
- **Contributors** can be individuals linked to your improvement project or work outside of your department or organisation but are beneficial to the outcome.
- **Channels** are the ways in which you choose to communicate with your stakeholders.
- **Commentators** are the views about the organisation based on the opinions of the customer.

NB To ensure patient-centred care, it is important to gain patient perspectives and involvement on any improvements or changes you make. You should seek guidance from your local governance department before consulting with patients, to ensure their confidentiality is maintained and to agree whether there are any specific ethical considerations in relation to your project.

Stakeholder matrix

This framework can be used for mapping and prioritising your stakeholders, this helps you to consider their level of influence and interest in your project and is also useful in planning and managing your communications with them:



What next?

Identify and prioritise your stakeholders then before you implement any changes, think about how these stakeholders might support or restrict your project. Consider their attitude, their reason for this perspective and how you might go about addressing any resistance to change to maximize effective engagement and co-production. A stakeholder analysis template can help you do this; a worked example is shown below.

Stakeholder analysis example

Name/ Function	Supportive of change -ve +ve	Reason for resisting change	Strategy for dealing with resistance	Action needed
Medical Records/ Clinic Prep	-ve	Additional Workload	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Enlist support of the Medical Records Manager2. Training of medical records staff as to the reason for additional workload3. Audit of additional workload implications from piloting new process4. Pilot new process	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Meeting with MR Manager2. Training sessions to be set up3. Data collection tool to be used to quantify time requirements4. Pilot period agreed

Reference: Improvement Cymru Academy: Improvement in Practice Workbook

A stakeholder analysis template such as this can be found at the end of this toolkit for your use.

Helpful tips

- Identify your project team and your stakeholders early on
- Ensure your project engages with and meets the needs of the stakeholders
- Always communicate what is happening within your improvement project to secure good working relationships
- Create ownership and accountability for the stakeholders throughout the project to create sustainability within your project

Additional resources

If you are interested in learning more about how improvement practices can benefit your workplace, we offer a range of training courses. Visit [Improvement Cymru Academy website](#) for more information or email us improvementcymruacademy@wales.nhs.uk to find about the improvement courses we offer.

Further reading

1. NHS Wales. Values and Standards of Behaviour Framework [Internet]. NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership. 2024. Available from: <https://nwssp.nhs.wales/a-wp/governance-e-manual/living-public-service-values/values-and-standards-of-behaviour-framework/>
2. Freeman RE. Stakeholder Theory. Cambridge University Press; 1984.
3. NHS England. Engaging, Involving and Understanding Others' Perspectives the Organising for Quality and Value: Delivering Improvement Programme [Internet]. 2019. Available from: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/improvement-hub/wp-content/uploads/sites/44/2018/06/Engaging-Involving-Understanding-Others-Perspectives.pdf>
4. Holloway J, Bryde D, Joby R. A practical guide to dealing with difficult stakeholders. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge; 2016.
5. Langley GJ, Moen RD, Nolan KM, Nolan TW, Norman CL, Provost LP. The Improvement Guide. John Wiley & Sons; 2009.



Stakeholder analysis template

Name/Function	Supportive of change -ve +ve	Reason for resisting change	Strategy for dealing with resistance	Action needed