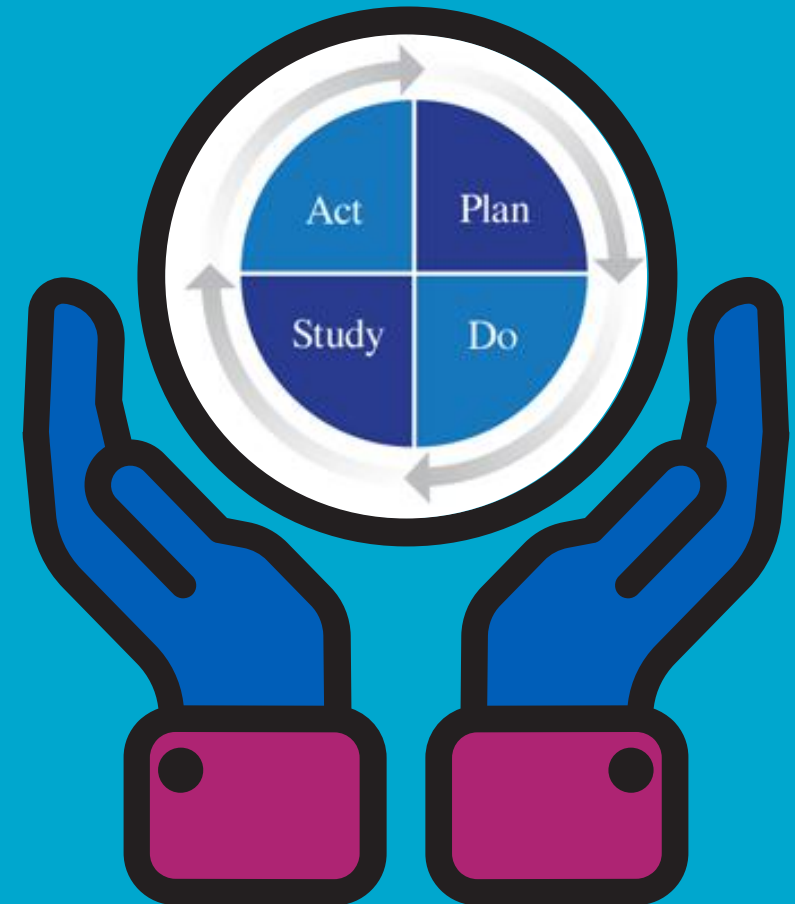


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# Quality Improvement

Workshop 5: Practical Introduction to Quality Improvement Projects

Presented by NHS Elect



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# Introductions



**Karleen Huggins**

NHS Elect QI fellow &  
LAS Senior Improvement Advisor

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# Introduction and Context

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# Today's Learning Outcomes

- Define Quality Improvement
  - Understanding of A3 thinking as a structured approach to problem-solving
  - Use a Fishbone diagram to identify and categorise causes of a problem
  - Identify practical improvement ideas (countermeasures) relevant to General Practice
  - Explain the PDSA cycle and its role in testing change
  - Provided with examples of QI Projects
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***What is Quality Improvement ?***



# Quality Improvement is....

Quality improvement is giving the people closest to the issues, the permission, skills and resources they need to solve them.

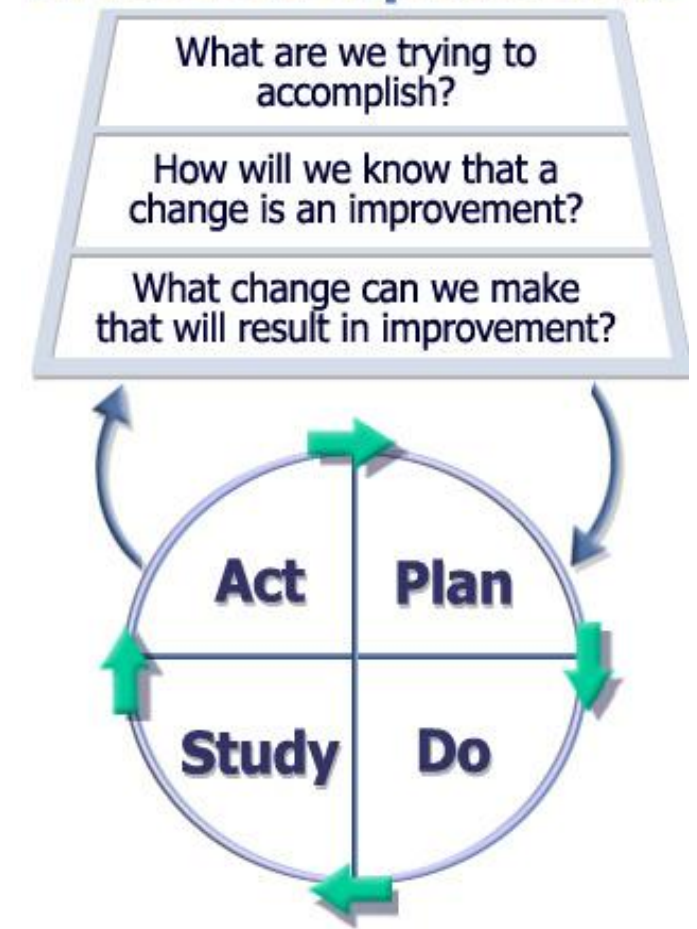
It involves a **systematic and coordinated** approach to solving a problem using **specific methods and tools** with the aim of bringing about a measurable improvement.

# Model for Improvement

3 Core Questions:

- **What are we trying to accomplish?**  
Define a clear, measurable aim aligned with organisational priorities.
- **How will we know a change is an improvement?**  
Identify specific measures to track progress and impact.
- **What changes can we make that will result in improvement?**  
Generate and prioritise ideas based on evidence, experience, and frontline insight.

## Model for Improvement



# Discussion

What frustrates you most in daily practice?

5 mins



# How to approach change

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# What is A3 Thinking?

## Structured Problem Solving

A3 Thinking is a Lean-based method that structures problem solving onto one concise page.

## Root Cause Analysis

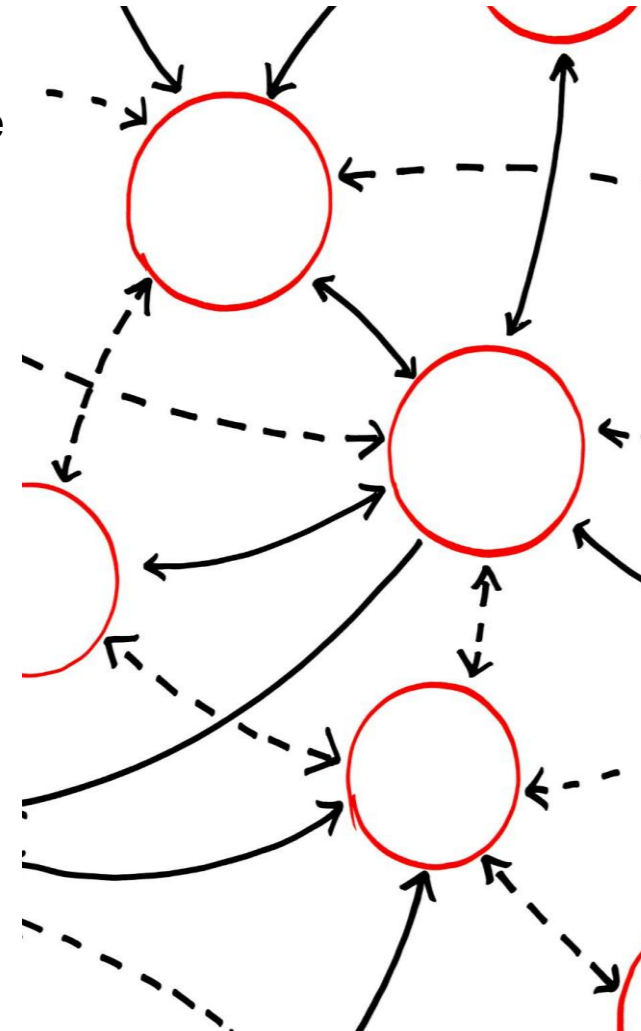
It emphasises defining problems clearly and identifying root causes before implementing solutions.

## Visual Communication

Summarises complex data and aligns teams quickly using clear visual formats on a single page.

## Accountability and Collaboration

Promotes ownership and teamwork to continuously improve patient care and operational efficiency.



# The A3 Framework and Key Steps

## Problem Definition

Define a clear, specific, and measurable problem statement highlighting its impact on patients and staff.

## Current State Analysis

Gather data and map existing processes to understand how the system currently operates effectively.

## Root Cause Analysis

Use tools like 5 Whys or fishbone diagrams to identify underlying causes beyond superficial symptoms.

## Vision / Goal Statement

Develop specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound goals and identify solutions to test.

## The A3

Title of Improvement Project:

Step 1: Problem statement

Step 4: Root Cause Analysis

Step 6: Actions

Step 2: Current Situation

Step 7: Progress & Benefits

Step 5: Countermeasures

Step 3: Vision / Goal

Step 8: Insight

# The A3 Framework and Key Steps

## Idea Generation / Countermeasures

Investigate potential countermeasures to address or mitigate the challenges / barriers connected to the root cause

This is also the opportunity to identify stakeholders

## Implementation

Select the ideas to take forward and identify the next steps

## Progress Tracking and Reflections

This allows teams to monitor outcomes and capture learning

### The A3

Title of Improvement Project:

Step 1: Problem statement

Step 4: Root Cause Analysis

Step 6: Actions

Step 2: Current Situation

Step 7: Progress & Benefits

Step 5: Countermeasures

Step 3: Vision / Goal

Step 8: Insight

# Workshop Purpose and relevance for GPs

## Challenges in General Practice

GPs face rising demand, complex patients, workforce pressure, and expectations for better quality and safety.

## A3 Thinking Framework

A3 Thinking offers a structured, evidence-based approach to understand problems deeply before action.

## Improved Team Communication

A3's one-page format enhances clarity and alignment across multidisciplinary healthcare teams.

## Proactive Quality Improvement

A3 supports shifting from reactive fixes to proactive, data-driven improvements for sustainable change





# Applying Improvement Tools

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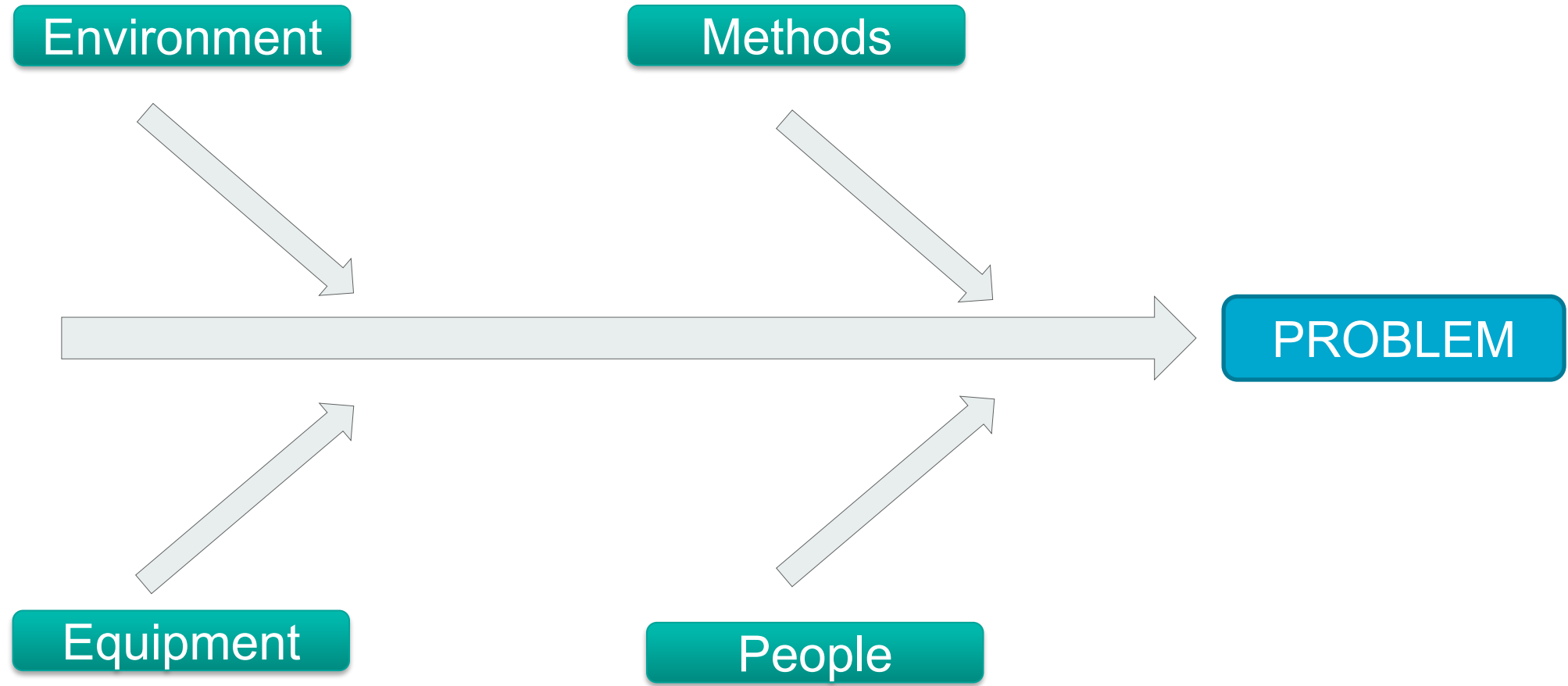
# Fishbone diagram – What it is

## What is it?

The Fishbone Diagram is used to create a visual of all potential factors that contributes to an issue or problem.

## How to do it?

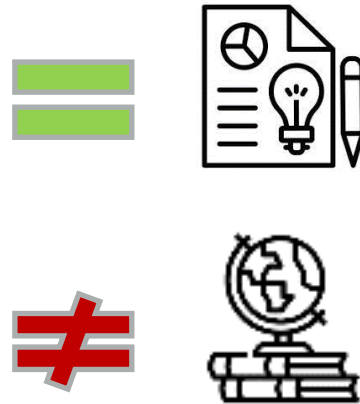
1. Identify the main issue
2. Identify major factors
3. Consider all the causes that contribute to the major factors
4. Collect ideas for possible solutions



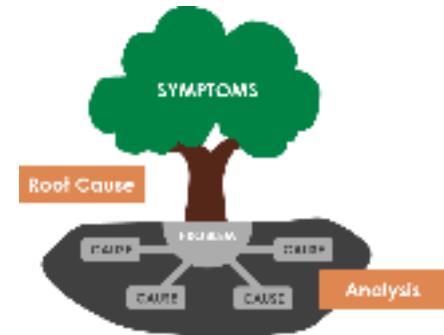
# Reasons to use a fishbone diagram



- Understand fully
- Variety of possible causes



- ✓ Content of causes as they are now
- ✗ Not history of causes



- True root causes
- Not symptoms

# Group activity

Consider a frustration from earlier:

Identify causes using a Fishbone

15 mins



# SMART Aims in General Practice

## Definition of SMART Aims

SMART aims are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound objectives guiding improvement projects.

## Benefits of SMART Aim

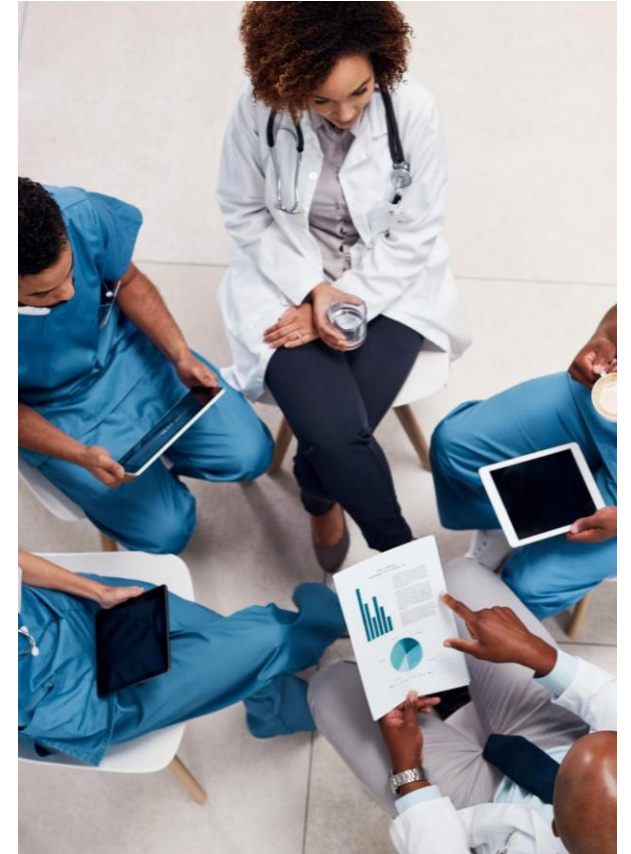
SMART aims help general practice focus efforts amid competing priorities and limited resources effectively.

## Realistic and Aligned Goals

Aims must be realistic, aligned with patient outcomes and organizational priorities for sustainable improvement.

## Avoiding Embedded Solutions

Focus SMART aims on outcomes, not solutions, to allow flexibility and explore alternative approaches.



# Setting an aim(goal)

- Developing a **SMART** aim

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**elevant
- **T**ime-bound

*What?*

*Where?*

*By When?*

*By How much?*

# Setting an aim (goal)

Reduce time taken to check in at the reception



**SMART**

Reducing time taken for **diabetic appointments** to complete the checking in process **by 50%** by **November 2026**

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# Idea Generation & Testing

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# Developing Countermeasures and Engaging Stakeholders

## Designing Effective Countermeasures

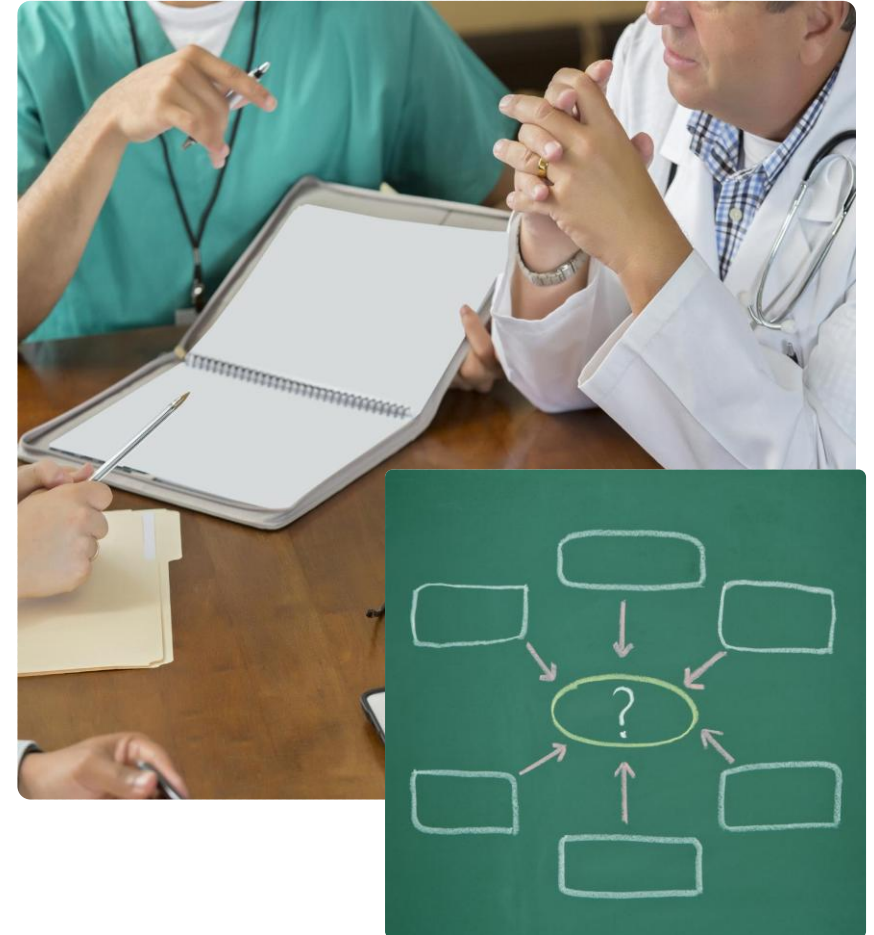
Countermeasures target root causes with practical, testable solutions aligned to resources and tested via PDSA cycles.

## Importance of Stakeholder Engagement

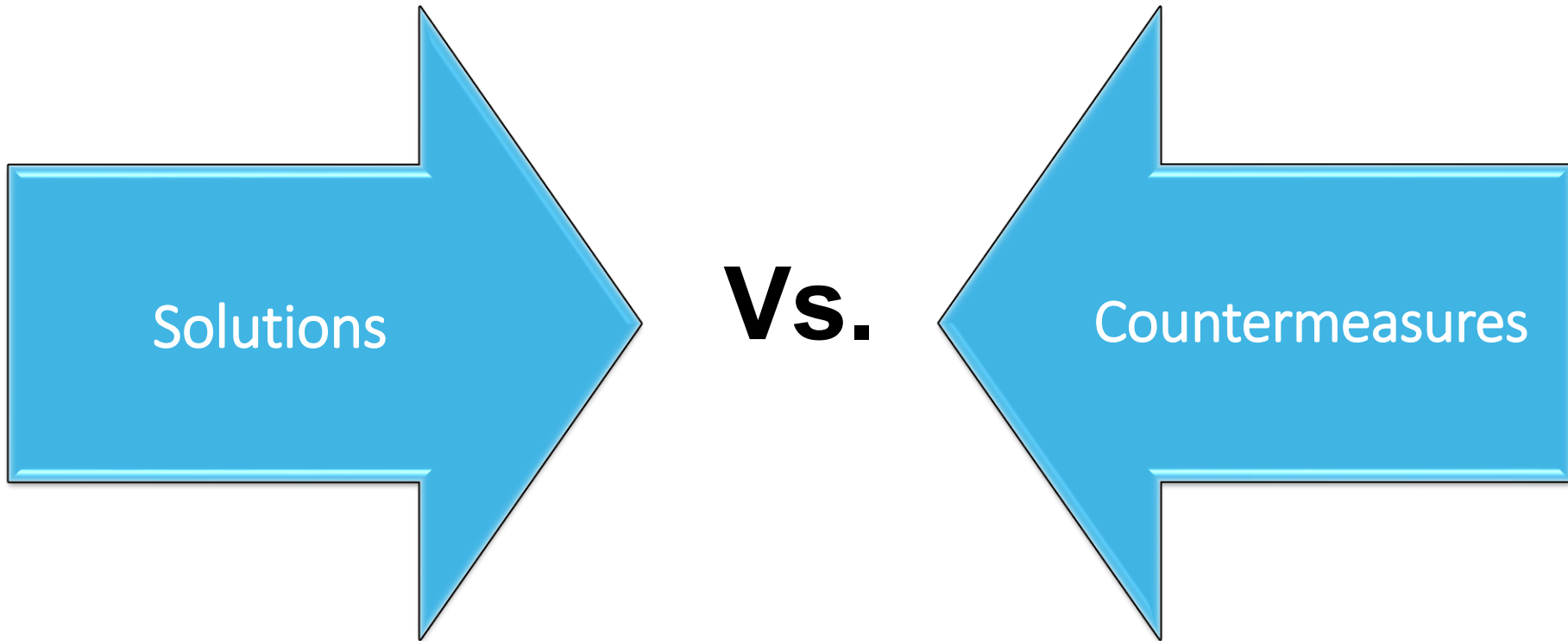
Engaging GPs, nurses, receptionists, and patients early promotes acceptance and reduces resistance to change.

## Communication for Successful Implementation

Clear communication helps stakeholders understand changes' benefits for both patients and staff, enhancing support.



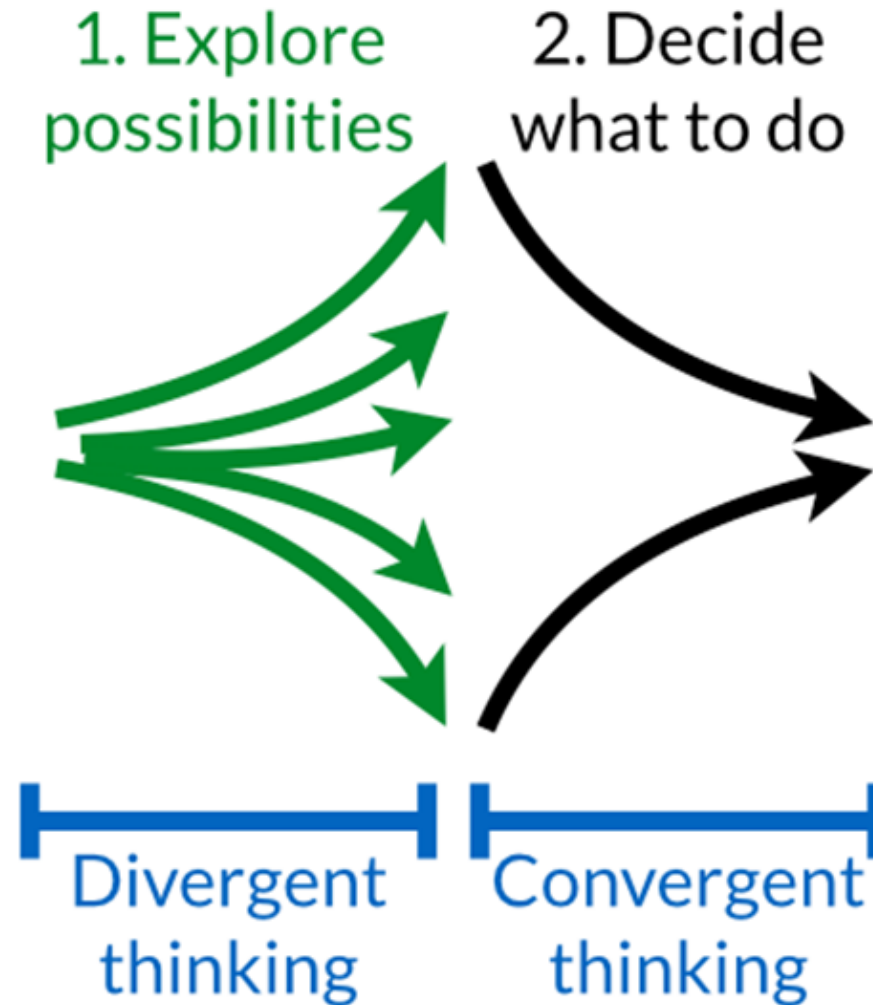
# Countermeasures



- Insinuates that you have found a permanent 'fix' to the complete problem
- Seen as the final decision

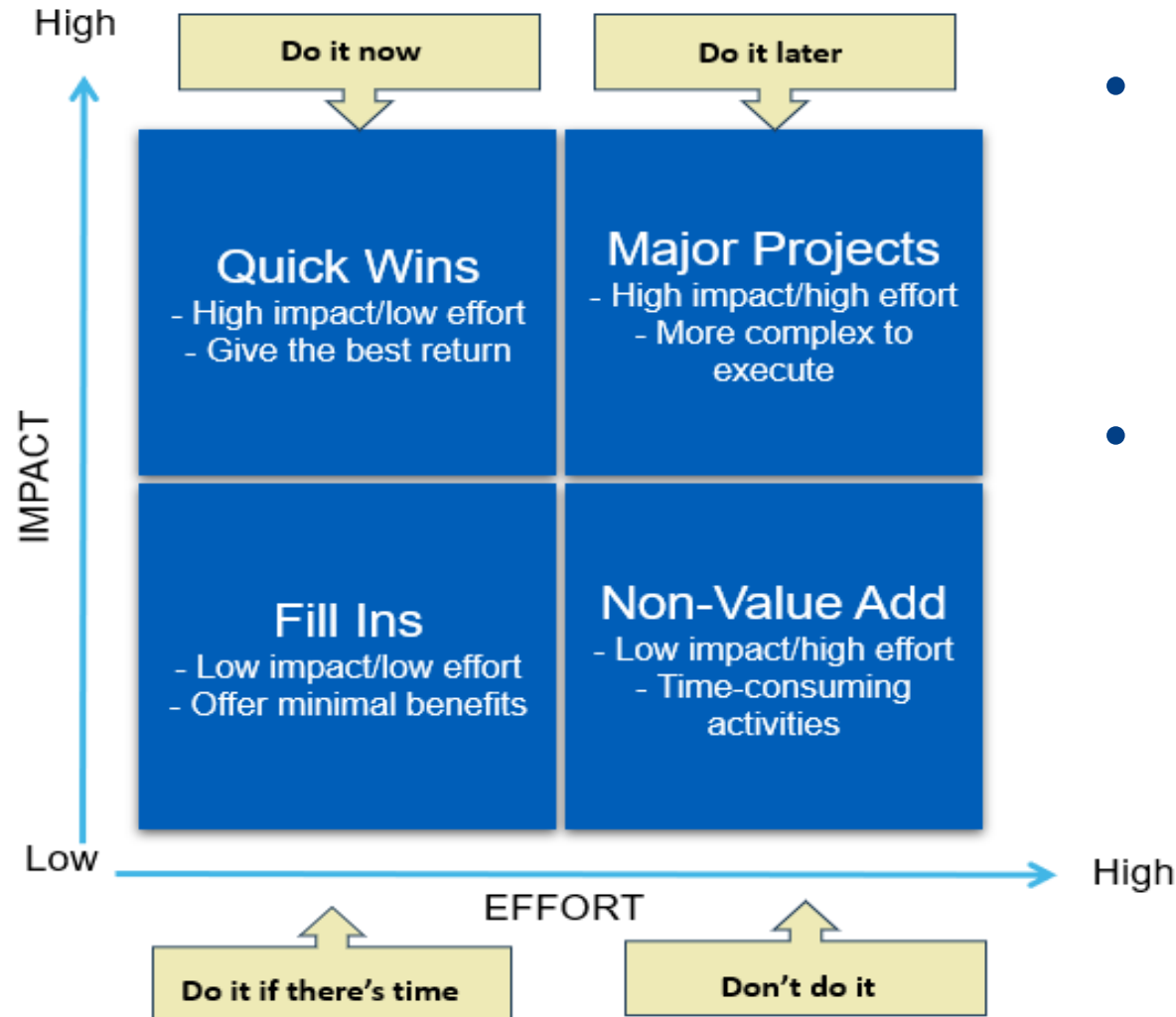
- May focus on an element of the problem, adapting as the understanding of the problem improves
- The countermeasures may evolve through continuous improvement

# Selecting which ideas to test



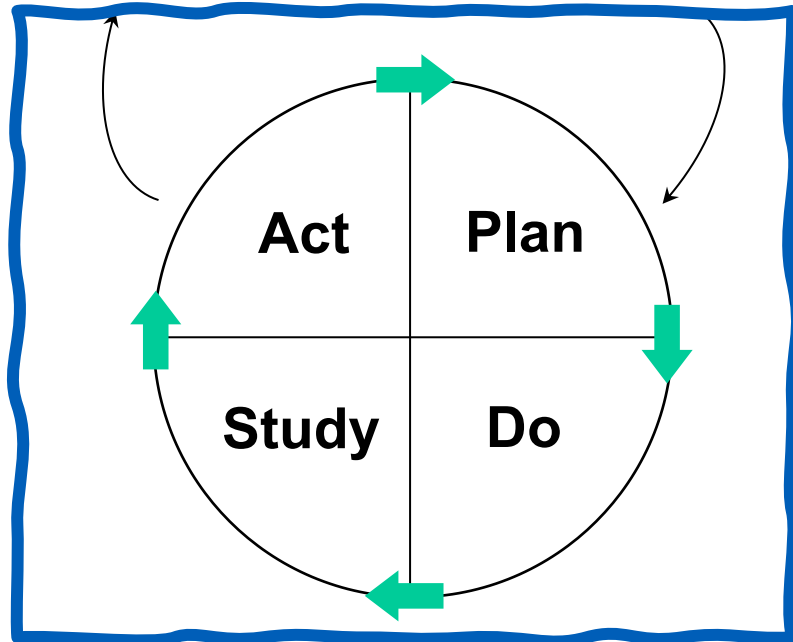
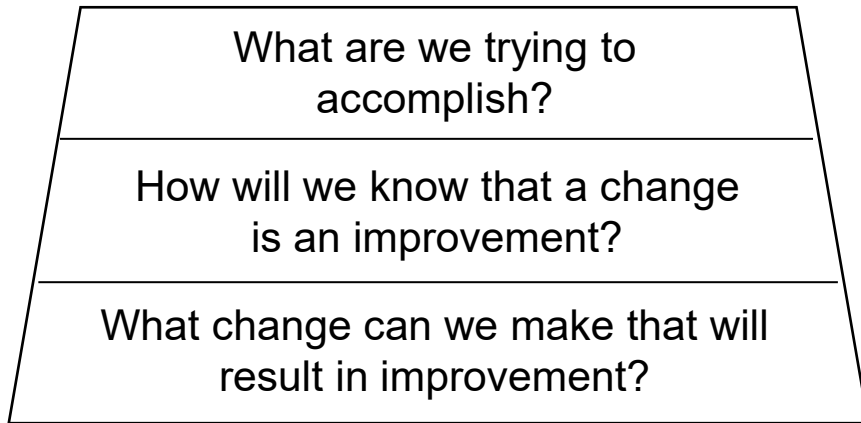
Adapted from NHS Elect training

# Benefits Matrix



- An impact analysis is a useful technique to prioritise a list of potential improvement ideas
- It helps to review a group of proposed experiments in terms of their impact and ease of implementation

# Model for Improvement – PDSA



## Plan the test

*Predict what you think will happen*

*Think 'Who?' 'What?' 'When?' 'Where?' 'What data'*

## Do the test

*Test it on a small (reversible) scale*

*Document problems and unexpected outcomes*

## Study the results

*Compare to your predictions*

*Plot on Run Chart as data over time when possible*

*Collect Feedback*

*Reflect on what was learned*

## Act on the results

*Adopt, Adapt, Abandon*

*Refine the change*

*Prepare for the next PDSA*

# Why test with a PDSA cycle?

A method for testing whether a change idea moves us closer to our aim



Learn and adapt



Increase degree of belief



Build common understanding



Contain risk



Reduce resistance



Variety of conditions

# Examples of QI Projects

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# But it doesn't end there....

## Do not forget to Track Actions, Outcomes and Learning

- **Defining Clear Actions**

- Teams assign responsibilities and timelines to ensure accountability and timely completion of improvement tasks.

- **Monitoring Outcomes**

- Regularly tracking metrics like wait times and satisfaction scores provides evidence of improvement impact.

- **Capturing Learning**

- Reflecting on results helps teams adapt approaches and build knowledge for future improvements





# Conclusion

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# Key Takeaways

## Start with Clear Problem

Define the problem clearly using data focused on patient impact to guide improvement efforts effectively.

## Identify Root Causes

Understand the current state and determine root causes to address underlying issues, not just symptoms.

## Use SMART Aims

Set SMART aims to provide clear, measurable goals that keep improvement efforts focused and trackable.

## Apply PDSA Cycles

Use Model for Improvement and PDSA cycles to test changes safely and learn iteratively, reducing risks.



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| TOTAL CLAIM  |
| LESS DEPOSIT |
| BALANCE DUE  |

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# Any questions?

Do you have any questions,  
comments or thoughts?



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# Thank you



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