

PRIORITISING KEY ISSUES

Diagnostics



Prioritising key issues

It is generally not possible to address all issues that are raised. Issues need to be prioritised so you can identify where you will be focusing your improvement strategies and precious resources to get maximum impact and results.

Diagnostics

The purpose of this phase is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current state from different perspectives. Once you know the issues you can prioritise them and establish the root causes, so you develop the right solutions.

Key points

1. Use a decision matrix

A matrix outlining the impact versus the ability to influence is a useful tool for prioritising issues. This rates each issue on its level of impact on the problem and how likely it is that improvement can be made. Consult with stakeholders and plot issues on the matrix according to agreed level. The issues rating higher impact and ease of influence are the priority for consideration to take forward.

2. Vote on issues

A good way to find out what issues stakeholders believe are important and to narrow down the options is to vote on it. Get people to nominate their top three priorities by sticking a dot to their choices. You can do this on an individual basis or in groups. Offer guidance on what people should consider, such as the biggest impact on patients, staff or service.

3. Apply the Pareto principle

The Pareto principle (also known as the 80/20 rule) helps identify the issues relating to your problem that have the biggest impact and should be prioritised. In this context, it would mean that 80% of the problem will be solved by addressing 20% of the issues. After voting is complete, plot the prioritised issues on the Pareto chart to determine which issues to focus on.

4. Lower priority issues

After prioritising you will have a group of issues that you are not taking forward. Decide what to do with these issues with your steering group/ sponsor. Some may be addressed as a side benefit of those you are taking forward, some may sit with other projects, or some may be put on hold. Clear communication to stakeholders about what is happening with these issues is important for transparency and engagement.

Considerations and tips

When the issues are piling up, it can often seem daunting, but prioritising according to stakeholders' knowledge, the impact and influence will keep you on track so you can target the most important issues.

Involve stakeholders

Stakeholders' opinions are a key factor to inform the prioritisation of issues. Ensure staff, patients and other consumers who are impacted have input into the issues which are important to them. This increases the chance of success and encourages buy-in and trust in the project.

Focus on accurate theming

It can be tempting to theme multiple issues into one large topic, e.g. communication. This makes it difficult to prioritise which part of the topic is central to the problem. Keep the issues as clear as possible to achieve successful prioritisation.

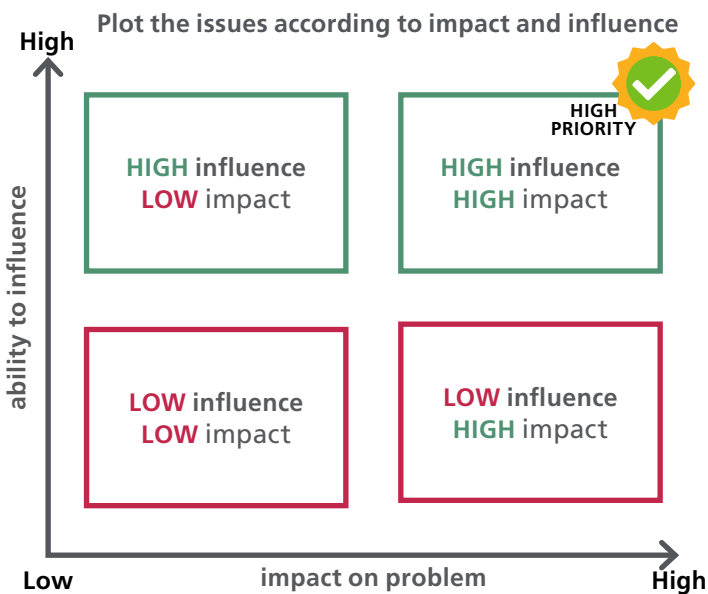
Look to the literature

It is likely that someone has already experienced the same issues in another service. Consult the literature or your professional networks to see if there are learnings from previous experience. This will also help to validate that you are taking the right issues forward.

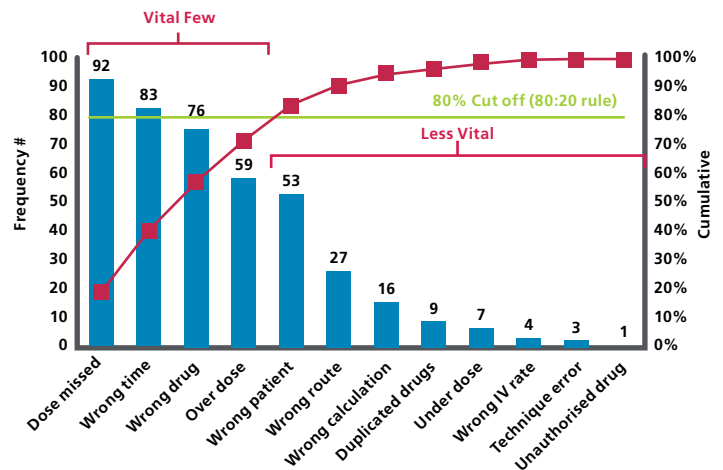
Keep the issues log

Even though you have prioritised and taken issues forward, don't discard the log you have developed over the course of the project. If you get to testing solutions and the problem is not reducing, you may need to come back and consider if you have missed addressing certain issues.

Matrix



Pareto chart



Further information

[My Health Learning Log in Form](#) – Redesign Diagnostics (202464432): Issues Prioritisation

Next steps

Once you know the key issues that are being taken forward, it's time to do a root cause analysis to find the true causes of those issues so they can be addressed effectively. Remember you need the right problem before you get the right solution.