

IMPROVEMENT PLAN

What is continuous improvement?

Continuous improvement is an ongoing effort to improve the quality of services and care delivered by a service.

Continuous improvement;

- Takes into account the needs of our client with the needs of our staff and may involve them in improved activities
- Looks at improvements in a systematic way to improve quality over time
- Ranges in scale from smaller groups to significant strategic initiatives.

What is the relationship between continuous improvement and quality assurance?

Quality assurance is about systems and processes that deliver a consistent quality of care and services. Continuous improvement moves beyond quality assurance to find ways of lifting the quality of services delivered.

What are the principles of continuous improvement?

Whatever approach is used the following framework helps to drive and support the process;

- Care recipient-focused
- Strategic planning and implementation
- Involvement of key stakeholders
- Innovation
- Regular monitoring and evaluation

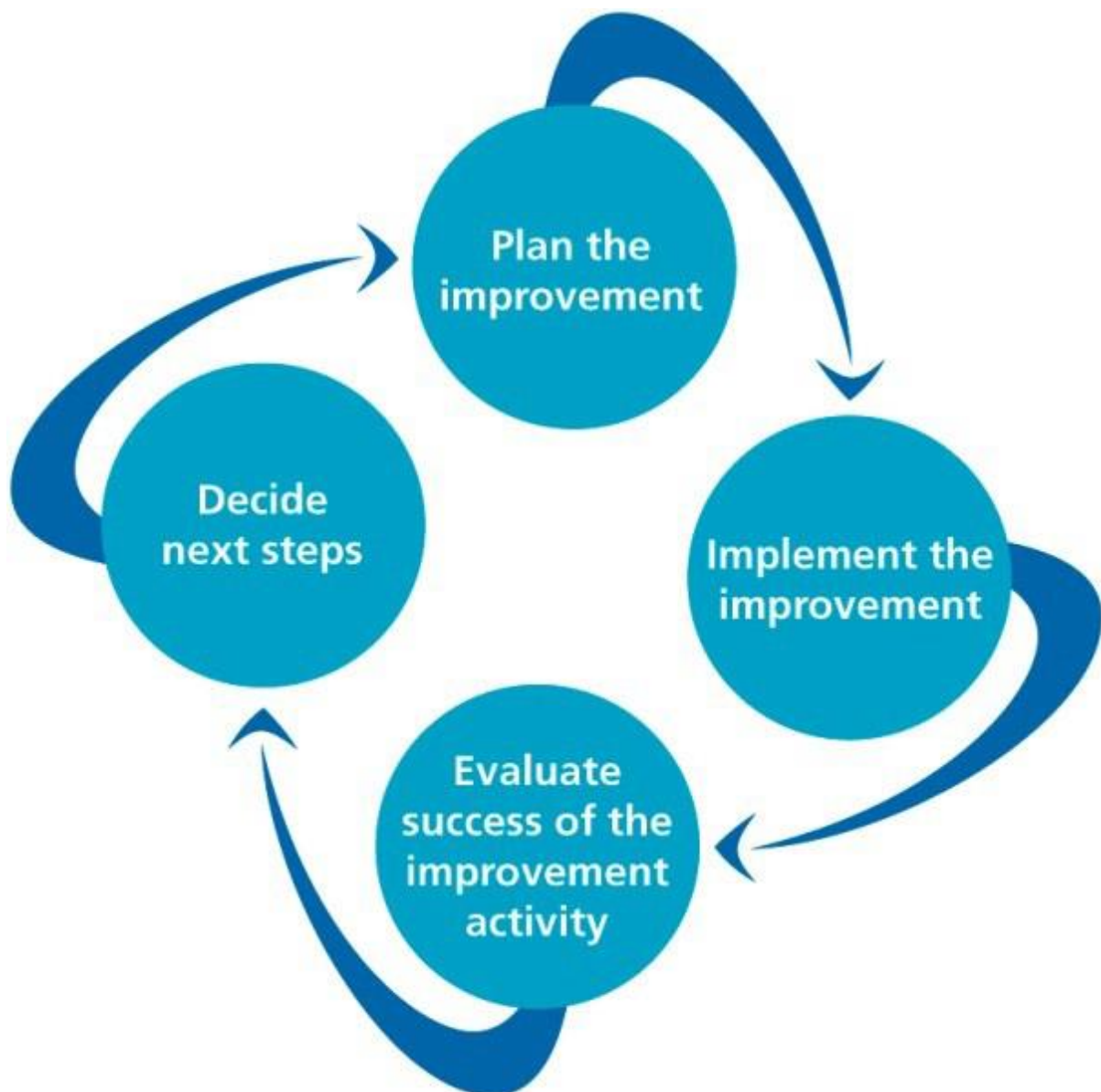
A culture of continuous improvement ensures a service is responsive to change and can continually develop a quality service that is of value to its care recipients.

A sound continuous improvement program can demonstrate;

- Baseline – the current situation the service is trying to change
- Planned improvements and the expected benefit to Clients
- Monitoring – systems to monitor a new process or activity during its implementation
- Evaluation – systems to monitor a process or activity once it has been implemented, which should help ensure its sustainability and capture the actual improvements.

Continuous improvement processes help services resolve problems and deliver high quality care and services to our Clients.

How can services implement improvements in a structured manner?



Plan the improvement

Continuous improvement means taking a systematic and planned approach to improving the quality of care and services including;

- Analysing complaints trends and themes
- Researching possible solutions at the service level
- Planning and prioritising improvement activities
- Listening to suggestions from care recipients, representatives and staff, and
- Monitoring and evaluating new solutions, processes and improvements.

Improvements that are made in response to problems (for example, malfunctions being corrected, broken supplies being replaced) are not planned continuous improvement.

Implement the improvement

Services should monitor new processes and activities to make sure the change is not causing problems. This will allow services to make modifications to an activity or process as required and ensure positive results for Clients.

Staff should be involved in the implementation, including through keeping them informed as appropriate. Staff should be supported through education and training, and updated information in policies and procedures.

Evaluate success of the improvement activity

Evaluating the effectiveness of a new activity or process is an important step. Ensure all components of the activity have been closed off, for instance, updating of any policies and procedures, and seeking care recipient and staff input.

Having a structured approach to the evaluation of continuous improvement can also provide guidance for future improvement activities.

Decide next steps

There are at least two possible situations in this step;

1. If the improvement activity has been successful you can close the loop, or
2. The improvement activity has been unsuccessful or partially successful and implementing, evaluating and deciding.

Why should services keep track of their improvement activities?

Keep track of improvement activities ensures a strategic approach to continuous improvement, including prioritisation of activities. It also allows services to reflect back on what worked well, and what didn't.

A plan for continuous improvement can be in the service's own format but should include clear information on;

- Issues identified
- The expected outcome/s to which it relates
- The planned action/s and
- Planned completion date