

Priority review: method and tools

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Outline of the priority review process

The tools that evolved as the core of the PMDU approach to priority reviews

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14-10-2016

Joint problem solving ‘priority reviews’

Key features of ‘priority reviews’

1. A partnership to engage departments and create commitment to action
2. Pace and urgency - a report in 6-12 weeks
3. Proven tools and methods
4. A strong team approach – mix of expertise and skill
5. Outside challenge to stress-test existing strategies
6. Sharply focussed on the key delivery issues
7. Fieldwork that tracks delivery down to the front line
8. Firmly rooted in evidence and data
9. Produces results through a prioritised action plan

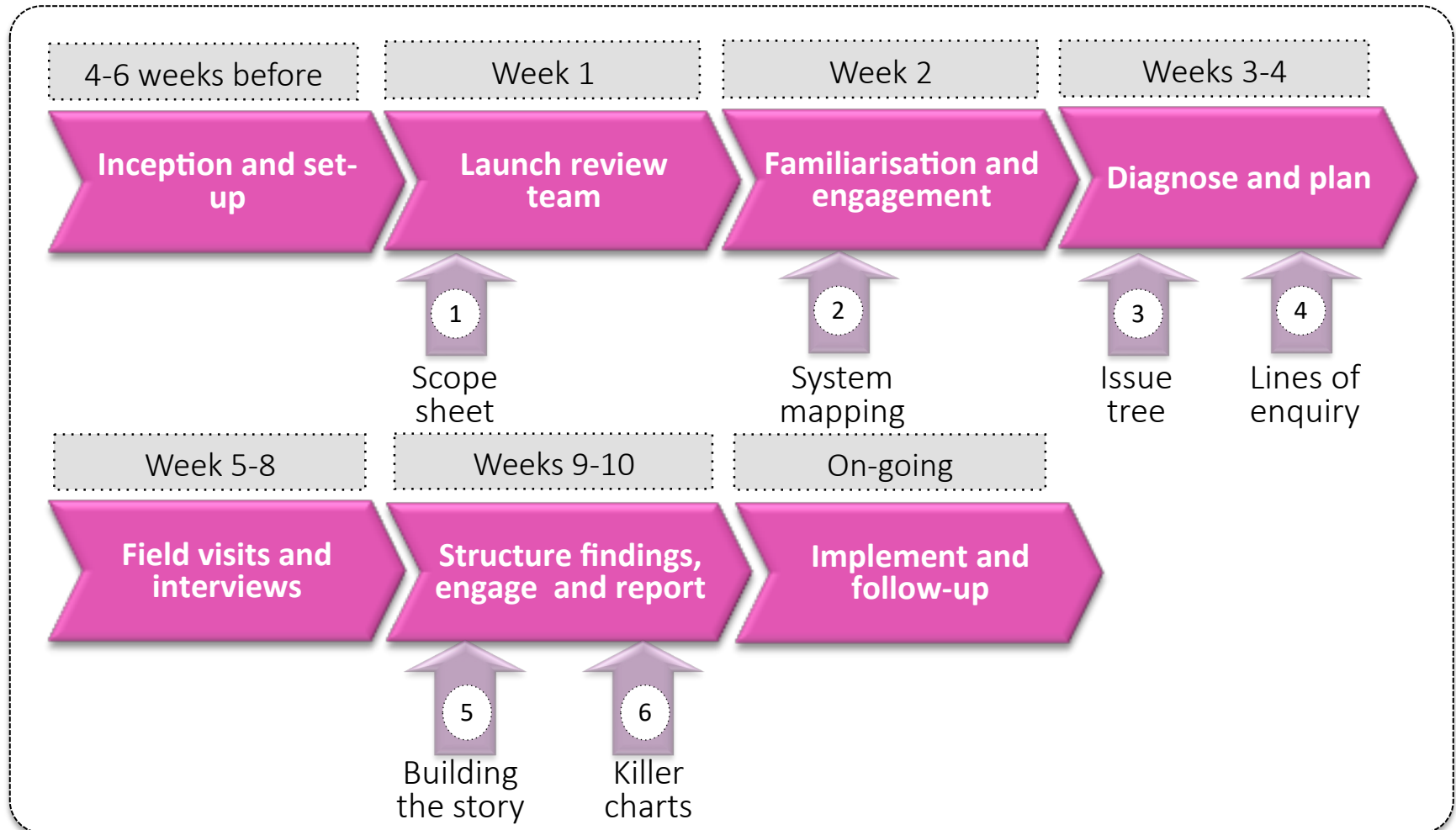
Lessons from reviews

The reviews were key to the credibility and effectiveness of PMDU...

- They help you to build trust and good relationships with ministers and officials
- You have helped them succeed and they will want to work with you again
- The strong focus on action to tackle evidenced problems – not just hunches or treating symptoms
- They create clear actions with timescales that can be monitored
- You keep looking at your delivery trajectory to see if the actions are working
- By doing things – you learn about what works and what doesn't
- You are building capability in the people, departments and organisations you work with

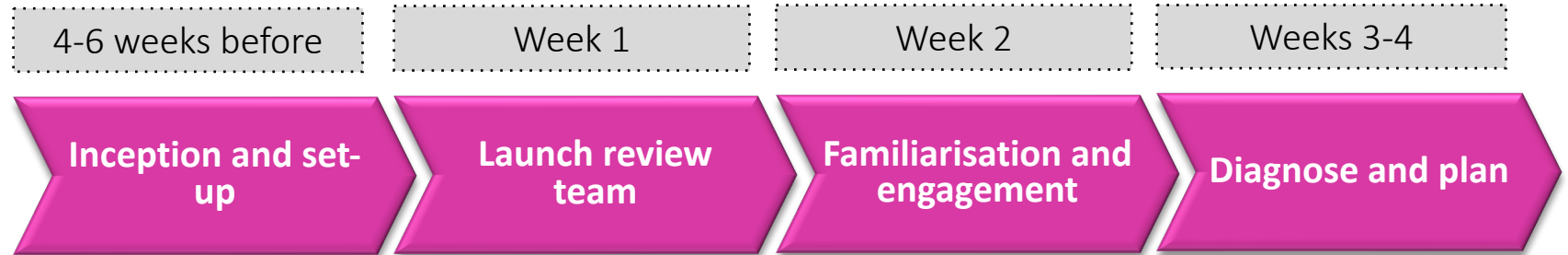
The priority review process

The approach uses key tools that bring rigour and is obsessive about building in engagement throughout the review.



Source: Etheridge.Z & Thomas.P, *Adapting the PMDU Model*, Institute for Government, 2015.

Priority review process



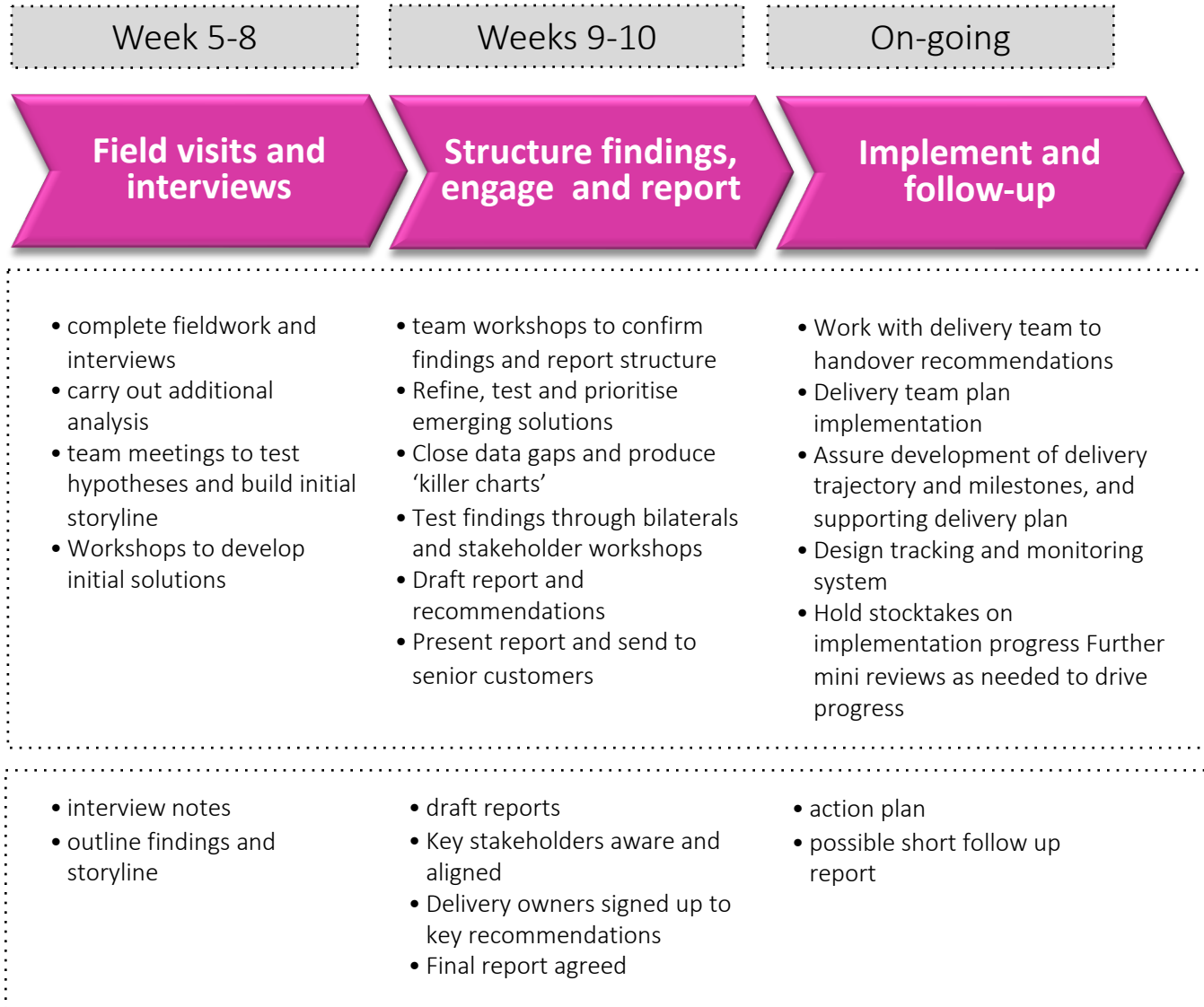
Activities:

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build support and agreement for review• Initial briefing of stakeholders• Produce draft scope• Identify and recruit core team members• Initial data baseline – produce pack• Develop outline timeline and plan• Initial training for team members | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Team induction and familiarisation• Team workshop to finalise scope sheet• Develop initial problem structure• identify delivery chain and key issues• Plan/run stakeholder workshops• Produce detailed timeline• Undertake further training for review team | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initial ‘orientation and immersion’ field visits and interviews• carry out additional analysis to expand data pack | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Baseline validation• Team workshops to finalise problem structure and refine key issues and develop initial hypotheses• Plan detailed field work and further analysis• Revise stakeholder engagement plan and risk register• prepare interview guides• confirm avisits & interviews• Test emerging focus with key stakeholders in workshop. |
|---|---|---|---|

Outputs:

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• team in place and briefed• Draft scope• Outline project plan• Initial briefing and data pack | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finalise scope and problem statement• Draft problem structure• Stakeholder map and engagement plan• Risks identified | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Team familiar with delivery system and perspectives of actors and stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final problem structure and initial hypotheses• fieldwork programme• interview guides• Revised project plan and other documentation |
|---|---|--|--|

Review process continued...



Tool 1: Scope sheet

Problem statement: the basic question to be resolved

The basic question brings focus to the analytic work. It should be succinct and ensure that the findings can be acted upon. The more specific the statement the better – but not so narrow that key levers to solve the problem are missed

1. Perspective/context

Comments on the “situation” and “complication” facing the delivery chain, e.g. recent performance

2. Decision makers

Identifies who decides whether to act upon the Priority Review recommendations

3. Criteria for success

The basis on which Decision Makers will decide whether or not to act on the reviews recommendations, e.g. timeliness, practicality, impact etc

4. Other key stakeholders

Identifies who else could support/derail the Priority Review and who else is influential

5. Out of scope

Indicates what will not be included in the Priority Review

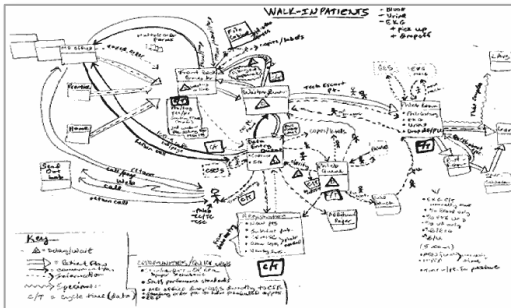
Tool 2: System mapping

Different mapping tools help expose different perspectives, processes, institutions, funders, actors and services. They enrich analysis and logic trees.

tool SYSTEM MAP

tool description

The system map is a visual description of the service technical organization: the different actors involved, their mutual links and the flows of materials, energy, information and money through the system.



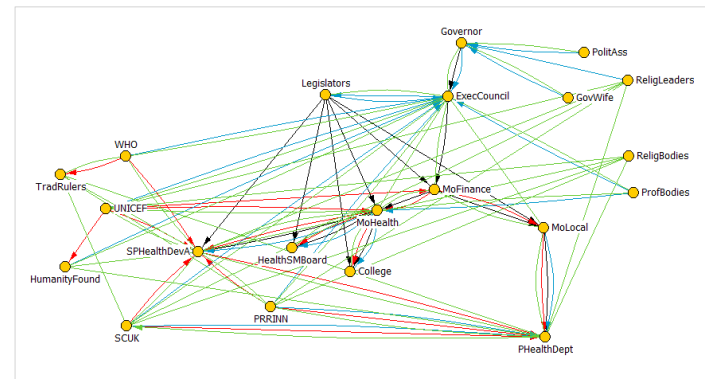
tool ACTORS MAP

tool description

The ecology map is a graph representing the system of actors with their mutual relations. It provides a systemic view of the service and of its context.

The graph is built through the observation of the service from a specific point of view that becomes the centre of the whole representation; for example if the selected subject is the user, the graph will show all the actors starting from their relations with him.

Example: Net-map of formal and informal networks between actors that influence funding of new born survival and maternal health interventions in Nigeria.



Network 1: Complete Combined Network Map

Formal directive (black lines), funding (red lines), pressure (green lines), information (blue lines)

Source: Eva Schiffer, Net-map

Why do system mapping?

Mapping and analyzing Delivery Systems can help you to develop a shared understanding of:



What you are trying to achieve and how you are trying to achieve it;



Whether the money follows the critical path;



Whether there are any 'black holes' ie parts of the system on which you have limited information



The nature of the relationships and differences between the various organisations; and



The synergies and conflicts which help or hinder their ability to work together.

Consider

- What do you want to use your system map for?
- What issue (s) do you want to highlight/resolve through your delivery system map?
 - Funding flow
 - Relationships/conflicts
 - Capacity and capability
 - Influence
 - Accountability
 - Knowledge gaps
 - Fit with other policies
 - Fit with customer journey maps
- Who are the big players?
- Who needs to be involved?
- How are you going to use the map?
- Who will make sure that it doesn't just sit on the shelf?

Example: process mapping for A&E



Check-in

Assessment

Treatment

Outcome



Ambulance



Walk in

Check-in

Receptionist will check you in



You will be seen by a nurse in order of arrival.

Assessment

A nurse will assess the urgency of your injury

Handover

You will be treated in order of urgency

Resuscitation

For people with life-threatening injuries or illnesses.

Major

Tests



You will be treated in order of urgency.

Minor

For people with less urgent injuries or illnesses.

See and treat

For people whose injuries can be assessed and treated in one step

You may have to wait while we process your test results and decide on best treatment



You may have to wait while we process your test results and decide on the best treatment.

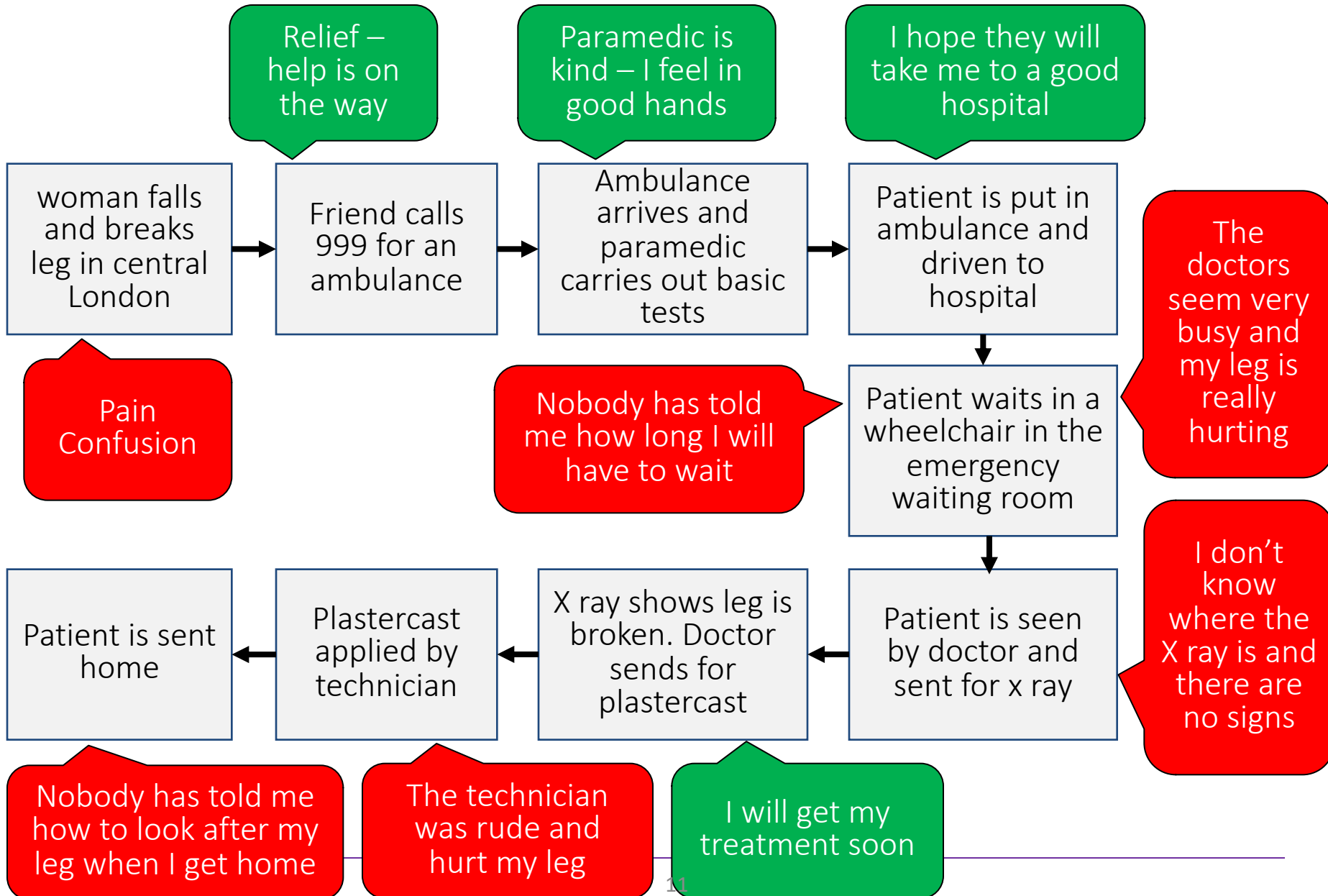
Hospital

People who need further treatment will be admitted to hospital

Go home

Most people will be able to go home after treatment

Example: Customer journey and feelings map

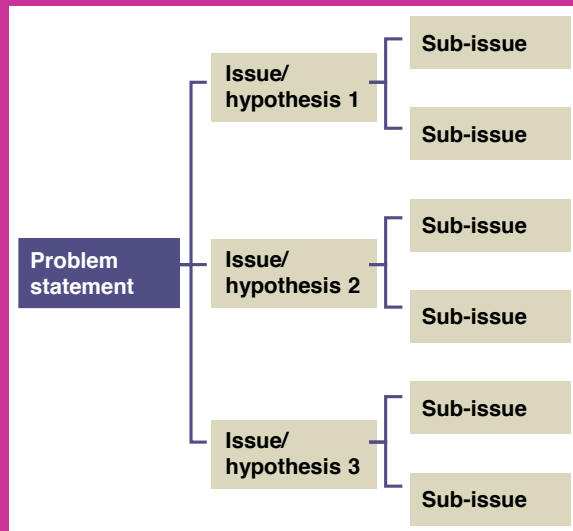


Tool 3: Structured problem solving

Logic trees help you structure and focus your thinking, and shape the analysis and fieldwork that will deliver most value...

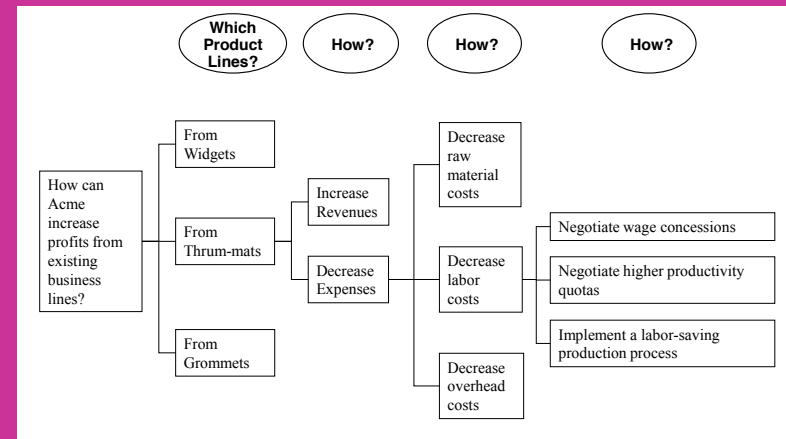
Data driven – Why?

Starts with the problem and decomposes it to arrive at a solution



Hypothesis driven – How?

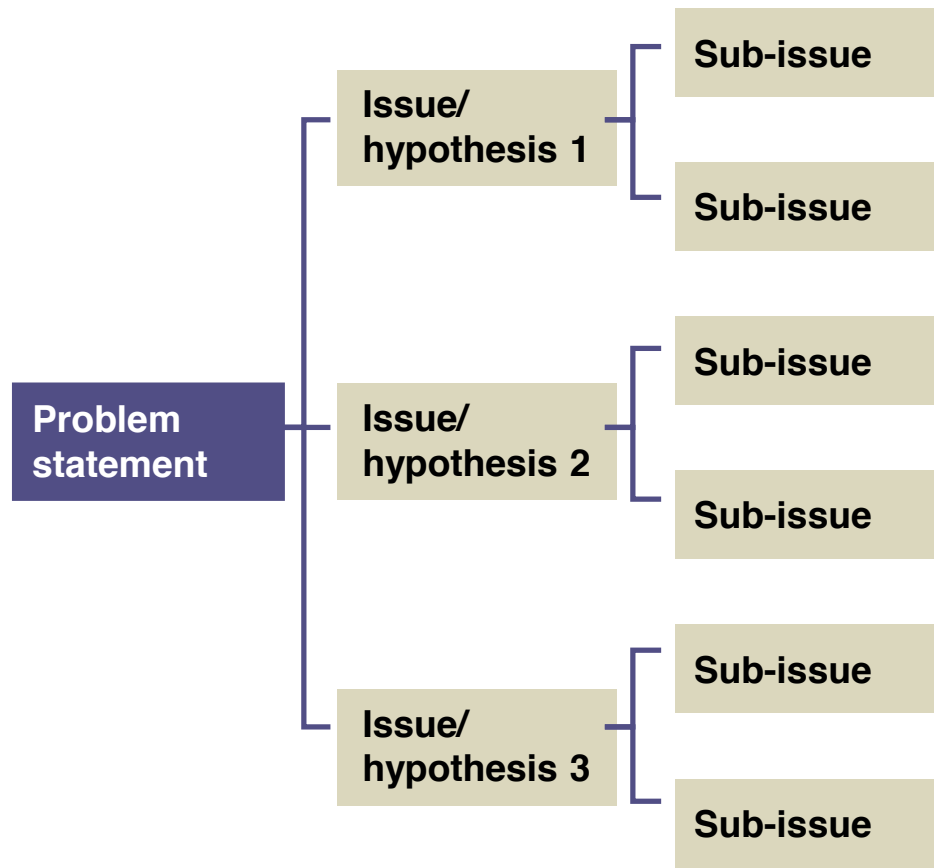
Starts with a potential solution and develop a rationale to validate or disprove it



Logic trees help structure your analysis

Logic trees are the link between your problem statement/scope sheet and a list of manageable questions...

Why use logic trees?



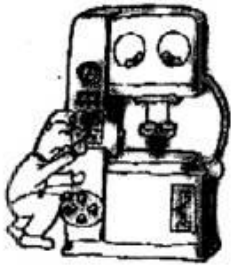
1. To break a problem into component parts so that
 - Problem-solving work can be divided into intellectually manageable pieces
 - Priorities can be allocated to individuals
2. To maintain the integrity of the problem-solving approach
 - Solving the parts will really solve the problem
 - The parts are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive (i.e., no overlaps, no gaps)
3. To build a common understanding within the team of the problem-solving framework
4. To help focus the use of organizing frameworks and theories

Getting to the root causes of problems

The five-whys is a useful tool that helps you work with your issue tree to investigate root causes.

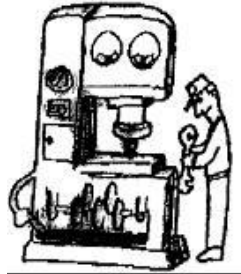
ILLUSTRATIVE

1
Why has the machine stopped?



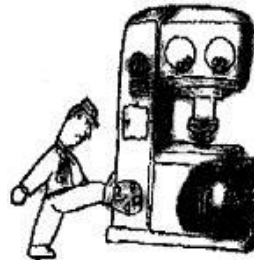
- The overload fuse has blown

2
Why did the overload fuse blow?



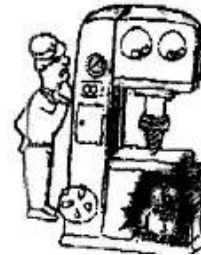
- There was not enough oil on the shaft

3
Why wasn't there enough oil?



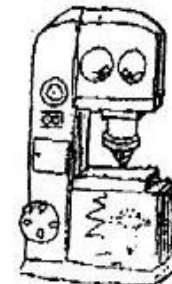
- The oil pump doesn't pump enough oil

4
Why doesn't the oil pump work properly?



- Because the shaft has worn

5
Why has the shaft worn?

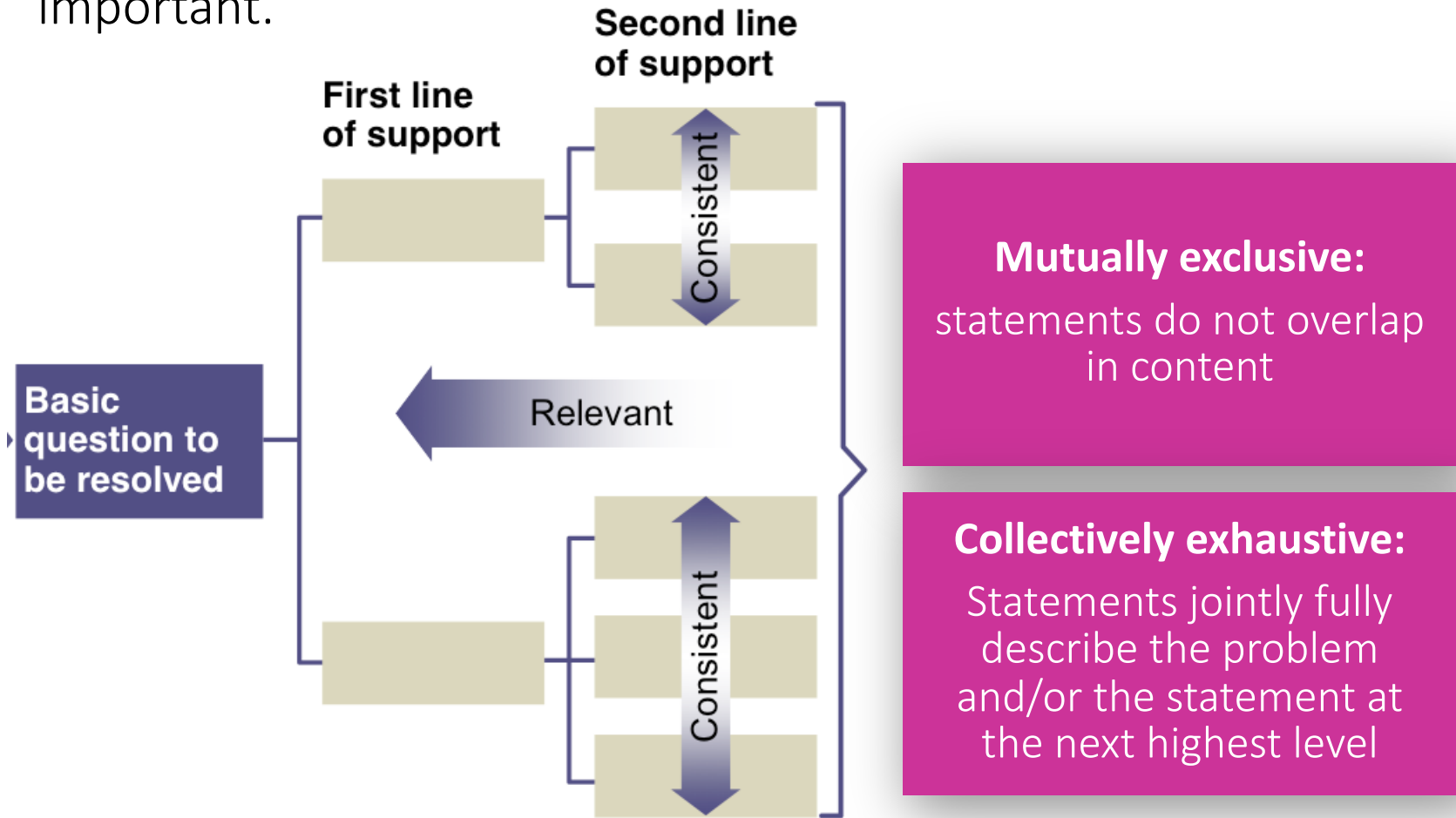


- Because the oil strainer is blocked with metal swarf

Ask 'Why?' until
you get to the bottom
of the problem

Testing your logic tree - MECE

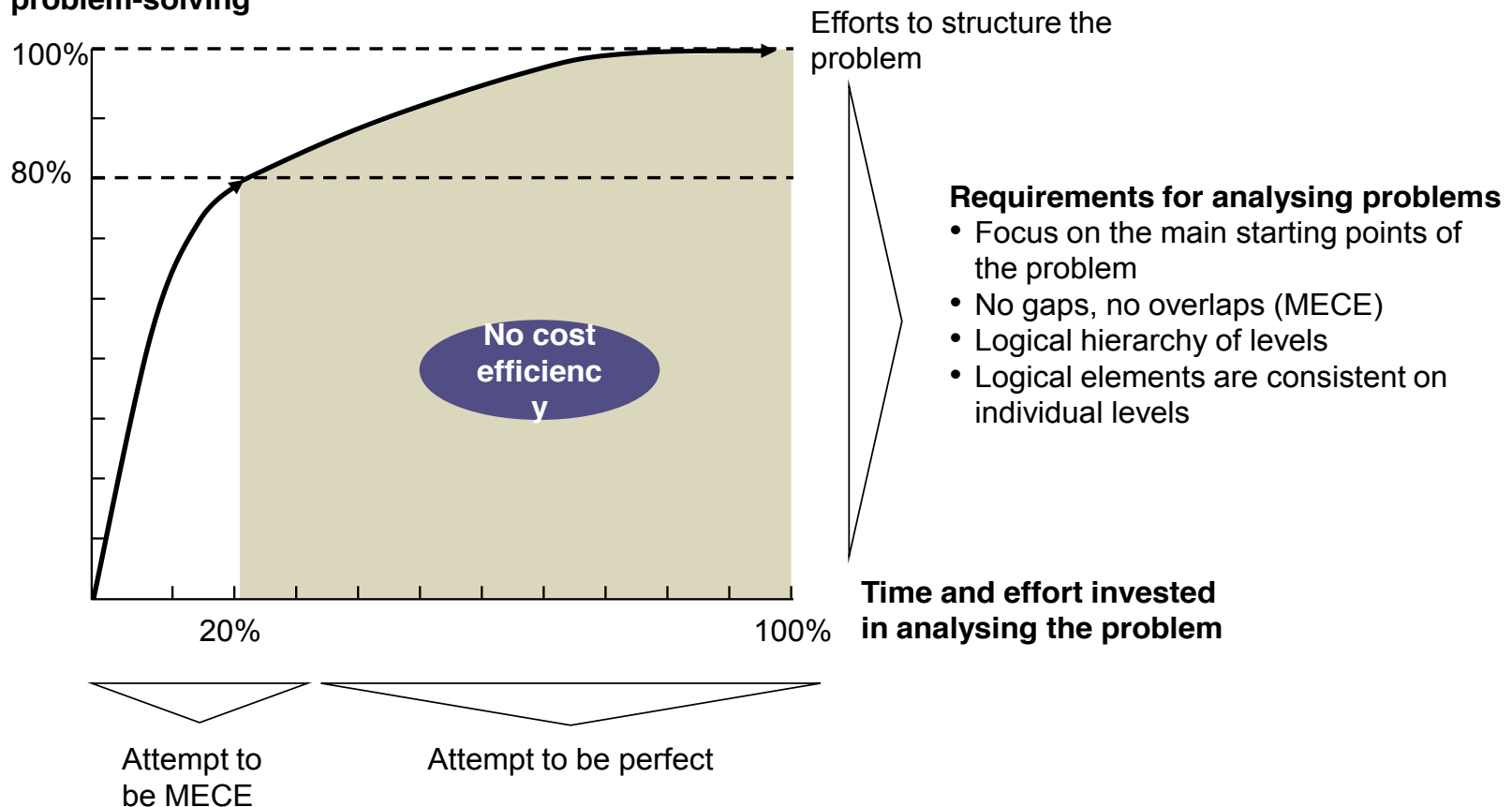
This oddly named test helps you make sure there are no gaps, no overlaps so you are confident you are not missing anything important.



Good enough to proceed: 80:20

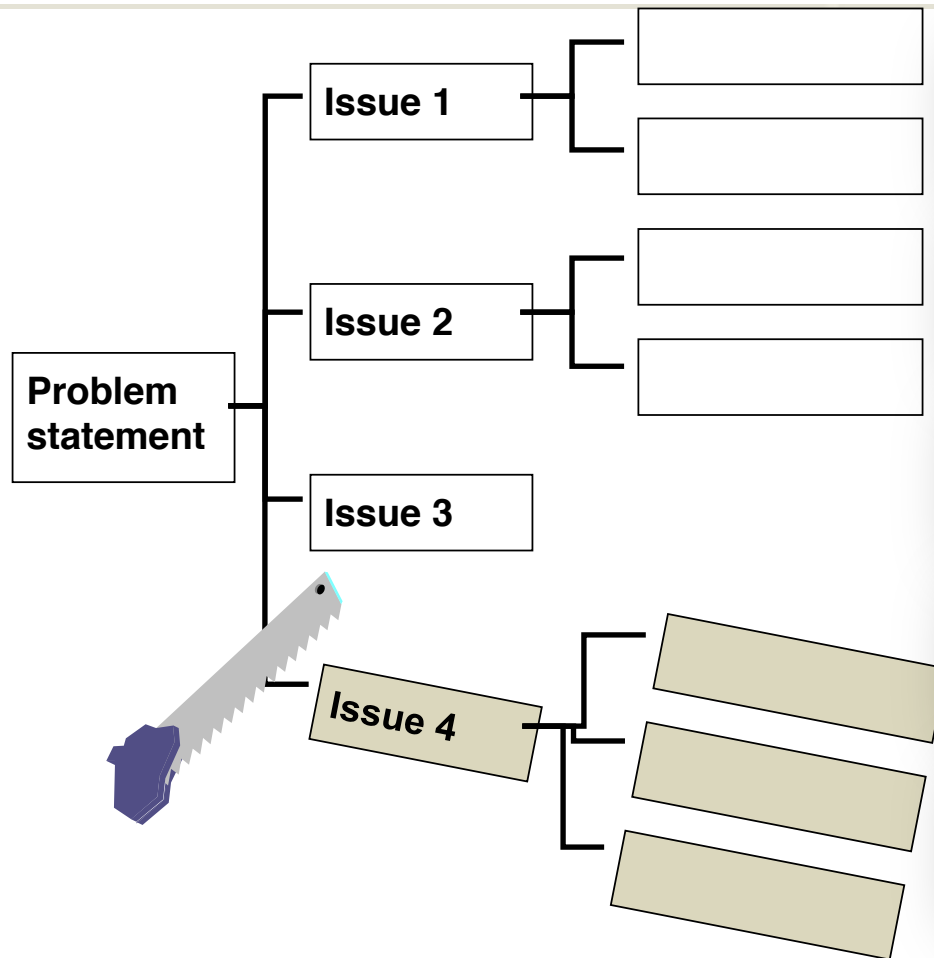
The principles of the service review model focus on getting the starting point of the problem 80% right, then explore further and iterate – don't seek perfection...

Benefits for problem-solving



Iterate all the way through

You will be iterating your logic tree – by switching between hypotheses, theories and data. Eliminate non-essential issues.



First step in a constant iterative refinement process

Keep switching between hypotheses, theories and data

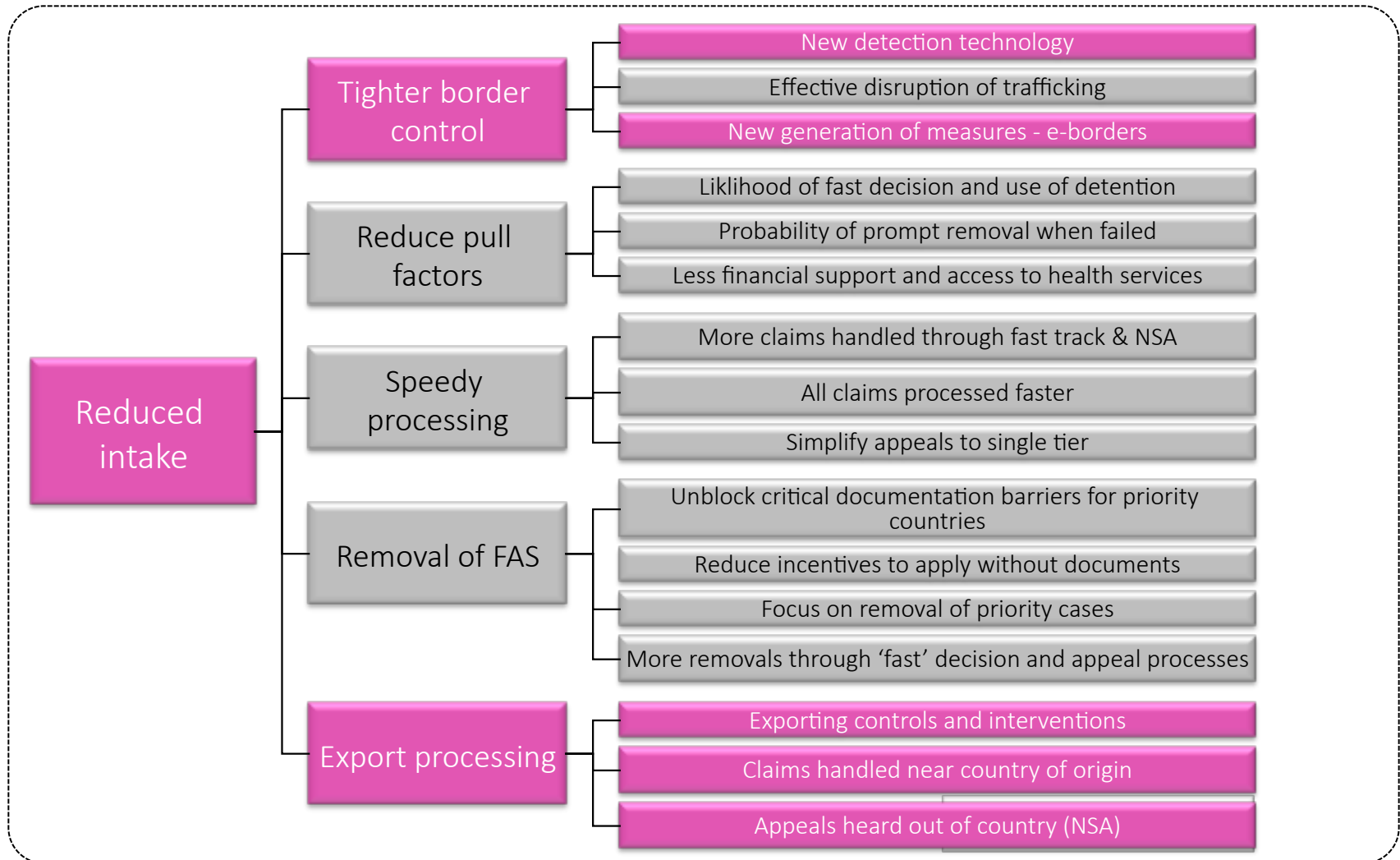
Focus your effort on what is most important

Always ask 'so what' but also ask what you have forgotten

Eliminate non-essential issues to make project manageable

Example: reducing unfounded asylum claims

They worked through all fronts with some bold new approaches...



Source: Peter Thomas

Tool 4: Lines of enquiry and sampling to focus research

Work through the hypotheses from your issue tree to plan your analysis and field work. You need to be focused on where you think there is most value to found, but also allow space for new insights and perspectives that may validate or challenge your hypotheses and areas of focus.

	Issue	Hypothesis	Analysis	Source	Responsibility/ timing	End product
Description	<p>Yes or no?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An issue is typically an important unresolved question, phrased so that it can be answered "yes" or "no" 	<p>How or why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The hypothesis is a statement of the likely resolution of the issue; it includes the reason for answering yes or no 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The analysis defines the work necessary and sufficient to prove or disprove the hypothesis or resolve the issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The source identifies the likely location or means of obtaining data to undertake analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsibility identifies the person who will obtain the data and undertake the analysis. Also the completion due date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The end products is a statement of the output from the analysis

Use purposive sampling to get maximum insight from your fieldwork

For fieldwork a purposive sample can help to gain insights quickly

A purposive sample is deliberately designed to capture information on the subject area of interest

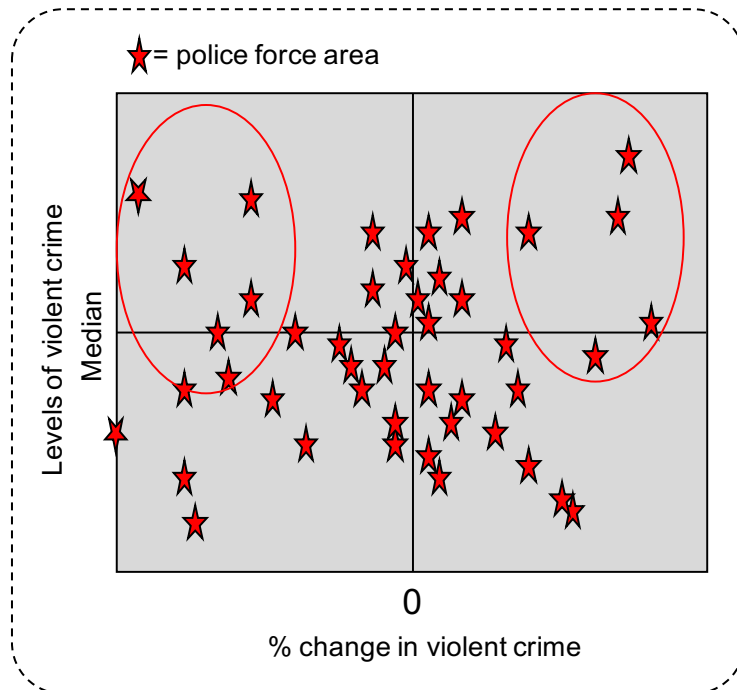
It assumes that by focusing on the 'extreme' deviants of the subject area, you can gain an understanding of more regular patterns of behaviour

An example of purposive sampling – violent crime

Consider Violent Crime as an example – you want to understand quickly what's driving changes in violent crime across the country and what best practice might look like .

By plotting the levels of violent crime against % change in violent crime you can start to see the extreme 'deviants' of police force areas.

You can also consider splitting the data into quartiles – and considering how you want to select your fieldwork areas, e.g. do you want to visit all quadrants, or just specific extreme deviants. Some of this may depend on how many areas you have time to visit.



Then consider geographic spread – the most common variables to consider (and to add to the dataset) are geographic region and urban/ rural classifications.

General guides: London is usually unique, it is always useful to get a contrast with the north, DEFRA's classification can help you identify extreme urban/rural areas.

This will help you come up with your actual list of areas you will visit/ sample.

Tool 5: Understanding the root causes: the 5 whys

The five-whys [or five hows] is a useful tool that helps you develop and work with your issue tree to investigate root causes or solutions.

For example...

Q: **Why** am I having to wait so long to be seen in the emergency department?

A: Because the number of people coming unnecessarily to accident and emergency has increased by 40% over the last 2 years?

Q: **Why** are so many more people coming if they don't need

A: Because they cannot get to see their local doctor?

Q: **Why** cant they see their local doctor?

A: Because you can only see them during the day in the week and it takes 2 weeks to get an appointment?

Q: **Why** can you only see them during the day?

A: Because doctors have closed their out of hours services.

Tool 6. The pyramid principle: stacking up your story

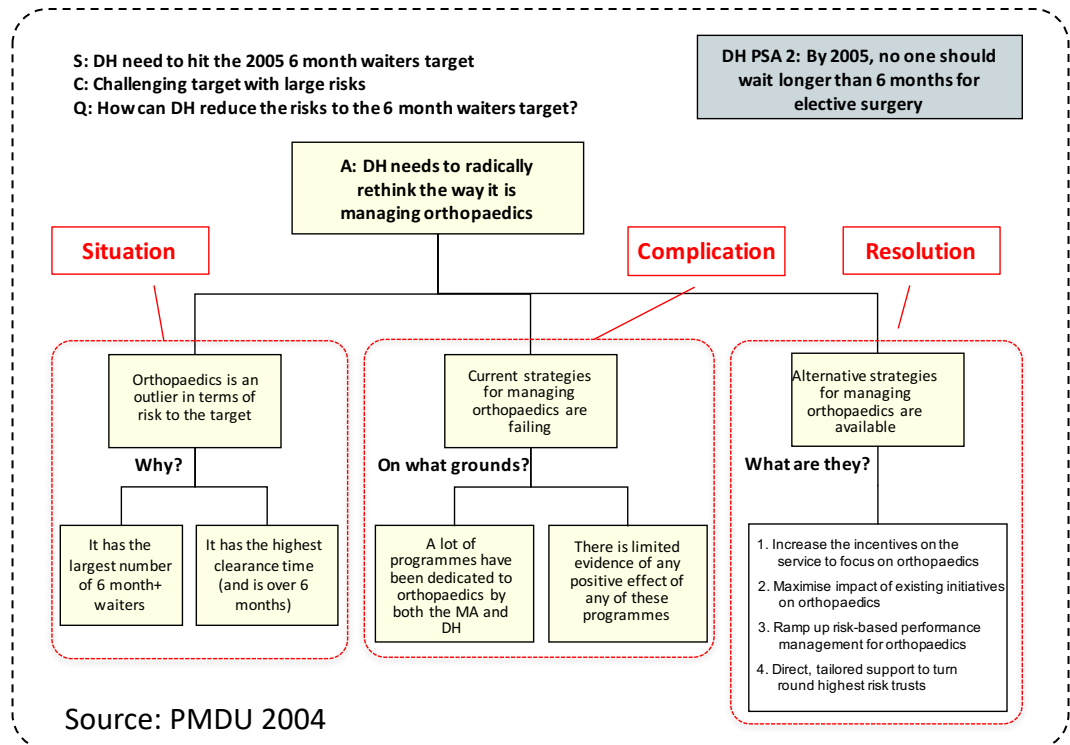
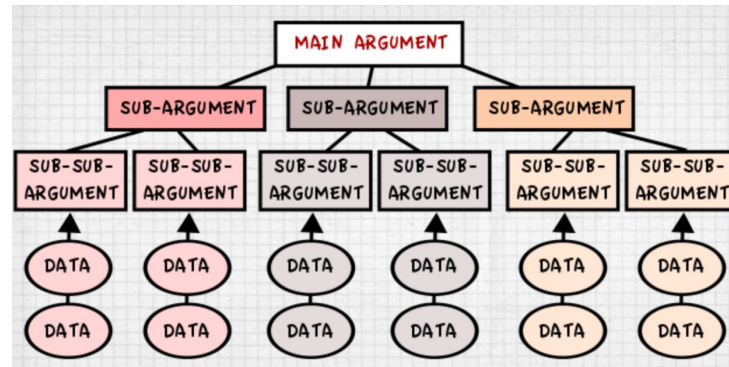
S-C-Q-A:

Situation, Complication, Question and Answer helps you write introductions which engage an audience's attention before you provide the answers.

You build your story top-down in the shape of a pyramid, backing up your main arguments with sub-arguments, and those sub-arguments with soft and hard data: examples, visualisations, voices or simply logic.

This means the listener/reader always know why data and supportive arguments are being presented.

Source: handbookofawesome.com



Tool 7: Compelling data visualisation

The key characteristics of a killer chart...

1. Appears at a crucial point in the storyline

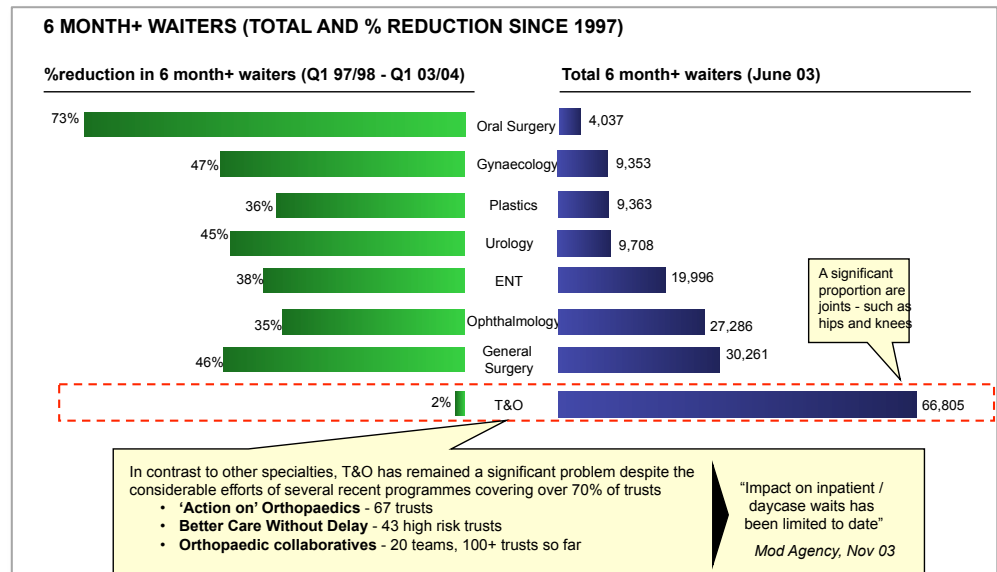
- Is the turning point in the story
- Contains surprising information
- Is the essence of the argument

2. Passes the ten second test

- Is clear enough for the reader to understand in 10 seconds or less
- Contains no unnecessary information

3. Is memorable and talked about

- Sticks in the mind
- Referred to as “that chart”



...and some rules

- 1 message per slide – ideally one sentence on top
- Format – is this for an on-screen show or a 'lap pack'
- Font – clearer is better, don't use multiple fonts
- Font size – try not to go below 12 point
- Colour – avoid the 'play school' trap
- Parallelism – e.g. start bullets with the same type of word
- Time series – always go across the page left to right
- Consistency – axes, scales and labels
- All rules can be broken

Tool 8: Report slide pack

This device that brings together tools 6 and 7 is the use of PowerPoint 'report packs'. These are designed to be read rather than projected. They use the pyramid principle, have a very strong story running through and use a compelling mix of visuals, data, voices, maps. They are more likely to be read than a conventional prose pack – increase the onus on clarity of narrative and use of most compelling evidence and illustrations. They can be broken down into a series of trade shows that you walk people around and get them to engage with.

The image displays a series of 25 numbered slides from a report pack, arranged in a grid. Each slide contains a mix of text, charts, and diagrams. The slides are numbered 6 through 25. The content includes:

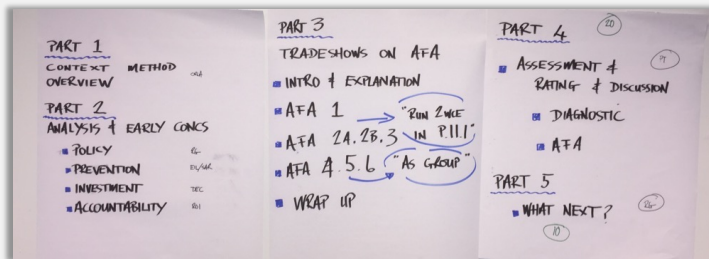
- Slide 6:** Overview of the team's accelerated problem-solving process, supported by external expertise. It lists external support (DES, NCHS, etc.), different methodology, and an accelerated pace.
- Slide 7:** A highly compressed timeframe showing a total of 13 + 3 days, with a breakdown of 13 days for findings and 3 days for feedback.
- Slide 8:** A list of services and schools involved in the project, including DES, NCHS, and various community and school-based organizations.
- Slide 9:** A photograph showing a group of people working together in a collaborative team dynamic.
- Slide 10:** The title slide for 'Part Two: Analysis and Conclusions'.
- Slide 11:** A bar chart showing rates of deliberate self-harm in Ireland, with a focus on young adults (15-24).
- Slide 12:** A diagram illustrating the focus of the Connecting for Life initiative, which aims to reduce and prevent mental health problems.
- Slide 13:** A list of government strategies targeting young people's mental health and wellbeing, including the National Mental Health Strategy and the National Suicide Prevention Strategy.
- Slide 14:** A bar chart comparing current policy to a distinct bias towards 'sector' service settings, highlighting a gap in community-based services.
- Slide 15:** A diagram showing the scale of current and planned change in Education, emphasizing the challenges of scope and pace.
- Slide 16:** A bar chart showing the number of staff employed or funded by the Government, highlighting a significant gap in staff resources.
- Slide 17:** A diagram illustrating the consequences of sending multiple and/or conflicting messages into the system, leading to confusion and inefficiency.
- Slide 18:** A diagram showing the early conclusion of the report, highlighting the need for a small number of priority areas for action.
- Slide 19:** A list of 15,000 young people who responded to the 'My World Survey' in Ireland in 2014, highlighting a number of key issues and themes.
- Slide 20:** A diagram showing key factors affecting young people in Ireland currently, including mental health, education, and employment.
- Slide 21:** A diagram showing the at most basic level, information and advice about mental health is not sufficient to help young people.
- Slide 22:** A diagram showing a range of early, preventative supports in place, but highlighting the need for a universal service, schools provide an ideal setting for building emotional literacy and competing particularly well.
- Slide 23:** A diagram showing core statutory services are structured around need, but the maturity of services differs regionally.
- Slide 24:** A diagram showing that in the last 10 years, there have been many service improvements, but highlighting the need for a national mental health and wellbeing strategy.
- Slide 25:** A diagram showing that nationally, waiting times and waiting lists are leading to serious delays in support, but a closer look shows the need for local interventions to reduce variation.

Source: Thomas, Gaynor and Templeman 2017. 15 days: A practical guide to leading accelerated high-impact collaboration in the Irish civil service

Example: using a report pack to engage and interact

The default reporting back format tends to be static, passive, unengaging and too often unproductive. This example the review team decided to run the sessions as they had run the rest of the project – active, innovative and engaging. Resolving to make secretaries general stand up, move around the room, vote with sticky dots, sit on chairs in a semi-circle for discussions without a table felt risky and unusual.

We had developed the plan on whole group day 5.



① The team presented the pathfinder process, analysis and conclusions in plenary in an impressive 20 minutes.



② Then they ran two tradeshows in parallel on areas for action 1 and 2.



③ And a plenary tradeshow on areas for action 3-6.



④ Finally we got each sec gen to rate the overall story and each of the areas for action. We explored the rationale for their ratings.

