

STEP 2: PROCESS MAPPING / VALUE STREAM MAPPING

Overview:

Process Mapping is used to develop a 'map' of a process within a system. It will help you to map the whole patient journey or diagnostic pathway with a range of people who represent the different roles involved. Process mapping can be used to help a team understand where the problems are and identify areas for improvement.

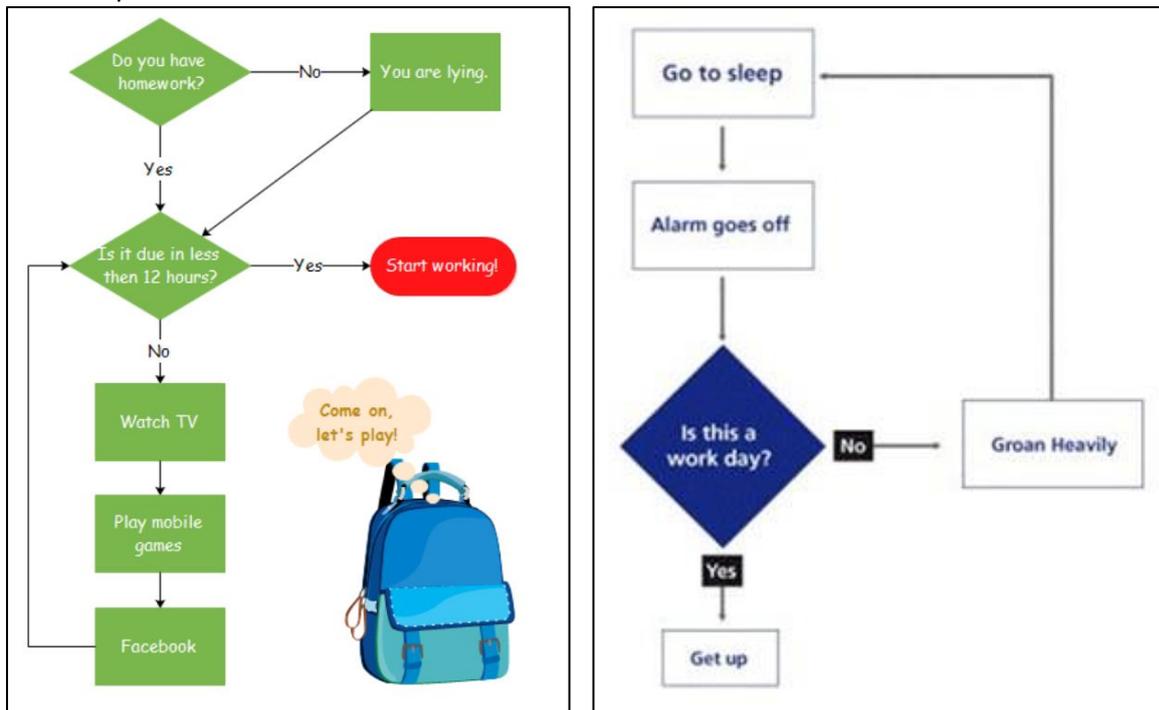
How to use it:

The aim of process mapping is to make things clear and to provide insight. The best map is often the simplest map.

There are different approaches to process mapping. Which one you select will depend upon what you need to know, what level you are working at (whole pathway or a small part of it), resources available and timescales.

Start with a high level process map of say 5 to 10 steps which you set a time limit to achieve e.g. 20 minutes. This helps to establish the scope of the process and identify significant issues. Here is a simple example of a high level process map.

For example:



Symbols:

Box	Shows the activities of the process.
Diamond	Represents the stage in the process where a question is asked or a decision is required.
Oval	Shows the start of a process and the inputs required. Also used to mark the end of the process with the results or outputs. The symbol is the same for the start and end of a process to emphasis interdependency.
Arrows	Show the direction or flow of the process.

Equipment:

There is software that can help you to develop process maps but in a group setting you can use rolls of paper, marker pens, post-it notes in different colours to represent the four different symbols, flip chart to 'park' issues and display ground rules for your session.

Once you have your high level process map you will start to be able to understand how the process works and where there are problems, drilling down into these with more detailed process maps. Further work may be required to analyse the problem areas identified e.g. seek stakeholder feedback or further data collection.

Benefits:

Mapping a whole patient pathway or a series of processes around one element of care or function will reveal:

- Unnecessary delays, steps or handovers
- Duplication of effort / waste
- Things that don't make sense / not logical
- Likely hotspots, bottlenecks or constraints
- Identify and understand variations in practice
- Develop a shared understanding of the problem/issues relating to quality of care

How To Process Map:

This will help your improvement team develop a shared understanding of the problems/issues

1. Gather the team together. The team should consist of staff who are involved in all aspects of the pathway.
2. Agree the scope, start and finish points of the value stream or process e.g. referral received, date of first attendance through to discharge.
3. Map out each step of the process, using post-it notes on a large sheet/ flip chart paper.
4. Record how long each step of the process takes, including the times between each step (you may decide to measure this).
5. Add roles to the map i.e. who carries out each step.
6. Add the information flow to the map i.e. recording systems etc.
7. Stand back as a team and agree what it is telling you about your current processes of care.

Questions to help you analyse:

- Could some tasks be carried out by one person instead of several people?
- Is there any duplication of work?
- Are there any bottlenecks?
- How much error correction/rework is being carried out?
- Are the steps doing the right things in the process?
- Is the right / best person doing it?

Your map should show how long the process takes, the different steps in the process, the information flows and the staff resources at each step. You can now agree on any immediate actions to take – “Just Do Its” or the first areas to test changes that may result in an improvement.