Tool 1a
The Model for Improvement

Introduction

Our environment is constantly changing. Some changes are imposed on us and we have to find a way to manage the impact. At other times, change is something we choose to make, motivated by the desire to make things better. It is important to remember that whilst every improvement is certainly a change, every change is not always an improvement.

Making changes to the way that we do things can be time-consuming and can sometimes feel risky. The model for improvement is a tried and tested approach to achieving successful change (see Figure 1). The model was first published in 1992 by Langley, Nolan et al in The Improvement Guide: A Practical Approach to Enhancing Organisational Performance. The model provides a framework for developing, testing and implementing changes to the way that things are done that will lead to improvement.
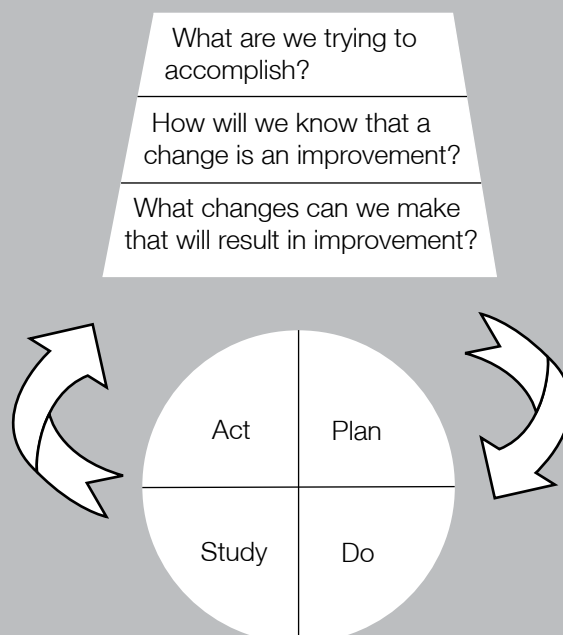
Use of the model offers the following benefits:
• it is a simple approach that anyone can apply
• it reduces risk by starting small
• it can be used to help plan, develop and implement change
• it is highly effective.

The Model for Improvement

The model consists of two, equally important parts. The first, the 'thinking part', consists of three fundamental questions that are essential for guiding improvement work. The second part, the 'doing part', is made up of Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycles that will help you make rapid change.

Figure 1: The Model for Improvement

What are we trying to accomplish?

How will we know that a change is an improvement?

What changes can we make that will result in improvement?

Act | Plan

Study | Do

Langley, Nolan et al

The three fundamental questions for achieving improvement

A planned approach to improving things will give you a better chance of success. The three fundamental questions for achieving improvement are a useful way of framing your work.

1. What are we trying to accomplish?

This question is intended to help you be clear about the improvements that you would like to make, what results you would like to get and how you would like things to be different. It is crucial for everyone involved to have a clear understanding of your aims.

### 2. How will we know that a change is an improvement?

Whilst every improvement is a change, not every change results in an improvement. Without measurement it is impossible to know whether things have improved. Think about how you want things to be different when you have implemented your change and agree what data you need to collect to measure it. You can do this in terms of the way in which your results or outcomes might be different, how the care that your residents receive will be better, or how your processes might change.

3. What changes can we make that can lead to an improvement?

Finally, you need to decide what changes you will try (test) in order to achieve the results you are looking for. What ideas and tools in this resource pack may be useful in your care home? What evidence do you have from elsewhere about what is most likely to work? What do you and your team think is a good idea? What have other people done that you could try? This is where you can adapt ideas or be completely creative. Remember that you know your own system best, so keep your objectives in mind and use your knowledge and experience to guide you.

Gather together as many ideas as you can. These will form the basis for the next step – your PDSA cycles.

PDSA cycles
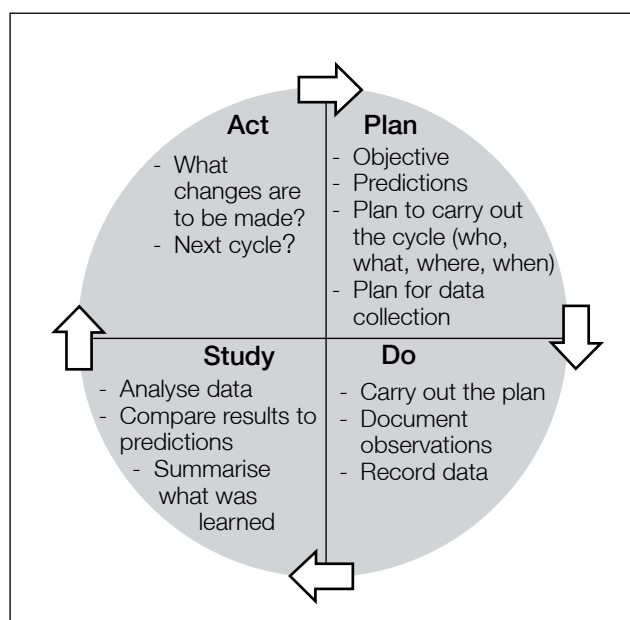
PDSA stands for 'Plan, Do, Study, Act'. Once you have decided exactly what you want to achieve, you can use PDSA cycles to test out your ideas developed from the third question.

The key to PDSA cycles is to try out your change on a small scale to begin with and to rely on using many consecutive cycles to build up information about how effective your change is. This makes it easier to get started, gives results rapidly and reduces the risk of something going wrong and having a major impact. If what you try doesn't work as well as you hoped, you can always go back to the

way you did things before. When you have built up enough information to feel confident about your change, you can then implement it as part of your routine in your care home.

First, **Plan** your PDSA cycle: what, where, when and who. Also, think what information you need to collect to learn whether or not your test is successful. Predict what you think will happen – reflecting on this later will help your learning.

The key is to try out your change on a small scale to begin with. You might, for example, like to run your cycle over one day, with one staff member or one resident. You can carry out a number of cycles to build up information about how effective your change is.

Next **Do** your test, documenting observations and recording data as planned.

After you've carried out your plan, the **Study** part of the cycle gives you the opportunity to reflect on what happened, think about what you have learned and build your knowledge for further improvement.

Finally, you can move on to your next steps – the **Act** part of the cycle. Do you need to run the same cycle again, gathering more evidence or making some modifications based on what you learned? Or do you need to develop further cycles to move your work forwards?

Practicalities

- Improvement is nearly always a team effort. Try to ensure that you involve the right people in your work.
- People have a tendency to jump straight to solutions, rather than really work out what the root of the problem is. If you use the three fundamental questions, it will help you be sure that you are dealing with the issue that really needs to be addressed.
- When you plan your cycle, make sure you are clear about who is doing what, where and when. Your results are dependent on how good your plan is. We have developed a worksheet that you may find useful and included it within this document. (Tool 1b)
- Discuss what you think will happen when you try out your change. What is your hunch? When you have carried out the cycle, compare your expectations with what actually happened. You may learn something interesting about how things work.
- Record your PDSA as you go along: the plan, the results, what you learned and what you are going to do next. Not only is it very motivating to see the results of what you have tried, it is also a great way of accumulating information about your systems and a good way of sharing your learning with other people.
- Use PDSAs consecutively to build up the information about your change and then use them to implement it systematically into your daily work. PDSA cycles generally do not operate in isolation – you should expect to have a series of them leading towards your goal.

And finally:
- PDSAs cannot be too small
- one PDSA will almost always lead to one or more others
- you can achieve rapid results
- they help you to be thorough and systematic
- they help you learn from your work
- anyone can use them in any area.