

i-THRIVE Toolkit: Process Mapping

What is it?

Process mapping enables you to create a visual picture of how a pathway currently works. This process allows you to capture the reality of the process, expose areas of duplication, waste, and unhelpful variation.

Process mapping is normally conducted with full teams. This facilitates discussion of the actual steps taken to complete a process. It also facilitates discussion about what works well or less well from a patient's perspective.

Frustrations and challenges may be aired, and it is crucial to consider how to address these frustrations and generate ideas for service improvement.

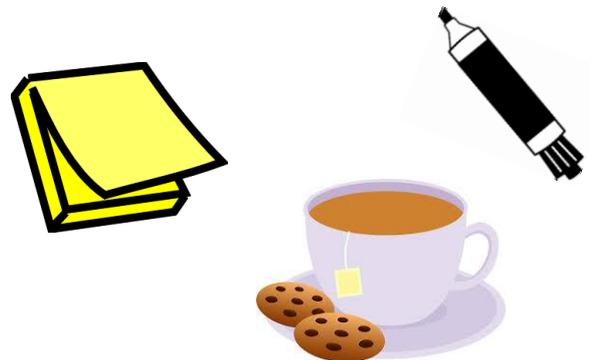
When to use it?

Before making any service changes to get a better understanding of how a whole patient pathway works. If changes are made without understanding current processes sufficiently well, unintended consequences such as creating problems at another point in the journey may occur.

How to?

Equipment

- A few sheets of plain A3 paper
- Sticky notes
- Marker pens
- Blu Tack
- Scissors
- Sellotape
- Flip charts
- Brain fuel i.e. tea, coffee and biscuits!



Just before the session

- Stick A3 paper across wall and stick the sheets together with Sellotape so that there are no gaps
- Prepare flipcharts to capture any ideas or comments that do not directly relate/cannot be answered during the mapping session but would be useful to look into at another time
- Write the name of the pathway/process you are mapping at the top of the paper
- Check if room layout is helpful and move furniture if necessary

At the beginning of the session

- Restate the objective
- Ask people to introduce themselves (names and roles)
- Agree ground rules for the session (i.e. openness, constructive criticism, listening, confidentiality, respect and any other that the group decides)

Step 1 - Producing a high-level map

Through this process you will produce a simple map of five to 10 steps. Set yourself a time limit to complete this, e.g. 20 minutes.

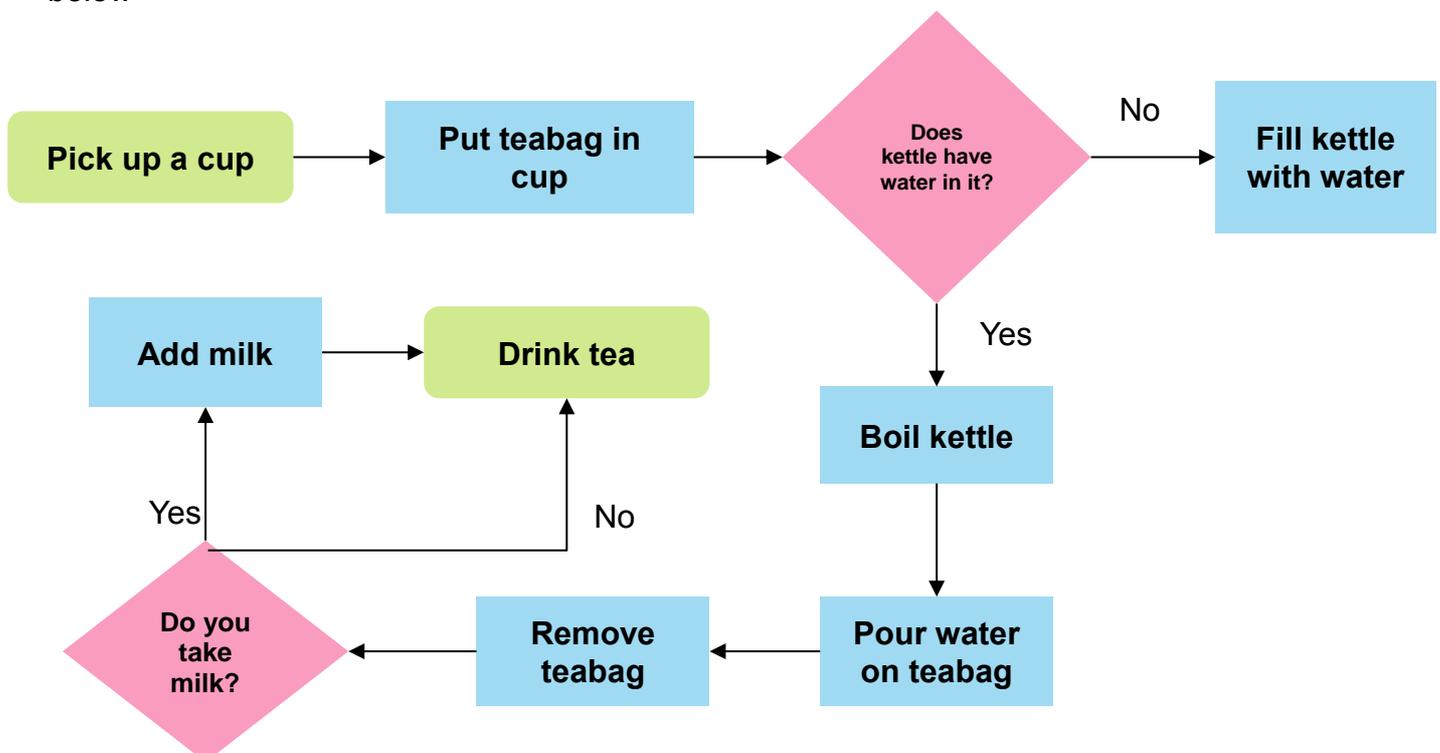
Define the start and end of the process you are looking at. This will help you to establish scope, identify significant issues and to frame a more detailed map.

Symbols

The following symbols are used when drawing up a process map to indicate different processes:



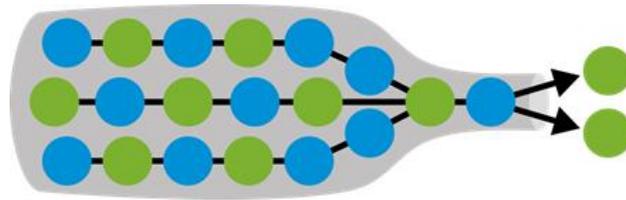
An example of how these might be used when producing a high-level map for making tea is shown below



Making a more detailed process map

For complex processes you would follow the methods described above but with more detail, identifying all the steps, roles and relationships and potential bottlenecks.

What is a bottleneck?



Any obstruction that slows down a flow or a process. E.g. Does one person have responsibility for processing incoming referrals? What does this mean for how quickly referrals are processed? What happens when the person is not at work?

Pathway mapping prompts

The following questions/prompts may help you get more detail:

- When does a patient see another clinician or move to a different pathway?
- Is there any duplication of work?
- Are there any bottlenecks?
- How long does each step take?
- How many people are involved in each step?
- What information do we give to patients at what stage and is the information useful?

Always map what happens in the current process (current state) rather than what you would like to be happening or what should be happening.

What's next?

After the process map is complete, take a picture of the finished product and write up using a computer program (e.g. Microsoft PowerPoint). You may want to disseminate the finished map with the team and check that all the information has been captured accurately.

The next step is to identify where the processes can be improved by redesigning or removing elements of it. While doing this it is key to keep the patient at the centre of your plans and consider the potential for a ripple effect through the organisation.