

# Understanding Your Problem

A problem is defined as: *a matter or situation regarded as unwelcome or harmful that needs to be dealt with or overcome.* – Oxford Dictionary

What is your problem?

Use the following questions to further understand your problem:

|                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                          |
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| <b>1. Whose problem is it?</b><br>What does it look like from different perspectives (e.g. carers, patients, managers, clinicians)?                              | <b>2. How big is the problem?</b><br>How many people are affected?<br>How big is the gap between the evidence and practice?<br>How can this be measured? |
|                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>3. What harm is created?</b><br>What are the consequences?<br>What is the suggested impact of addressing the problem?<br>Is this an important problem to fix? | <b>4. Why is the problem there?</b><br>Consider the evidence, the people, the inner (local and organisational) and outer contexts.                       |
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Don't forget to consider what the evidence/literature says about your problem – is it the same or different to what you perceive?

What is your refined problem?

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Additional questions to consider:

- Do you need to collect more information to understand your problem?
- Have you considered all perspectives, or do you need to talk to more people?
- How will you measure your problem to confirm it is a problem?
- Is it realistic to measure these outcomes considering your timeline and resources?
- If you were to address this problem, what would success look like? Have you considered this in your problem measurement?

It takes time not only to determine a problem but also to work towards improving it. If you or your team have multiple problems, it might be worth re-plotting them on the TRIP Evidence Practice Gap Decision Matrix to prioritise areas for progress.

**Additional resource:**

The tool provided by the Institute for Healthcare Improvements: **5 Why's Finding the Root Cause**, can assist in refining the problem further.

[www.ihl.org/library/tools/5-whys-finding-root-cause](http://www.ihl.org/library/tools/5-whys-finding-root-cause)

Or seek advice from a mentor or TRIP enthusiast.