

4 plus 1 questions

This tool is used to gather a team's collective learning to determine the next step. It is a way to reflect on an issue or project, look at what has been tried and learned, and use this to decide what to do next.

Benefits for the person

- Provides a record of what has been tried and how well it worked.
- A way to update one page profiles/person-centred descriptions.
- People are less likely to continue to do the things that are not working in terms of supporting a person.
- Figuring out better ways to support people is likely to happen faster.

Benefits for employees and the organization

- Everyone has a voice and feels listened to. One dominant voice doesn't take over.
- An efficient and effective way to gather collective learning and act on it.
- Helps people look at the learning from their efforts and gives them a way to take forward that learning to focus future efforts.
- More effective use of meeting time – avoids lots of talk and no action.
- Facilitates effective problem solving.
- Can be used to evaluate a specific process/effort or more generally looking at how we are doing.

Using it with an individual

1. Talk to the person about how they want to be involved – whether they want to be present, or contribute in another way, and how they want to review the suggested actions.
2. Decide on the best people to invite - who has knowledge and learning about the particular issue.
3. Put up a template or flip chart with the headings on. Explain each heading. Describe the issue to be considered.
4. Give each person a pen and ask them to write on each page regarding an issue (but not the 'do next' section).
5. After everyone has written their thoughts, look together at the answers, and then ask the final question (given what we now know, what next?) and ask people to answer this. Then develop SMART action plans (who, what, when, etc.) for items the team wants to try.

Using it with a team

- The process of using it with a team is the same as using it with an individual.
- The four plus one questions can be routinely used in meetings, one-to-one sessions and appraisals.
- SMART means specific, measurable, actionable, realistic and timed.