

Our approach

The Improvement Foundation is a private company with an experienced team of 90 people based in Manchester and around the country, and a number of expert clinical and professional associates.

We have been running successful improvement programmes since 2000, forging a credible reputation with the NHS and other public service providers, and working with local community members. We work predominantly in the fields of health and education, where we have achieved national and international recognition. For more information, please read about [our track record](#). We work in partnership with a range of people and organisations to help frontline professionals to redesign and improve the quality of the services they provide for service-users. In particular we work closely with the [Department of Health](#), [NHS Alliance](#), [NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement](#), [NHS Confederation](#), Karen Picking and Associates and [The Health Foundation](#). We also work with professional and [clinical advisors](#) to support the delivery of our work. Our devolved structure of 10 area teams enables us to work locally and regionally, as well as nationally. We are currently running a range of national and local improvement programmes involving hundreds of organisations and improving the lives of many people in the UK and overseas. We also undertake smaller, bespoke commissions. Because we measure the impact of our work, we can demonstrate improvement and [value for money](#). Although we are not set up to be an organisation that identifies waste or makes efficiencies, our work to improve quality does result in substantial savings. For instance, in 2006-07, following a £10 million investment in quality improvement programmes by the NHS, it created savings of £33 million. The Improvement Foundation is not an NHS body but works alongside the NHS to support improvement. Our aim Our aim is to develop the capacity and capability for sustainable public service improvement. We do this by:

Running multi-agency improvement programmes producing rapid, whole system change to benefit service users
Using a highly effective systematic method of spreading continuous quality improvement
Using quality improvement techniques to support the development of communities
Ensuring service users and communities are part of the improvement teams
Ensuring sustainability through transferring knowledge and skills to frontline professionals and managers, through best practice training
Working with government departments to support improvement in public services.

Our values We are passionate about improvement work that transforms the lives of individuals and communities. Our values are the basis for what we do and how we do it:

We only do work which we expect will make a real difference to individuals and communities
We are committed to the transfer of skills for large scale improvement around the world
We encourage innovation, creativity, continuous improvement and learning
We value every individual's contribution to the success of the team
We provide an open, fair and supportive environment for our staff and for those who work with us
We are committed to the responsible use of resources through a transparent way of working and the achievement of demonstrable results
We strive to make the world a better place to live through the improvement work we do.

How we work The Improvement Foundation's improvement programmes use quality improvement science, underpinned by a 'collaborative' approach. This is based on the 'Breakthrough' series developed by the Institute of Healthcare Improvement in the USA. It relies on the spread and adaptation of existing knowledge to multiple settings to achieve a common aim. In parallel, workshops and coaching strengthen individual and organisational knowledge of quality improvement methods. The collaborative approach is about changing systems to achieve improvement. It is based on a series of learning workshops, interspersed with action periods during which measures common to the participating sites are used to track progress. The new systems are based on using existing good practice that has resulted in improvement elsewhere. They are implemented using an accepted model for improvement and small, rapid, incremental cycles of change. Three fundamental questions underpin collaborative working:

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?

The collaborative approach looks at the best examples of organisations with improved results, and then seeks to understand what it is that is different about the anatomy of that particular organisation's system. The collaborative approach then breaks up these special factors of the organisation into a small number of 'change principles'. Participants in the collaborative then implement these change principles themselves in a systematic way, producing similar improvements. Participants are shown how to use small, rapid Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles of change, to test and enact the change. The PDSA approach breaks change down into small, manageable chunks which can build into larger improvements in service through successive cycles of change.