I want to clarify my priorities by focusing on key critical issues

PROBLEM DEFINITION

INSPIRED BY

Julier J., Kimbell L. (2012) Problem Definition. p30. In: The Social Design Methods Menu.

LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT

FAIRLY SIMPLE, SELF ADMINISTERED TOOL

needs relatively less time

What is it & why should I do it?

Defining a problem is a deceptively simple task - what at first seems to be the problem is often merely a symptom of a deeper problem. This tool works to both open a problem up - presenting it in a way that can be examined from a number of angles - as well as helping to define the wider context and associated issues involved.

This is particularly effective when trying to focus a team of people on the key problems at hand. This tool has been designed to structure the analysis of a particular problem in a way that makes good use of your time. It introduces a small set of key criteria by which an issue can be articulated and assessed, which makes the activity highly efficient. It also gives you a standardised way to compare several different problems which might seem to be very different on the surface.

? HOW TO USE IT

Go through the Problem Definition worksheet individually or in small teams and reflect on a specific issue you have identified, exchanging thoughts while writing down your notes. The key aim here is to capture, compare and discuss different viewpoints on the problem. You can then review the notes and discuss with your team members whether you are making the same assumptions, and whether you are framing things in the same way.

This exercise may lead you to 'reframe' the problem you initially addressed – for example, what happens if you see older people as having capacities, rather than needs? Reframing problems in such a way can offer clues to how the solution can take shape.

Working on a Problem Definition worksheet with not only your team members, but together with other stakeholders will usually bring up new contexts. For instance, working with service users, staff or volunteers may provide a slightly different angle to the tool than when working with managers or entrepreneurs. Feel free to experiment and rephrase questions in the worksheet to keep them relevant in such situations.

What is the key issue you are trying to address and why is it important?

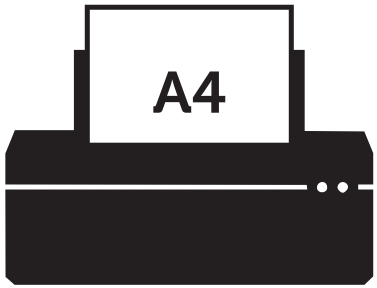
Who is it a problem for?

What social/ cultural factors shape this problem?

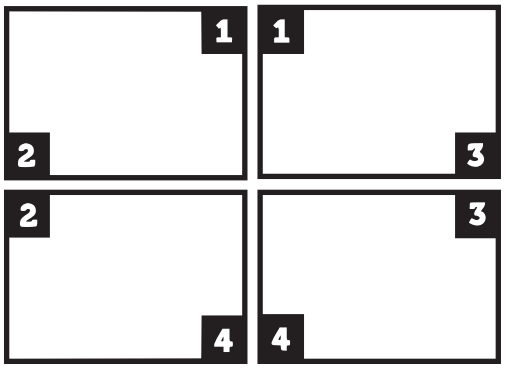
What evidence do you have that this is worth the investment?

Can you think of this problem in a different way? Can you reframe it?

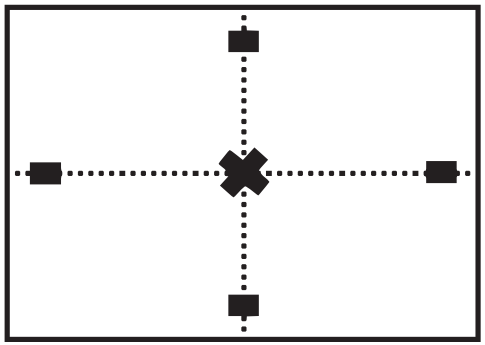
DOWNLOAD AND ASSEMBLE THE WORKSHEET IN DIFFERENT SIZES



1 Download the PDF file and print it in a normal A4 printer.

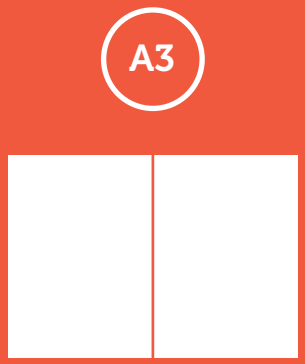


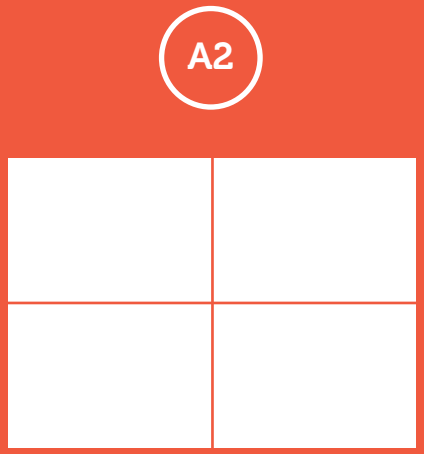
2 Align the worksheet prints according to the numbered boxes along the edge of the sheets.

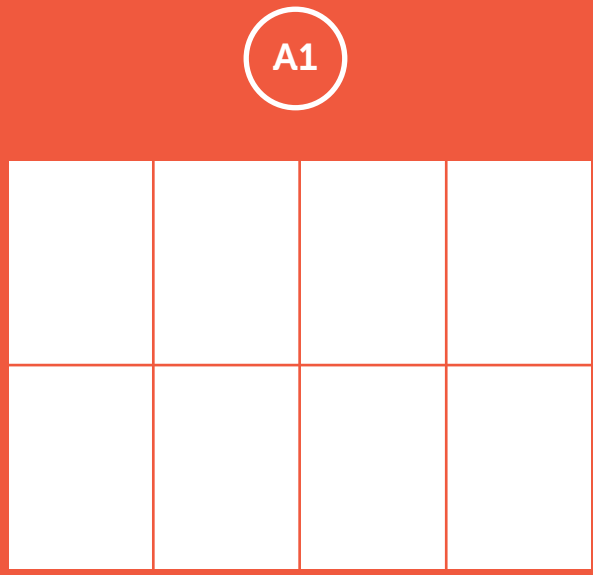


3 Join the aligned prints with cellotape or tacks and get started!

SIZE AND ORIENTATION GUIDE







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