An example of a Driver Diagram - How do I decrease my fuel costs?

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Overview

A driver diagram is an immensely powerful tool that helps you to translate a high level improvement goal into a logical set of underpinning goals ('drivers') and projects. It captures an entire change programme in a single diagram and also provides a measurement framework for monitoring progress.

The layout of a driver diagram is most easily explained via a simple example.

Imagine your personal goal was to reduce the amount you spend on petrol (i.e. 'decrease fuel costs'). The diagram below shows a typical driver diagram constructed around this goal.

To create a driver diagram:

- Start with a clearly defined, measurable goal. It should describe what you intend to achieve and by when.
- Get a group of people together who understand the different aspects of the improvement topic (i.e. subject matter experts). Ask them to brainstorm potential drivers (i.e. the areas where improvement is needed).
- Cluster the ideas to create an agreed set of 'drivers". Make sure you use language like "improve" or "decrease" and that each driver is clearly defined and measurable.
- Discuss the need for new drivers or whether some of the drivers should be eliminated (if they are wrong or immaterial)
- Identify the links between the drivers to create primary, secondary and tertiary drivers.
- Get the group to identify any balancing goals or balancing measures
- Select improvement projects that you believe will impact upon your drivers.

1. The goal

The driver diagram starts with a clearly defined and measurable goal. This is the focal point for your change efforts.

Decrease fuel costs

2. Primary drivers

The overall goal is linked here to three factors that are believed to have a direct impact on it (i.e. fuel costs will go down if you find cheaper fuel, reduce the number of miles you drive or increase your fuel efficiency).

This first set of underpinning goals are referred to as primary drivers because they 'drive' the achievement of your main goal.

These drivers may act independently or in concert to achieve the overall goal.

Primary drivers

- **Reduce fuel price per gallon** → Shop at a cheaper petrol station
- **Reduce miles driven** → Walk to work instead of driving / share a car
- **Increase efficiency (mpg)**

3. Lower level drivers

The process of breaking down a goal can continue to lower levels to create secondary or tertiary drivers (and even further if required).

Here it is done for one of the primary drivers. Increased efficiency can be achieved through technical improvements (i.e. the car's efficiency) or improvements in the way you drive it.

Secondary drivers

- **Increase car efficiency** → Buy a more fuel efficient car
- **Improve driving pattern**

Tertiary drivers

- **Decrease use of rapid acceleration**
- **Increase use of appropriate gears**
- **Decrease use of rapid braking**

4. Projects or actions

The ultimate aim of a driver diagram is to define the range of projects (i.e. actual change initiatives) that you may want to undertake. These can appear anywhere in the hierarchy of the driver diagram – wherever makes most sense.

Driver diagrams therefore help to break down an overall improvement goal into underpinning goals (i.e. 'drivers') to the point where you can easily define the changes that you need to undertake.

Improve driving habits, avoid unnecessarily accelerating and decelerating

5. Balancing goals or measures

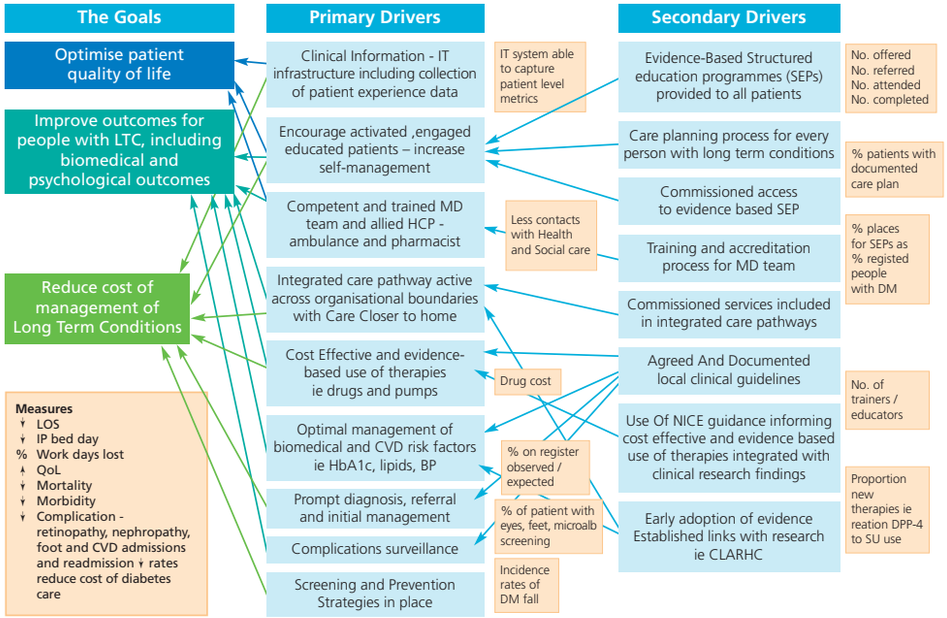
No increase in lateness for work

The goal you have chosen for your driver diagram will not exist in isolation. Often you will have identified related goals (which may have their own driver diagrams).

These goals represent a 'balancing' element to your change efforts. Here, decreasing your fuel costs should not occur at the expense of being routinely late for work (as you wait for the cheap petrol station to open!). This helps to shape the projects that you choose to undertake.

Frequently we choose just to measure performance against these balancing goals (rather than actively do something about them) – so we describe them as 'balancing measures').

Driver Diagram: Diabetes



Driver Diagram Aide Memoire

Hints and tips

Driver diagrams are a 'live' tool. They will change over time as you make changes to your system.

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If you can make your goal, drivers and project outcomes measurable you have created a measurement framework for determining progress. This will help you to monitor the change process without needing to purely relying on changes in performance against your overall goal. It will also help you to judge where more progress against a particular driver needs to occur.

If some drivers (or your overall goal) are heavily influenced by demographic factors (e.g. changes in population sizes), try to build these into your measures (e.g. by using rates or setting a reduced target figure) or add them to your measurement framework so that their impact can be monitored.

Creating a driver diagram with a team ensures that everyone understands your goal and how they can contribute towards achieving it. Get the right people there so that you have knowledge in the room from people who see all parts of the care process.

Always keep in mind that a driver diagram is an improvement tool. Stop identifying additional layers of drivers when is ceases to be helpful (i.e. when your improvement projects start to become apparent). Also be confident enough to prioritise your drivers by selecting quick wins or dismissing drivers that in reality have little impact. Don't automatically ignore drivers that seem outside of your control. Sometimes with some lateral thinking (or partnership working) you can influence them. Driver diagrams will vary from place to place - there is no definitive 'right' answer as your local situation may be very different from other parts of the country. Research evidence and local understanding will both shape your driver diagram.

What do people think of driver diagrams?

"It took us a few times to get it refined, we changed it six times; it was an intuitive process. But it really is the backbone of our strategy. We're now hanging project measures on to it."

"Driver diagrams are something that can be applied to any environment, any situation… It gets you into a structure of thinking where, even with a very complex and complicated programme, you can put that into context to another person."

"It enables us to move from a concept or an idea into starting to execute a programme and delivery very quickly. That has been a major difference to the way we work..."

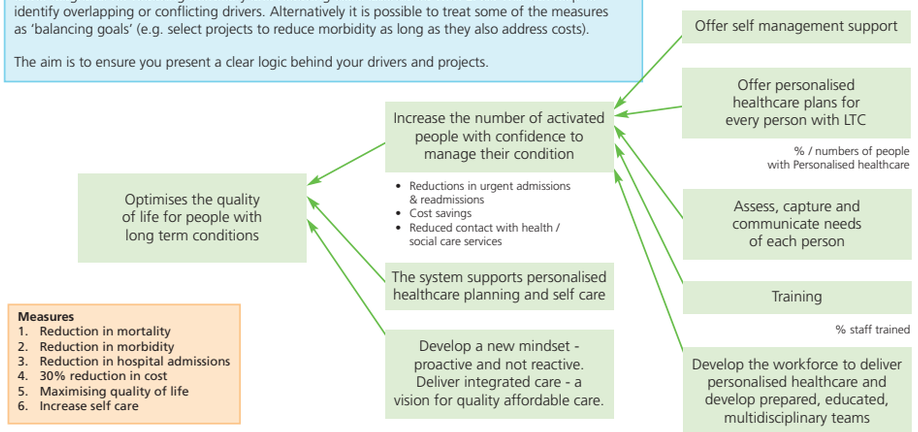
Optimise the quality of life for people with long term conditions

Comments

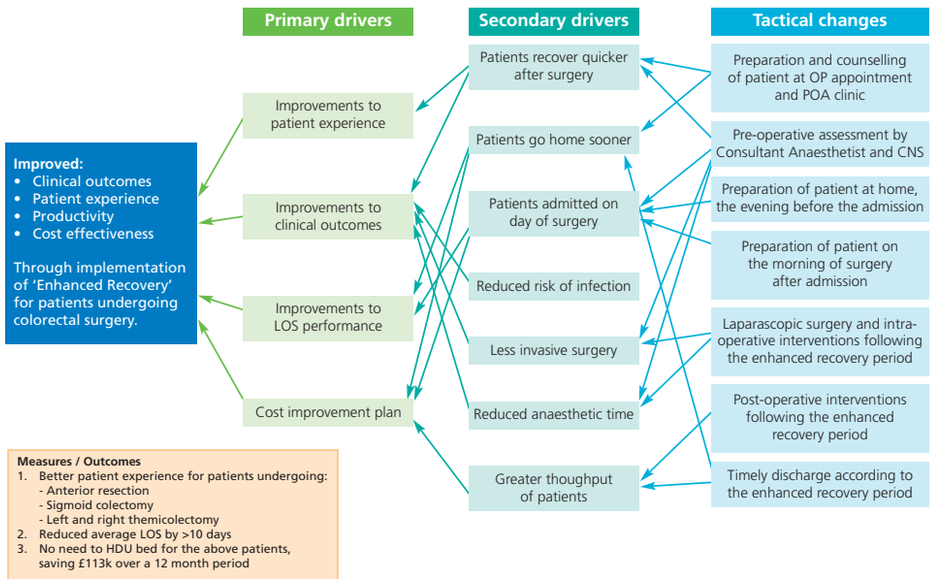
This driver diagram is still in the early stages of development and will be further refined by the team. Only some of the drivers and measures are shown.

Notice how the team has chosen to select multiple measures for their overall goal. In some situations this can cause confusion over which drivers relate to which overall measures. It can be clearer to do separate driver diagrams for each measurable goal. For example, it would be possible to do separate driver diagrams for reducing morbidity and reducing costs associated with LTCs. This can help to identify overlapping or conflicting drivers. Alternatively it is possible to treat some of the measures as 'balancing goals' (e.g. select projects to reduce morbidity as long as they also address costs).

The aim is to ensure you present a clear logic behind your drivers and projects.



Driver Diagram: Enhanced Recovery for Colorectal Surgery



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