

Improving strategic decision making: three development sessions from MDSN



Midlands
Decision Support
Network

This is an offer to all Midlands Integrated Care Systems (ICS) to help improve strategic decision making. It is part of the [Midlands Decision Support Network's](#) (MDSN) education and training programme; it comprises three highly interactive development sessions.

The sessions, which have been developed and run by the [Strategy Unit](#), are:

- 1. Decision quality for leaders.**
- 2. Using economic thinking to improve decision making.**
- 3. Thinking tools for decision making.**

They are all one-day sessions, designed to be run face-to-face for groups of 15-20 people. The focus is on strategic decision making, so sessions are best suited to current / aspiring decision makers and those advising them (e.g. senior analysts).

The three sessions can be run in combination or as single / stand-alone workshops. ICSs are responsible for registering the right people and managing the logistics; MDSN provides the content and runs the sessions, which are led by [Fraser Battye](#).

If you have any questions, please contact Rachel Caswell (rachel.caswell@nhs.net).
Information on each session is below.

1: Decision quality for leaders

Decision making is a fundamental, but neglected, route to improvement. Advance your practice with this development session



Decision making is a core leadership skill...



...and better decision making = better results.



Yet leaders rarely get a chance to focus on decision making...



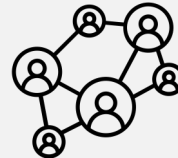
...and their teams / organisations / ICS often lack frameworks and tools needed to improve decision quality.



So [MDSN](#) is offering this specific session on strategic decision making.



Drawing insights from decision science, it is experiential, practical and with plenty of time to apply to your context...



...leaving you thinking differently, inspired and with plans for improvement.

The [Strategy Unit](#), working on behalf of the [Midlands Decision Support Network](#), has devised a development programme to improve decision quality. It is designed for current and aspiring leaders from across health and care services.

The programme is founded on the view that decision making is utterly fundamental - but that very few leaders, organisations or systems focus specific attention on it. (More of the underpinning thinking is set out [in these blogs](#)).

The programme is designed using insights from the literature, alongside research with senior decision makers in the Midlands. It is highly applied; participants have valued learning from the evidence and each other. Feedback has been excellent, and the content seems to resonate especially strongly with clinicians.

This one-day introductory session starts with a broad exploration of strategic decision making - and the evidence on what characterises better / worse practice. It then gets progressively more applied and specific. By the end, participants are equipped with tools, frameworks and methods for improving decision quality.

See [this short video](#) for more information.

2: Using economic thinking to improve decision making

Economic thinking is powerful when making decisions. But 'economics' remains mysterious and its power is often lost...



Many of us think 'economics' is all about finance...



...when really it's about making choices in all situations...



...where resources (e.g. time, staff) are scarce but needs are great.



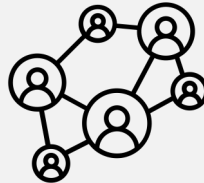
So economics is useful for all decision makers! Yet few have been 'formally' trained in it.



To address this gap, [MDSN](#) is offering this session.



Assuming no background in economics, the session is experiential, practical, interactive and with exercises to apply concepts to your context...



...leaving you with fresh, powerful new ways of thinking and acting

Right or wrong, economists rule the roost. Their way of viewing the world dominates business, government and public services. Yet the very mention of 'economics' can turn people off. And it is not obvious how it relates to improving population health.

The result? Not enough people in health and care know the positive power of economic thinking. Decision making suffers as a result.

So the [Strategy Unit](#), working on behalf of the [Midlands Decision Support Network](#), has devised a development session to help people understand and use economic thinking.

The day starts from first principles. Zero prior knowledge is required and there is heavy emphasis on demystifying jargon. At every point participants are given opportunity to reflect and apply the material to their work and their practice as a decision maker.

People will leave with new ways of seeing things. They will understand why cost and price are not the same thing, and why there is no such thing as a free lunch... Applying these approaches will help them to become more effective decision makers.

For more information, see [this short video](#).

3: Thinking tools for decision making

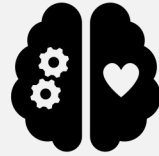
High quality decision making needs high quality thinking. Specific tools and methods can improve individual and group thought



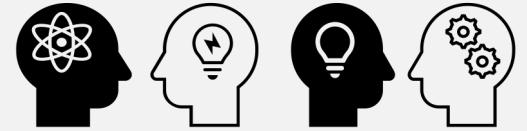
Many problems are complex and debated...



...requiring multiple perspectives to understand them...



...and creative, critical, clear thinking to address them.



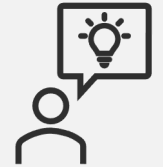
So thinking matters. But good quality thinking – especially shared thinking – is difficult.



To address this need, [MDSN](#) is offering this session.



It offers structured methods for understanding problems, creating solutions and analysing them before implementing. It helps you see things differently...



...giving you new ways of approaching decision making

Health and care services need people who can think clearly, flexibly and analytically. People who can cast new light on familiar problems, and create new routes around long-standing obstacles.

They need people with strong thinking skills. The good news is that these skills can be learnt. So the [Strategy Unit](#), working on behalf of the [Midlands Decision Support Network](#), has devised a development on ‘thinking tools for decision making’.

Many of the tools are designed for group working and decision making. So the session is especially useful for people who lead teams / organisations – or are set to do so.

The session is informal and interactive. You will choose which tools to cover, from a selection including: pre-mortems; problem trees; regression to the mean; breaking the rules; the complex and the complicated; thinking on the margin; Eeyore (!); Ulysses pacts, and many more.

Participants will gain new perspectives, helping them become more independent and analytical thinkers, with practical tools to support them in future. This [short video](#) provides more information.

**Headline feedback from previous
runs of these sessions**

“Excellent...Made me think about how I make decisions. Has certainly changed how I research my ideas and present papers. Learnt excellent ideas for how to bring ideas from pilots to pathways”

‘I am glad I did it! Made some complex economic concepts relatable, accessible and useable. I would definitely recommend!’

“We were given time to digest and use real examples. The timing was great. Excellent trainer - thoroughly enjoyable day and learnt a lot.”

“Incredibly powerful framework that can help reduce significant concepts and problems into more manageable “chunks” to resolve and move forward with”

- ✓ 96% of attendees enjoyed the workshops
- ✓ 96% left with a better understanding of how to improve decision quality in their team or organisation
- ✓ 82% left being able to apply a method or tool for improving decision quality

28 respondents having attended session 2 and/or 3 of the DQ programme.