



ICiPS

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**The Institute for
Continuous Improvement
in Public Services**



The basic concepts of continuous improvement

Our courses

This is the foundation for all our training modules

Courses are tailored to meet the needs of all people and functions within an organisation.

This course can be copied and shared in its entirety but you are not permitted to use extracts.



An introduction to continuous improvement

This introductory module introduces the concepts of continuous improvement (CI). At the end of it you should understand:

- What continuous improvement is
- The role you play
- Some ways in which you can start to identify improvements



'So what is continuous improvement ?'

CI is a way of working where the identification and implementation of improvement is an integral part of daily activities.

Improvements delivered through a CI approach could result in:

- Reduced costs
- Better insight
- Faster processing
- Better quality output
- Less errors
- Less frustration with things going wrong or waiting for things

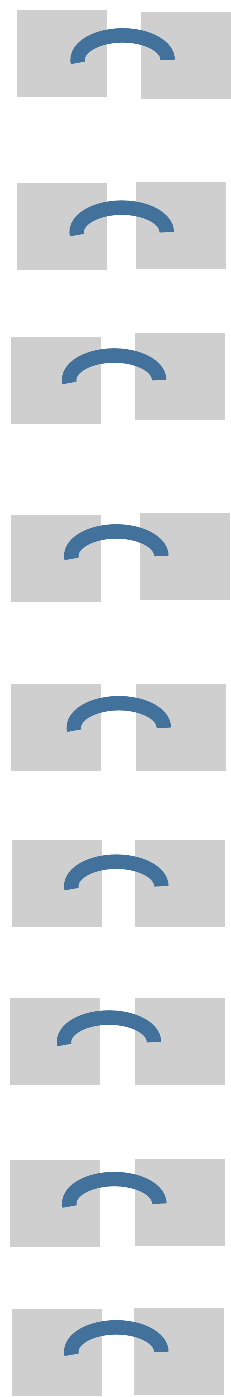
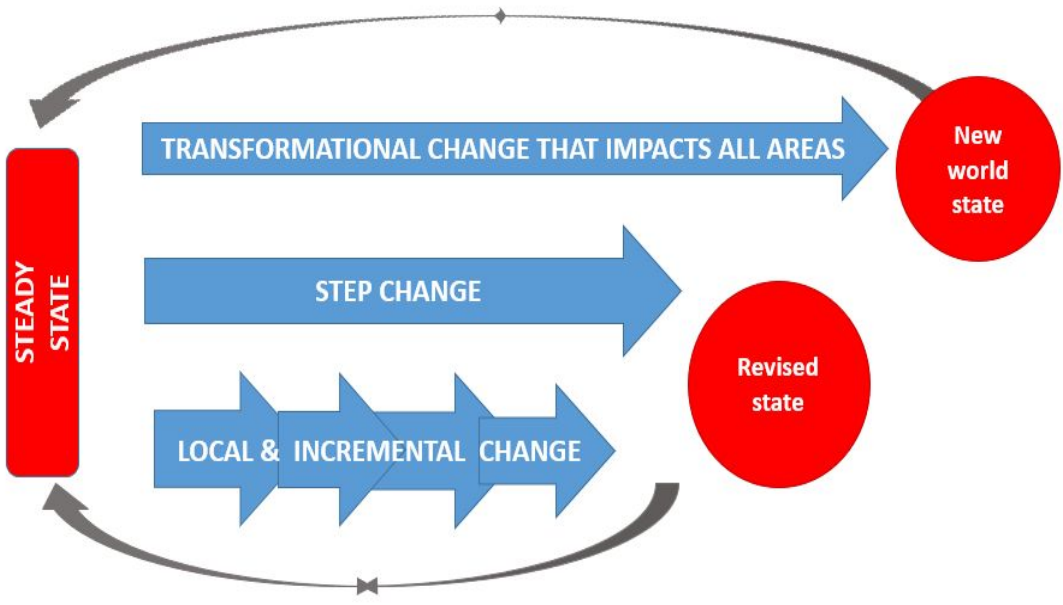


Continuous improvement is delivered through 3 types of change;

- 1. Incremental change;** a series of small changes which may be low impact, and take only minutes or hours to introduce.
- 2. Step change;** a planned piece of work to address a known & defined issue – often delivered by a specialist team over the course of days, weeks or months.
- 3. Transformational change;** fundamentally alters the way things are done, likely to be led by a Board and delivered over months or years.



It is typical for all types of change to co-exist



‘ I thought that was Lean Six Sigma?’

Not exactly -

Throughout time sectors including manufacturing, science and medicine have developed tools and approaches to help understand outputs and improve performance.

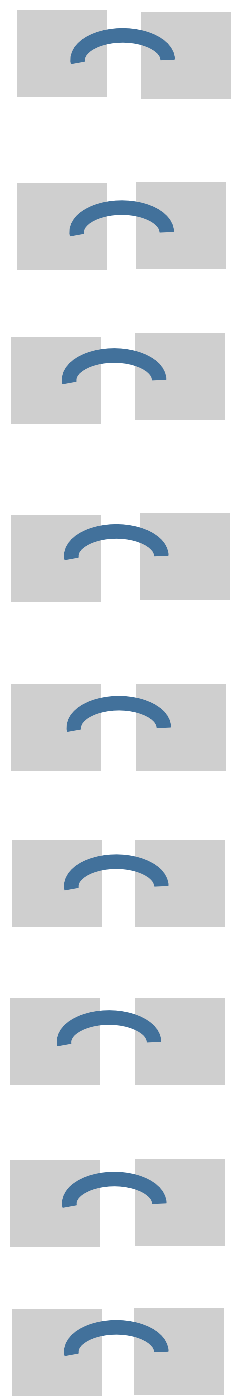
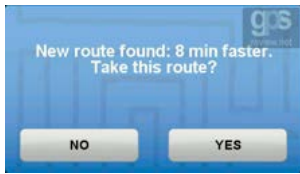
Over the years many have been set within frameworks that provide a logical application pathway from problem definition to introducing improvements. Some have been branded, most notably Lean and Six Sigma.

Tools remain in use outside of these framework, and you may find them referred to by slightly different names in different industries.

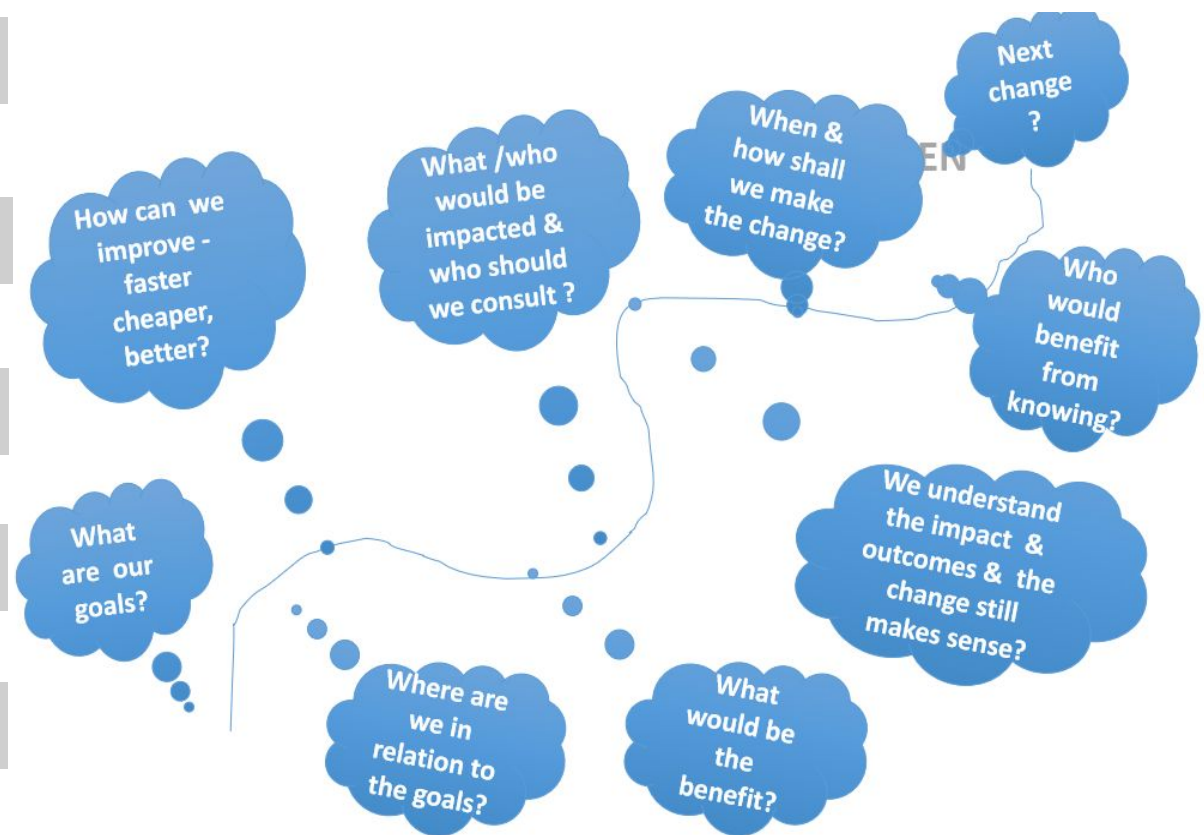


'Isn't continuous improvement the domain of experts or our change team?.'

NO – continuous improvement is something we practice in our daily lives; we can apply the same principles in the workplace



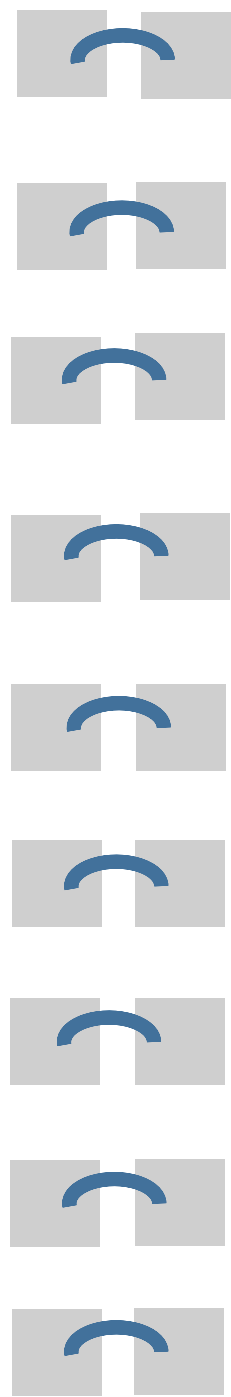
The questions we apply in our personal life are the same we would ask at work



'I meet targets so why bother with continuous improvement?'

Continuous improvement provides benefits for all

- 1. **Benefit to the customer** – more efficient and effective service/ product, improved satisfaction
- 2. **Benefit to your organisation** – meet organisational objectives, meet emerging challenges more proactively, reduce complaints, reduce cost of delivery
- 3. **Benefits to you** – enhanced job satisfaction, more ownership of your work, increased interaction with colleagues, less failure demand to manage leaving more time for work that adds value



and... nothing stays the same

Although things may be going well today, the environment in which organisations exist constantly change.

This provides opportunities to do things differently and the necessity to meet changing demands.

Adopting a mindset of continuously improving can help meet these challenges more proactively.

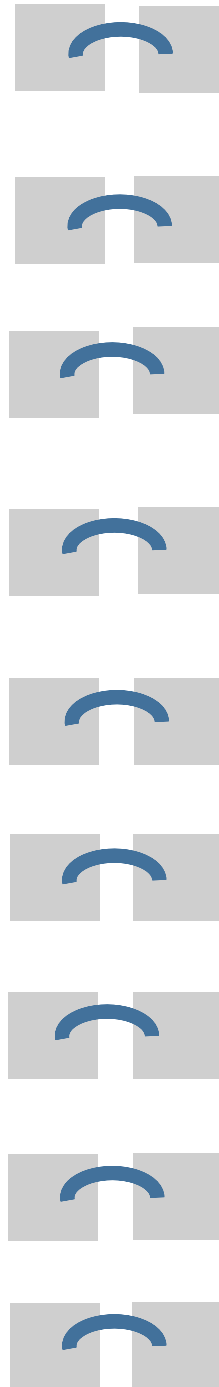


You have vital insight into improvement opportunities

Every employee has a responsibility to perform their work as effectively and efficiently possible.

As the people doing the job, employees are ideally placed to identify how things could be done better.

Every employee should be aware of what they do, the impact of their work on others. They should remain vigilant in order to identify opportunities to improve the timeliness, quality and efficiency of the tasks they perform.



‘ I get all that but we have a change team , isn’t this their role?’

No!

Change team role

These teams are trained in advanced techniques so they can lead complex change projects and offer help and guidance.

Your role

Identifying and implementing small changes within your immediate area of work.

Supporting larger projects, as required by CI teams.

Ensuring opportunities to improve within the wider environment are flagged



'I can't make changes as ideas have to be submitted for approval'

CI requires employees to be empowered to make change, so where things go wrong, or opportunities for improvement are identified, changes can be introduced as quickly as and seamlessly as possible.

Discuss what changes you are empowered to make with your line manager.

CI is about **employees taking ownership** of the change process wherever possible.

Even small changes can be beneficial and many small change can lead to something great.



'If all employees are making changes there would be chaos !'

CI is not about a free for all, it is about:

- Change within defined and allowable boundaries
- Change that is introduced after having confirmed it would not cause a negative impact on other parts of the process
- Introducing what is known to work well and best practice

If it is a change that isn't in your remit to make, at least the idea is shared and ready for the right people to pick up



Understanding the operating environment will help identify & deliver improvements



1. Organisational purpose
2. The role you play in delivering against purpose
3. The end-to-end process for the service you deliver
4. Your customers & suppliers
5. The internal and external stakeholders with an interest in your work
6. The support functions that enable you to deliver
7. What your customers consider to be critical to quality



‘What do you mean by purpose?’

An organisation exists to provide something that the customer wants / finds of value; this is its ‘Purpose’ – the reason for the organisations’ existence.

At the very least you should understand what the purpose is, but ideally you will also empathise with the purpose as this will mean you are more likely to be motivated to want to deliver as efficiently and as effectively as possible.



'Our organisation has a vision, is this different to purpose ?'

Yes - the Vision summarises the long term aspirations of an organisation in delivering its core purpose.

It provides a route map for development.



Purpose is the core reason you exist as an organisation / team



Ensuring purpose is met

A strategic business plan that covers a period between 3 and 5 years, will lay out how the organisations purpose and vision will be met.

Specific activities will be detailed in an annual delivery plan, which this in turn is cascaded into team and personal objectives. You may hear this process referred to as strategy deployment.

Continuous improvement across every part of the organisation will be an integral part of these plans.



'Why do I need to understand all of this?'

Every employee is a vital cog in a system of operators who to meet a hierarchy of objectives.

For the cogs to move in unison you need a high level understanding of the process from start to finish.

You will then understand your contribution to the process, dependencies between each 'cog' and any blockages and duplication between each cog.



Right first time

It helps to be clear on what you require from the person that supplies you, and what your customer requires from you.

This way you can collaborate to ensure that you have everything you need to do your job right first time; and you pass on to the next person in the chain so they can do their job right first time.

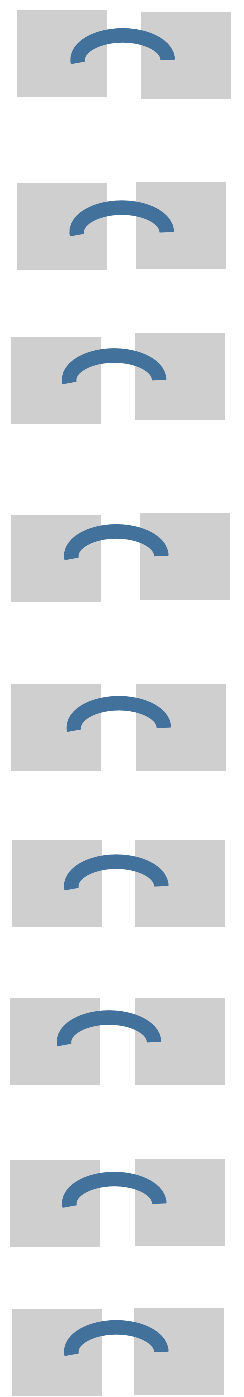
Moreover the end customer gets what they need – right first time.



' When you talk about customer need – we don't have customer'

Every employee has a customer. Your customer may be the person that your send things to, rather than the end recipient of the service.

Not only should you take time to understand what your direct customer needs, but understanding what the end customer needs will provide the context for your work – the end goal.



' Our end customers don't pay , they need our services regardless so does this matter?'

Absolutely; failure to meet customer need often incurs cost. This could be the cost of dealing with complaints, re-work, repeat calls, wasting time waiting for something.

This is called the 'cost of poor quality' and eliminating this is one of the key aims of continuous improvement.

More importantly - in the public sector where customers are reliant on public services; failure to meet their needs - right first time - can be catastrophic.



‘What's in it for me?’

There are many benefits to understanding the ‘embracing CI :

- Get to know your colleagues and work with them to remove things that don't add value
- Develop your knowledge and skills
- Learn more about how your organisation works - this could open doors
- Become an innovator !
- Become part of a CI community
- Contribute to ensuring value for money in the delivery of public services – after all we all pay for these one way or another



‘OK I am convinced but where do ideas for improvement come from?’

Opportunities for improvement are all around, you need to remain aware of, and open to ideas.



See, don't just look

Listen, don't just hear

Imagine, don't just accept

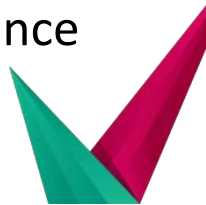
Question, find out why or why not

Tools to help identify opportunities to improve and stimulate ideas are available in later modules



‘Have you any quick tips to help identify improvement opportunities?’

1. Ask why 5 times to gain greater understanding of why something doesn't work; understand why something is done as it is. Why do I do it this way? .. and why is that? ... and why is that?
2. Pretend you are someone else watching you work, what would they see? What would they question?
3. Be aware of what causes extra work and frustration as these are likely to be things that could be improved
4. Talk to the people who are before and after you in the process and ask how to smooth transition
5. Rewind- ask what has changed since something stopped working



‘What I do is too complex to find ways to improve so what can I do?’

If things seem complex, try looking at the individual steps rather than the whole.

Our 3 step ABC approach which you can learn in the next module, is based on breaking down tasks into their individual elements.

This approach will turn something that is complex into something that is simple; making each elements easier to review.



'If it a small change worth it ? and will people question why I am bothering?'

Absolutely! ; A change may only be small, delivering a 'marginal gain' but it has been shown time and again that changes that result in improvements of as little as +1% , can make a huge difference when summed over time or across an organisation.

The Olympic cycling team attribute their Olympic success to the fact that each person identified a way to improve efficiency at every step by just 1%.



' ... and where do I find time ?'

CI is a way of thinking and working that enables you to recognise opportunities to do things differently.

CI is being aware of everything around you, being open to ideas and opportunities for improvement. Awareness does not take time, it is a state of mind.

Implementing change may take time but the long term benefit should outweigh the initial effort.

CI includes small incremental change that is within your remit to make. These are likely to be adjustments that take little time.



'So is that what CI is all about ?'

Yes, CI at work is simply a way of thinking and doing that draws on a natural instinct to be more efficient and effective in what we do and how we do it.

It is something we should all do at work , as we do in our own lives; ensuring our organisations are in the best position to meet present and emerging demands.

Don't forget; CI is a never ending journey not a one off activity.

CI is an integral part of work and not a bolt on activity.



Remember – the key questions every employee should continually ask

- What is our customer need / our purpose?
- How do we work together to deliver as efficiently and effectively as possible?
- What do people need from me and what do I need from them in order to perform effectively?
- How well are things working?
- What are our immediate challenges ?
- How can things be done better?
- What opportunities and threats are there in the wider operating environment that we need to address?



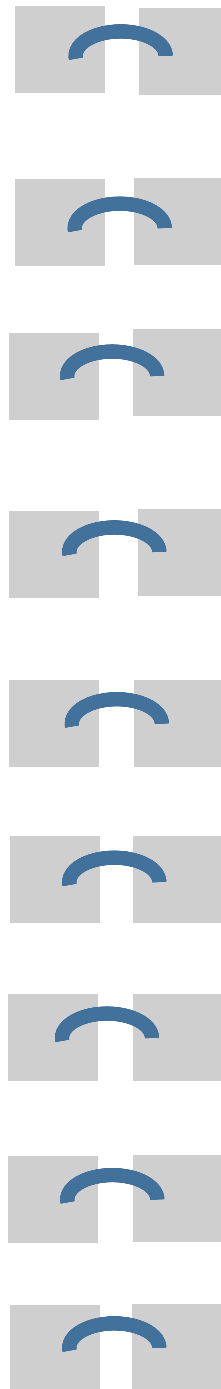
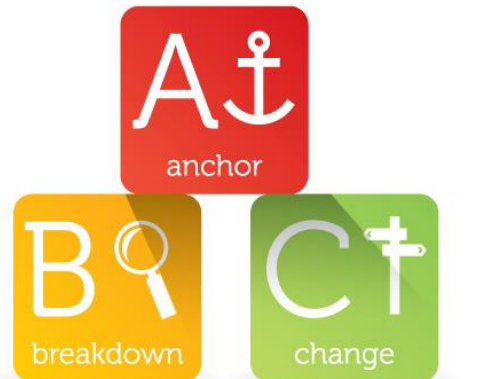
Next steps

Register for access to our training store and learn more.

Our free interactive course contains practical tools and tips, along with quizzes to check understanding.

Once complete you will receive a certificate

- we try to make CI as easy as ABC



Organisations with CI embedded have:

- Exemplar leadership
- Strong and inter-relating structures
- Empowered employees
- Motivated employees
- Efficient and effective delivery
- Happy customers
- They seamlessly adjust to meet future needs

Deploy our free CI maturity assessment and understand how well CI is embedded in your organisation and benchmark your progress year to year



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