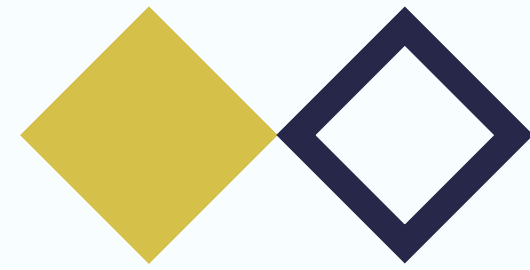


How to: Overall Problem Statements



Isla's Story

Scotland's Independent Care Review used what it heard from real children and young people to create **composite stories** about the care system. These are stories about fictional people, made up from experiences which actually happened.

Isla's story is one of these, and has been used in the example below.

Problem Basics

What is the is the general problem?

Isla's experience of care has been patchy and disruptive, so she is struggling to cope.

How do you know it is a problem?

Isla's mental health has been a recurring problem, and she doesn't always go to school.

Who is it a problem for?

For Isla, her birth family, care family, the school and local authority.

Where and when is it a problem?

In Isla's home and school. Isla doesn't go to school around 10-12 times a month, and often has 'bad days.'

What social and cultural factors affect the issue?

Isla's current school is in a relatively 'well-off' area, and there is a lot of pressure to act and dress a certain way.

Overall Problem Statement

The problem is...

Isla is not attending school, and so her school work and friendships are being affected.

It affects...

Isla, her foster parents, the school and local authority.

We plan to change...

How Isla is supported to attend school, particularly when she is having a 'bad day.'

So that...

Isla can learn, thrive and keep stable friendships.

Using Overall Problem Statements

What they're for

A problem statement helps you become completely clear about the issue, problem or challenge you are trying to find a solution for.

Tackling big issues can be very complex, so it can be hard to know where to start. Problem statements help you to 'chunk up' things that lead to the big issues, turning them into actionable elements.

Even if it seems obvious what a problem is, spending a bit of time on it will still pay off. When people see it even just a little bit differently, it can have a significant impact later in the process.

How they're used

First agree the scale for your problem statement: are you looking at the big issue, or focusing in on an important element?

Work through the sections and agree how your answers should be worded.

Discuss what's missing. Should this form another problem statement, or be included in the current one somehow?

When to use them

Do this at the start and keep coming back to it throughout the process.

Keep checking if it's still the right problem you're solving!

Top tip

Creating problem statements is a group activity, but try to create them individually or in smaller groups first. When you share them, you'll find that either everyone is very clear what your problem is, or that there are different perspectives and angles to consider. Either of these things can be useful!