SWOT analysis
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Why is it used?
Enables a group to analyse possible courses of action.

This tool is a method of analysing data and is solution-focused.

How is it run?

- Decide on a situation or focus on a particular aspect of the organisation. Participants can either work as individuals or in groups.

- Each group can consider all four elements or groups can be allocated one of the four aspects to look at in depth.

| Strengths (Usually within the organisation)	Weaknesses (Usually within the organisation)	**Questions to consider:** How can we best exploit our strengths? How can we address our weaknesses? How can we ensure we take advantage of opportunities? How can we anticipate or mitigate against threats and develop strategies for turning them into opportunities?
Opportunities (Often with consideration beyond the organisation)	**Threats** (Often with consideration beyond the organisation)	

Diamond nine

This tool is designed to produce lots of discussion between staff in a relatively short space of time.

How is it run?

- Participants are given a long list of issues or questions. They are asked to select 9 of the most important items and place them on a diamond shaped grid like this one.
- The most important item is placed in the apex of the diamond. The least important of the 9 is placed at the bottom of the diamond. Items in each row are of equal importance.
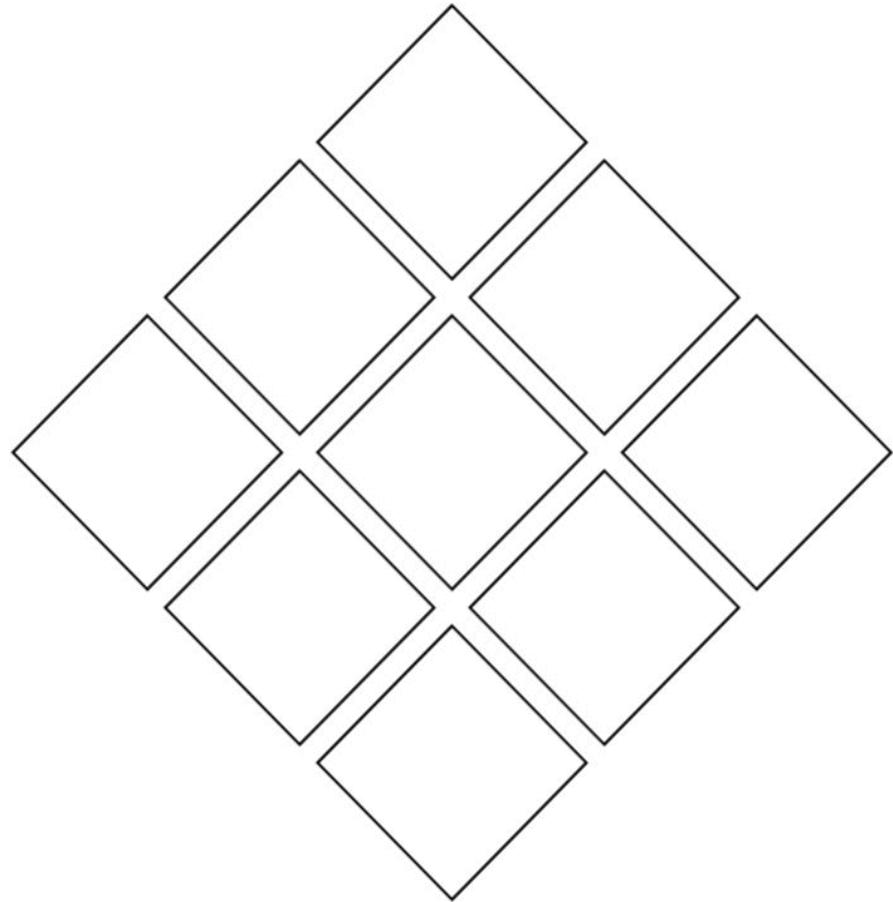
Group action planning

This format for action planning works backwards from a collective vision and encourages groups to consider the specific changes they want to achieve before deciding on actions, resources, timescales, etc.
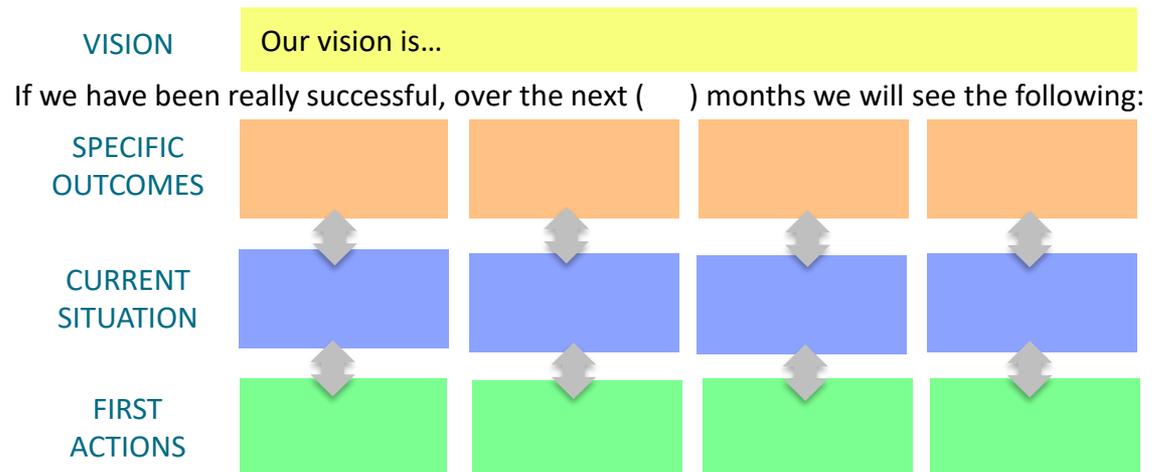
How is it run?

Step 1: The group agree what their vision is for the aspect of practice they wish to change and write that succinctly in the yellow box.

Step 2: They then imagine that their forthcoming intervention has been a fabulous success and consider what different aspects of practice would look like; what would be happening for teachers, pupils, etc. This is recorded in the orange boxes.

Step 3: Then, for each orange box, they consider what this is like currently. This is recorded in the blue boxes

Step 4: They then decide what is the first action to be taken for each of the blue boxes. Sometime one action will address more than one aspect. This is recorded in the green boxes.

Finally this can feed into a more familiar action-planning format that specifies SMART targets, identifies who will take the action and identifies any resources required.

VISION	Our vision is…			

If we have been really successful, over the next (   ) months we will see the following:

SPECIFIC OUTCOMES				
CURRENT SITUATION				
FIRST ACTIONS				

Dotocracy

This tool helps with consensus and prioritisation.

How is it run?

Each person is given a fixed number of sticky dots which they use as 'votes.' The number of dots is decided by the facilitator.

Everyone must use all of their votes.

Votes can be split; for example, if there are five dots, you can use all five in one vote or split the votes into a 2, 2, 1, etc.
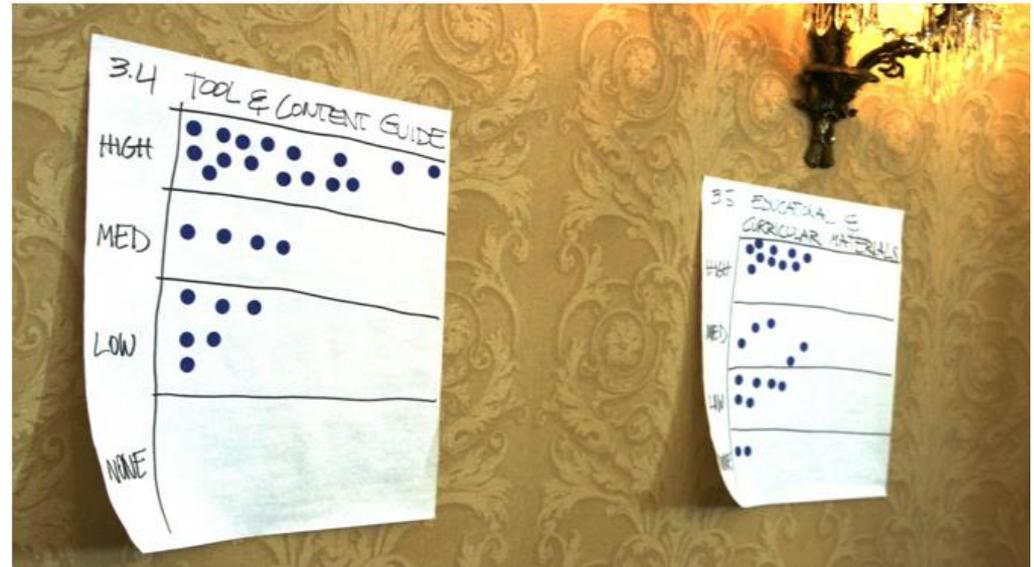
It can be used in various ways:

• if a group has generated several ideas and needs to agree which to take forward.

• if red, amber and green dots are used, voters can identify their most preferred with green and least preferred with red, etc.

Radiant thinking

This tool is rather like group mind mapping. It generates deeper thinking about an issue and can lead to people considering an issue from different points of view.
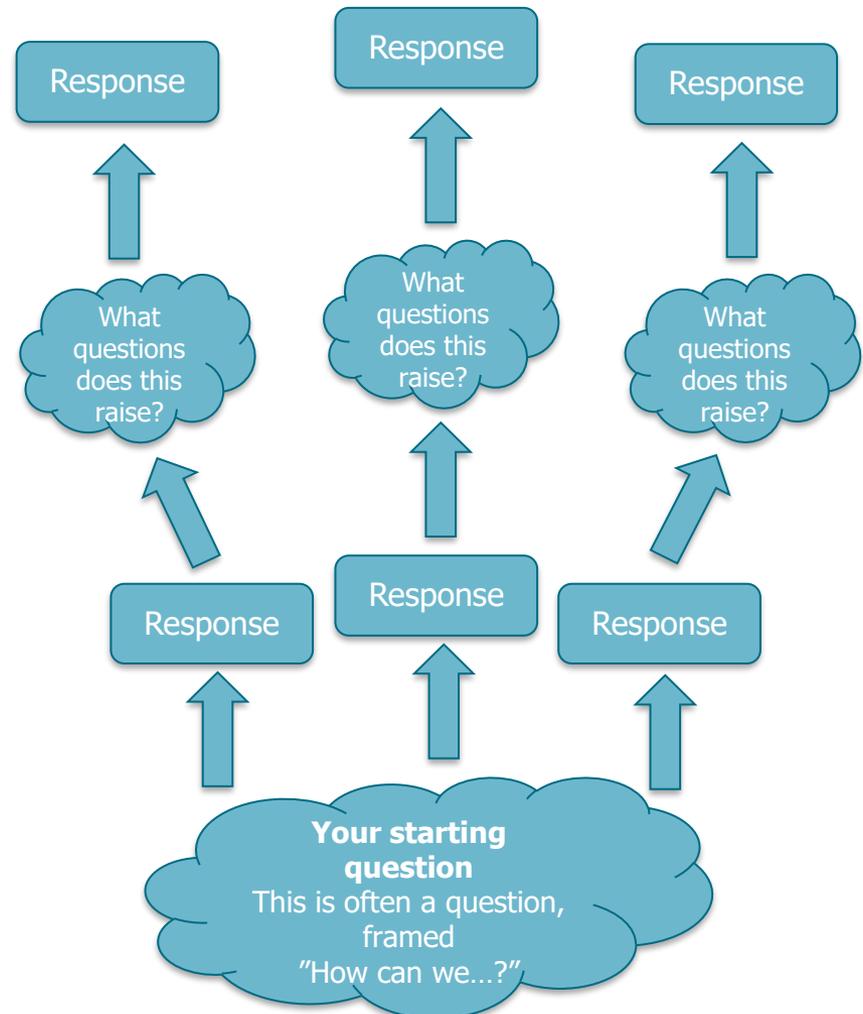
How is it run?

- Take a large sheet of paper.
- Start at the bottom or left hand edge of the paper and write the key question you would like to address and generate thinking about. (Framing this question well really helps the activity to work.)
- Ask the group to suggest responses to this question, agree as a group how you will summarise the key responses, and write them in response boxes
- Consider: What further questions does this generate?
- Record the next layers of responses

When you have enough responses and ideas, you may like to extract these from this sheet and ask the group to prioritise them using another process.

Response

Response

Response

What questions does this raise?

What questions does this raise?

What questions does this raise?

Response

Response

Response

Your starting question
This is often a question, framed
"How can we...?"

RAG rating

This tool is simply asking people to record their views in relation to a particular aspect of the school, noting:

- Things that we already do well (Green post-it notes)
- Things we do so-so, or could improve (Amber post-it notes)
- Things that we don't do so well or don't do yet (Red post-it notes)

After this exercise, the group could look at the amber things and pose a question around one or two of these, for example, "What is stopping this from working as well as it could?"

Equally, you could take the red post-it notes and ask which of these should be a priority for development. You could use either diamond nine or dotocracy to do this.
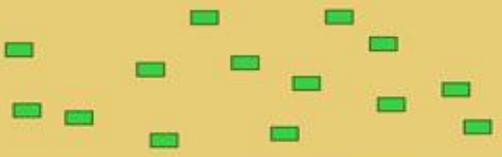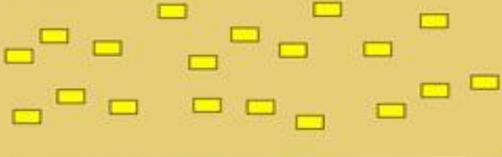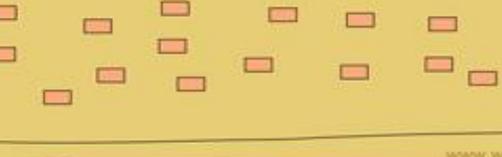
Problem Solving Team Building (PSTB)

Why is it used?
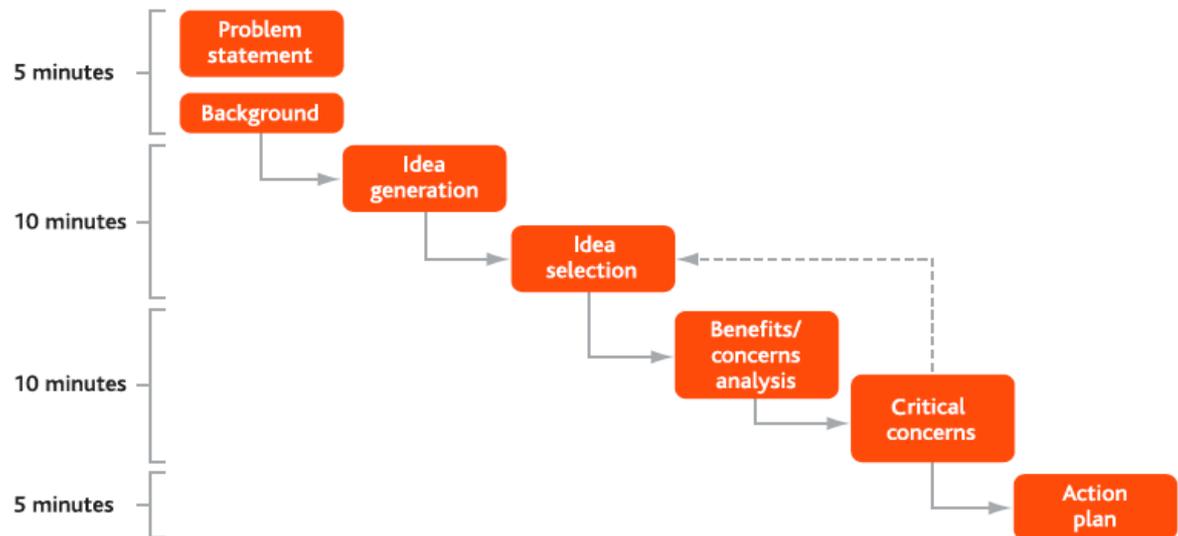Enables a group of people to develop solutions to the root causes of issues.

PSTB creates breakthrough progress on an intractable problem by harnessing the team's power. It is an antidote to unstructured, time-consuming meetings that discuss problems but seldom agree a way forward. It provides a structured approach to problem solving and the 'problem owner' walks away with an action plan.

How is it run?

The team works with the 'problem owner,' helped by a facilitator, to create lists on a flipchart following the steps described below:

- Problem statement: a simple, "How do I…?" question
- Idea generation: a rapid brainstorm for everyone
- Idea selection: the problem owner picks the two to three most promising ideas
- Benefits and concerns: assess each of the selected ideas
- Critical concerns: may eliminate an idea if it cannot be overcome
- Action plans: provide a blueprint for addressing the problem

30-minute example

5 minutes — Problem statement / Background
10 minutes — Idea generation / Idea selection
10 minutes — Benefits/concerns analysis / Critical concerns
5 minutes — Action plan

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a simple technique often used with more sophisticated tools. It encourages group members to think freely and widely, go beyond the limits of customary thought and generate fresh ideas.

Why is it used?
Enables a group to gather different perspectives on an issue.

How is it run?

During the session
- State the problem or issue clearly and ensure everyone understands
- Explain the process and time limit
- Encourage individuals to contribute ideas freely
- Capture the ideas with no judgments and contribute only a few ideas personally

After brainstorming
- The group can examine ideas one by one and either expand, combine or eliminate some
- Cluster ideas if they say the same thing
- If the ideas need prioritising, invite the participants to vote
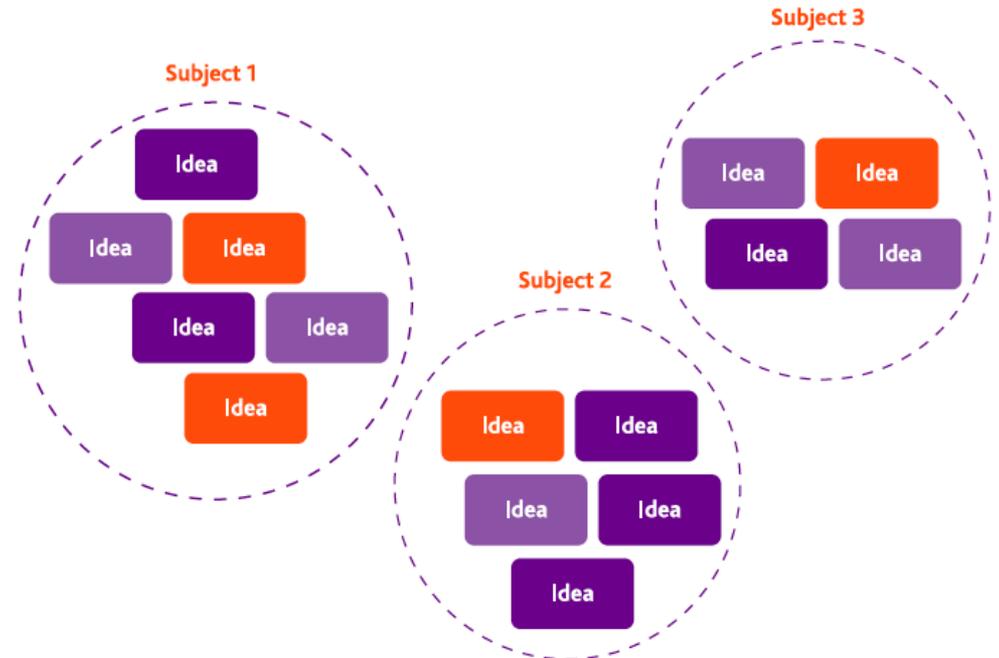
Fishbone analysis

This tool gets its name from how it appears when drawn out, with a problem statement to one side. A 'spine' extends from this statement with lines branching off it on which the team records sub-issues.

How is it run?

- Write the problem statement on the right-hand side of a large sheet of paper
- Draw a straight, horizontal line to the left (like the backbone of a fish)
- Draw stems at a 45⁰ angle to the backbone line
- At the end of each of these stems, brainstorm five or six key factors
- Break each key factor into subsidiary factors that must be understood before moving on to solutions in the development phase

Note: encourage the team to brainstorm each main 'fishbone' in turn. Perhaps each member could take responsibility for facilitating the brainstorming of one main bone. This way it also becomes a team-building exercise.
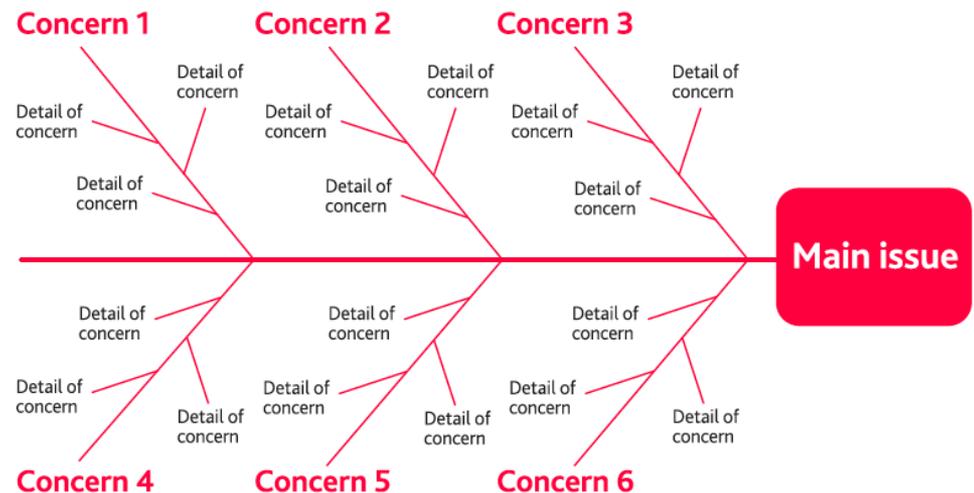
Working in this way, teams begin to understand the elements contributing to a perceived problem.

Fishbone analysis is a good tool to help teams explore the perceived difficulties of multi-agency working, for example.

Five whys

This tool is similar to the fishbone analysis. This technique beings with a clear problem / issue statement and allows teams to interrogate the statement with the question, "Why?", repeated five times.

Five whys and fishbone analysis have been used extensively by schools to avoid moving into 'fix it' mode too quickly, where solutions may address symptoms rather than cure causes.

Why is it used?
Helps teams understand the underlying root of a problem or issue.

How is it run?

- Start your analysis by writing a concise statement on the left of a large sheet of paper
- Move to the right and pose the question: "Why is that?"
- Capture the answers in a short, succinct phrase
- Gradually work from left to right as you pose the same question, "Why?", at each successive level of analysis
- Try to work each branch of your analysis to five levels, or until you reach a root cause, before returning to a higher level and analysing another branch of the issue

Prioritisation matrix

This visual tool is a quick, effective way to generate group consensus about what should be a priority.

Why is it used?
Enables groups to short-list a large number of items, such as challenges or opportunities, into a more manageable number

How is it run?

List all the possibilities for action and rate them according to:

- **Impact:** if we did this, what positive impact would it have on fulfilling our objective? (Low, medium, high)
- **Desirability:** just how pressing is the desire to do this? (Low, medium, high)

Then plot each on the prioritisation matrix accordingly and moderate their relative positioning in the matrix to arrive at a sensible distribution.

Write each item on a sticky note and, taking them in turn, ask the team to rate items on impact and desirability.

The ideal outcome is to have items distributed across the matrix so only a few fall in the top right-hand box.