

# LEARNING HANDBOOK

Guidance and tools to support systematic learning before, during and after project activity in health and care

## After action review

An After Action Review (AAR) is a method of evaluation that is used when outcomes of an activity or event, have been particularly successful or unsuccessful. It aims to capture learning from these tasks to avoid failure and promote success for the future.

| Tool                | Time  | Resources | Physicality | Interactivity |
|---------------------|-------|-----------|-------------|---------------|
| After action review | ★★★★★ | ★★★★★     | ★★★★★       | ★★★★★         |

### When?

An AAR should be used at any point where there has been an unexpected outcome – whether it be positive or negative. It is usually focused on task-based events during a project.

### Who?

Everyone who was involved in the particular task / activity / event which is to be reviewed, has a role to play.

Developed by the US Army, the AAR should be carried out with the intent of 'leaving the stripes at the door' so everyone has an equal opportunity to input and learn. The AAR focuses not on accountability but on learning.

A facilitator is also required to introduce the task and assist participants.

### How?

The overall time required for the session is around 30 minutes to an hour.

A facilitator should introduce the session and aim to create a space everyone feels comfortable in to openly and honestly share their views and experiences. A prerequisite of an AAR is that everyone feels they can equally contribute without fear of blame or retribution.

Firstly, the group should define together what the intended outcome was as 'what was meant to happen'.

Then, the group should define what actually happened and whether this contributed to either the success or failure of the task – again, this is about identifying unexpected events both positive and negative, not those who are responsible for them.

Then the group should aim to understand the differences between the intended and actual outcomes and what can be learned – should the outcomes be avoided or aimed for in the future?

The facilitator keeps track of time and can play a role in recording centrally what emerged from the activity. Review of the notes / key points is completed at the end for further discussion. The

notes should then be captured by the team as part of a [knowledge asset](#) for the project to be shared within the wider organisation.

### Things you need:

- Facilitator
- An open, safe space for discussion and movement
- Flipcharts/sticky notes and pens

### Further reading:

- NHS eLearning - [After action review e-learning](#)
- Health and Social Care Information Centre - [After action review postcard](#)

