

# 5Ws&1H

## What is it?

A structured questioning technique used to explore a situation, problem, or opportunity from multiple angles. It helps teams gain clarity, uncover root causes, and generate ideas by asking six key questions: What, Where, When, Why, Who, and How.

## When to use it?

- At the start of a project or improvement initiative
- When diagnosing a problem or exploring a process
- During workshops or team discussions to prompt deeper thinking
- As part of root cause analysis or service reviews

### Benefits at a glance....

- Structured questioning tool for exploring problems or opportunities
- Uses six key questions: What, Where, When, Why, Who, and How
- Builds a full picture of the situation
- Encourages team discussion and shared understanding
- Supports root cause analysis and decision-making
- Easy to use in workshops, meetings, or individual reflection

## Why to use it?

- Encourages comprehensive understanding of a situation
- Helps uncover assumptions and gaps in knowledge
- Promotes collaborative problem-solving
- Supports clear communication and decision-making

## How to use it?

- **Frame the issue:** Define the topic or problem you want to explore
- **Ask the six questions:**
  - **What** is happening?
  - **Where** is it happening?
  - **When** does it occur?
  - **Why** is it happening?
  - **Who** is involved or affected?
  - **How** is it being done or managed?
- **Capture responses:** Use a whiteboard, flipchart, or digital tool to record answers
- **Analyse findings:** Look for patterns, contradictions, or areas needing further investigation
- **Use insights:** Apply what you've learned to inform decisions, design improvements, or guide next steps.



## Tips

- **Use it visually:** Create a mind map or grid to organise responses and spot connections
- **Tailor the questions:** Adjust wording to suit your context e.g. “What’s working well?” or “Why do users prefer this method?”
- **Combine with other tools:** Use alongside Fishbone diagrams or 5 Whys for deeper analysis
- **Keep it focused:** Don’t try to answer everything at once - break complex issues into smaller parts
- **Encourage diverse input:** Invite different perspectives to enrich the discussion and avoid blind spots
- **Document outcomes:** Capture key insights and agreed actions to support follow-up and accountability.