

## Quick Guide to Action Learning

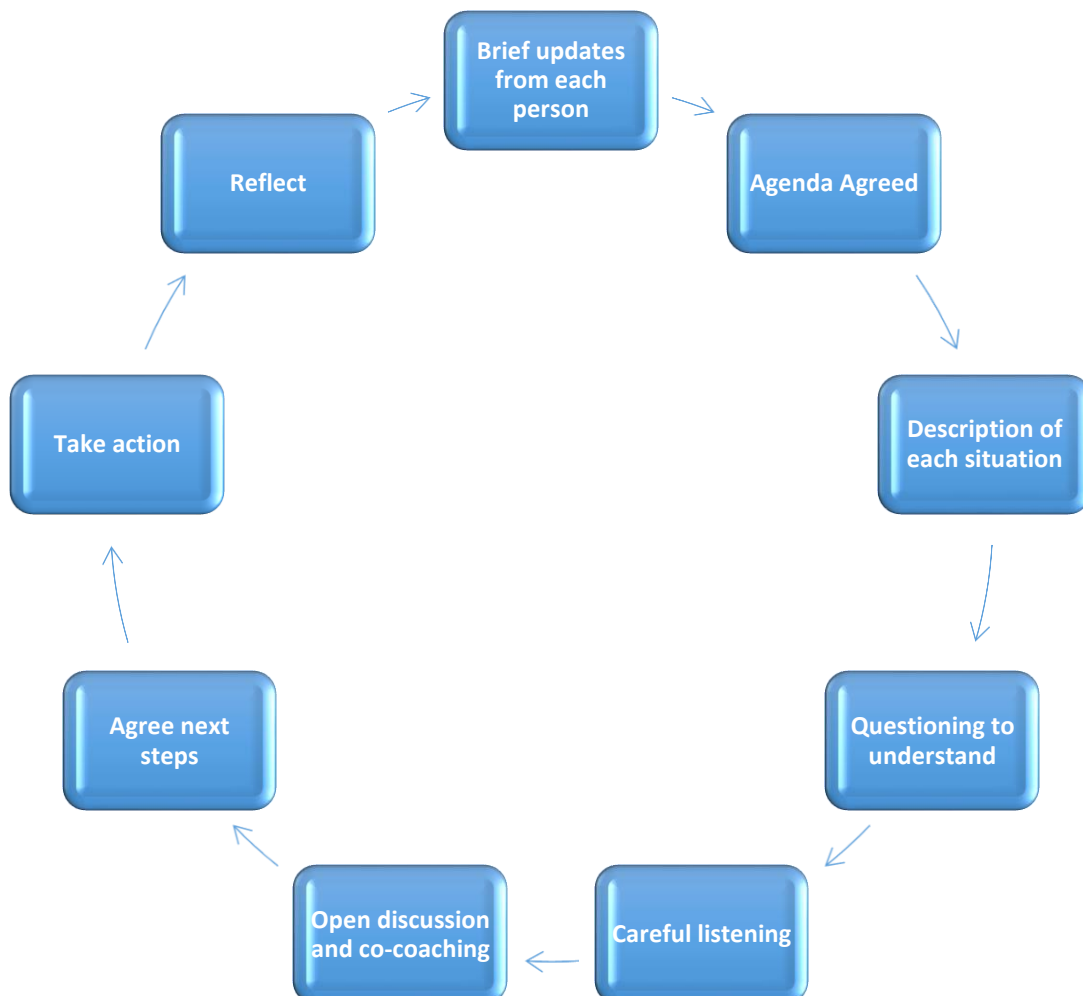
### What is Action Learning?

Action learning is a powerful method to uncover and utilise the knowledge of a group to solve their own problems, find their own solutions, and take positive action. Small groups (known as Action Learning Sets) work together to listen, question, reflect and support each other and make decisions about how best to proceed with specific challenges.

It is not a problem-solving process in that following certain steps produce an answer: rather it is a journey that helps people to identify their own possible solutions, and supports them as they implement them. It is a form of continuous learning and improvement.

### How does it work?

A small group of willing participants (typically 4-6) meet on a regular basis (often monthly) to share real-life challenges. Everyone must bring something real to share where the way forward isn't clear. Each person then gets the opportunity to have their 'issue' heard. They are asked questions by the group to provoke thinking, challenge assumptions, and encourage alternative viewpoints.



Together, possible next actions are identified. Each person then goes away with something to try, which they report back on at the next meeting.

Action Learning sets continue for as long as the group feels they add value.

### **The Role of the Facilitator**

Action learning sets do not NEED a facilitator, but having one often makes things easier. The facilitator makes sure that:

- A safe environment is created and maintained.
- Everyone gets equal share of the attention.
- Powerful questions are used to bring about learning.
- Assumptions are challenged.
- Participants get help to overcome blocks and barriers.
- The group stays focussed on the issue, and doesn't get side-tracked.
- Key ideas are captured.
- Actions are clear and agreed.

### **Benefits of Action Learning**

There are many benefits of taking an action learning approach. These are the top 5 in our opinion.

1. Learning is based on real issues, not theoretical ones, so transfer of learning is excellent.
2. People within the group develop confidence in their own abilities as they often find the solution for themselves.
3. People within the group often form strong networks, which has long-term benefits.
4. You don't need lots of equipment and resources.
5. In time, it becomes self-managing, so costs virtually nothing.