



Boosting your problem solving skills

 **BARCLAYS** | LifeSkills



Module overview

This module will support learners to increase their problem solving skills. It includes relevant activities including a tip sheet on how to apply a six-step problem solving strategy, three problem solving scenarios and an exercise on problem solving in the future.

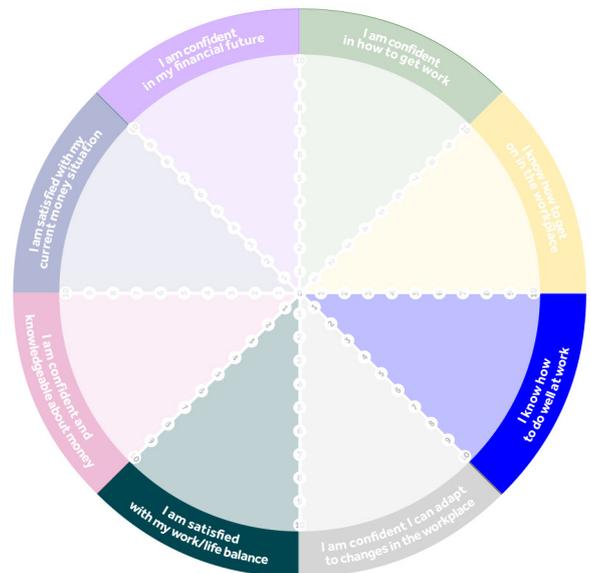
Whether it is in our personal or workplace life, we will all encounter setbacks. If we don't learn to solve our problems effectively, it can lead to frustration and disempowerment. Learning how to solve problems effectively and confidently is an important life skill. This module will assist learners to feel more empowered when facing challenges and to take appropriate action to find effective solutions.

Time	Key learning outcomes	Which will lead to
30 mins	By the end of the module, learners will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand that they are already successfully using problem solving skills in their life Be able to understand and apply a simple six-step problem solving strategy Start identifying solutions to potential future problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased likelihood of taking action to achieve their work-related goals through developing the necessary confidence, knowledge, skills and attitudes

Important

Introduce the activity and theme and remind your learner of the coaching-based approach. Agree the desired outcome of the session with your learner.

Throughout the activity, we have included **'do now'**, **'do soon'** and **'do later'** actions which may help your learner to think about the next steps they could take. Alternatively, you could use the 'do now', 'do soon' and 'do later' headings to help your learner come up with their own actions.



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Core activity one

Discussing problem solving skills

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
⌚ 2-3 mins	<p>Start the session by referring to your learner’s Life Skills wheel, emphasising positives and things to improve.</p> <p>Discuss what they need to know/do to be able to increase how they rate their satisfaction with this area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners are reminded of where they are now and what they need to do to reach a higher satisfaction score within this area
⌚ 3-5 mins	<p>Explain the importance of problem solving skills both personally and professionally to your learner.</p> <p>To demonstrate your learners’ existing problem solving skills, ask questions such as:</p> <p>Tell me about a recent problem you had to overcome?</p> <p>What steps did you take to overcome the problem?</p> <p>How was the problem resolved?</p> <p>What did you learn by overcoming this problem?</p> <p>How did you feel after you solved the problem?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussing how your learner previously solved problems will help them to build confidence in their ability to solve every day problems

Core activity two

Approaching problems differently

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
⌚ 10-20 mins	<p>Discuss with your learner how some problems are more complex than others and may require a different approach.</p> <p>Explain that where a problem is complex, strategies are often used to resolve a problem using a more formal and structured approach. This includes working through different stages to assist you along the journey to developing a workable solution.</p> <p>Introduce the Six-phase problem solving strategy to your learner. Using the handout, explain the purpose of each step.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners will gain a good understanding of how to approach solving a problem

Core activity two

Approaching problems differently (cont'd)

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
	<p>Explain how the six-phase problem solving strategy can be used to further their problem solving ability. Where a problem is more straightforward, the strategy can be adapted. Encourage your learner to be innovative and come up with creative solutions.</p> <p>Present your learner with Problem solving scenario 1. Talk through the scenario together, identifying how you could use the six-phase strategy to solve the problem.</p> <p>Questions to prompt learning include:</p> <p>What is the problem?</p> <p>What are some possible solutions to the problem?</p> <p>What could prevent the solution being effective?</p> <p>What could be done to prevent the problem happening again?</p> <p>Ask your learner to apply the strategy to the additional Problem solving scenarios. Talk through each scenario with them and discuss the steps they have recommended.</p> <p>Do now: Reflect on a recent situation you have experienced which didn't go well. How could you apply the strategy to lead to a better outcome? How could the problem have been anticipated and avoided or resolved earlier?</p> <p>Do soon: Reflect on the learnings from the session and think about how you could use the six-phase problem solving strategy in your own life</p> <p>Do later: Use the six-step problem solving strategy as a reference for future problems you may encounter personally or professionally</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners will gain a good understanding of how to approach solving a problem

Wrap up

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
🕒 5-7 mins	<p>Remind your learner that they regularly solve problems in their personal life. Explain that they may not need to use all six stages in order to come up with everyday problems but the six-stage approach is a useful guideline.</p> <p>Ask your learner:</p> <p>Think about what you have covered in this session, what steps can you take next to move forward in this area?</p> <p>Agree an action or next step that your learner can take to consolidate what has been covered in the session.</p> <p>Discuss any gaps that your learner feels they have in knowledge, skills or confidence in regards to problem solving and agree how these might be addressed.</p> <p>Refer your learner back to the LifeSkills wheel and check that they are closer to achieving their desired score.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners will leave the session confident that they have detailed knowledge on how to approach problem solving

Optional extension

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
🕒 10-20 mins	<p>Ask your learner to think of a goal they would like to achieve in the next 12 months. This could be going on holiday, starting a new career, getting onto the property ladder or putting money aside for retirement.</p> <p>Once your learner has chosen a goal, ask them to identify what problems they may need to overcome in order to successfully achieve the goal?</p> <p>What future problems would they need to resolve?</p> <p>Encourage your learner to complete the One year on handout.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners to feel confident that they can resolve problems they may encounter in the future

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Six-phase problem solving strategy

Phase	Description
1. Identify the problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What's the problem you need to solve? Make sure you identify what the actual problem is
2. Break it down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If it is a large problem, split the problem into smaller manageable chunks Write each individual problem down on a sheet of paper
3. Observe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What behaviours keep happening that could be causing the problem? What behaviours may need to change in order to solve the problem?
4. Think freely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open your mind and think of different ways the problem can be resolved Can you come up with a creative or innovative solution? There may be lots of different ways to resolve the problem Think outside the box and focus on what can be done – not what cannot be done!
5. Apply your new solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You won't know whether something works unless you try it out, so put your solution to the test Even if it doesn't work, the worst that can happen is that you find a better answer to the one you had
6. Evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What have you learned in solving the problem? What would you do differently next time? How do you feel?

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Problem solving scenarios

Problem solving scenario 1 – Pete



Pete works as a courier. He has been driving for the company for two years and has always taken pride in delivering his goods on time.

He has just three more items to deliver before he can clock off for the day, however, when he rings the buzzer at the next drop off point (which is a priority delivery) there is no answer. When he rings the phone number on the order, he receives an automated message saying the phone number is not recognised.

What should Pete do? How could he solve this problem?

Problem solving scenario 2 – Wahid



Wahid works in the marketing department of a large food manufacturing company. The company makes pre-packed sandwiches and salads. Sales have been reducing recently and the company hasn't launched any new products for several years.

As a result, Wahid's manager has requested that he comes up with a few ideas for new product launches. Specifically, they are interested in developing products that specifically appeal to people with food intolerances and allergies.

What steps could Wahid take to solve this problem? What information may he need to help him decide what new products would appeal to this market?

Problem solving scenario 3 – Izzie



Izzie is a care worker who provides homecare visits to elderly people. She is extremely busy and has to plan her days in advance so that she can work out the route between each home visit. She spends 45 minutes with each of her clients, often assisting them with tasks such as cleaning, cooking and also making sure they have had a hot drink.

On Monday morning, Izzie's car refuses to start. She doesn't have breakdown home cover. It is already 8.40am and she has to be at her first home visit by 8.45am. She knows that her client will not be able to get out of bed until Izzie arrives.

What should Izzie do? How could she solve this problem?

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Optional extension: one year on

Imagine it's one year from today. What would you like your life to be like? What would you like your job to be? What about your relationships? Finances? In order to achieve this, what problems do you need to solve to get to your goal?

Goal

What problems could get in the way of achieving my goal?	What steps do I need to take in order to solve these problems?	What action am I going to take to achieve this?	How would I feel once my goal has been achieved?