Is action research for you?[1]

	Opportunities to reflect on action and act on reflection are enhanced by…..	Barriers to reflect on action and act on reflection are presented by…..	Opportunities for exchange and sharing are enhanced by……
Practitioners and action researchers	Openness to challenge and having professional assumptions questioned	Restraints of roles, divisions of labour, job descriptions	Ability to self-select rather than by management directive
	Getting out more – seeing what goes on elsewhere	Lack of ability and skills to reflect/act critically	Personal passion, commitment and energy to process of exchange and dialogue
	Sufficient staff autonomy and freedom to take initiative	Focus on delivery as the imperative	Access to other people doing similar things in the same organisation and elsewhere
	Individual commitment to professional development and new skills	Continued adherence to quantitative methodologies in all areas of clinical and organisational practice	Openness of boundaries of network – not a closed group
	Explicit, conscious practice of those values espoused by the organisation	Preference and history of seeking patterns rather than puzzling	Seeing diversity as a rich source of information for improvement
	Awareness of personal and professional frames of reference that inhibit the capacity to act in ways which are more congruent with expressed purpose and actions	Cynicism and lack of buy-in to wider goals	Skills and techniques to help recognition of tacit knowledge and to identify who else might be able to use it
	Ability to validate the significance of individual cases/stories	Undermining of commitment to change by failure of organisation to practice the values it espouses	Credit/reward for sharing knowledge and experience with others
	Openness to intended and unintended consequences of actions		Ability to pay dual attention to personal, local concerns and the bigger picture
	Ability to decide on key methods and targets that suit local context and priorities		Sufficient time for initiatives to run as long as energy and commitment is there – not constrained by other imperatives

[1] This table is adapted from *How to Select a Suitable Occasion to Use Action Research*, Bob Williams and Robyn Bailey available at: http://users.actrix.co.nz/bobwill/ and Table 1 Communities of Practice in Bate, S. P. and Robert, G (2002) op cit.

	Opportunities to reflect on action and act on reflection are enhanced by…..	Barriers to reflect on action and act on reflection are presented by…..	Opportunities for exchange and sharing are enhanced by……
Service Users	Organisational and professional respect for experience of service users	Tokenism and undervaluing or rejection of perspectives	Openness and ability to listen by the organisation
	Recognition of validity of qualitative evidence by all parties	Entrenched professional agendas and power dynamics	Preparedness of professionals to give up some of their power in order to learn
	Confidence that views are important, will be heard and acted on	Continued adherence to quantitative methodologies in all areas of clinical and organisational practice	
	Feedback on what happens to evidence provided by service users	Patient care and professional interests seen as in conflict	
Task/situation/ problem that is the focus	High importance of the situation or task to those most centrally involved	A focus on urgent tasks, rather than important ones	Ability to work collaboratively
	Clear purpose for inquiry	No imperative to act any differently	Attention to process as well as outcomes
	Strong imperative for the issue to be resolved creatively	Lack of adequate skills, resources, time and tools	Ability to ask questions, rather than fix problem or give advice
	Solutions not necessarily clear cut – challenging, but not high risk	Inability to access or understand formal evidence	Knowing what to do with the 'best' practice you hear about
	Access to formal evidence of effectiveness where desired		
Organisational and wider environment	Strong organisational expression of values which support learning	The 'blame' culture; lack of focus on learning from mistakes	Skills of facilitation and mentoring available
	Strategic overview of the range of interventions to support learning from practice	Failure to credit successes	More strategic and proactive attitude to networking - brokering meetings, presentations or by hosting visits
		Pressure for short term solutions	
	Awareness of organisational frames of reference that inhibit capacities to act in ways more congruent with expressed	Limited to reactive response to crises, audit and managerial-led service improvement initiatives	Opportunities for extended social contact and face to face working

	purpose and actions

Permissive management culture - encouragement of reasonable risk taking

Modelling of reflective practice by managers

Legitimising feedback of all kinds – compliments, comments and complaints

Building on corporate existing knowledge

Working with the energy and commitment of staff

Encouragement of professional development

Nurturing of leadership skills at all levels of the organisation

Positive culture of evaluation | Organisational history and values that undermine quality improvements

Preference for forgetting – 'organisational dementia'

Lack of trust and poor relationships | Informal creative opportunities for exchange

Development of systems thinking - encouragement to work across boundaries and outwith traditional silos

Multiple ways of communicating across boundaries and networks – greater 'interactivity' or 'two-wayness' between participants

Interest in locally contextualised and wider systemic learning |

For more information: *The improvement of public sector delivery: supporting evidence based practice through action research,* Scottish Executive, Social Research Knowledge Transfer, 2005. Report available at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/