This document is intended for anyone interested in learning more about Q.

It is an interactive pdf: you will need Adobe Acrobat to make use of the click-through function. This will allow you to take your own path through the information, and read the parts of most interest to you.

Get started
Q: what and why?

What can Q members do and access?

What does it mean to be a Q member?

How Q will benefit patients, the public and the health sector

How we will continue to build and develop Q

How will we measure success and share our learning?

Welcome to the Q community
Section one

Q: what and why?

What is Q?

Why Q?
What is Q?

Q is an initiative connecting people with improvement expertise across the UK. Its mission is to foster continuous and sustainable improvement in health and care.

To achieve this, Q is creating opportunities for people from health and care across the UK to come together and form a community – sharing ideas, enhancing skills and collaborating to make health and care better. Over the coming years we envisage Q will become a community of thousands of people.

Q is a long-term initiative aiming to support individuals and their improvement work. Through this, Q benefits members’ organisations and the populations they serve. It has been designed to complement and enhance other initiatives and networks. People in the community pool together their knowledge, insights and connections – encouraging collaborative ways of making improvements.

The Q community is made up of a diverse range of people, including those at the front line of health and social care, patients, commissioners, managers, researchers, policymakers and others. This boosts the power of Q as a source of innovation and practical problem solving by including a wide range of perspectives.

It is not a taught programme, but a network of support for those already knowledgeable in and undertaking improvement work.

Q was developed in 2015 through a co-design process* with the founding members, and will continue to be built and delivered with their input, and that of new members, through 2016 and 2017.

* This was arguably one of the largest-scale co-design projects ever undertaken in health and care. You can find out more about what we learned from this process via our learning report.
Our health and care system is facing major challenges, with the need to improve quality in the face of considerable financial and other challenges.

Q was established in response to a recommendation in the 2013 Berwick report, which argued that we urgently need to enhance the ‘bottom up’ capacity of the health and care system to identify and respond to new ideas.

Our ambition is that Q will contribute to building a health and care system devoted to learning and improvement.

Improvement is happening in pockets around the UK

Q is creating ways to surface, support, develop, connect and mobilise
Our health and care system is facing major challenges, with the need to improve at significantly, and in the face of considerable financial pressures.

Why Q?

What is Q?

Our ambition is that Q will contribute to an ultimate aim of improvement work being everyone’s responsibility.

Improvement is happening in pockets around the UK, but a better connected approach is needed to enable the scale of transformation required. Too often problems are solved in one place at a time, without easy ways to tap into support and advice from those who have already been there. Great ideas spread painfully slowly.

Enhancing the ability of the system to make the most of innovative ideas is critical. Creating a diverse and well-connected community will encourage innovation and help develop solutions that have the buy-in of different groups.

Over the past decades, thousands of people in health and care have been trained in, and are now delivering, structured approaches to improvement. Providing support for people with improvement expertise makes the most of that investment already made.
Our ambition is that Q will contribute to an ultimate aim of improvement work being everyone’s responsibility.

Q is creating ways to surface, support, develop, connect and mobilise people to help maximise their impact and accelerate improvement. It is providing a long-term ‘home’ for cross-boundary learning and change.

For the first time, Q will provide a sustainable database of improvement talent across the UK. By making it much easier for people to share best practice and collaborate, Q aims to help overcome the slow adoption of innovation and consequent wide variation in practice that is recognised as a key constraint on quality and efficiency improvement across the health system.

Q responds to modern learning theory and what people say they most value by providing deliberately flexible ongoing professional development for improvement leaders. This multifaceted initiative seeks to establish a professional home for improvement for the UK.
Section two

How Q will benefit patients, the public and the health sector

How Q benefits patients, the public and the health and care system
Through its members and the infrastructure that supports them, Q seeks to address key challenges for organisations and the health system and enable benefits for patients and the public. 

How Q benefits patients and the UK population

How Q benefits organisations

For the health and care system
How Q benefits patients and the UK population

Q aims to foster improvement in every part of the health and care system. The ambition is for people who use services to be more confident that the way they are designed and run is informed by best practice from across the UK.

Through Q, people who understand how to make health and care services better (and this includes patients) are pooling their knowledge and energy, with a focus on achieving practical, measureable improvements. Q gives those who bring the patient and public perspective a greater voice and recognition as equally valued improvers, alongside those at the front line of care, managers, researchers, policymakers and others.
How Q benefits organisations

Q will create time-efficient ways for its members to draw on the expertise of others to help accelerate work on improvement challenges. Having a Q member within the organisation will help ensure access to the best ideas and a range of experts from across the UK and, in future, internationally.

Q will equip members with skills and resources to enhance their ability to act as leaders, role models and mentors for those they work with, encouraging a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

The online Q directory helps employers identify who has skills and a passion for improvement.
For the health and care system

Q will help promote improvement within the health and care system, encouraging and supporting a wide range of people to effectively lead improvement. Although members are expected to develop their own learning and skills as part of Q, they will use this input to lead and develop others beyond Q – building capacity across the system.

We are proposing to establish a network of ‘Q improvement labs’ over the coming years, where people from across the UK will collaborate on improvement challenges, making it easier to pool knowledge and energy to enable faster and more sustainable progress on cross-system issues.
Section three

What does it mean to be a Q member?

Benefits and opportunities

Values and commitments

Ways of being involved in Q

1. Q: what and why?
2. How Q will benefit patients, the public and the health sector
3. What does it mean to be a Q member?
4. What can Q members do and access?
5. How we will continue to build and develop Q
6. How will we measure success and share our learning?
People who join Q will join a diverse community of other improvers – a ‘home’ to turn to for inspiration and support.

Q provides ways for members to learn, share and get advice from a wider network of peers, offering flexible development in ways that taught courses aren’t easily able to provide.

There is no membership fee or minimum time commitment to be a member. Q is designed to help support busy people with their current improvement work and ongoing development, and to promote their visibility as a leader of improvement. Q should support members to tackle the challenges they are working on, rather than feel like an extra project.

Members are added to Q’s online directory, hosted and promoted by the Health Foundation. They have access to online resources and subscriptions, such as the Institute for Healthcare (IHI) Open School online courses, BMJ Quality online and journal, ISQua, and the LEAN QI app.

There will be opportunities for sharing ideas, enhancing skills and collaborating on improvement projects. These will include national and local networking events, expert-led knowledge sessions, and site visits both in health care settings and in other sectors.

Some of these activities are organised through a central team, while others are managed through regional improvement organisations or self-organised by members.

The networking opportunity and time to think about QI cannot be underestimated – we all have busy lives and jobs, but in order to be the best we can be we need to invest our time and energy with others designing and shaping the future.”
Values and commitments

Benefits and opportunities

Values and commitments

Ways of being involved in Q
Q is built around the values of collaboration, shared decision making and openness, reflecting the community’s commitment to patient centredness and multidisciplinary ways of working.

At present there is a ‘Q compact’ being co-developed by members to describe the expectations of those in the community and to nurture a creative environment for learning and improvement. Eventually all members will be asked to sign up to this. The compact is intended to describe our ways of working together, and help communicate the values of Q. We ask members to share what they are doing to improve quality with others in the community and beyond. The focus should be on supporting everyone to improve health and care, rather than using the shared spaces of the community to pursue personal, commercial or career interests.
Commitments

Although there is no minimum time commitment, the success of Q is largely dependent on the community. Some members will take a more active role in the community, others less so, and we expect an individual’s level of involvement may vary over time depending on their circumstances.

There are some core commitments that all members make by joining.

- Contribute to building relationships and networks, by attending events when possible or actively engaging with our e-newsletter (Q-municate) or on social media.
- Keep their profile on the online directory up to date so that it is a useful tool for the network.
- Take ideas and resources back to their place of work and share and spread learning beyond Q. This could involve for example using resources accessed through Q to coach or train others back in their organisation.
- Participate in the evaluation of Q, when possible, helping the community to improve as it grows and develops.
- Spread the word about Q. There are some [resources](#) to help you talk about Q to your peers.
Ways of being involved in Q

Q is designed so that members have the flexibility to participate in ways that fit with their lives and their improvement priorities.

Light touch ways of engaging

For those who want more involvement
Light touch ways of engaging

As Q grows and develops, opportunities will emerge for members to participate in a greater range of ways and to different degrees. Light touch ways to take part include, for example:

- accessing free or discounted resources to develop personal skills and knowledge for improvement
- sharing their own experience with others over Twitter or informally through events
- joining a special interest group within Q
- collaborating informally with other Q members, for example through joining the Randomised Coffee Trials.
Ways of being involved in Q

Benefits and opportunities
Values and commitments
Ways of being involved in Q

For those who want more involvement

Those who would like to have more involvement might take on other roles, for example:

• hosting activities such as site visits or local networking events
• coaching or mentoring other members or those outside Q
• participating in the ongoing co-design or governance of Q
• helping select and welcome new members
• contributing to an improvement lab project
• becoming a ‘Q connector’, someone who helps make connections between people in their patch
• initiating or helping lead ‘spin-off’ collaborative activities with other Q members
• sharing their expertise and experience through posters, blogs or over video.
Section four

What can Q members do and access?

Menu of activities

Approach to learning and development

Getting involved in Q labs

How activities will be organised and developed
As Q is still growing and developing, some of the activities and opportunities are not yet fully established. We are offering members resources and activities in a number of ways, and reviewing them to ensure they genuinely add value. Individual activities and the portfolio as a whole will continue to evolve in line with feedback from the community.

Activities and resources available to members as part of Q:

Connect  Exchange  Collaborate  Learn
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### Connect

**Now**
- Use the [online directory](#)
- Sign up for Q’s Randomised Coffee Trials
- Join the conversation on Twitter – [@theQcommunity](#) or #qcommunity
- Attend national and regional events

**Coming soon**
- Sign up as a Q connector
- Keep track of Q news on the Q website
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**Exchange**

**Now**
- Join the LinkedIn group
- Take part in swap shops
- Blog or contribute to the newsletter

**Coming soon**
- Explore other members’ expertise through the talks directory
- Join webinars
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### Collaborate

**Now**
- Join a special interest group/community of practice (or start one)
- Host or take part in peer problem solving sessions

**Coming soon**
- Get involved in a Q lab project
Learn

Now
- Subscribe for free to BMJ Quality, IHI Open School and the Institute for Continuous Improvement in Public Services
- Access expert-led sessions at Q events
- Download problem solving and co-design resources
- Use the Lean QI app for free

Coming soon
- Host or attend site visits
- Get discounts to improvement conferences
- Access tools to help you understand your learning needs
Inspired by the Berwick vision of a system devoted to learning and improvement, ‘development’ is one of the four types of social process through which Q seeks to achieve its aims. Q’s ambition is to boost the improvement capability of thousands of members and equip them to develop people in their organisations and the wider system. While Q is not a taught programme, learning is key to how it adds value.

Through Q we aim to support learning in six ways:

**Within Q, help members to:**
- Learn individually by:
  - understanding their development needs
  - access improvement development activities and resources

**Learn together by:**
- learn how to learn from diverse networks of people and information
- learn with other individuals within Q about improvement

**Reaching beyond Q:**
- Engage others in learning by:
  - encourage members to support others, outside Q, to learn about improvement
  - enhance the capability and capacity of the wider health and care system

This approach responds to what Q members told us would be most useful to them. We believe it works to the strengths of Q focusing particularly on opportunities for flexible, peer learning. By improving access to resources developed by others we are helping people make good use of what already exists, partnering with others where there are gaps that need to be filled.
Getting involved in Q labs

‘Improvemnts labs’ are an exciting element of Q that we are currently scoping.

Frances Westley, an academic who has researched social and innovation labs, characterises them as:

‘offering a place for creative, cross-sector and cross-disciplinary decision making and innovation. The process is supported by careful design and facilitation and is resourced by research geared to the decision makers’ need. The focus is on those “wicked problems” that seem insoluble.’

Our proposal

There is no single model when it comes to labs, although there is some theory about what elements are critical to success.
Getting involved in Q labs

**Q labs aims to:**

- Drive changes to practice leading to measurable improvements in health and care
- Increase capacity in the system (confidence and skills) to address complex problems
- Generate insight and knowledge about both specific project topics and generalisable learning about how to spread improvement
- Support new relationships and collaborations
- Inform and influence understanding of complex problems and how change happens in a way that prompts those with national and local influence to create a more supportive context for improvement work.

We are designing Q labs together with members of the community in order that they support the work members are already doing and operate in a way that makes it possible for members (and others including patients and the public) to be meaningfully involved.

We are still in the process of developing the proposal for Q labs and working towards the first lab going ‘live’ in 2017.
Getting involved in Q labs

Our proposal

Our proposal is to establish, over the next few years, a small number of labs across the UK where members of the Q community and others can come together, to make progress on complex challenges facing the health and care system. Labs will likely focus on cross-system challenges – the kind of challenge a single team or organisation cannot solve on its own.

Labs will pool and build on the knowledge and expertise of the Q community and draw in ideas from a range of disciplines to enable fresh insight that will then be shared back out through the community to accelerate change on the ground.

The idea for Q labs emerged through the co-design of Q in 2015. Q has been designed to support thousands of people involved in improvement to connect, develop, learn together and collaborate on local priorities. Through Q labs, members would be facilitated to come together in a systematic way to make progress on specific topics that are a priority for many across the system.

What we are proposing draws on relevant experience from quality improvement as well as the experience of an increasing number of other ‘labs’ worldwide, applying a blend of different methods and disciplines to tackle social, systemic and complex problems in new ways.
At present, most of the activities currently running are being coordinated or delivered by the Health Foundation, or being self-organised by members. In future there will be more self-organised activities and more delivered at a local level coordinated by our partners.

* Partners in the context of Q include Health Improvement Scotland, Public Health Wales, Health and Social Care Forum Northern Ireland and the 15 English Academic Health Science Networks. These organisations coordinate with others locally to ensure broad ownership of Q.
Section five

How we will continue to build and develop Q

- Governing the community
- Growing the community
Governing the community

Q has a number of distinctive features and strengths that will need to be reflected in the governance model. These include:

- A lack of hierarchy and a commitment to involving patients, carers and diverse professions from within and beyond the health and care sector.

- A strong commitment to flexible, iterative learning, minimising bureaucratic processes, maximising learning between members and promoting a sense of shared ownership across the community.

- A desire to facilitate two-way relationships between national and regional activities, as well as relationships with other improvement organisations, and ensure these are well managed as the community grows in size and complexity.

As part of the next phase of developing Q, work is underway to consider what governance model will be appropriate in future, and an innovative ‘Commons’ model has been recommended.
The Commons model

The theory behind the Commons model of governance was developed by economist Elinor Ostrom, whose work demonstrated – in very practical ways – how people could co-produce, and make the most of commonly held assets and resources. A Commons model has been proposed for Q on the basis that it is values-based and inclusive, as well as robust and accountable.

The model will allow members freedom to work together and to make decisions locally, and to self-organise. It will hold individuals to account in ways that are proportionate to the task in hand, and provide an underpinning logic and framework for groups who choose to work together on projects.
Governing the community

Governing the community

Growing the community

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• A desire to facilitate two-way relationships between national and regional activities, as well as relationships with other improvement organisations, and ensure these are well managed as the Q community grows in size and complexity.

What would this look like in practice?

It is proposed that there will be a loose structure bringing together a number of regionally located commons into an overarching National Commons Stewardship Group. The governance model will be trialled in three regions from early 2017.

We will eventually create these commons stewardship groups in each part of the UK – creating a platform for stewardship of Q activities at a local level. There would also be structure for facilitating collaboration and knowledge exchange within and between the different local commons.

We will identify a small group of people who are willing to take a more active stewardship and leadership role for Q, forming a National Commons Stewardship Group from representatives of the local commons groups. This group would effectively become a board with up to 18 members, chaired by a Convener. It would have some responsibilities for financial, strategic and performance oversight for Q.
Growing the community

To ensure the community is grown in a manageable way and to enable the members to contribute to its evolving shape and design, opportunities to join Q are being phased across different parts of the UK.

We are phasing opportunities to apply to Q. During 2016 and 2017, we launched a pilot to test a new online application system and process with a targeted group of people. We have just welcomed 214 new members into the community.
Growing the community

Q’s long-term ambition is to have a community of thousands of improvers, but this growth (from a starting point of 231 founding members) needs to be done in a manageable way, so everyone has a positive, personal welcome.

We are phasing opportunities to apply to Q. During the summer, we launched a pilot to test a new online application system and process with a targeted group of people. We have just welcomed around 200 new members into the community.

Plans for growing the Q community

As part of this, we are partnering with a number of improvement organisations that are helping us to grow the community.

The next phase will start in early November. We are partnering with the North East and North Cumbria, West of England and South West AHSN regions to promote and attract people to join the Q community.

In February 2017, we will be looking for people in Scotland (through Health Improvement Scotland) and the Improvement Academy in Yorkshire and Humber, UCLP, North West Coast and the Midlands AHSN regions.

People in Wales and Northern Ireland as well as other areas of England will be able to join from May 2017. We will be partnering with HSC Safety Forum in Northern Ireland, Public Health Wales, and the Kent Surrey and Sussex, Health Innovation Network (South London), Greater Manchester, East Midlands, Eastern, West of England, Imperial College Health Partners, Wessex and Oxford AHSN regions.

All applicants will be asked to reflect on criteria around their knowledge and experience of improvement and how they can benefit and contribute to the community.
Growing the community

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Patients are at the heart of Q: its mission is to deliver tangible improvements for and with patients, and the membership includes patients. The patients who join are people who combine commitment, understanding and experience of improvement with their perspective as a patient or carer. The Q community also involves individuals from organisations that represent particular patient or public perspectives.

There are many labels used with somewhat different emphasis to describe those active in wanting change who have substantial experience as patients or carers or as representing the perspective of patients and carers.

Terms include ‘lay members or representatives’, ‘experts through experience’, ‘system leaders from a patient perspective’ and ‘community leaders’. Q is open to all of these improvers.
Section six

How will we measure success and share our learning?

What's being measured and how?

How will we share what we are learning with others?
In 2015, as part of the co-design process with Q members, a ‘theory of change’ was developed for Q. This involved understanding the core elements of what Q is trying to achieve, and how.

To ensure high quality, robust analysis we have commissioned RAND Europe to undertake an independent, yet embedded, evaluation. The evaluation of the design year of Q has been published, describing early progress, challenges and successes.

The ongoing evaluation will help to inform how well Q is progressing towards its aims, as well as exploring unintended consequences. RAND Europe will use various methods such as surveys, interviews, focus groups and document review, involving key stakeholders including Q members.

Formative feedback will be used to improve the design and management of Q. An interim evaluation report will be published in 2018 and the final evaluation report will be published in 2020.
What’s being measured and how?

In 2015, as part of the co-design process with Q members, a ‘theory of change’ was developed for Q. This involved understanding the core elements of what Q is trying to achieve, and how.

Alongside being clear on the intended areas of impact, we are committed to understanding more about the contribution Q makes and through what mechanisms.

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What’s being measured and how?

As a large-scale, diverse community of people working to improve quality, Q is unique. Q aims to generate learning, insight and evidence that will be of interest and benefit to a wide range of people.

The Q community will also be a valuable way to spread information rapidly and disseminate what we collectively uncover. We hope to share what we learn through a range of methods including publications, social media, presentations and academic journal articles.