



Joining Q

Frequently asked questions

About Q - also see [What is Q?](#) information booklet

What is Q?

Q is a diverse and growing community of people with experience and understanding of improvement, committed to working collaboratively to improve the quality of health and care across the UK.

Over time Q will grow to be a community of thousands, including people at the front line of care, managers, researchers, patients, commissioners and policymakers. Our aim is to connect a critical mass of people in order to expand and accelerate improvement in the quality of care.

Q will make it easier for people with expertise in improvement to share ideas, enhance their skills and make changes that bring tangible improvements in health and care.

Q is the name for the infrastructure we are creating to support individuals with their improvement work and make it possible for the community to come together.

What is the difference between Q and other initiatives, networks or programmes?

Q is intended to complement and underpin other initiatives, networks and programmes, not compete with them. Q supports people meet their existing improvement work rather than being a separate project.

Q is aimed at individuals and will provide a long-term infrastructure to support them throughout their improvement career. Q is not a taught development programme, but a network of support for those already knowledgeable in and undertaking improvement work.

Q supports other initiatives and programmes by:

- a) making it easier to understand what improvement work is being done, by whom, and where UK-wide
- b) providing resources and platforms to connect and support across existing networks, working with and through others wherever appropriate
- c) making it easier to collaborate on areas of shared interest
- d) Influencing the policy, organisational and cultural context to be more supportive of improvement.



Where did Q come from? Is patient safety part of Q?

Q began as an initiative to recruit '5,000 Safety Fellows' following a recommendation of the widely respected [2013 Berwick report *A promise to learn, a commitment to act.*](#)

Recognising those with improvement expertise was part of the report's recommendations about how best to improve safety in the wake of failings of care at Mid Staffordshire Hospitals NHS Trust. The report made the case for a system devoted to continual learning and improvement.

In 2014 NHS England approached the Health Foundation to lead the design and delivery of the initiative.

The Health Foundation's UK-wide remit and funding means the initiative brings together those committed to health and care quality across all four countries in the UK.

The decision was also made to expand beyond patient safety to cover all domains of quality in line with the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) definition: safe, effective, patient centred, timely, efficient and equitable.ⁱ

During the design phase of Q, we also formally extended Q beyond the NHS to all public, third sector, community and private organisations and individuals with a role to play in supporting health as well as caring for people when they are ill.

Who funds Q?

Q is co-funded by the Health Foundation and NHS Improvement. Previously Q was co-funded by NHS England. On 1 April 2016, the Patient Safety team transferred to NHS Improvement, along with co-funding commitments to Q.

Who designed Q?

To ensure the design of Q meets the needs of those who will be part of the community, we collaboratively designed the initiative together with 231 founding cohort members during 2015.

In addition, throughout the design process, we have involved eminent leaders of improvement and wider stakeholders. To date, we have engaged more than 500 people in the design of Q.

More about this process can be found in [Building Q – learning from designing a large scale improvement community.](#)



What are improvement labs?

'Improvements labs' are a proposed development we are scoping as part of Q. We envisage that over the next few years we will establish a small number of places across the UK where members of the Q community come together, facilitated by a small team with specialist skills, to make progress on complex challenges facing the health and care system.

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.

We are designing labs together with members of the community and anticipate the first lab going live in 2017.

Being a member of Q

What are the benefits of joining the community?

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 a way that taught courses aren't easily able to provide.

There is no membership fee or minimum time commitment. Q is designed to help support busy people with their current improvement work and on-going development and to promote their visibility as a leader of improvement.

Members are added to Q's online directory, hosted and promoted by the Health Foundation. We will offer access to online learning resources in exchange for your commitment to share what you learn. People joining as part of the summer phase will have access to the Institute for Healthcare (IHI) Open School Online Courses and BMJ Quality, with others to be added over time.

There will be opportunities for sharing ideas, enhancing skills and collaborating on improvement projects, based on what the founding members identified as most useful. This will include Do-It-Yourself online resources, networking events nationally and locally, masterclasses and exchange activities (including site visits). Some of these are designed and organised through the central team, while others are managed through regional improvement organisations or self-organised by members.

Q is relatively new, with some of the activities and opportunities still being designed. During 2016 and 2017 we will be piloting activities together with members 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.



What is expected of people who join Q?

The success of Q is largely dependent on the community. There is no minimum time commitment, but generally speaking the more you're able to contribute, the more benefit. Some members will take a more active role in the community, while others not as much and we expect individual involvement will vary over time.

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

- Take ideas and resources from Q back to their work place and share and spread learning beyond Q.
- Contribute to building relationships and networks, by attending events when possible or engaging on social media, or with Q-municate (e-newsletter).
- Keep their profile on the online directory up to date
- Participate in the evaluation of Q, when possible, helping the community to improve as it grows and develops.

There is a 'compact' being developed together with Q members to help describe the expectations of those in the community and to encourage a creative and safe environment for learning and improvement. The compact suggests members should be polite and respectful, but constructively challenge and provide feedback to their peers to help them build on ideas. We ask members to share what they are doing to improve quality with others in the community as well as being open to new ideas.

The focus should be on supporting everyone to improve health and care, rather than pursuing personal commercial or career interests in a way that inappropriately dominates the shared spaces of the community.

How much does it cost to join Q?

There is no membership fee to join the Q community. Travel and expenses are not covered by Q.

Will those not in paid employment have contributions to expenses?

There will be times where we will cover the travel and out of pocket expenses in relation to Q activities for those who are not in paid employment. This will need to be pre-approved and in line with the Health Foundation expenses policy.



Joining Q

Who is currently in Q?

We have 447 members in the community at the moment and will continue to grow.

This number includes the 231 who helped to co-design Q, along with 216 who have recently joined as part of the summer pilot to test how we will grow the community. This pilot was aimed a small group of people including:

- bring a patient's or carer's perspective and are working predominately at a national level
- are alumni of a number of [identified improvement courses](#) and / or
- work in [identified national organisations](#).

When will opportunities to apply open up?

There will be continuous opportunities to join Q over the coming years. The next phase will start in the autumn of 2016. As part of this, we are partnering with a number of improvement organisations who are helping us to grow the community.

Anyone who feels they meet the criteria and is based in the area can apply and there will be no cap on numbers.

In November we will work 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, 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 Surry and Sussex, Health Innovation Network (South London), Greater Manchester, East Midlands, Eastern, West of England, Imperial College Health Partners, Wessex and Oxford AHSN region.



What is involved in applying to join Q?

To join the community, you will need to complete an application online via our new portal [AIMS](#). As part of the process, you will be asked to reflect on criteria around your knowledge and experience of improvement and how you can benefit and contribute to the community. The application process should take one to two hours and you can pause and return to the process at any time.

Why are there selection criteria?

We worked together with the founding cohort and others to develop selection criteria for joining Q. The decision to have selection criteria was made after much debate. It is there to ensure those who join share an understanding of improvement and are able to contribute equally. It also means those who join have reflected on their commitment to collaborative improvement and Q specifically.

Who assesses applications?

Applications will be assessed by our partner organisations and supported by the team at the Health Foundation and NHS Improvement. The partner organisation that assesses your application will depend on which part of the UK you are applying from. For example, if you are based in the South West of England, then our partner organisation SW AHSN will be assessing the application, together with the core project team.

How will future opportunities to join Q work?

Future opportunities to join Q will be available from autumn 2016 and phased through different parts of the UK. At this stage, anyone who feels they meet the criteria and is based in the area can apply and there will be no cap on numbers.

We will be working in partnership with organisations in the English regions, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales to lead the process. Recruitment will take place in waves from November 2016 to November 2017. We will announce the first six areas in August 2016.

As at 10 October 2016

^{i i} Institute of Medicine (IOM). *Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2001.