



# An independent evaluation of Q

## Questions and response (12 January 2023)

The following questions have been submitted by prospective bidders. Some of these were addressed on the information call held on the Tuesday 10 January but the questions and responses to those questions have been included here for completeness. Additional questions can be submitted up to Friday 27 January and will be regularly added to the document. Any final responses will be added to this document on Monday 30 January.

### 1. How *settled* are Q's offers?

As outlined in the ITT, Q has reached a scale, maturity and stability to allow for a higher standard of evidence to be collected. Q has a set of well established core offers that we will continue to deliver up to 2025 including a range of events, Q exchange, Q Labs and our insight work.

That said, Q will not stand still between 2023-25 and we regularly review and adapt our work in response to changing individual, organisational and system needs. Specifically, we are currently in the process of revamping [Q Visits](#), developing our approach to [participation](#) and are embedding our [strategic themes](#).

The nature of our future adaptation will most likely and most often be in relation to refining and refocusing our existing activities (eg in relation to emergent system priorities or redesigning in terms of face-to-face, virtual or hybrid delivery) rather than the development of discrete new offers – although this is a possibility.

If major new offers or pieces of work are developed between 2023-25 we expect the evaluation to integrate them into the overarching analysis and assessment. In anticipation of this we have ring-fenced an additional drawdown fund of £50,000 alongside the core evaluation budget of £250,000 (see question 2 below). It is also worth noting that when Q develops new areas of work we

usually go through a substantial design process meaning evaluators would be aware of any changes well in advance of them being delivered.

## **2. Can you say more about the drawdown fund of £50,000?**

The total budget for the evaluation including VAT and all costs is up to £250,000. An additional drawdown fund of £50,000 has also been made available for this evaluation, however, this is for additional work that may emerge throughout the commission. We used a similar approach during RAND Europe's evaluation of Q (2016-20). Almost all of the drawdown fund was used as part of that commission including a distinct evaluation of Q exchange.

The drawdown fund is expected to be used for either integrating new developments to Q's work into the evaluation or for additional work by the evaluators that is decided would add considerable value. The drawdown fund is not a contingency fund for challenges that might emerge during the evaluation contract. It should also not be used for additional communications activity that sit outside of the evaluation contract – separate resource could be made available for this type of activity.

The ITT response should not include substantial detail on how you anticipate you might utilise the drawdown fund. You may briefly point to some potential options but the ITT response will not be judged on this detail.

## **3. What exactly is the timeframe of the evaluation?**

The evaluation needs to meet two distinct requirements in relation to timeframe. First, the commission needs to evaluate the progress Q has made against its strategic objectives up to 2025 (NB: the ITT includes Q's strategic objectives between 2020-30 but we will set clear strategic objectives, in-line with our 10 year strategic objectives, up to 2025 in March/ April 2023). In the final report we want the evaluation to make a clear assessment against these aims. However, there is a second broader requirement of the evaluation which is better described as making a contribution to our understanding and assessment of the impact of Q more generally. As some of our work is aimed at medium and longer term impact this may include aspects of work that date back closer to Q's establishment in 2015. For example, the evaluation may explore impact for members that have been part of the community for a substantial length of time or may revisit projects that were previously funded by Q to assess their longer term impact (eg earlier rounds of Q Exchange funding).

#### **4. Are you expecting Q to have an impact on reducing patient waiting times?**

One of Q's [strategic themes](#) is “reducing waiting in ways that support broader transformation goals”. Clearly, reducing waiting lists is currently a key priority for the system and will likely continue to be up to 2025. Ultimately, by focusing on this theme Q is aiming to have impact on patient access to care, whilst also supporting the system to do this in ways that are sustainable and contribute to wider goals. However, Q does not have a distinct set of outcomes and impacts in relation reducing waiting times for patients specifically. Instead, it is more accurate to think of our aims on this theme being directly in-line with the outcomes and impacts already contained within our theory of change. Our themes are a way of directing our work and having a clearer and more direct contribution to key system priorities. So, we are directing our activities in relation to our waiting list theme such as our Q community event, insight work, Q exchange and Q Labs. We then aim to achieve outcomes for members, their work, organisations and the system as detailed in our theory of change but directly in relation to this theme. As per our expectations for the evaluation overall, we are expecting evaluative effort to be focused at the level of these outcomes rather than necessarily ultimate change in terms of patient outcomes.

#### **5. Do you expect Q members to be involved as peer evaluators?**

Since Q's establishment it has been committed to co-design and co-production with members and we have employed participatory approaches across our previous evaluations and insight work. Both in external commissions and in-house work. However, involving members as peer evaluators is **not** a stipulation of this commission. We are very open to this being built into the methodology but if you do build this in to your design, please make sure that it is properly resourced and planned to ensure that Q members have a good experience.

More broadly, we certainly value methods that provide a positive and, if possible, developmental experience for participants. Q members will be actively involved in the Evaluation Steering Group and in helping us to reflect on and interpret evaluation findings.

#### **6. What data do you already collect on Q and its members?**

We have collected, and continue to collect, substantial data on Q members, Q's work and Q's impact. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Member data – we have detailed member profile data (including geography, role, organisation and interests). We have aggregate data in

relation to some protected characteristics but this cannot be attributed to individuals;

- Engagement data – we have good attendance and engagement data in relation to our central offers, use of our resources and communications metrics (although these communications metrics cannot be linked to individuals). Our data in relation to other more informal and member-led activity (eg informal connections or regional events) is incomplete and more patchy;
- Offer-level evaluation – we undertake a range of targeted evaluation activity around specific offers including, for example, our events, our learning series (such as the Network Weavers programme), Q Exchange and Q Labs. For larger pieces of work these evaluations collect outcome data;
- Overarching evaluation activity that explores the experience and outcomes of Q overall including our biennial member survey and regular member case studies.

Some of this data will form a good foundation for the work of the independent evaluation. Q's in-house evaluation and insight team will continue to collect this type of data between 2023-25, however, we will adapt our plans to serve the needs of the independent evaluation. For example, although we currently manage our member survey, we would either adapt or suspend it between 2023-25 to allow for the independent evaluators to undertake a member survey if this was part of your design.

Both in-house and external evaluation to date has drawn on a wide range of methods. Including:

- Application form
- Attendance data
- Project reports
- Pre- and post-engagement surveys
- Annual member survey (now biennial)
- Member case studies
- Q Exchange case studies
- System mapping
- Social network analysis
- Focus group discussions
- Learning logs
- Regional deep dives
- Non-participant observations
- Unsuccessful applicants
- Member rapporteurs
- Semi-structured interviews
- Stakeholder interviews
- Member ethnographies
- Cost data

- Value for Money

**7. Can you share more about the economic or value for money analysis you are anticipating and can you share more on the scoping work that has been undertaken to date?**

We expect the independent evaluation to make a clear contribution to the evidence on Q's value. In-line with the two overarching aims of the independent evaluation, this should include assessing the value of Q overall, assessing the value (or contribution to value) of different elements of Q's work and making a comparison between value and the scale of the inputs, resources and costs associated with Q. Our primary aim for this aspect of the independent evaluation is to provide evidence with greater precision to inform Q's strategic development beyond 2025. The analysis may be used for accountability or other purposes but this is not the primary motivation for it.

Within our ambitions for this aspect of the independent evaluation, we recognise there are considerable methodological challenges with making a value assessment or economic analysis of Q as well as trade-offs in terms of resource and capacity. RAND Europe's evaluation of Q between 2016-20 (Hocking et al, 2020) questioned the feasibility of a simple value for money assessment but did recommend that *"as the scale and reach of Q grows, the evaluation lead of the Q team should commission an economic analysis to include: understanding the willingness to pay for Q among system leaders; assessing the costs and consequences of high impact activities; and conducting a discrete choice experiment to more precisely understand how members tradeoff the benefits they perceive from different activities"* (p125).

Using this as a starting point, in 2022 we completed an informal internal scoping exercise around the feasibility and worth of applying different economic analyses or value assessment approaches to Q's evaluation. We are not sharing the full detail of this work at the ITT stage but we will share it with the appointed supplier. However, we can provide some more detail here.

The difficulties of making a simple value assessment of Q are multiple and include the challenges of collecting data on Q's ultimate impacts, the challenges of evidencing causation and contribution of Q's work to these impacts and the complexity and interrelation of how Q aims to achieve impact – as well as the complexity of the context within which Q operates.

A range of approaches could be applied to Q, and we have explored the potential application of methods ranging from Social Return on Investment (SROI), Cost-Benefit Analysis, Value for Money assessments and Multi-Criteria Decision

Analysis (MCDA). No single approach has emerged as clearly the most appropriate for Q but this work has advanced our thinking including:

- We continue to be open to different approaches but our work suggests that approaches that attempt to monetise the value of Q may introduce greater error than the clarity they provide as well as potentially requiring substantial additional resource. Applications that propose to monetise Q's value should be clear on what this step offers in terms of our aims for this evaluation;
- There are many different ways to structure the economic or value assessment aspects of the evaluation, which we are open to. However, we are anticipating that the economic or value assessment aspect is one strand of the independent evaluation. We are anticipating the independent evaluation to primarily focus on collecting high quality evidence of outcomes for members and their work and outcomes for the wider system with the economic analysis or value for money assessment drawing on and supplementing this evidence;
- The evaluation will need to capture an accurate picture of Q's inputs, resources and costs. We recognise that this is an area that we will need to work closely with the evaluators on and that requires considerable development internally.

Please submit any further questions in relation to this aspect of the evaluation.