Be part of the latest Q Lab UK project

Creating collective responsibility to reduce delays in elective pathways

(Updated after test team and co-researcher applications closed on 28 June.)

Welcome

From July 2023, Q Lab UK will start a new project to explore:
How might we create collective responsibility to reduce delays in elective pathways?

This pack gives you information about Q Lab UK, the topic this latest Lab project will be working on and explains how you can get involved.

Find out more about:

- how Q Lab UK works
- the topic this Lab will explore
- the three different ways you can participate in the Lab
- how you sign up to participate

## Contents

Introduction to Q Lab UK

Q Lab UK supports people to come together to take action on complex, shared health and care challenges, to improve care for people in the UK and Ireland.

We provide opportunities for people working across health and care to develop successful ideas and interventions, while developing the skills and capabilities to lead collaborative change.

This diagram sets out how the Lab works.

Building **partnerships** and **convening stakeholders** across organisational, professional and geographic boundaries around **shared priority topics**.
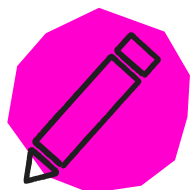
Supporting teams to **creatively design** solutions. Enabling them to experiment and learn in a supported environment and implement ideas in practice.

Providing spaces for **reflective learning** and **sense-making**. We help people to understand the problem and the system they are operating in.
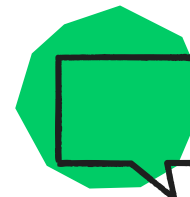
Distilling and **communicating insights** to enable changes in practice. We foster social learning and support people to act and effect change.

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The topic

How might we create collective responsibility to reduce delays in elective pathways?

Waiting lists and wait times for NHS elective care are at unsustainable levels. The pandemic exacerbated the problem, but delays have been growing for years. This is a systemic issue that is worsening health outcomes and health inequalities and putting unsustainable pressure on health and care staff.

Timely, efficient and safe care relies on collaboration and flow along pathways. While there is great work going on to reduce waits, pressures on the system can make collaboration hard at a time when rapid and radical redesign is needed most. Limited time to understand what's happening 'upstream' and 'downstream', combined with increased urgency to accelerate progress, can put strain on relationships and get in the way of shared ownership of the problem and solutions.

This Lab project is an opportunity to bring people together to collaboratively explore and innovate to address the issues around flow, build collective ownership and reduce waits. We will support teams to develop solutions that address immediate challenges, while paying attention to the deeper and longer-term changes that are needed.
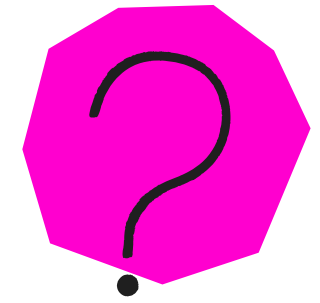
What do we mean by pathway?

"A patient's pathway is a chain of events such as the appointments, tests and treatments they receive following a referral, and, for some patients with long-term conditions, may last for many years."
(NHSE 2022 elective recovery plan)

What do we mean by elective care?

"Care that is planned in advance is known as elective care. It involves specialist clinical care or surgery, generally following a referral from a GP or community health professional."
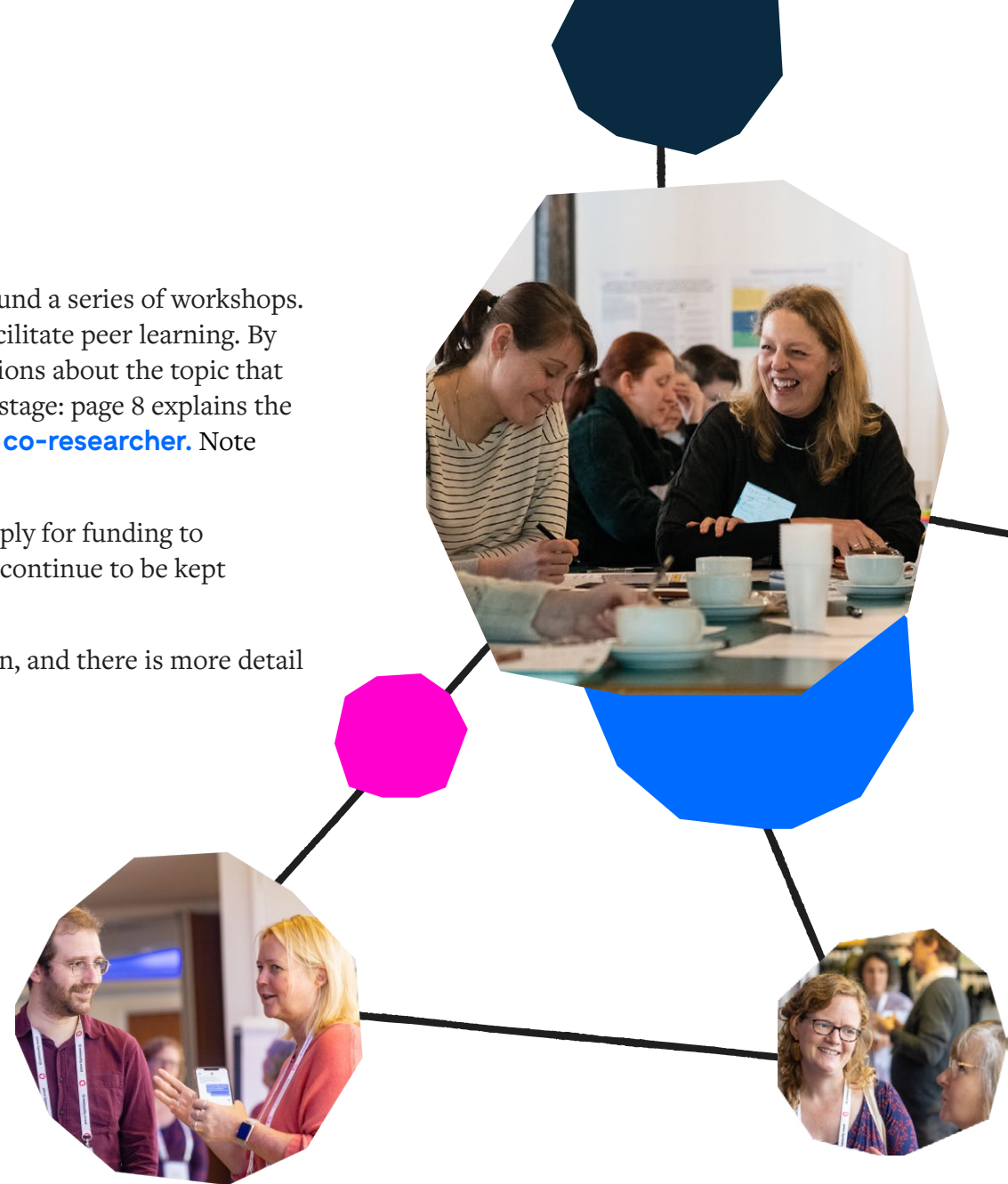**(Nuffield Trust 2019 elective care)**

The Lab process

The Lab process is divided into two main stages:

Discovery and ideation: takes place over nine months and is structured around a series of workshops. The workshops guide people through each phase of the design process and facilitate peer learning. By the end of this stage, Lab participants will have generated ideas and interventions about the topic that can be implemented in practice. (All participants are actively involved in this stage: page 8 explains the different ways you can participate in the Lab as a **test team**, **contributor**, or **co-researcher.** Note that test team and co-researcher applications closed on 28 June.)

Implementation: continues for a further 12 months, where test teams can apply for funding to continue to pilot and validate their intervention or idea. (All participants will continue to be kept updated about test team progress and insights.)

The diagram on the following page shows each phase of discovery and ideation, and there is more detail about timings and what's involved in the table that follows.

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The Lab process

Build test teams

Onboard test teams and develop relationships with each other and Q Lab UK

Welcome session

Research and discovery

Deepen knowledge and develop systemic understanding of the problem

Workshop 1

Define and refine

Analyse and make sense of insights to identify areas amenable to change

Workshop 2

Develop and test

Generate and develop ideas to improve the situation, and undertake prototype testing

Workshop 3

Distil and share

Develop implementation plans. Synthesise and communicate insights to inform other improvement efforts

Workshop 4

Implementation (12 months)

Test teams that reach proof-of-concept stage are invited to apply for grant funding to support further testing

Discovery and ideation (9 months)
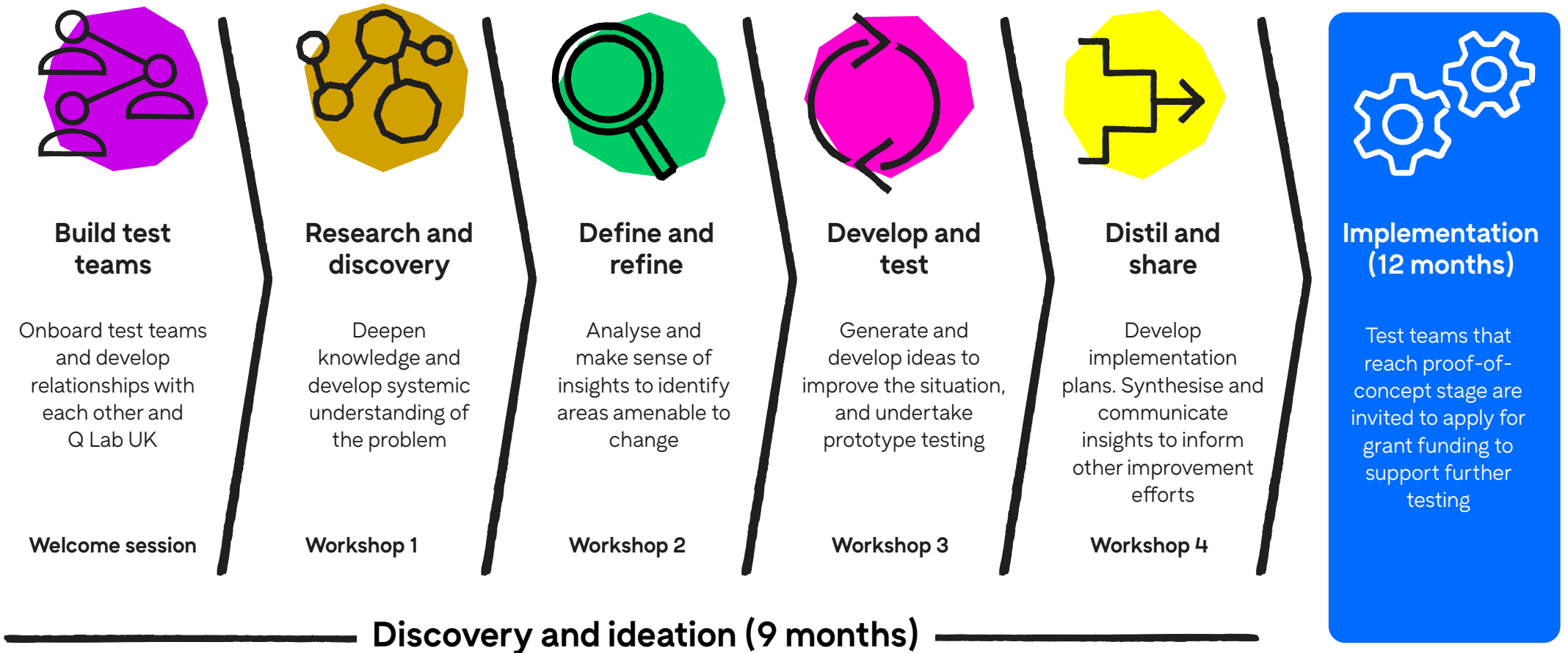
What happens when?
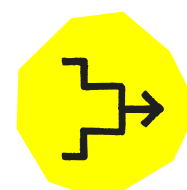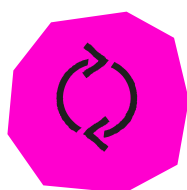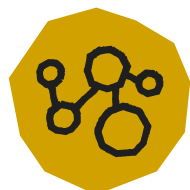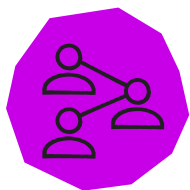
Phase	Build test teams May–Sept 2023	Research and discovery July–Sept 2023	Define and refine Sept–Nov 2023	Develop and test Nov 2023–Feb 2024	Distil and share Feb–March 2024	Implementation May 2024–May 2025
Phase description	Onboard test teams into Lab process and topic.	Deepen knowledge and develop systemic understanding of the problem the Lab is exploring	Analyse and make sense of insights to identify areas amenable to change	Generate and develop ideas to improve the situation, and undertake prototype testing	Develop implementation plans. Synthesise and communicate insights to Q and wider audiences	Support teams who have reached a proof-of-concept stage to further validate their idea/ intervention
What we will achieve	Agree how we will work together and start gathering local insight	• Insights and perspectives shared across test teams and other participants • Synthesise and reflect on insights • Undertake research to surface insights on the topic	• Identify problems and opportunities that are amenable to change • Agree which areas test teams will focus on for the next phases of the Lab	• Generate and develop ideas and interventions to improve the situation • Develop prototypes and undertake prototype testing to begin to learn how ideas can work in practice	• Undertake early-stage testing • Develop implementation plans and prepare for implementation phase • Communicate main insights from the Lab to Q and wider audiences	• Test teams deliver improvements in practice to understand feasibility • Plans developed to sustain, scale and spread valuable interventions
Key dates	Online workshop 27 July 2023 (Test teams only)	Workshop 1 21 September 2023 (In-person)	Workshop 2 1 November 2023 (In-person)	Workshop 3 February 2024 (Online)	Workshop 4 March 2024 (In-person)	

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How you can get involved

Everyone who participates in the Lab can expect to attend workshops to connect, collaborate and learn with others who have a shared interest in the topic.

There are three different ways you can participate in the Lab:

Test team: Test teams will work together to develop and test interventions addressing the Lab topic. Teams will receive upfront funding and support to follow a nine-month design process to experiment and develop ideas. They can then apply for more funding to pilot and further validate their ideas in the implementation stage of the Lab.

Contributor: If you have an interest in the topic and expertise and experience to share, you can join as a contributor.

Co-researcher: Each test team will have a co-researcher assigned to them. Your role as a co-researcher will be to participate in all the Lab activities and, in addition, to support insight gathering and communication within and beyond the Lab.

You can find out more about the different roles and how you apply on the following pages. (Note that test team and co-researcher applications closed on 28 June.)

Test teams

(Note that test team applications closed on 28 June.) Test teams join the Lab through a selection process. Test teams are given seed funding during the first nine-month stage of the Lab, and can apply for funding to pilot and validate their ideas for a further 12 months in the implementation stage of the Lab.

What test teams can expect to do:

- Gain deeper knowledge of the problem at the local level and connect this to the national context.
- Undertake a structured workshop programme that guides them through the design process to develop and test prototypes.
- Have space to try out new methods and tools around systems change and design thinking that they can use in their day-to-day work.
- Build their skills and capabilities and learn from peers.
- Connect with people from different backgrounds and sectors who have a shared interest in the topic.

Benefits of being involved:

- Upfront seed funding of £30-35,000 and a chance to apply for further funding.
- Expertise and support from the Q Lab UK team.
- Support to take part in a structured design process, including coaching and workshops.
- Knowledge and expertise from other teams, Q members and the wider Lab community.
- Space and support to experiment and develop ideas to improve care.
- Energy and momentum for their improvement project.
- Links to Q and Health Foundation networks.

MAY– JULY

Activity	Date
Applications open for test teams	11 May 2023
Information webinar for potential test teams	18 May 2023, 12.30 - 13.30 (online)
Deadline for test teams' application submission	28 June 2023, 12.00
Test teams informed of selection decision	11 July 2023
Test teams onboarding workshop	27 July 2023

**What test teams need to commit to and demonstrate:**

- A named team who will be involved from July 2023 to March 2024.

- An elective care pathway in which to conduct testing.

- Appropriate time commitment to undertake testing and attend workshops. This will vary based on team roles, but we expect core team members to contribute three to five days per month on average.

What does a test team look like?

We recommend that each team includes the following roles, some of which could be combined:

- Team lead to manage the testing work.
- Project manager who can build a team and co-ordinate involvement.
- Strategic lead who can provide direction, make connections, and consider sustainability and how to spread the ideas developed.
- Senior leader sponsorship within your organisation to help make the case for this work and make sure you are linked with your organisational priorities.
- Communications support to share learning within your organisation and networks, the Q community and wider improvement community.
- Lived experience involvement from people who access the health and care services that you provide.

Each team will also have a **co-researcher** assigned, to support communication about the team's progress within and beyond the Lab. (See role description on page 13.)
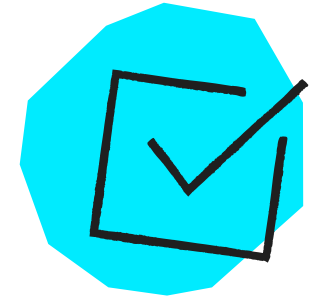
Selection criteria

Note that test team applications closed on 28 June. We have selected teams who are:

- already looking at ways to reduce delays and committed to doing collaborative work across a pathway

- interested in or already taking an equity-lens to reducing delays, either by addressing inequalities in waiting times or working on pathways with the longest waits
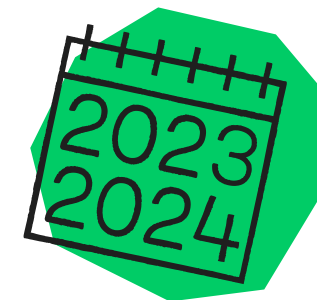
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Contributors

Contributors join the Lab to learn about the topic and share their experience and knowledge. If you have an interest in the topic and some expertise and experience to share, you can join as a contributor.

What you can expect to do:

- Share your knowledge and experience with others and add to the Lab's shared understanding of the topic.
- Gain deeper understanding of the problem at a local level and connect this to the national context.
- Feed back on ideas developed by the Lab test teams and take the learning back into your own organisation or context.
- Come to workshops that will expose you to new creative and collaborative methods that you can use in your day-to-day work.
- Connect with people with different experience and expertise and from different sectors who have a shared interest in the topic.

Benefits of being involved:

- Deepen your knowledge about the Lab topic.
- Build skills and capabilities around systems change, design thinking and tackling complex problems.
- Work collaboratively with a wide range of people.
- Build your network with peers.
- Access an online group that will support you to make connections and to collaborate with others.

Activity	Date
Registration opens	11 May 2023
Registration closes	11 September 2023
Workshop 1: Welcome and sharing insight	21 September 2023
Further workshops	November 2023 – March 2024

Who makes a good contributor?

- You want to share experience and expertise about the topic.
- You want to learn more about the topic area.
- You could come from a wide range of backgrounds with a wide range of experience:
    - you are a Q member
    - you are not a Q member
    - you have lived experience related to the topic
    - you are a system leader or in another role with influence on the topic
    - you work in the third/charity sector on issues related to the topic
    - you have already done work in the topic area.

To apply:

Fill in the Lab registration form and we will get back to you with more information about joining the Lab and the first workshop on Thursday 21 September 2023. You will start to receive more updates and information after the test teams are selected in July.

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Co-researchers

(Note that co-researcher applications closed on 28 June.) Co-researchers help the test teams 'work out loud' and so support communication and engagement inside and beyond the Lab. Co-researchers will work closely with test teams. They will share insights from the test teams' work and their experience working alongside test teams to develop their improvement ideas.

We have recruited one co-researcher per test team.

What co-researchers can expect to do:

In addition to the contributor activities, they will be expected to:

- Attend an onboarding session with other co-researchers.
- Attend all Lab workshops.
- Attend sense-making sessions with the Q insight manager.
- Meet with their assigned test team for a half-day once a month.
- Write up notes of their experience, learnings and observations about the test team and their emerging insights to support wider insight gathering and communication, in line with guidance from the Q insight and communications managers.
- Participate in online discussions in the Lab online group space.

MAY– JULY

Activity	Date
Registration opens	11 May 2023
Registration closes	28 June 2023, 12.00
Co-researchers informed of selection decision	11 July 2023
Co-researcher onboarding session	26 July 2023, 12.30 – 13.30 (online)

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Who makes a good co-researcher?

- An existing Q member or someone willing to join Q.

- Someone who can commit at least half-a-day each month to connect with Lab test teams online or face to face, write up their notes and work with the Q insight and communications managers.

- Someone who is interested in and able to share learning and reflections with the wider team and Q community.

- Someone who is ready to develop their social research and communication skills or who has those skills already.

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How to sign up

Note that test team and co-researcher applications closed on 28 June. To participate in the Lab as a contributor, complete the **Lab registration form**.

You can sign up by linking through to the registration form here or on **the Lab web page**.

How to stay connected

Email updates

- The Q Lab UK team will share regular email updates about the Lab. (You can opt out at any time.)
- Co-researchers will share regular updates about test teams' progress in the online group and via the Lab pages on the **Q website**.

Online group

- There is an **online group** for the Lab project. The space allows you to meet and connect with others working on the topic area. It will also be a way to stay in touch with the Lab, with regular updates and opportunities to contribute.

Twitter

- You can follow us on Twitter at the main Q community account **@theQcommunity**. We will be posting and sharing updates using #QLabs

Questions

- If you need to contact the Q Lab UK team or have any questions about the Lab or the registration process, get in touch with us at **QLab@health.org.uk**

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