



Exploring our evidence review of social innovation labs

Q and Innovation Unit

13 May 2024



Q is led by the Health Foundation and supported by partners across the UK and Ireland



Welcome





Do innovation labs work to improve health and care services?

A pragmatic rapid evidence review
January 2024



About Q

We are a community of thousands of people across the UK and Ireland, collaborating to improve the safety and quality of health and care. We share our knowledge and support each other to tackle challenges.

Together, we make faster progress to change health and care for the better.

Visit us online at q.health.org.uk

Email us at q@health.org.uk

Follow us on X [@theQCommunity](https://twitter.com/theQCommunity)



Intro to Q Lab

Q Lab 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.

Our current Lab topic:

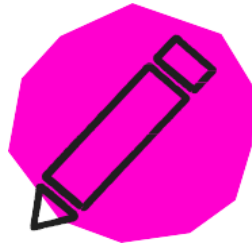
How might we create collective responsibility to reduce delays in elective pathways?



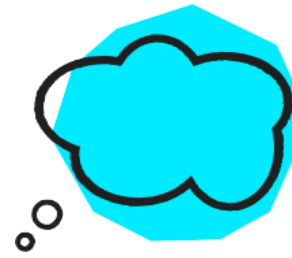
The Q Lab approach



Convene
people across the
system



Support teams to
creatively design and
test solutions



Provide space for
reflective learning
and sense-making



Distil and share
insights with a wider
audience



Who are Innovation Unit?

We are a social enterprise with a mission to grow and scale the boldest and best innovations that deliver impact for people, address persistent inequalities, and transform the systems that surround them

Drawing on approaches from social innovation, service design, co-production and systems change, we help partners solve today's urgent problems and grow sustainable solutions for the future – building a safe and credible pathway between the two

Visit us online: <https://www.innovationunit.org/>



What we'll be doing today

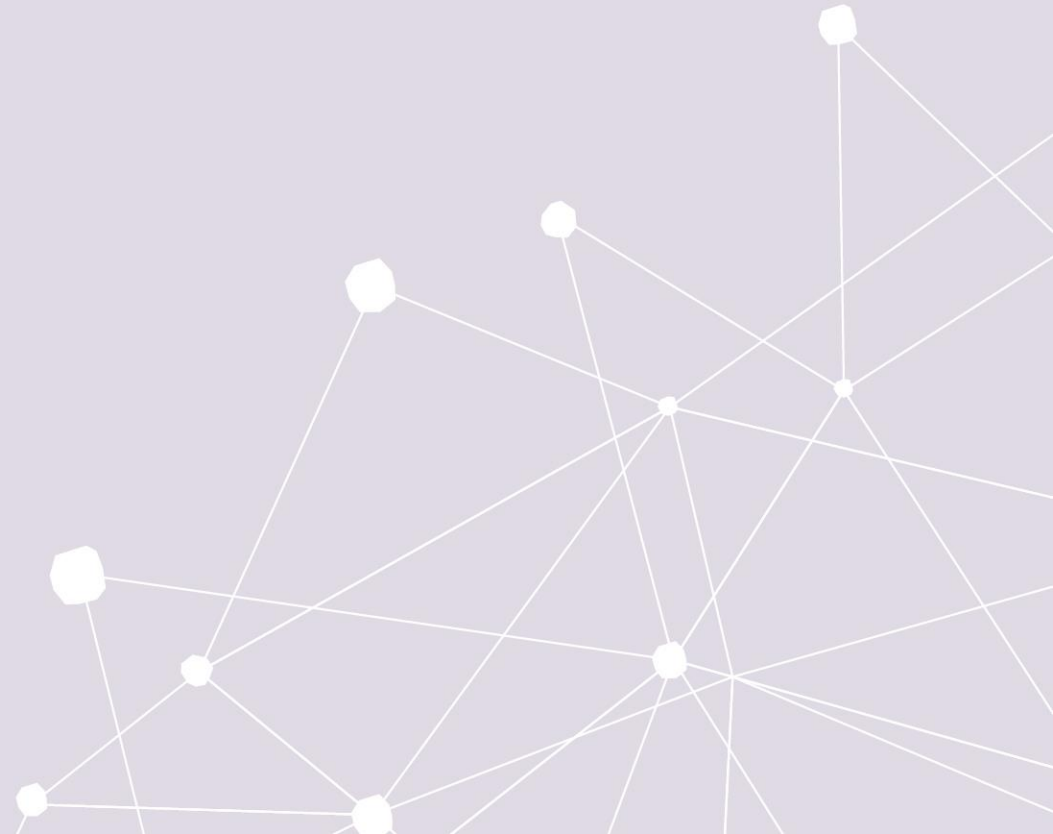
- **Exploring** the evidence review
- **Connecting** with others
- **Hearing** from interviewees
- **Reflecting** on what it means for you and your work



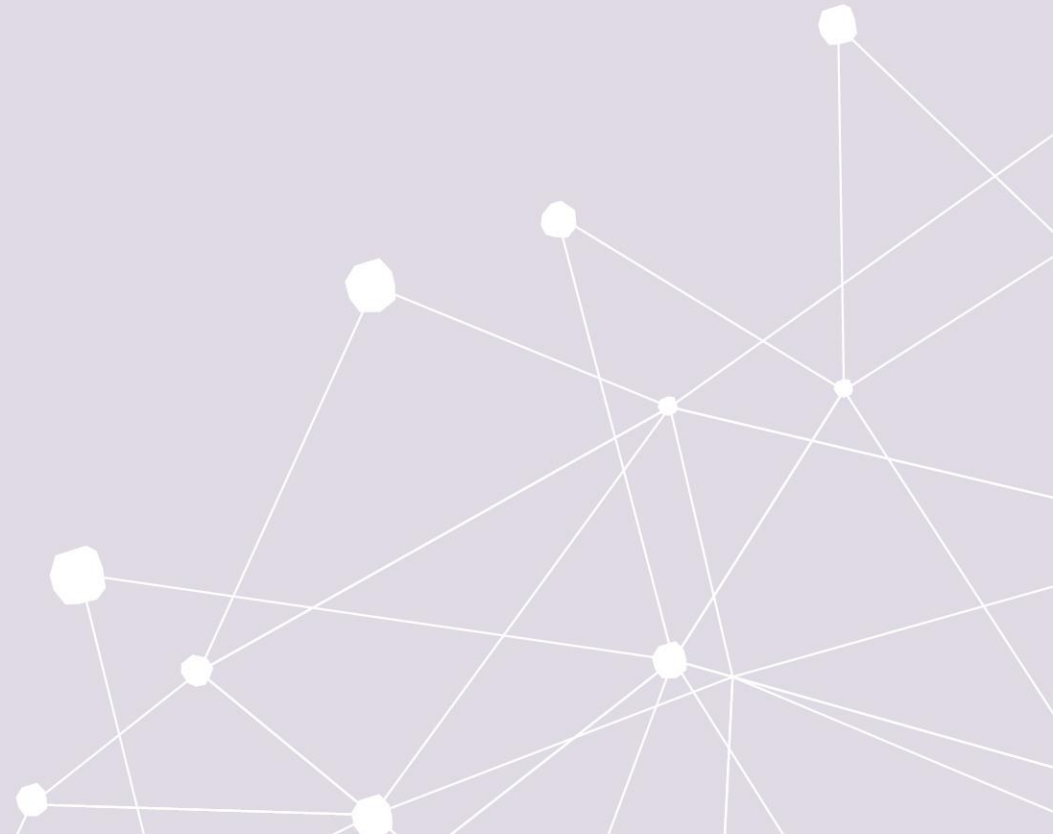
Energiser



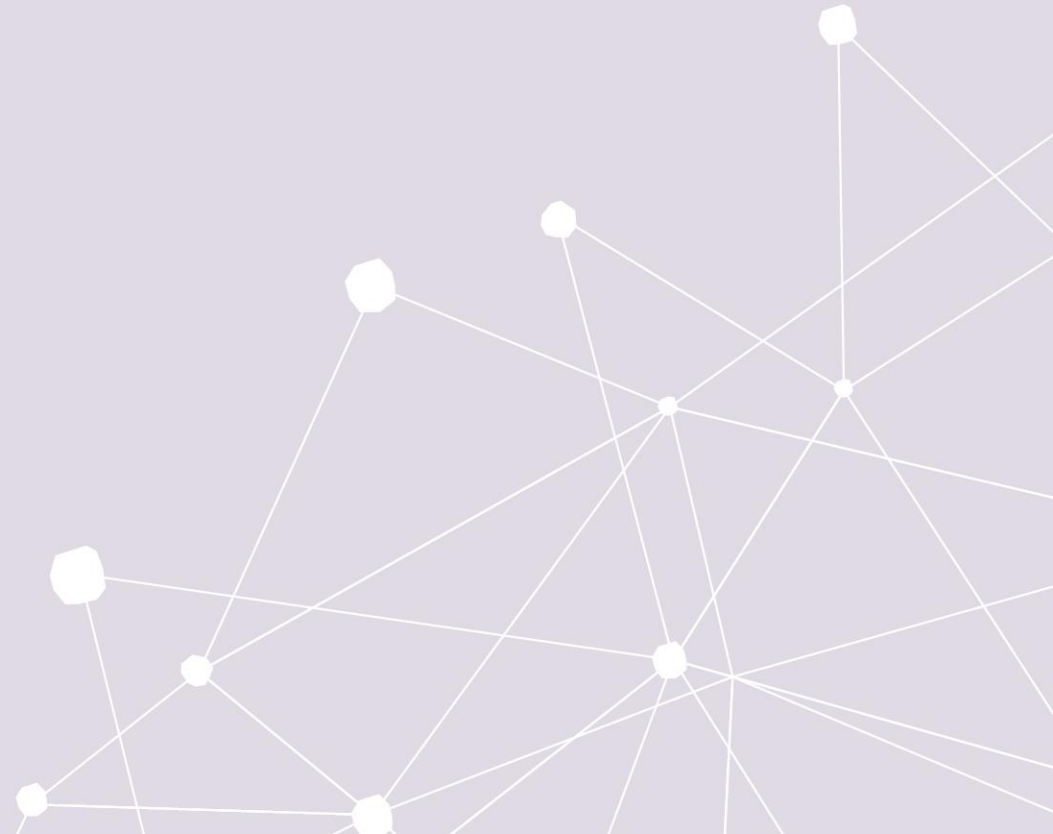
What drew you here?



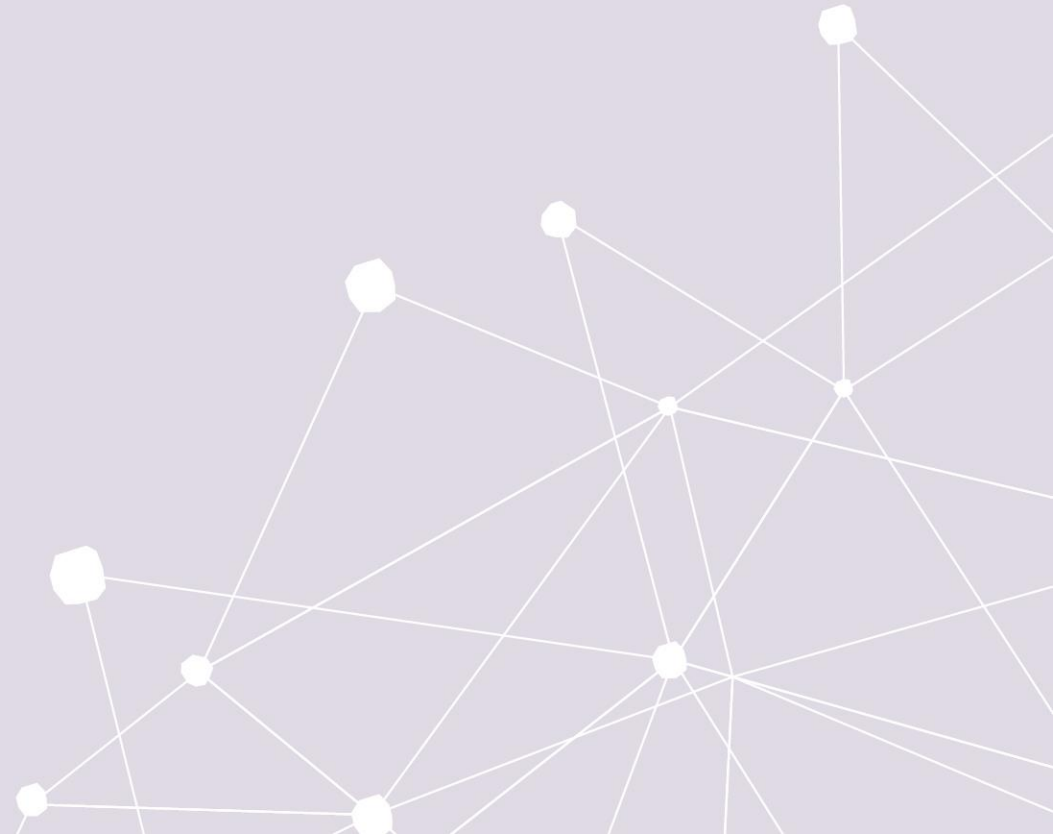
**What do you hope to
get from today?**



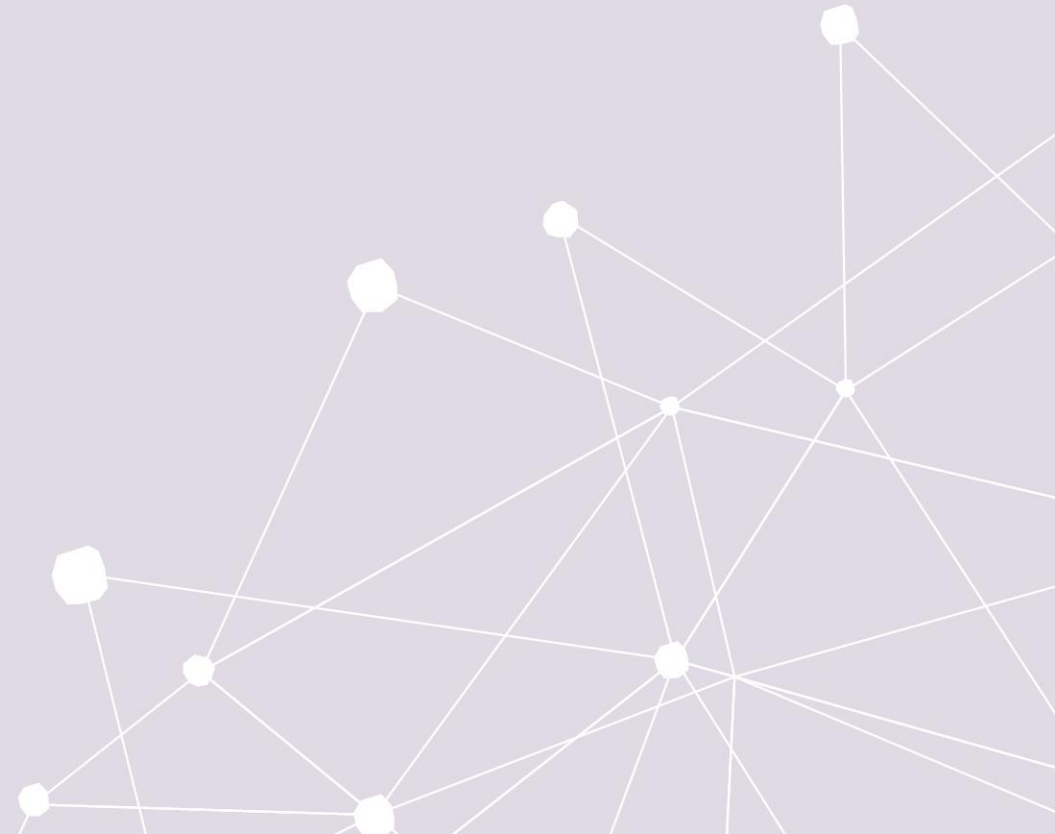
**What does a social
innovation lab mean to
you?**



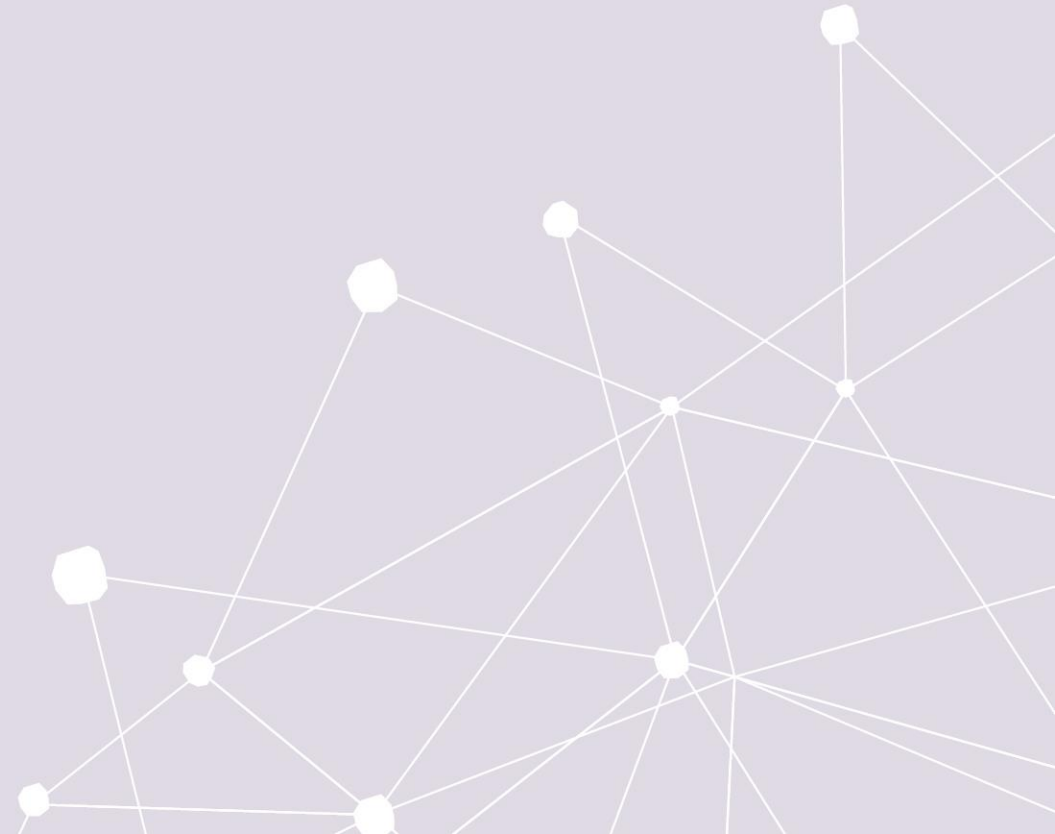
**How familiar are you
with social innovation
labs/methods?**



**What is it you want to
hear or learn more
about?**

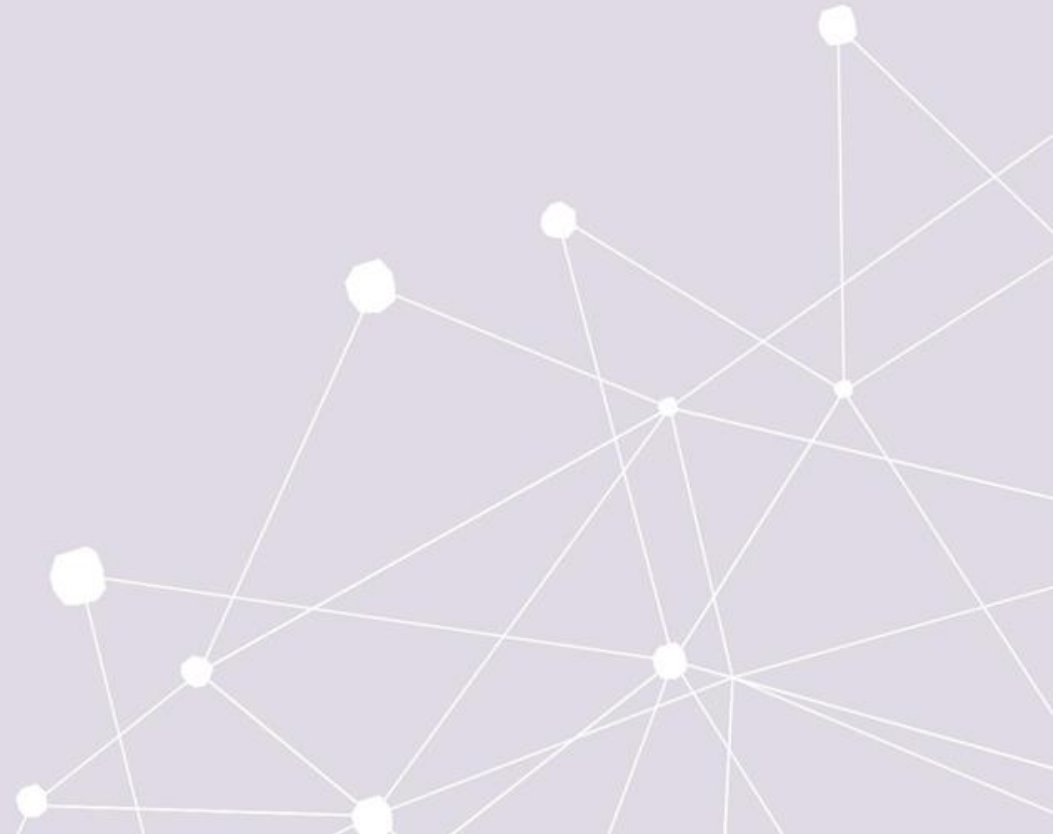


Story of the evidence review





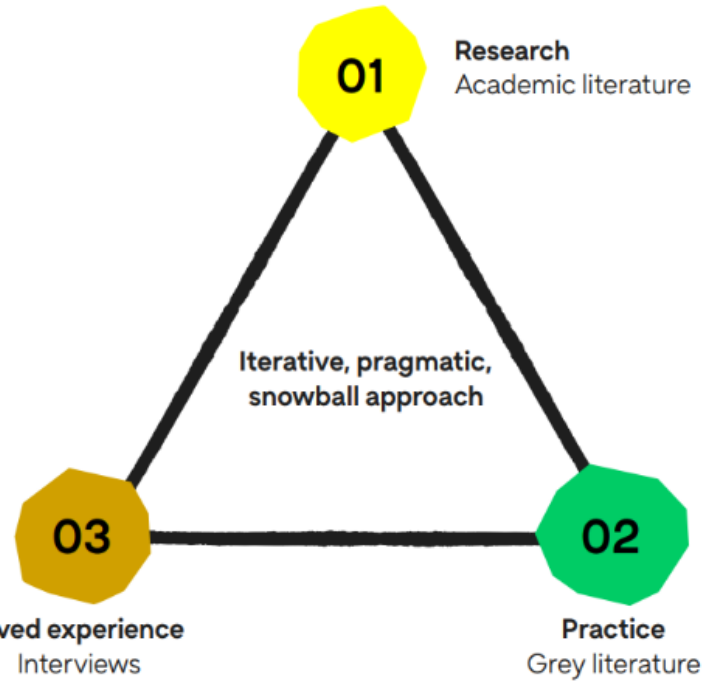
Methodology and key findings










Methodology



Figure 1: Three fields of knowledge framework



Source: Innovation Unit 2023

 <p>Anna Birney Director, School of System Change, Forum for the Future > UK public sector</p>	 <p>Jesper Christiansen Co-founder and Executive Director, States of Change > International public sector <i>Formerly Head of Research and Programme Lead at MindLab</i></p>	 <p>John Craig Chief Implementation Officer, UCL Partners > UK health and care sector <i>Formerly CEO at Care City</i></p>	 <p>Bas Leurs Innovation Lab and Learning Lead, United Nations Development Programme Accelerator Labs > International public sector</p>
 <p>James Lewis Director, Y Lab > UK public sector</p>	 <p>Kuranda Morgan Evidence Lead, Nesta > UK public sector</p>	 <p>Charlotte Williams Chief Strategy and Improvement Officer, Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust > UK health and care sector</p>	



What is a lab?



Providing a separate and distinct space for innovation



Multidisciplinary and multi-methods, underpinned by design thinking



Experimenting, testing and learning



Involving diverse stakeholders through co-design and co-production



Human-centred practice

What are social innovations?

‘New products, services or models that both **meet social needs** and **create new social relationships or collaborations**. They are ‘social’ both in ends and means.

They may generate financial value, but this is not necessarily their primary aim’.

(Nesta 2020)



Key areas of impact



Generating successful innovations



Creating connections between stakeholders



Developing learning, skills and capabilities



Key tensions and trade-offs

Developing theories of change and evaluation methods which reflect lab ethos and approaches

Protecting space for experimentation and learning alongside traditional policy and research approaches

Clarifying roles and priorities which balance ambition, influence, resources and timelines

Amplifying insider/ outsider perspectives and impact

How to progress system priorities while also disrupting status quo

Future potential for labs

Build stronger innovation ecosystems

- Focus on how and where to use labs
- Build on existing assets and connect initiatives and learning across the system

'We're seeing a shift from labs as structures and projects to labs as a mentality and culture.'

Jesper Christiansen, Co-Founder and Executive Director, States of Change (interview)

Enhance measurement and learning of/ between labs

- Flexible implementation of shared metrics and impact frameworks
- Learning about contribution not just attribution, progress as well as outcomes, shifts in culture and towards longer term impacts

'People are recognising that the learning process is more important than the evaluation process.'

Anna Birney, Director, School for Systems Change (interview)

Hearing from interviewees



Hearing from interviewees

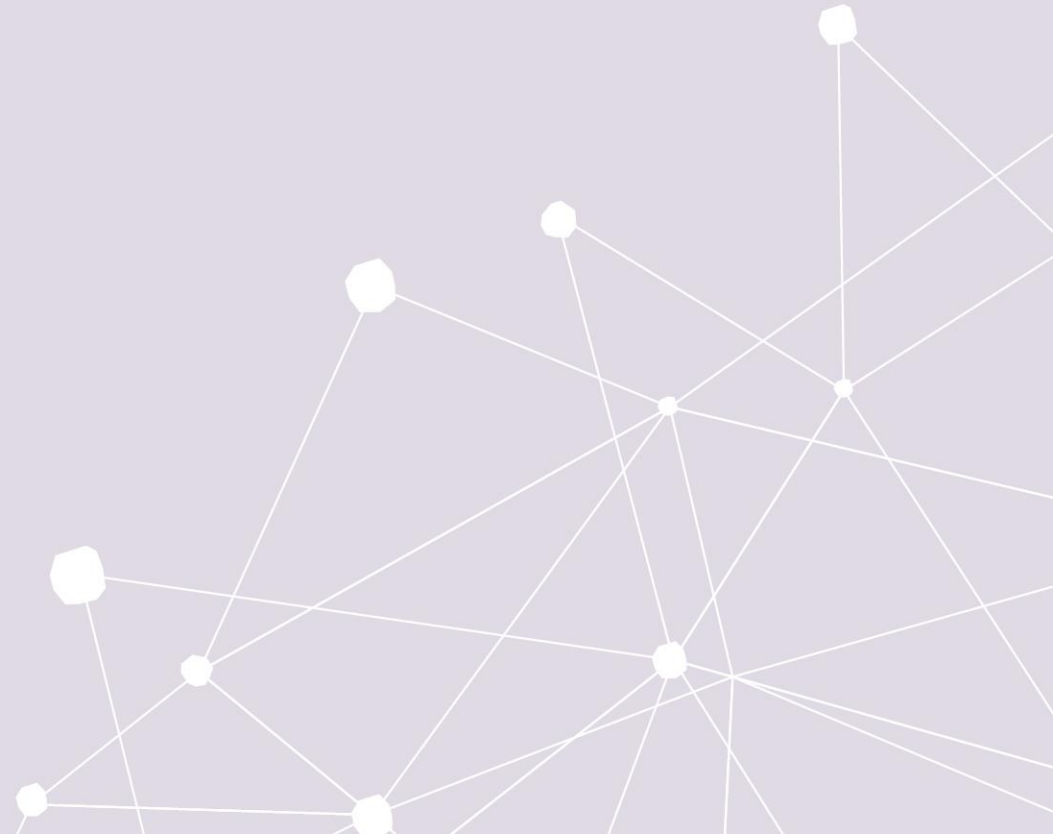


Anna Birney
CEO, School for System Change
Forum for the Future



Charlotte Williams
Deputy Chief Executive
North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust

Breakout discussions

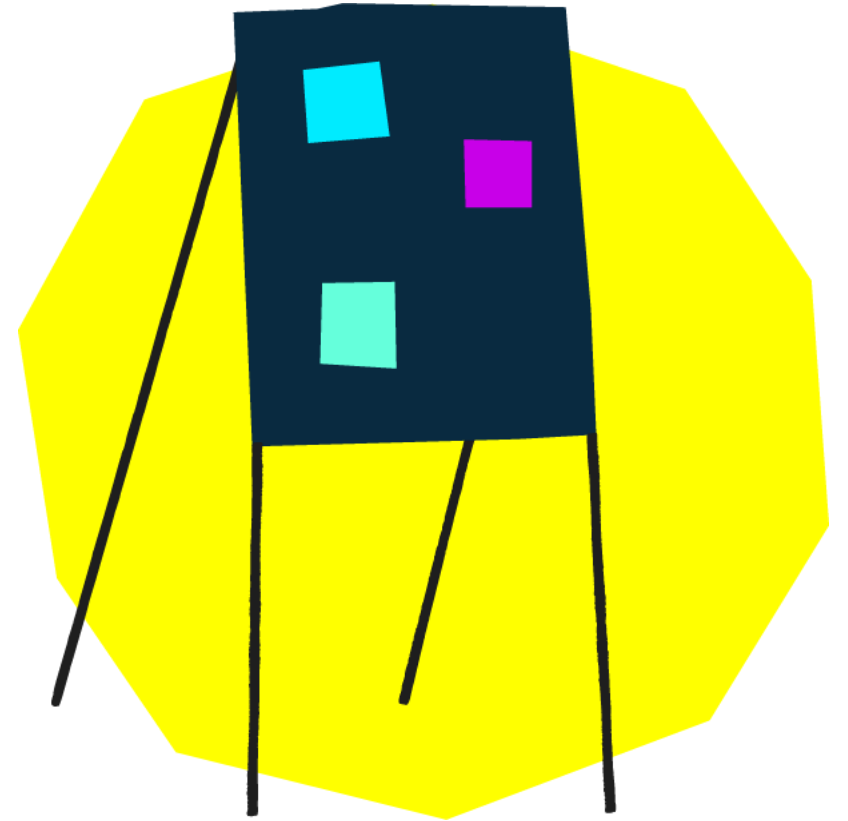


Breakout group discussions

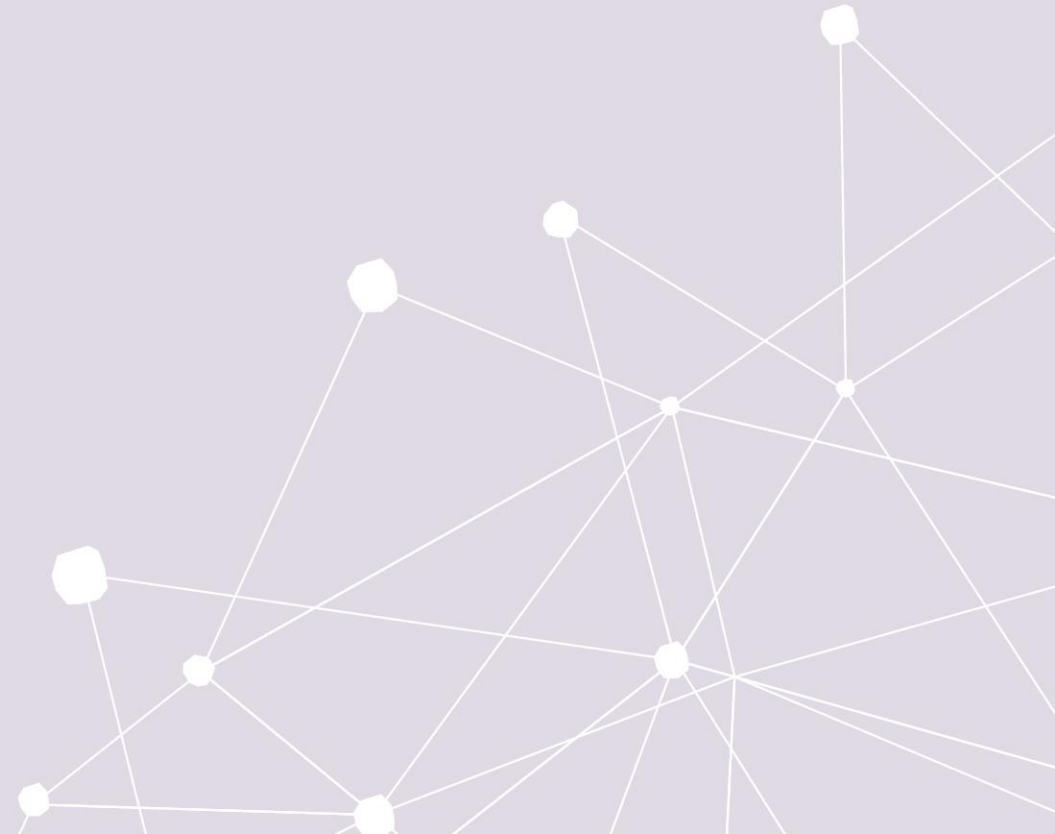
Groups of c. 5 people

10 minutes

- Introductions
- How do you understand labs?
- How has this been informed (or not) by the evidence review findings?
- Any other reflections?



Fostering innovation and improvement

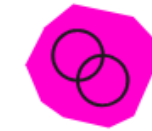


Innovation and improvement

There is very little evidence that explores the relationship between innovation and improvement.

The boundary between them is blurred and influenced by your perspective.

Similarities between innovation and improvement skills



Collaborative working and/or co-production



Learning



Agility



A facilitative approach



Being questioning and curious



Resilience



Systems thinking



Elements of risk taking*



Leading and influencing change



Imagination and creativity



Making connections and building bridges



Working with conflict and brokering relationships

*although, in improvement, this is more calculated

Connected fields of practice

“Innovation and improvement are connected, overlapping and complementary fields of practice. They both include a deliberate and thoughtful use of methods intended to deliver change.”

The Health Foundation

How are they traditionally viewed?

Innovation

Disruptive and
transformational
change

Creation of
solutions or
interventions

Improvement

Incremental
change

Small-scale

What are the unique strengths?

Innovation

Early stages of
ideation, prototyping

Working on the edge
or outside of
established systems

Improvement

Understanding and
optimising existing
structures and
systems

Embedding and
scaling change

Most commonly, we find:



Innovation = technology

Innovation and
improvement as distinct
mindsets and practices

Innovation and
improvement as
separate organisational
functions/workstreams

Greater potential when:

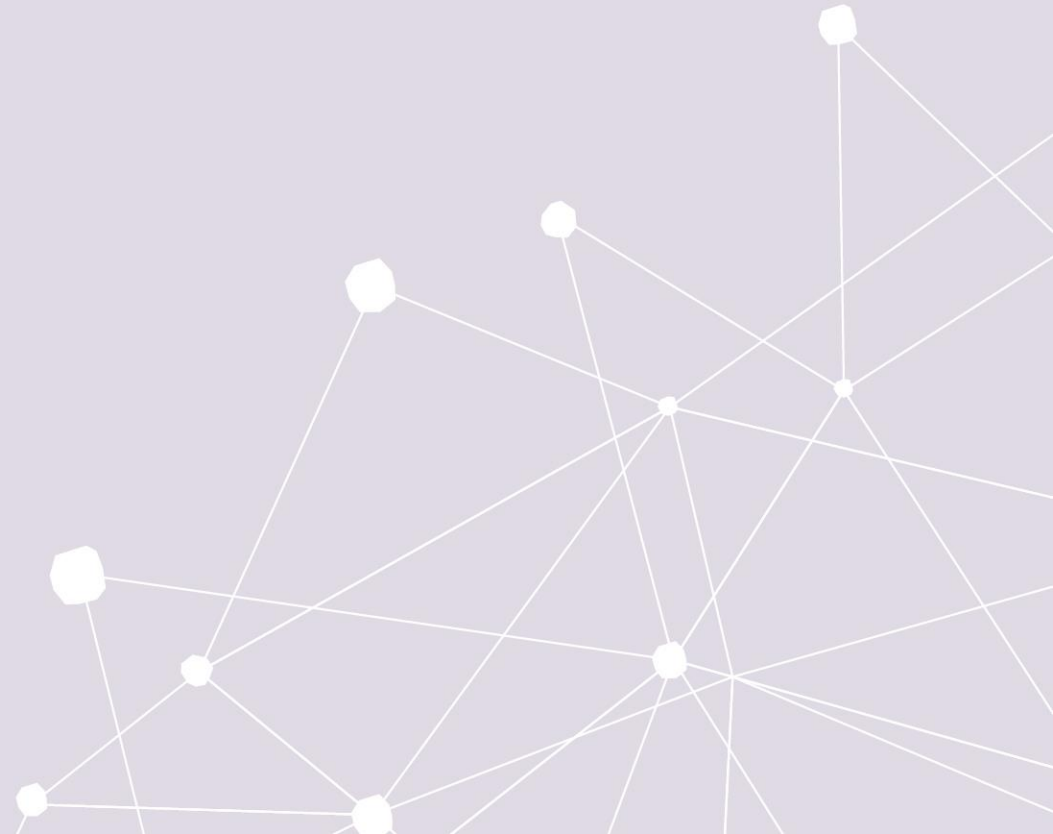
Innovation = any new:

- Product
- Practice
- Pathway
- Model
- System

Innovation and improvement as complementary mindsets and practices, supporting collaborative design, testing, implementation and growth of new ideas

Innovation, improvement and other change efforts connected and coordinated to grow learning cultures and address strategic challenges

Breakout discussions

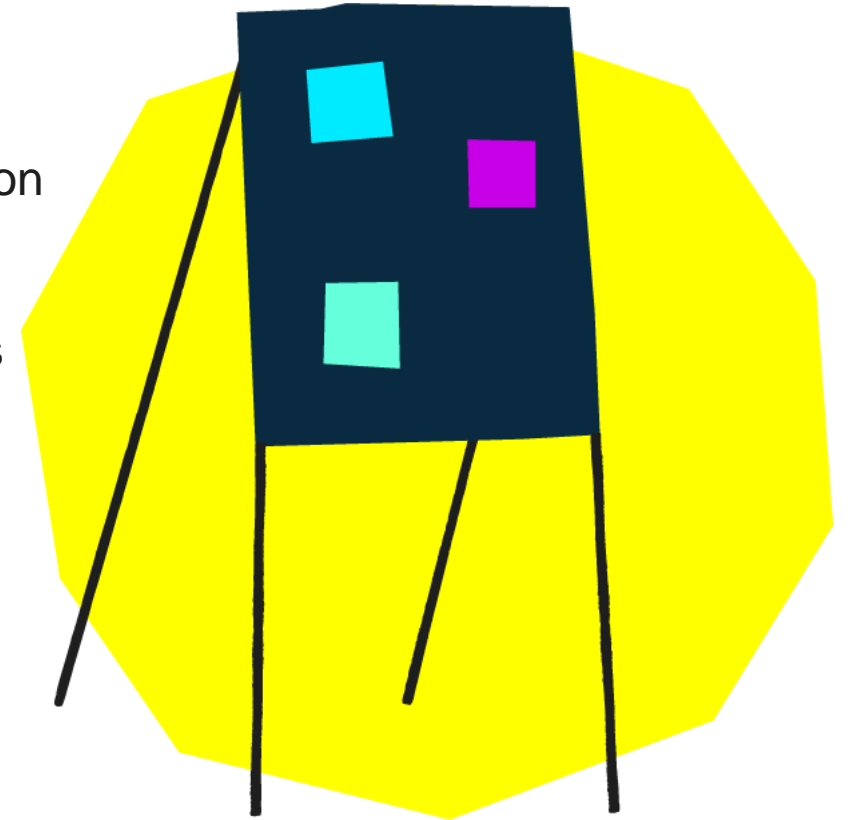


Breakout group discussion

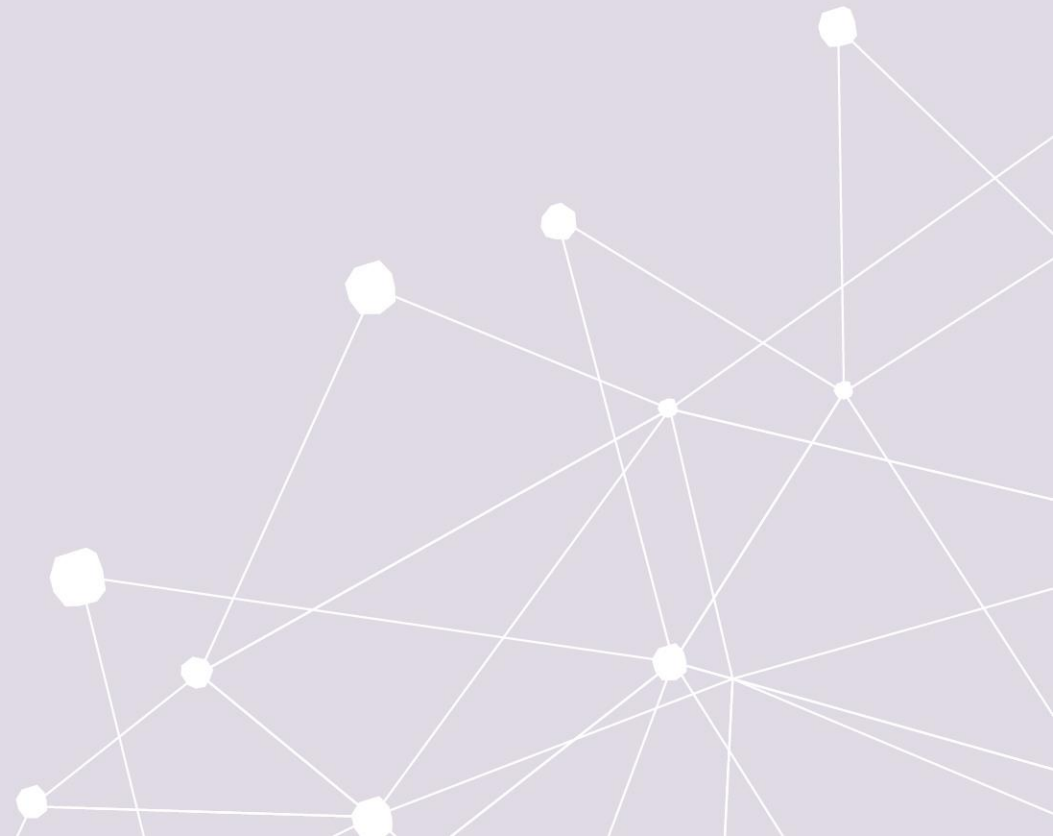
Groups of c. 5 people

10mins

- How are you fostering improvement or innovation in your organisation or system?
- What is the unique role and opportunity for Labs to support systems change?
- How can we maximise the impacts of Labs?
- Any other reflections based on what you've heard?



Sharing key takeaways



Join Q

Visit us online at q.health.org.uk
Email us at q@health.org.uk
Follow us on X [@theQCommunity](https://twitter.com/theQCommunity)

Download the evidence review:
<https://q.health.org.uk/resource/do-innovation-labs-work-to-improve-health-and-care-services/>



Thank you

Q is led by the Health Foundation and supported by partners across the UK and Ireland

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