

# Staff Practices Intervention

Manual and Guide  
Updated March 2022



## Introduction

QTurn’s **Staff Practices Intervention (SPI)** This manual includes the following section to support successful implementation and understanding of the SPI:

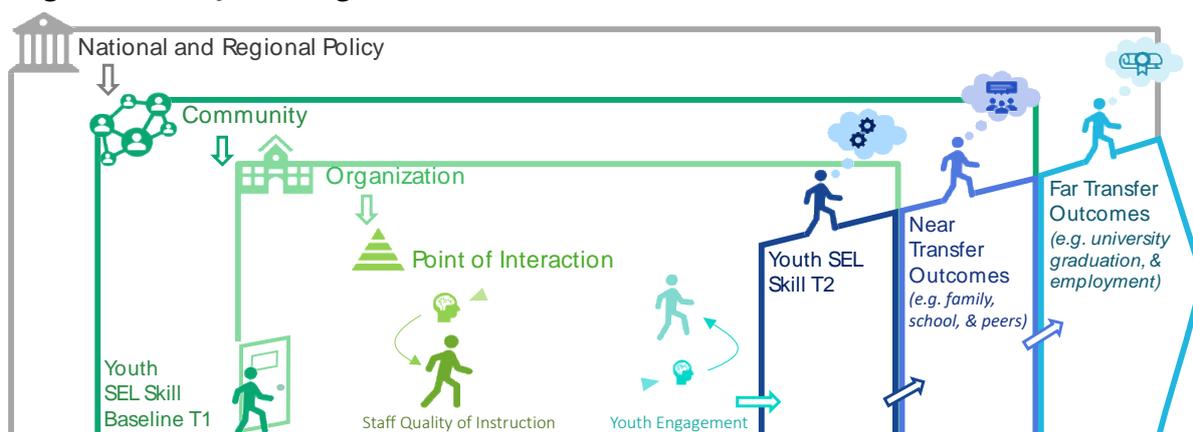
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## Theory of Change

The user guide is based on the Outcomes Framework 2.1, which sets out how youth provision contributes to improvements in outcomes for young people. The Outcomes Framework 2.1 includes a theory of change that details how quality youth provision can lead to socio-emotional development for young people. In summary of Figure 1:

- High-quality staff practices and content offered at the point of interaction, where staff and young people meet during provision, are likely to lead to higher levels of youth engagement during each session or interaction.
- Young people bring with them a set of experiences and beliefs about themselves and the world around them, shaped by the contexts in which they are living and learning. This affects how young people engage with youth provision.
- Over time and multiple interactions, the combination of high-quality staff practices and young people's engagement at the point of interaction promotes the growth of socio-emotional skills.
- With sufficient participation in, and intensity of exposure to, high-quality settings, the effects of socio-emotional skill growth will transfer to other settings.
- This includes the 'near transfer' of socio-emotional skills to family, school, and peers and the 'far transfer' of socio-emotional skills to subsequent life course events or experiences, such as early adulthood health, education, and employment. Young people continue to further apply and grow their socio-emotional skills in these settings.
- Improvement in socio-emotional skills is linked to longer-term impacts including an improved ability to cope with the transition into adulthood, alongside long-term improvements in mental and physical health, educational attainment, sustainable employment, finances, secure housing, positive relationships and personal safety.

**Figure 1: Theory of Change**



## About the Staff Practices Instrument (SPI)

The Staff Practices Instrument (SPI)<sup>1</sup> is a self-report measure that was designed to assess the quality of *staff practices* in programming, build a quality-focused organisational culture, develop improvement goals, identify staff training needs, and provide information about how specific aspects of quality relate to specific aspects of young people's socio-emotional skill growth. This measurement tool is applicable to all staff delivering youth provision and is focused on staff practices that are warm and responsive, scaffold content skills, and encourage awareness. Each of the 15 items on the SPI describes a practice staff use to encourage socio-emotional growth of young people. The SPI was developed by the researchers at QTurn in collaboration with expert practitioners and numerous youth work organizations.

The Centre for Youth Impact is supporting a range of organisations to trial use of this new measurement tool. If you would like to use the measure please contact us so we can support your use and understanding of the measure with additional materials, training and, or coaching.

### Validity

Whilst the items on the SPI are the result of decades of research by the QTurn team. To date, two rounds of data collection have been collected on the instrument. During both rounds, data collectors were successful achieving over 80% perfect agreement across all items on four paired observations. Because the SPI's items and constructs are individual, and differently, configured to reflect the reality of practice in youth work settings (i.e., they are *formative* not *reflective* indicators of their respective scale scores), traditional psychometric assumptions and techniques are inappropriate for evaluation of the instrument. We recommend that users focus on the face validity of the items in evaluating the tool use. Appropriate and final validation of data produced using the SPI will await the production of more extensive data sets (e.g., including socio-emotional skill growth data) that can be used to establish criterion validity.

### Analysis

After analysing the data, we generally provide reports to each organisation that show the three primary SPI scales as a set of profiles (e.g., High, Moderate, and Low Skill) that characterise the staff practices.

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<sup>1</sup> The SPI is also known as the Teacher Practices Instrument (TPI); for more information, see: <https://www.qturngroup.com/>

## Summary of Items

The SPI measures 15 staff practices that are warm and responsive, scaffold content skills, and encourage awareness. Below is a subset of these items. Some indicators of quality break out multiple practices in order to accurately score the tool. This is exemplified in the first item in the Warmth and Responsiveness domain. In order to score a 5 in this domain, four practices must be present. To score a 3, two or three practices must be present. A score of 1 is awarded when only one or none of the practices are observed. Another type of scoring is when certain items are required for a score in a given domain. You can see that in item 6 (below). The final type of scoring is when you are required to count the number of times something happens (every time/sometimes/none of the time) or the number of young people invited to participate (all young people/some young people/none of the young people), like in item 16 (below).

<b>I. Warmth and Responsiveness</b>	
<b>1  Proactive Strategies</b> – Objective is to clarify norms quickly, help young people stay comfortably and coherently on task, and help individuals with redirection or recovery without losing the cadence of instruction for the group.	<b>1</b> = 0-1 practices <b>3</b> = 3-2 practices <b>5</b> = all practices
T group management style includes four elements: (a) posted and/or verbally referenced guidance for safe space; (b) individual redirection (before mention of consequence) and group attention-getters (e.g., hand claps); (c) sensitivity to emotional triggers/physical limitations of individuals in the group; (d) second T helps when individual challenges interfere with activity progress.	
<b>2  Acknowledge Emotions and Bodies</b> – Objective to make space for expression (e.g., loudness, humor, frustration) and movement.	<b>1</b> = b or c <b>3</b> = a only <b>5</b> = all practices
T engages in at least three ways: (a) always acknowledge emotional expressions and body movements of S (e.g., “I see that you are mad, but yelling at me isn’t telling me what you need.”; S are allowed free movement to interact and move about at entry and during transitions, always with adult supervision); (b) asks S about active body feelings in real time (not always expecting a clear answer); (c) T uses slow and calm body proximity, voice tones, and breath to model de-escalation from charged emotional energy	
<b>II. Scaffolding Content Skills (STEAM, Socio-emotional, Sport, etc.)</b>	
<b>3  Connect and Extend Content</b> – This happens both formally for the whole group and as informal conversation throughout activities with individuals.	<b>1</b> = 0 practices <b>3</b> = 1 practice <b>5</b> = all practices
(a) T make connections between activity and S’s prior experience (e.g., e.g., who has made slime before, can you tell us the ingredients; how many of you have a had a powerbar before, were there any veggies in it?) (b) T link activity examples to wider categories or more abstract types, (e.g., “Yes! This design is linked to field of careers in shoe design.” “What property gives us addition, it’s the Associative law, remember!”).	
<b>III. Encouraging Awareness</b>	
<b>4  Guide to Emotion Cause/Effect</b> – This is about whole group discussion and goes with item 10 as indicators for explicit SE curriculum. T ask S to discuss the causes and/or effects of S’s or other’s emotions (e.g., in response to in-the-moment situations, past experiences, or in discussion of other actual or fictional events or experiences).	<b>1</b> = none <b>3</b> = some young people

	<b>5</b> = all young people
More than once, T asks S to think about alternatives and/or try another way of approaching a task or challenge (e.g., activity requires trials and improvement; resolution to a conflict requires alternative thinking).	

## How and When to Use

The SPI is used by programme staff as a self-assessment instrument. The SPI self-assessment process can be done at any time during the course of provision. For example, it can be completed once, in the middle of a programme period, to get a general idea about how well staff are implementing best practices. It could also be completed twice: once at the beginning of a programme period, to inform improvement goals and training priorities, and once at the end of a programme period to assess improvements in the quality of instructional practices. The timing of the SPI process should be determined by the goals of the organisation (e.g., continuous quality improvement, programme evaluation, or both).

The SPI can be used to assess the quality of staff instructional practices with young people ages 5 and up, but it was designed to be most applicable to older children and adolescents (ages 10 and older) who are in the process of developing their full range of socio-emotional skills. The SPI is especially suited for use when provision is virtual or one-to-one. The SPI self-assessment scoring process for any given staff person should take about 30 minutes to complete.

### Scoring

1. There are no SPI items for any scale or domain that require being reverse scored prior to calculating the scale and domain scores.
2. The scoring rules used to combine item scores into SPI scale scores are unique to each of the three SPI scales (i.e., Warm and Responsive, Scaffolding Content Skills, & Encouraging Awareness) and are currently produced only by QTurn researchers. If some item responses are missing, scale scores can sometimes still be calculated. The resulting scale scores range from 1 to 5.

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