

Using the YPQI for Detached Youth Work

Over the past year many organisations and services have been doing more detached youth work in response to COVID and the question has come up of how you apply the YPQI to that work? The majority of organisations in the UK who have used the YPQI so far have focused on observing and assessing activity based and open access sessions. Over the past six months Youth Work Practitioners in the UK have been part of an ongoing discussion on how the YPQI can be used to assess the quality of and strengthen the skills of detached workers. The YPQI is underpinned by youth work values of empowerment, equality, participation and education. Detached Work is youth work and shares all the same values and principles, it promotes social and emotional learning and therefore we would like to encourage you to use the SEL PQA as an observational tool for assessing practices that support social and emotional learning. There are some things you will need to think about and consider when observing and assessing the quality of detached youth work.

When undertaking **observations**, consider the purpose of the session. For example, it could be that the work is in the reconnaissance/mapping stage, or it could be a group meeting to be part of an activity, or workers may be doing one to one door-step support visits. This will have an impact on what an observer will see and the evidence available to score the quality of staff practices.

When undertaking an observation staff and young people should know it is going to happen as far as is practicably possible and the observer should try and observe for an hour in total. We recommend you make up the hour of observation in 20 minutes chunks though this may not always be possible or practical. Observations should be done in as unobtrusive way as possible. Just as in any observed session it is a snapshot and it will be affected by weather, other events and what is going on in young people's lives.

When **scoring** SEL practice in detached work it may not be possible to score all the items. The YPQI is designed for provision that intends to develop young people's social and emotional learning skills, so you should take this into consideration when planning which sessions to observe. For example if you are observing detached work at the reconnaissance stage you will probably score fewer items, especially in the Interactive Environment and Engaging Environment domains and may want to focus on Creating Safe Spaces and the Supportive Environment domains. Knowing it may take longer to develop relationships in detached settings, to the point that young people plan and participate in a group work programme, you may want plan to observe more established work to be able to assess all items in the SEL PQA.

The 'Adaptation for Detached Work Observation – Social and Emotional Learning PQA Item Summary' is a **guide** to what you might expect to observe at different stages of detached youth work. The key to the colour bands suggests if it is an item that you might expect to score at all stages of detached youth work or one that might be easier to observe and score following the initial reconnaissance/mapping stage. It is a guide and not definitive.

When you meet to score the SEL PQA tool, as you move through the domains it may become more difficult. If you cannot evidence a domain just move on. Do not worry about this, it is better to start off with one domain and build up from there, than never start. As with all YPQI

cycles this is an opportunity to assess – plan – improve. As you develop your detached youth work programme and undertake more YPQI cycles you should seek to push forward to evidence more domains and create that continuous improvement cycle.