**Observing Practice Quality Instructions**

The Observing Practice Quality (OPQ) tool is used to assess the quality of support provided to a person with an intellectual disability. Good support enables a person to participate in purposeful activities and social interactions. Such as household, leisure, work, personal care or social activities. Good support can enhance a person’s quality of life.

The focus of each observation is one staff member (i.e., worker) and the support they provide to one person.

The OPQ can be used in settings where more than one worker is providing support to more than one person. In this situation, you will need to conduct a series of observations, each focussed on one worker and the support they provide for one person. Each observation is scored separately.

**Observing Support**

Before you start observing, introduce yourself to everyone present and explain that you are going to observe what is happening.

Stand or sit where you can see and hear the worker and person they are supporting, but where you are not interfering in what they are doing. You may have to move around during the observation if the worker moves. Try to limit your interactions with the people you are observing to avoid influencing what is happening.

Spend between 15 - 30 minutes observing how the worker provides support, then complete the tool.

**Completing the Tool**

There are 11 items in total:

* Items 1 to 4 are about *the way the worker supports the person to engage in activities*
* Items 5 to 8 are about *the way the worker interacts with the person*
* Items A1 and A2 are optional. Only rate them if you have seen opportunities for teaching to occur and/or the person exhibiting behaviour that is a danger to themselves or others.
* Item 9 is about how much of the time the person was engaged during the observation.

**Rating Items**

Each item is rated on a 3-point scale: 3 is a high score and 1 is a low score. The table below shows how to rate each item.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 3 | The worker provided good support  |
| 2 | The worker sometimes provided good support, but it could have been better |
| 1 | The worker did not provide good support  |

If during the observation the worker does not provide any support, then rate the item a 1. For example, if the worker does not provide the person with any activities (item 1) or does not provide the person with any assistance (item 4), then rate the item a 1.

When rating an item, think about what you observed overall:

* ​​What did you see happen?
* Did the worker provide good consistent support tailored to the person?
* Were there missed opportunities?
* Were there ways to provide better support?

You can write and save your comments in the tool, which you can refer to later to help you rate the items. For instance, you could record descriptions of when the worker provided good support, the words that the worker said to the person, and your ideas about how the support could be better.

**Total Score**

A total score is calculated by adding up the ratings for items 1-8. The maximum score is 24. A higher score indicates better quality support.

The following table provides information about how to interpret total scores.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 20 - 24 | High quality support  |
| 14 - 19 | Medium quality support  |
| 8 - 13 | Low quality support |

The two optional items – A1 and A2 – and item 9 are not included in the total score. They are interpreted separately. This is because teaching (A1) and responding to behaviour that is a danger to themselves or others (A2) may not happen during every observation, whereas the support reflected in items 1-8 should happen during every observation, therefore total scores can be compared across all observations.

Item 9 is interpreted separately because the amount of time a person is engaged is influenced by both the quality of support they receive and their support needs, people with higher support needs are typically engaged for less time than those with lower support needs.

**Supporting Engagement in Activities**

**1. Offering activities to take part in**

This item is about the type of activities the worker offers and supports the person to participate in: whether the activities have multiple steps or just one or two steps.

Multi-step activities often require time and effort to do. For example, making toast comprises multiple steps, which include getting two pieces of bread, putting the bread in a toaster and pushing down the leaver, getting margarine and jam from the fridge, spreading the margarine and jam on the toast, and putting the toast on a plate.

On the other hand, simple activities comprise just one or two steps and can usually be done quickly or easily. For example, closing curtains or blinds.

Examples of a 3 rating for this item include the worker asking or supporting the person to make a coffee, make a sandwich, change bed sheets, put clothes in a washing machine and turn it on, or play a card game with another person. Each of these activities have multiple steps. You would expect to see the person take part in some but not necessarily all of the possible steps involved.

Examples of a 2 are the worker asking or supporting the person to take a plate to the sink, carry clothes to a washing machine, check for mail in a letter box, carry rubbish to a bin, shut a door, or watch TV. Each of these activities have one or two steps.

Examples of a 1 are the worker not offering any activities and the person doing nothing (e.g., just sitting or standing, watching the worker or other people). If the worker provides activities that do not have a real purpose, such as providing paper to rip into pieces for no purpose, then the rating is a 1.

**2. Offering choice**

This item is about how much choice the worker provides the person. This includes choice about what to do, how to do it, when and for how long, and the worker respects the person’s choice.

An example of a 3 rating for this item is the worker giving the person choice about when to start cooking (e.g., now or in 10 minutes), which part of the cooking the person does (e.g., cuts vegetables or puts water in saucepans), and supporting the person to have a break if they want to (e.g., respecting their wish to have a 5-minute break after cutting vegetables for 10 minutes). Good support usually means the worker providing the person with 2 or more options to choose from.

An example of a 2 is the worker giving the person choice about which part of the cooking they do, but not respecting their preference when the person says they want a break from cooking. Or the worker offering the person only one option when providing choice.

An example of a 1 is the worker not giving the person any choice about when to start cooking, which part of the cooking the person does, and dismissing the person’s preferences (e.g., wanting to have a 5-minute break from cooking).

**3. Providing opportunities to be engaged**

This item is about how much opportunity for engagement the worker provides. Staff who are skilled in Active Support can break complex activities into simpler parts to create opportunities for the person to be engaged in all or parts of activities.

An example of a 3 rating for this item is the worker recognising that washing clothes comprises multiple steps and supporting the person to be involved in all or most of these: carrying clothes to the washing machine, putting them in the machine, getting a scoop of washing powder, putting it in the machine, selecting the wash cycle, and starting the machine.

An example of a 2 is the worker supporting the person to carry clothes to the washing machine and putting them in, but the worker putting in the powder and starting the washing machine without involving the person. That is, there were missed opportunities to engage the person.

An example of a 1 is the worker doing all the steps themselves and not involving the person. Instead, the person watches the worker do the steps.

**4. Providing the right type and amount of assistance**

This item is about how often the worker provides the right type and amount of assistance to enable the person to engage in activities. Not too much or too little assistance.

Examples of a 3 rating for this item include the worker:

* asking the person to wash vegetables and the person understanding and following the request
* providing hand-over-hand assistance using a knife so the person successfully cuts a potato
* demonstrating how to use tongs to put food on a plate and then the person does it
* standing back when the person starts to put food scraps in the bin because the person can do this independently

An example of a 2 is the worker asking the person to wash vegetables and the person does it. But standing back and watching the person have difficultly using a knife to cut potato, when hand-over-hand assistance is needed for them to successfully cut the potato into pieces. That is, the worker sometimes providing the right type and amount of assistance, and sometimes providing too much or too little assistance.

An example of a 1 is the worker asking the person to put food on a plate, but the person having difficultly using tongs (i.e., providing not enough support), so the worker does it. The person starts to take food scraps to the bin, but the worker intervenes and takes it from their hands to put it in the bin, when the person can do this independently (i.e., providing too much support).

**Interacting with the Person**

**5. Communicating clearly**

This item is about how clearly the worker communicates to the person (verbally and non-verbally). Such as, communicating what is being offered to them or what they are being asked to do.

An example of a 3 rating for this item is the worker instructing a person to use a washing machine:

* asking the person if they want to put powder into the washing machine while holding the box of washing power to make the message clearer
* the worker touching the box of washing powder while saying, “Get a scoop of washing powder”
* then saying, “Put the powder in here”, while pointing to the detergent draw
* then saying, “Turn the dial” while pointing to the dial and gesturing how to turn it
* then saying, “Press this button” while pointing to the start button, and the person understanding all of these instructions

An example of a 2 is the worker verbally asking the person if they want to put powder into the washing machine, but the person does not understand the question. Then the worker holding the box of power and saying, “Get a scoop of washing powder”, followed by pointing and saying where to put the powder in the machine, with the person following both of these instructions. Next, the worker saying, “Turn the dial and press the button”, but the person not understanding this instruction.

An example of a 1 is the worker saying to a person, “Can you put the powder in the washing machine for me and turn it on”, but the person not understanding the instructions.

**6. Noticing and responding to the person’s communication**

This item is about how often the worker notices and responds to the person’s communication (verbal and non-verbal).

Examples of a 3 rating for this item include the worker:

* answering the person’s question about when they are going out later today
* responding when the person starts a conversation
* noticing and acknowledging when the person looks at an object to indicate their preference
* responding when the person calls out from another room for help

An example of a 2 is the worker answering the person’s question about when they are going out later today, but walking away when the person starts a conversation. That is, the worker notices and responds to some of the person’s communication, but misses or ignores other attempts to communicate.

Examples of a 1 are the worker missing or ignoring the person’s efforts to communicate, such as not responding when the person asks a question, tries to start a conversation, calls out to them, or looks at an object to indicate their preference.

**7. Respecting the person in all interactions**

This item is about how attentive and courteous the worker is when interacting with the person.

Examples of a 3 rating for this item include the worker:

* looking at the person and using their name when talking to them
* using a friendly tone of voice
* waiting for the person to finish talking before speaking
* working at the person’s pace when doing an activity
* knocking on the door or calling out before entering their room if the door is shut

That is, the worker is respectful, polite and considerate of the person.

An example of a 2 is the worker in some interactions using the person’s name and looking at them when talking as well as waiting for the person to finish talking before speaking, but in other interactions speaking in a stern tone and demanding the person do something. That is, the worker is sometimes respectful and sometimes not.

Examples of a 1 include the worker using a directive tone of voice, demanding the person do something, talking over the person when they are talking, being dismissive or patronising, trying to rush them during an activity, talking about the person in front of them without acknowledging their presence, entering their rooms or moving them without permission or notifying them.

**8. Having friendly interactions**

This item is about how friendly the worker is when interacting with the person. That is, the worker creates a friendly atmosphere and takes opportunities to include the person in social interactions.

Examples of a 3 rating for this item include:

* smiling when the person smiles at them
* laughing together or sharing a moment when something funny happens
* praising or telling the person they are doing a good job when performing a difficult task
* making small talk
* asking the person a question which invites them to participate in a conversation

An example of a 2 is the worker smiling at the person who also smiles, but directing the person back to the activity when the person stops to laugh at something. That is, the worker sometimes creates or takes opportunities for friendly social interactions but also does not take some opportunities.

An example of a 1 is the worker ignoring or not responding positively to the person smiling, when something funny happens, or using an opportunity to start a conversation with the person.

**Additional items**

A1 and A2 are optional items. Rate them only if you see opportunities for teaching and/or the person exhibiting behaviour that is a danger to self or others.

**A1. Teaching something new**

When supporting a person, there are sometimes opportunities to teach the person something new. This item is about how many opportunities the worker uses to teach the person something new.

Examples of a 3 rating for this item include:

* the person asking why onions are cooked before other vegetables and the worker explaining that vegetables have different cooking times
* the person has never used a blender, so the worker teaches them how to use it

An example of a 2 is the person asking why onions are cooked before the other vegetables and the worker explaining that vegetables have different cooking times, and the person wanting to learn how to use the blender but the worker not teaching them. Or the worker providing an explanation which is too brief and has insufficient information for the person to learn about the task or topic.

An example of a 1 is the person asking why onions are cooked before the other vegetables and the worker not giving an explanation, and the person wanting to learn how to use the blender but the worker not teaching them.

**A2. Responding well to behaviour that is a danger to self or others**

This item is about how well the worker responds when a person’s behaviour is a danger to themselves or others. Examples of this behaviour includes aggression, self-injury and damage to property. It is about the worker being confident (i.e., knows what they are doing), responding to the person’s emotions, and ensuring the person and any other people present are safe.

An example of a 3 rating for this item is that a person being supported to cook swears aggressively at another person entering the kitchen. The worker recognises the potential for the situation to escalate and responds immediately, thereby avoiding potential harm by calming the aggressive person and directing the other person to safety.

An example of a 2 is the person being supported to cook swears aggressively at another person entering the kitchen, the worker hesitates, then the person cooking hits the other person. The worker tells the person who was cooking to go to their room for time out and comforts the person who was assaulted.

An example of a 1 is the person being supported to cook swears aggressively at another person entering the kitchen and then hits them. The worker tells the person who was assaulted it was their own fault for coming into the kitchen and punishes the person who was cooking by telling them to go to their room and that they are no longer allowed to cook.

**9. How much of the time was the person supported engaged?**

This item is about how much of the observation time the person supported was engaged in purposeful activities and social interactions. These include household, work, leisure, personal or social activities.

An example of a 3 rating for this item is that the person was engaged for more than 20-minutes of a 30-minute observation.

An example of a 2 is the person was engaged for 10 to 20 minutes of a 30-minute observation.

An example of a 1 is the person was engaged for less than 10 minutes of a 30-minute observation. That is, they spent most of the time disengaged: just sitting, standing, walking back and forth, or doing repetitive activities.