



Using the Independent Living Star™ or the Older Person's Star™

Published in 2014, the Independent Living Star can be used across the spectrum of adult social care in the UK with people who are being supported to live at home or as independently as possible, including older people and people with physical disabilities or other needs. A variant of the Older Person's Star, it includes a scale on Where you Live, broadens the focus from ageing and is presented on a 1-5 instead of a 1-10 scale for greater simplicity and ease of completion.

Published in 2010, the Older Person's Star has two versions. The original (full) version uses a 1-10 scale, while the shorter version reduces this to 1-5 and offers brief, illustrated scales perfect for use in day or resource centres or within services where one-to-one time with clients is limited. Services working exclusively with older people, and in which there is not a particular focus on accommodation, will probably find the Older Person's Star is right for them.

The Star materials for each version are:

- The Star Chart, Notes and Action Plan
- The User Guide, with an introduction and both brief and detailed scales for each of the outcome areas
- The Star Online.

NB The short version of the Older Person's Star has brief, illustrated scales only.

Completing the Star is meant to be a helpful process that stimulates and focuses discussion and provides a useful basis for agreeing actions with service users. The Star is a flexible tool that relies on the judgement of the professionals using it, and on a degree of understanding and trust between service user and worker. The Star is designed to be used one to one, but we are not prescriptive about the setting or how long it should take – the aim is to have a genuine interaction with the person.

The Star celebrates well-being and does not set people up to fail.

**Worker,
Age Concern,
London Borough
of Camden**

Completing the Star is useful and helps explain what's needed in easy-to-see terms.

**Older person,
London Borough
of Camden**

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**Contact info@triangleconsulting.co.uk
or 020 7272 8765**

Make sure that you have received training in using the Star and that you are familiar with the materials and know when and how they are used in your service. It is vital that workers understand and use the Journey of Change underpinning the Star as this will support consistent results and reliable outcomes data for your service to use.

Introduce the Star to service users using the resources flexibly, including:

- Talking the service user through the points in the introduction to the Star within the User Guide
- Showing them a sample of a completed Star, and how the visual shows change
- Devising a short script to introduce the Star in a way that feels natural to you and clear for those you are working with
- Using any opportunities to introduce and discuss the Star before the session in which it is completed, and possibly giving people a copy of the User Guide to read in advance.

Some suggested phrases for introducing the Star include:

"It is about you and how we can help you live as good a life as possible."

"It can help you find services that are of use to you."

"When life is tough it's hard to see the wood for the trees and this is a tool to help us unpick what is going well and any needs you have around how to stay independent and live well."

"It shows the steps towards living well and can help us work out your next step."

In some instances, you may judge that the person you are working with does not have the capacity to engage with the Star or that the Star would be a barrier rather than a help in working with them. In this case you may decide to let the Star inform your discussion but not actually share the Star materials with them. You could complete the Star on your own afterwards and record it as a 'worker only' reading, drawing on what you learnt in the one-to-one session to place them on the Journey of Change. Working in this way, you will not gain all of the benefits of using the Star but you will get outcomes data and it may help to focus your thinking in relation to where the person is and what they need at this time.

The Star is a therapeutic tool because it allows a person to reflect on their life and focuses on their strengths and coping strategies.

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Emphasise that everyone can reach the top of the scale if the right support is available and they are doing what they can, however frail or unwell they are at the time. At 5, the service user is as independent as they are able to be at that time (10 in the full version of the Older Person's Star), without harm to their well-being, so even if someone moves down the journey of change after a fall or illness, they can still go back up and reach 5/10 with the right level of support. Being at the top of the scale signals to both the worker and the service user that they do not need to make further changes at the moment – their task is to maintain how things are, including continuing with any support the service user receives to do so.

The top of the Star scales is 5 (or 10) but things can continue to improve after they have reached this stage.

The aim is to complete the Star collaboratively, selecting appropriate examples from the scales. Some service users will want to approach the tool cognitively, reading it through and discussing their life in terms of the scales. Others might prefer to explore aspects of their life more conversationally or less directly and receive support from the worker to place themselves on the scales.

Use the Journey of Change when deciding where someone is on their journey. There are two versions of each of the Star scales. The short version of the scales (or, in the shorter Older Person's Star, the brief statements) are accessible '1' statements to support using the Star collaboratively with service users. The detailed scales are intended as a resource for workers but feel free to refer to specific points for clarification with service users if it is useful.

Be positive and non-judgemental. Used well, the Star will support a conversation that covers many potentially sensitive aspects of a person's life. Ensure that the service user does not feel they are being judged, and clarify that the aim is not to get the highest score possible, but to understand their life at this moment and where they might need help. It is their life and it is important.

No one was annoyed, everyone seemed to be interested in the results, with some people being quite surprised at their lives in graphic representation. I think it gives people's lives greater validation.

Worker,
Camden Council

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