



# Using the Justice Star™

The Justice Star is designed for use with people in the criminal justice system, whether in the community, on short custodial sentences or approaching release from custody. It is not suitable for people on long sentences who are not yet preparing for release<sup>1</sup>.

Completing the Justice Star is meant to be a helpful process that stimulates and focuses discussion and provides a useful, shared basis for an action or support plan. It is a flexible tool that relies on the skills of the professionals using it, as well as on a degree of understanding and trust between service user and worker. The Star is designed to be used one to one – the aim is to have a genuine interaction and complete it collaboratively.

The Justice Star resources consist of:

- The Justice Star Chart, Notes and Action Plan for completion by workers with service users
- The Justice Star User Guide with both brief visual and detailed scales
- The short illustrated Scales
- This Guidance for Workers
- A web application for online completion at [www.staronline.org.uk](http://www.staronline.org.uk)
- The Implementation Guide, for those in a management role.

Background and further information about the Outcomes Star suite of tools can be found at [www.outcomesstar.org.uk](http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk).

The visual aspect is easy for service users to understand, the language is clear and simple, it structures keywork and helps to break actions down into bite-sized bits.

**Manager,  
Uniting Care  
West, Australia**

**Want to use this tool?  
Visit [www.outcomesstar.org.uk](http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk)**

**Contact [info@triangleconsulting.co.uk](mailto:info@triangleconsulting.co.uk)**

<sup>1</sup> The Recovery Star Secure is for people in custody or secure services with a mental health condition and can work with other people on long sentences – contact Triangle if this might work for your service.

**Make sure that you have received training in using the Justice Star** and that you are familiar with the materials and know when and how the Star is used in your service. It's vital that you understand and use the Journey of Change underlying the scales – **stuck, accepting help, motivated and taking responsibility, learning what works, self-reliance** – as this will ensure consistent and reliable information for use by your service and as a basis for planning. You will also need to be familiar with the ten scales, so that you can unpack and rephrase them as needed.

**Introduce the Justice Star to service users in a way that encourages them to engage.** This can be done in a number of ways. Try devising a short script to introduce the Star in a way that feels natural to you and clear for those you are working with. Those who are literate and interested may want to read a copy of the User Guide or short illustrated Scales before the session.

When introducing the Star, it is important to:

- Explain that people may start anywhere on the journey, can move both up and down the scale and that 10 is the top of the Star scales but not necessarily the end of the journey
- Be clear that it's not about getting an overall score out of 100, but about building up a map of their world, their experiences and the journey they're taking
- Let the service user decide which scale to start with, or choose one that is concrete and may be easier to discuss (for example Accommodation or Positive Use of Time).

Some suggested phrases for introducing the Star include:

*"The Justice Star is a way of tracking your journey and finding out about your strengths and needs."*

*"The Star tells us where you are now and what needs to improve, and it helps you and the service to make that improvement."*

The Star was a really good collaborative tool and conversation starter and took us in directions we might not otherwise have gone.

**Worker,  
Justice Star pilot**

It's a reflection tool for people who are not good at reflecting – our role is to help them reflect.

**Worker,  
Justice Star pilot**

The visual perspective has helped me see how the areas of my life affect each other. That's been really helpful.

**Service user,  
Justice Star pilot**

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or 020 7272 8765**

**Complete the Justice Star collaboratively with service users.** The aim is to engage people in meaningful discussion, rather than to complete the Star as quickly as possible. There is a choice of three formats for the brief Star scales, according to service users' abilities and preferences:

- If your organisation uses the Star Online, many people prefer to view the scales and complete the Star on screen. This relies on internet access when working with service users so may not be possible in custody
- If not, give the service user the short illustrated Scales for reference, either in their current form or made into flashcards by cutting them into separate questions (preferably laminated or on card)
- Or use the brief visual scale in the User Guide with service users.

**Use the scale descriptors as a basis for discussion** about that area, or have an open discussion about the area, then use the scale to place the service user on the Journey of Change. Although the detailed scales are intended primarily as a resource for workers, they are written to be accessible for all, so feel free to refer to specific points within them for clarification with service users (though avoid reading them out in their entirety due to their length). If you are completing the Star on paper, you may find it works best for the service user to have the short illustrated Scales and the worker to have the User Guide.

**Always use the scales** – otherwise, one person's 3 could be another person's 8, the completed Star won't be a useful basis for completing the action plan and your service won't be able to treat collated Star data as reliable for reporting purposes.

**If you don't agree, have a discussion** – this can help you learn about the service user and help them reflect on their situation and see it in new ways. If someone is able to engage meaningfully – likely if they are at 5 or above for most of the areas – encourage them to take the lead in placing themselves on the scales. You may need to be more directive for people in the **accepting help** stage. Those who are **stuck** in all or most areas won't discuss the Star meaningfully. Encourage people with low confidence to see their strengths, and others to be more realistic.

**If you can't reach agreement, record both readings on the Star**, labelling which is the worker's view and which is the service user's, using the Star Notes to record points from your discussion. Use your professional judgement about when further discussion isn't helpful.

I liked the thought-provoking realisation that life is good.

**Service user,  
Justice Star pilot**

It's really amazing how much information you can draw out – I did the Star with people I had known for two years and heard new things they had avoided saying because it was too sensitive.

**Worker,  
Justice Star pilot**

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