

Briefing: Choosing which Outcomes Star™ to use

Guidance to make sure the tool and the version you choose is right for your service

This briefing is designed to support people considering the Outcomes Star for their service. Triangle are also here to help you through this process – if you have any questions, would like any advice on how the Star can work best for your service, or if you have found the version that is right for you and want to get started, please contact us on info@triangleconsulting.co.uk or [+44\(0\)207 272 8765](tel:+44(0)207 272 8765). More information can also be found on our website www.outcomesstar.org.uk. If you are not based in the UK, please contact the licensed service provider in your country – contact details can be found on our website.

1 Is the Outcomes Star right for you?

The Star can be a simple and effective tool for many services, but it isn't right for everyone. It is designed to be used as an integral part of the support provided by a service, so it is important that it fits with your approach and remit.

Look at this checklist to see if the Outcomes Star is right for you.

QUESTION	WHY IT MATTERS
Do you offer 'keywork' – one to one conversations and support planning with service users?	The Star is designed to be used collaboratively by practitioners and service users as a framework for reflective conversations and action planning, capturing co-reported data agreed by both practitioner and service user. If services do not offer a form of one-to-one keywork, the Star cannot be used effectively. For example, the Star is not suitable for Information and Advice services and will only work in some group work settings where one-to-one time is also provided.
Do you work with service users over time – for more than 6 weeks?	The Star measures the change that takes place for a service user in several areas of their life. If services work on very short timescales or without a level of intensity to the support offered, sustainable change is unlikely to occur which will make the data gathered by the Star less meaningful.
Do you work in a holistic way, addressing multiple areas of a person's life?	The Stars cover between 5 to 10 broad areas of a person's life, and the service should be aiming to achieve changes in all or most of the areas covered by a Star. If services only focus on one or two aspects of a person's life, the Star is unlikely to be able to be used effectively.

If you answered no to any of these questions, the Star may not be the right tool for you – get in touch with us and tell us about your service, and we can advise on next steps.

If you answered yes to these questions, the next step is to work out which specific version or versions are right for you. It is also worth being aware of four key points about what the Star is and isn't:

- Stars do not measure the severity of problems, it measures someone's engagement with the problem. You may need other measurement tools or other tools alongside the Star – for example, risk assessments
- Stars are not designed to be performance management tools – individual change is complex and Star data should always be used alongside other information
- Outcomes Stars are trademarked, licensed tools and organisations must have licences and training to use them
- The Star can be implemented in different ways – creating an implementation plan for your organisation will help you to get the most out of your investment in the tool, and Triangle can help licensed Star users do this with free advice and support

2 Which version of the Outcomes Star is right for you?

There are over 30 published versions of the Outcomes Star to choose from, each tailored to a specific service user group or sector. For a full list of published Stars and Stars in development, please visit our website.

We recommend that if you consider moving to any new version of the Star at any time, you get in touch with Triangle to discuss the nature of the new Star and what you might need to know before introducing it in your service.

For some services it will be obvious which Star to use, and for others there will be a choice to be made. Identifying the right Star is based on:

1. The needs of your service users - the areas of life that are important to your client group
2. What it is that your service helps people to achieve – the intended outcomes
3. The type of service you provide, especially the amount of 1:1 time you have with people

Using multiple versions of the Star

As all Outcomes Stars are holistic tools, as a rule only one version of the Star should be used with a service user at any one time. (There are some Stars that can work alongside each other for individual service users – talk to Triangle for more information.)

For organisations with a variety of services or serving a variety of service users, a variety of Stars may be needed (for example, Family Star Plus for parents and My Star for children complement each other well and we can run training covering both Stars at the same time.) **Star licences and core Star training give workers access to all the published versions of the Star at no extra cost.**

Working with adults (not in family and children's settings)

Service and client group	Appropriate version of the Outcomes Star
Homelessness	Outcomes Star for Homelessness
Housing	Tenancy Star
Older people	Older Person's Star
Adult Social Care	Independent Living
Learning disabilities	Life Star
Autism and Asperger's	Spectrum Star
ADHD	ADHD Star
Mental health	Mental Health Recovery Star Recovery Star Secure (secure settings)
Substance misuse	Drug & Alcohol Star
Domestic violence (women)	Empowerment Star
Criminal justice	Justice Star
Armed Forces Community	Independence Star
Carers	Carers Star
Health and long-term conditions	Well-being Star
Community involvement / integration	Community Star

If you work with adults with a range of needs, focus on the intended outcome

For example, adult clients may have both learning disabilities and autism or mental health issues. If the aim of your service is self-reliance, where people no longer need a specialist autism or mental health service, the Spectrum Star or Recovery Star are more suitable. If your clients will probably need an ongoing service, and perhaps a lot of support, and/or do not have the cognitive capacity to engage with the Spectrum Star, then the Life Star is more relevant.

If you work with people who have mental health issues, autism, social isolation, mild learning disabilities and/or other needs, you can choose from a number of Stars, depending on the intended outcome of your service:

- Well-being Star – if your overall aim as a service is to improve their health and well-being
- Work Star – if the overall aim is to get people into work or closer to work-ready
- Independent Living Star – if the aim is to enable people to live in their own homes
- Homelessness Star or Tenancy Star – if it is about getting people off the streets or avoiding eviction
- Community Star – if it is about community integration

Be clear whether self-reliance is a realistic aim, or if your clients will always need a service

For most versions of the Star, the end-point of the Journey of Change is self-reliance – an absolute end point where the person no longer needs a specialist service. However, the Older Person's Star, Independent Living Star, Life Star, Well-being Star and Carers Star all have a relative endpoint of maximising independence, choice and well-being, often with ongoing support.

If your work is lighter touch, choose a light-touch Star

The Well-being Star, Community Star, Carers Star, Tenancy Star and Older Person's Star (Short version) (as well as most versions for young people in the following section) have 1-5 scales and 'quiz-style' resources that are quicker and simpler to use than other Stars. These are most suitable for use where there is limited one-to-one time with people for assessment, support planning and review.

For example, a project using gardening, peer support groups or other activities to support people with mental health problems would be recommended the Well-being Star instead of the Recovery Star.

Working in family and children's settings

Triangle have developed a number of Stars specifically for services supporting parents, families and children. The table on the following page sets out the differences between the versions and how to choose between them.

(Please note: for services in Scotland working with the SHANARRI indicators and GIRFEC frameworks, specific resources are available for Family Star and Family Star (Early Years).)

On the whole core Star training equips workers to use any version of the Outcomes Star without requiring additional training, however for My Star we recommend additional training or briefing. This is because it is a full, detailed version with two parallel Journeys of Change underpinning the scales, and because completing the Star collaboratively with children will raise issues and opportunities that are different from working with parents. Contact Triangle for more information.

Star version	About this Star
My Star	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For use with children – works best from children at 7 years or more • Suitable for children in families identified as vulnerable, children looked after by foster carers or in a children’s home, or children who need support for other reasons, for instance bereavement or behaviour problems • Works well alongside Family Stars to capture the child’s voice and their needs and to see how changes made by parents are enabling their children to thrive • For more information see the next section – “Working with children and young people”
Family Star Plus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-10 scale • Recommended for all interventions (apart from lighter-touch work with families with younger children and in Scotland) • In the UK this includes Targeted or Specialist Early Help with families (eg “Level 2” or above)¹ • Provides evidence within key areas of the Troubled Families initiative – employability, anti-social behaviour, school attendance
Family Star	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-10 scale • This was the original version – services are now better served by either the Family Star Plus or (Early Years) • For services in Scotland, it is recommended as it is a good fit with the GIRFEC framework and specific resources are available
Family Star (Early Years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-5 scale • For families with babies and/or children under 5 AND • For less intensive, briefer interventions/keyworking – such as drop-In groups in Children’s Centres where there is also some one-to-one support
Family Star (Relationships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For services focusing on resolving conflict between parents, including mediation and counselling services where there is a focus on children and effective parenting • For use with anyone in a co-parenting role • Holistic so should be used instead of another Family Star version, not as well as
Parent and Baby Star	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For parents who may need extra support with their perinatal mental health and well-being • For during pregnancy and the first year after having a baby) • Suitable for use with mothers and fathers
Support Stars (Parent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For use with parents of younger children facing serious illness, such as cancer

¹ 1 Four levels of need for children’s services – definitions may vary. Level 1: No identified additional needs = universal services. Level 2: Low risk to vulnerable, Child’s needs are not clear, not known or not being met; the threshold for completing an assessment = universal services and/or targeted services. Level 3: Complex needs likely to require longer term intervention from statutory and/or specialist services; the threshold for a child in need and social care intervention. Level 4: Acute needs, requiring statutory intensive support; the threshold for child protection.

Star version	About this Star
Young Person's Star	For young care leavers, those leaving young offender institutes, homeless young people or young people with housing needs. This is effectively a young person's version of the Outcomes Star for Homelessness.
Youth Star	For community-based universal youth work, including youth clubs, young people at risk of disengaging from education, and activity-based programmes. It can also be used with NEET young people early in their journey to work.
Student Star	For young people with additional needs in colleges or other supported work and learning environments. It is suitable for students with a range of needs including autism, learning disabilities or behavioural needs
Teen Star	Developed for young people in substance misuse services and/or addressing risk behaviours
My Star	For looked after children, children in vulnerable families and those in therapeutic children services. This version can be used from ages 4-18 though is most meaningful around 7-14. My Star is designed to work well alongside the Family Star Plus and Family Star, capturing the voice of the child in family support work.
Attention Star	For children and young people aged 5-18 child or young person who has difficulty paying attention, learning and/or with their behaviour at school or in other situations. They may or may not have a diagnosis of ADHD. The Attention Star is a version of the adult's ADHD Star
Shooting Star	For school students, to capture more holistic outcomes and give a focused emphasis to outcomes beyond academic achievement. Ideal for students in Years 10/11, it was developed for secondary schools for later tested successfully for primary schools
Sexual Health Star	For work with young people specifically around sexual health. A holistic tool looking at relationships, attitudes to risk taking and confidence, as well as attitudes to contraception and sexually transmitted infections.
Support Star (Young Person)	To help young people facing serious illness to talk about the impact of their illness on different aspects of their life and identify any support they may need.
Music Therapy Star	Our most service-specific Star, this is suitable for children aged 2-11 in music therapy and is completed by the therapist, parent/carer and possibly referrer.

3 What if there isn't a version that is right for me?

The first step is to get in touch with Triangle to discuss your needs. You could try testing out the closest version or versions with a small group of workers and clients – get in touch with Triangle for help with designing this.

If there isn't a version of the Star that is right for you, you may want to consider collaborating with Triangle to develop one for your sector. It is worth noting that collaborating on Star development takes a considerable commitment and investment of time, expertise and money, but can provide a variety of benefits for your organisation and sector. Contact us or visit our website for more information.

Please note, Outcomes Stars are sector-wide, trademarked and evidence-based tools. Each version is the result of extensive research, development, testing and refinement, informed by sector thinking and developed with commissioners, managers, workers and service users. Please do not attempt to tailor the Stars yourself – it is harder than it looks, will damage the integrity of the tool and be a breach of copyright and trademark legislation.