



Using the Planning Star™

The Planning Star is for use with children and young people who are separated from their families and have come to this country to seek asylum. Many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people are in their late teens, but the Star can be used across a range of ages, acknowledging that some children arrive unaccompanied in the UK much younger and many are supported into their twenties. This Star can also be used with children and young people who have relatives in the UK and have come to settle with them.

The Star is designed as an integral component of one-to-one keywork¹ or support. It consists of:

- The Planning Star Chart, Notes and Action Plan for completion by workers with children and young people
- The Planning Star User Guide, with brief visual scales and detailed scales for each of the eight outcome areas and a detailed description of the Journey of Change
- Short, illustrated Scales and flashcards to help engage children and young people in discussion
- This Guidance for Workers
- The Development Report, explaining the development history of the Planning Star
- A web application for online completion at www.staronline.org.uk.

I like the visual element and the ability to track change.

Personal adviser

The Planning Star was developed by Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise in collaboration with the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration and Pathways to Independence UK. The project is funded through a Controlling Migration Fund bid which was hosted by Brighton & Hove City Council on behalf of the local authorities in the south east region. The development process involved local authority managers and practitioners along with managers and workers from Pathways to Independence UK. There have been a number of focus groups with young people and participation from the Refugee Council, the Enthum Foundation, the WISE project, the Hummingbird project, John Ruskin College and Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust.

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1 Keywork may have another name in your service, but includes assessing a service user's needs, agreeing goals and providing support and referrals to help them meet those goals. The keyworker is the person who is assigned special responsibility for working with that service user.

Completing the Planning Star is intended to be a helpful, engaging and empowering 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 them and the child or young person. The Star is designed to be used one to one; the aim is to have a genuine interaction and complete it collaboratively.

Background and further information about the Outcomes Star suite of tools can be found at www.outcomesstar.org.uk.

Before you use the Planning Star™

Make sure that you have received training in using the Planning 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 – **It's not OK, accepting help, stable, learning for yourself**, and **managing well**. This will ensure consistent and reliable information as a basis for support planning and for use by your service. You also need to be familiar with all the scale descriptions, so you can unpack and rephrase them as needed for young asylum seekers, some of whom may be just starting to learn English.

How to introduce the Planning Star™

Before you introduce the Star to someone for the first time:

- Devise a short script to introduce the Star in a way that feels natural to you and clear for those you are working with
- If you meet with the children and young people you support in groups, it can be useful and save time to explain the Star to the group before starting one-to-one work within individual sessions
- Consider giving children or young people who are interested a copy of the short illustrated Scales – or possibly even the User Guide – to read before the session. These documents rely on someone being comfortable with reading in English and it may be helpful for children or young people to go through them with an interpreter.

When introducing the Star:

- Explain that people may start anywhere on the Journey of Change and can move both up and down on the scale. Point out that 5 is the top of the Star scales and signals that they and workers can be confident that things are going as well as possible, but that they will continue to have aspirations and make progress beyond that point
- Be clear that this is about exploring where they are and building up a map of their world and experiences – it is not about being judged or being awarded an overall number
- Avoid using the term "score" – refer to where someone is on the scale or Journey of Change using the stage names, colours and/or numbers, depending on what works best for each individual

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- Encourage people to ask questions so they feel as comfortable as possible about the Planning Star and reassure them that they will have choices about the pace and process
- Let the child or young person decide which scale to start with or choose one that is concrete and may be easier to discuss, such as “Education, activities and work”.

It helped me see what to do next about everything and makes me learn more about life.

Young asylum seeker

Overall, the skills and approach needed to introduce and use the Planning Star well are likely to be in keeping with being person-centred, trauma-informed and other good practice in your service. Some suggested phrases for introducing the Star include:

“The Planning Star is a way of finding out about what is in place for you already, your strengths and the areas where you need more information or support, and then showing your progress.”

“The Star tells us how things are for you now and what needs to happen next, and it helps you and me plan our work together.”

It was concise and easy to use, enabling young people to discuss their support needs in a way that didn’t make them feel they weren’t doing very well.

Personal adviser

How to complete the Planning Star™

Complete the Star collaboratively with children and young people in a way that responds to their needs and abilities. The aim is to engage them in meaningful discussion, and to listen and learn about them, rather than to complete the Star as quickly as possible.

Use the scale descriptors as a basis for discussion about the chosen area, or have an open discussion about the area, and then use the scale to place the young person on the Journey of Change. The brief visual scales in the User Guide, the short illustrated Scales document and flashcards are designed to be used directly with children or young people so you can choose the option that works best. Although the detailed scales are intended primarily as a resource for workers, they are written to be accessible, so feel free to refer to specific points for clarification with children or young people. Avoid reading them out in their entirety because of their length

Always use the detailed scales and be aware of the Journey of Change when deciding where someone is on the scales. These are designed to reduce subjectivity – otherwise one person’s 2 could be another person’s 4 and the completed Star won’t be a useful basis for completing the support 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 child or young person and help them reflect on their situation and see it in new ways. If someone is able to engage meaningfully and is at 3 or above for most of the Planning Star areas, encourage them to take the lead

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in placing themselves on the scales. You may need to be more directive for children or young people in the **accepting help** stage, and those who are at **it's not OK** in all or most areas won't discuss the Star meaningfully and you may need to do a worker-only reading.

This process requires good keyworking skills, some knowledge of the person and a relationship with them. You will need to encourage people with low confidence to see their strengths, and others to be more realistic.

If you can't reach agreement, record both views on the Star, labelling which is the worker's view and which is the child or young person's. Use the Star Notes to record points from your discussion. Use your professional judgement to decide when further discussion isn't helpful.

Recognise external factors. Making progress on the Journey of Change usually relies on a combination of the work done by a service and the child or young person doing what they need to and being as active as possible in making changes for themselves. The amount of agency a service user has will depend on their age, which aspect of their life is under discussion and, to some extent, where they are on the Journey of Change. However, there will also be factors and conditions beyond their control – and beyond the control of your service – which make it harder for things to improve.

The main external factor is likely to be the progress of their asylum application, which will have a big impact on them and on various aspects of their life. Others may include the situation for their family in their country of origin, lack of suitable accommodation or lack of suitable mental health provision or other services. These need to be acknowledged and recorded when using the Star. Your service may then be able to use this information to identify gaps in provision, plan future developments or raise issues with policy-makers.

Recognise other factors. While the emphasis in the Planning Star is on where someone is now and how they can be supported to make progress, there may also be trauma or other factors that make that more difficult. As with external factors, these need to be acknowledged and may affect how you work with someone, in line with good practice in your service.

When you have completed all of the scales, join the points to create a shape. Mark each reading on the Star Chart and join the points. Encourage the child or young person to do this themselves and to create the shape. This applies whether you are completing the Star on paper or on screen, for example using the Star Online.

It helped visually to identify where I am at the moment and what needs to happen to achieve my goals.

Young asylum seeker

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How to use the completed Star as the basis for a support plan

Look at the shape of the completed Star together and prompt the child or young person to comment on it as a basis for agreeing what to do next. Ask questions such as:

- Is the shape of the Star an accurate picture of how things are for you now?
- What does it tell you about what is and isn't going well?
- What are the strengths that you bring to the areas that are going well? How might you apply those strengths in other areas of your life?
- What does your Star tell you about areas where you need to make changes or where you could do with more support?
- What is most important to address first?


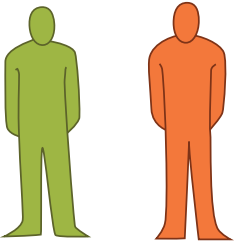
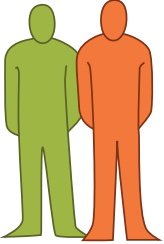
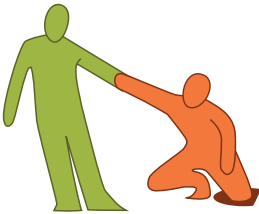

Once you have chosen the areas to be included in the support plan, further motivational questions for each area include:

- Where on the scale do you want to get to and by when?
- What needs to be done to bring about that change?
- Who is responsible for these actions? When can they be completed?

Complete the Planning Star Action Plan or use your service's support planning documentation. The Journey of Change provides valuable pointers for thinking about the goals of support with people as well as achievable, realistic actions, as summarised on the next page:

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Journey of Change stage	Goals of keywork
<p>Managing well (5)</p> 	<p>At this stage, children and young people are managing well and prepared for the different possible outcomes of their asylum process. They are ready to deal with the next steps in their lives, so the main actions will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to reinforce the learning • Building and reinforcing support networks outside of the service • Ensuring children and young people understand and know how to access the support systems that are around them
<p>Learning for yourself (4)</p> 	<p>At this stage, children and young people are starting to take the lead for themselves where possible, mostly have the support that they need and are learning what works for them but still have difficulties. The focus of support may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrating their achievements and helping them to reflect on how they have overcome problems and how they can learn from this and deal with manageable difficulties themselves • Providing practical support where needed and making sure action is taken as needed on their application or other issues
<p>Stable (3)</p> 	<p>At this stage, people believe things could be different and may begin to see the possibility of a working future for themselves. They are open to suggestions and willing to give things a go but will find it hard to keep going, so goals and actions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to offer practical help and making sure that foster families, teachers and others are delivering the extra support the children or young people need • Checking that they understand what is going on, what needs to happen and what they need to do, and encouraging them to have the confidence to build on this stability so they can start to do what they can for themselves • Offering support, reassurance and encouragement
<p>Accepting help (2)</p> 	<p>At this stage, children and young people's basic needs are met and they have some stability and plans in place. However, life may still feel very strange for them or there is a lot still to improve or sort out for them to manage well. Goals and actions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to take action on their behalf as necessary, such as with their application or benefits, but explaining what is happening and involving them • Helping children and young people to talk about what is and isn't working for them and working together to try to find solutions • Building on the emerging relationship and trust, including doing what is possible to ensure continuity
<p>It's not OK (1)</p> 	<p>At this stage, children and young people don't yet feel safe or don't know who to trust, and may not understand what is happening, so they may resist help or be fearful of talking to workers. Actions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking action on their behalf as necessary, particularly in relation to their application or benefits • Providing essential information, for example on health care and education • Focusing on safety to prevent or minimise harm • Developing trust and starting to build a relationship.

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