



Using the Support Star (Young People)™

The Support Star (Young People) is designed to support young people facing cancer or another serious illness. It is a version of the Outcomes Star, a suite of tools for supporting and measuring change when working with people.

Completing the Support Star (Young People) is intended to stimulate and focus discussion and to help identify what support a young person needs. It is a flexible tool that relies on the skills of the professionals using it, as well as some trust between them and the young people they support. The aim is to have a helpful discussion.

The Support Star (Young People) resources consist of:

- The Support Star (Young People) Chart, notes and Action Plan
- The Support Star (Young People) User Guide, with both brief visual scales and detailed scales
- The Support Star (Young People) short illustrated scales (an alternative to the User Guide)
- This Guidance for Workers
- The Star Online web application for online completion and data analysis.

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

Make sure that you have received training in using the Support Star (Young People) and that you are familiar with the materials and know when and how the Star is used in your service. It is vital that you understand and use the Support Star (Young People) Journey of Change underlying the scales – **not able to respond, taking it in, trying to respond, finding a way through, managing well** – as this will ensure consistent results and reliable information for use by your service and as a basis for planning. You also need to be familiar with all the scales so you can unpack and rephrase them as needed.

There was a real sense of pride in seeing how far he had come – there was a smile on his face and he kept asking to look at his completed Star again.

**Social worker,
CLIC Sargent**

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Introduce the Support Star (Young People). This can be done in a number of ways:

- By devising a short script to introduce the Star in a way that feels natural to you and clear for those you are working with
- If there is a young person support group or similar, it can be helpful to explain the Star to the group before discussing and completing it during one-to-one work with young people
- By giving young people who are interested a copy of the User Guide or short illustrated scales to read.

When introducing the Star:

- Explain that people may start anywhere on the journey, that they can move both up and down the scale and that the journey underpinning the Star doesn't follow the treatment journey – young people may be **finding a way through** very soon after diagnosis in some areas and **taking in** further implications in other areas later on
- Be clear that 5 is the top of the Star scales, indicating that young people are doing all they can and have the right support, but doesn't mean that things are OK or that it's the end of treatment, for example
- Let the young person decide which scale to start with, or choose one that is concrete and may be easier to discuss. Be clear that the Star isn't about 'scores' but about building up a map of their world now they are ill and identifying where support might help.

The following phrase was suggested by a CLIC Sargent social worker for introducing the Star:

"To support you as well as we can, we need to get a picture of your life and then we can look at what you need. We look at how you manage at home and in the ward. We will keep coming back to it to see if there is anything more we can help you with."

Complete the Star collaboratively with a young person in a way that responds to their needs and abilities. The aim is to engage them in meaningful discussion and draw out their concerns about the areas covered, not to complete the Star as quickly as possible.

Use the scale descriptors as a basis for discussion about that area, or if young people are keen to talk, listen and then use the scale descriptors to help them place themselves on each scale. Choose either the brief visual scales in the User Guide or the short illustrated scales. The User Guide has the benefit of including the detailed scales on facing pages alongside the brief descriptors; this detail will be helpful for many young people and can be referred to for clarification. However, it is best to avoid reading the detailed scales out in their entirety because of their length.

Always use the scales – otherwise, one person's 2 could be another person's 4 and 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.

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If you and the young person don't agree, try to have further discussion. Listen and encourage people to see their strengths and where they are managing well, but also to recognise the challenges so they can get the help they need. If young people are at 3 or above for most of the Star areas, they can often take the lead in placing themselves on the scales. You may need to be more directive if they are just **taking it in**. If a young person is **not able to respond** in most areas, it's probably not the right time to complete the Star with them collaboratively, though you may want to complete a worker-only reading based on what you know.

If you can't reach agreement, record both views on the Star, labelling which is your opinion as the worker and which is the young person's, using the Star notes to record points from your discussion. Use your professional judgement about when further discussion is helpful or not.

When you have completed all of the scales, create a shape. Mark each point on the Star Chart and join the points. Encourage young people to do this and create the shape.

Use the completed Star as the basis for a support plan or next steps. Look at the shape together and prompt the young person to reflect on it as a basis for 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?
- What is it most important to address first?
- What support do you need? What can you do to shift things in that area?

Complete the Support Star (Young People) Action Plan or use your organisation's support planning documentation. The Journey of Change provides valuable pointers for thinking about the goals of support with the young person and achievable, realistic actions for each stage:

Seeing the Star visually helps me to see that I'm changing, that things are happening.

Service user

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