

Developing a common approach to supporting the progression of young people towards employment

Pilot Project using 'Work Star'

**Evaluation Report
June 2015**



**London Borough
of Hounslow**

Foreword

Hounslow's 14-19/Connexions Team has a track record of establishing and working with local partners who share common objectives. In January 2013, the LA 14-19/Connexions Team decided to use the opportunity afforded by a grant from the City Bridge Trust to establish a new third sector partnership (Hounslow NEET Action Group - HNAG) to bring together the collective expertise of local organisations supporting the reengagement of young people not in education employment or training (NEETs).

The City Bridge Trust Programme has three strands:

- Developing the capacity and partnership working of the Third Sector
- Developing new provision to address unmet needs
- Developing innovative ways to engage with the hardest to reach NEETs

This pilot project arose from discussions amongst partners at an HNAG partnership meeting in June 2014. As partners shared their experiences of re-engaging young people in learning it became clear that whilst the NEET cohort shared some common characteristics (generally around self-esteem and confidence), life experiences and circumstance of individuals were unique. The need to assess and meet needs therefore needed to be undertaken sensitively and holistically.

Partners agreed that in order to work more effectively (including referring young people between organisations and/or into new provision) it would be helpful to have a common approach to assessing needs and a language (beyond simply 'work ready or 'not work ready') to describe the unique circumstances of young people and to plot their progress towards employment.

During 2013, LBH EIS (Early Intervention Service) had adopted such an approach through the introduction of 'Outcomes Star'. The 'Outcomes Star' is a unique suite of tools for supporting and measuring change when working with people. There are over 20 versions of the Outcomes Star which have been adapted for different client groups and services. EIS had decided to introduce this methodology to bring greater consistency to the work of across their service area and to be better able to 'assess need' and move and track clients towards 'positive outcomes'.

HNAG partners were very interested to explore the possibility of piloting the same approach within their own organisations. This led to a decision to run a pilot project amongst HNAG partners. In addition to HNAG members a number of other stakeholders within the council (i.e. Virtual College for Looked After Children, Connexions, 14-19 and Skills and Employment Teams) were invited to join the project.

It was agreed that the initial pilot would focus on using the 'Work Star' since this was a key focus of the activities undertaken with young people in all the organisations involved. In October 2014 the participants undertook a one day training session (run by Triangle Consulting) to understand the nature of the work star to explore approaches to using it with clients. From that point organisations agreed to use the approach and to report back their experiences. This report describes those experiences and next steps.

We would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to invest in developing the use of the Work Star and in feeding back their experiences and reflections into this evaluation report.

David Scott

Priscilla Hansberry

1. Introduction

- 1.1 For young people today, successful progression into employment is more challenging than at any other time. There is wide recognition that those entering employment now will need to be more flexible and adaptable to rapid change than ever before and prepared to learn new skills as the needs of society and the economy evolve.
- 1.2 Within the context of RPA (Raising the Participation Age) there is a clear requirement that Post 16 Study Programmes give young people not only access to the right provision (and qualifications) to enable them to progress successfully into further learning/training but also that any course of study is set a coherent framework of Career's Education that makes meaningful links with the world of work and provides careers guidance which supports decision-making related to their future career ambitions.
- 1.3 For some young people the progression challenge is made more complex because of particular barriers and circumstances in their lives, which have impacted on their capacity to fully engage in education and training. These so called NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) or RONS (Risk of NEET) have become a focus for the Local Authority's support services when working directly with young people or in partnership with other education, training and service providers.
- 1.4 Key to the RPA strategy has been the development of a range of internal and external partnerships particularly focussed on learners who are either at risk of not progressing into post-16 education, at risk of dropping out of learning or who become NEET and need to be reengaged. Examples of these developing partnerships include:
 - The 14-19 Training provider network
 - The Hounslow NEET Action Group (3rd Sector)
 - 16-18 Apprenticeships Project Group
 - HSTEP/Skills and Employment Strategy Team
 - Hounslow Virtual School for looked after Children
 - Post 16 SEN Provision Planning group
 - BS&B Construction Skills and Employment Operational Group
- 1.5 In many cases the remit and partnership working extends beyond 19 into support for adult learning and training. The 14-19/Connexions team recognise the needs to develop effective relationships with providers and support services serving this age range.
- 1.6 Increasingly the focus for all partners has centred on how we better support people towards and into sustained employment. Indeed the focus on progression into and within employment is increasingly significant for all those supporting the education, training and skills agenda. The organisations involved in the partnerships above have all been involved in developing or brokering opportunities for young people/adults to support their journey into and through work. Examples include job clubs, work experience/placements (including traineeships) and apprenticeships.
- 1.7 Much has been done in the last two years to improve communication between partners and to make opportunities for young people more widely understood and available between providers. Examples include HNAG coordination activity, Alternative Provision directories and the Opportunities Gazette. However a common theme emerging from partners is the apparent mismatch between opportunities established (supply) and the availability of suitable young people who are ready to engage (demand).
- 1.8 There are many organisations and individuals working with the NEET/risk of NEET cohort. Such individuals and organisations naturally hold information about the progress of their clients on whatever programmes they are engaged. However in terms of partnership working

there is not currently a 'shared language' describing exactly where young people are on their journey towards employment. Most commonly we simply distinguish our clients as being 'work-ready' or not 'work-ready'.

Work Star

- 1.9 **Work Star** is a tool which enables those working with vulnerable young people (and their organisations) to describe, measure and summarise a range of characteristics of clients as they support them on their journey towards employment. In this way it enables a more sophisticated assessment of young people in relation to available opportunities and next steps.
- 1.10 For individuals, organisations and partnerships working with the NEET/PreNEET cohort there are a number of potential advantages of using a common assessment tool. It provides:
- greater shared clarity about what we are trying to achieve in working with our clients;
 - a consistent approach within and between organisations in how we describe where particular clients are on their journey towards employment;
 - a more efficient way of matching the needs of young people to available opportunities and making referrals between organisations;
 - the possibility of a needs led approach to developing opportunities to support progression;
 - the opportunity for line managers to systematically review case work and engage in outcome-focussed discussions during supervisions linked to specific clients.
- 1.11 A copy of the 'Work Star', the associated action plan template and the outline model of the 'journey of change that underpins the scoring process is included at Appendix 1.

The Pilot Project

- 1.12 The purpose of the pilot project was to evaluate the use of Work Star across a range of organisations working with vulnerable young people (Post 16) to assess the extent to which the advantages listed above could be realised in practice. The project rationale can be found at Appendix 2.

The organisations that took part in the pilot were:

- Action West London (formerly Action Acton – 3rd Sector)
 - Green Corridor (3rd Sector)
 - Cultivate London (3rd Sector)
 - 14-19 team working with Virtual College for looked after children/care leavers (LA)
 - Connexions Team (LA)
 - Skills and Employment Team (LA)
- 1.13 There were two strands of pilot activity, namely:
- Evaluation of the use of Work Star with young people (front line staff)
 - Evaluation of the work star within supervision/line management meetings (managers)

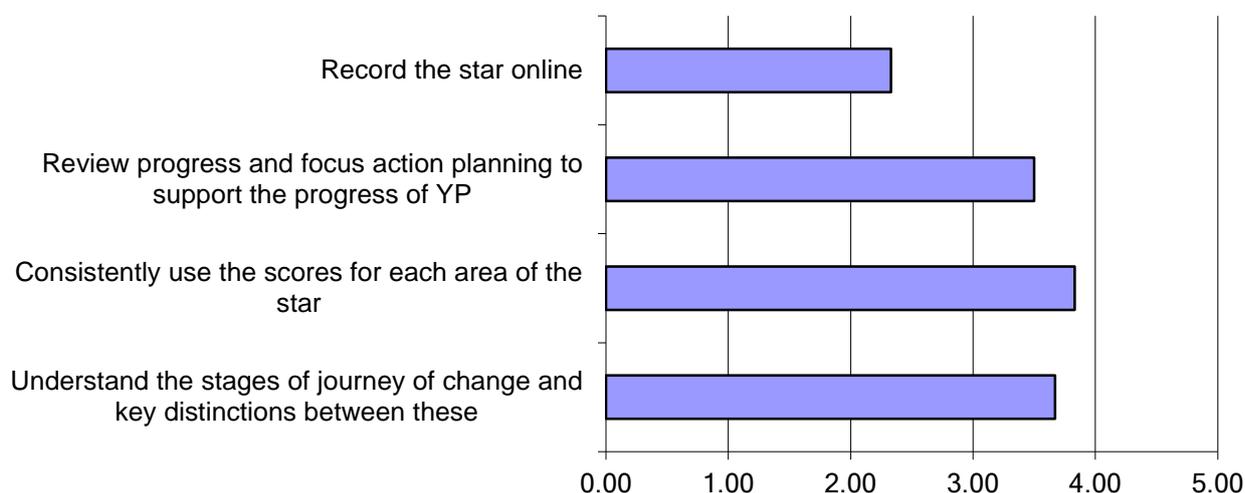
The Evaluation

- 1.14 This report includes the following feedback from stakeholders:
- Training day for organisations involved in the pilot on 23rd October 2014
 - Interim evaluation meeting held on 12th February 2015
 - On-line evaluation questionnaire (circulated in June 2015)
 - Final Evaluation Meeting held on 17th June 2015
 - Individual Case Studies from Partners
 - Recommendations and Next Steps

2. Training

- 2.1 Appendix 3 gives an overview of the training programme run by Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Ltd. This was a prerequisite for all those involved in the pilot project.
- 2.3 Appendix 4 provides a summary of the evaluation feedback (undertaken by Triangle) immediately after the training day. The feedback is presented as 'quality of training' and 'learning outcomes' rated on a scale of 1 (Very poor) to 10 (Excellent). The average scores from participants against both elements scored very well. All the 'quality of training' criteria scored over 8 and all the 'outcomes' criteria scored above 7.5.
- 2.3 Figure 1 below provides feedback about the training from the 'on-line evaluation' questionnaire completed by partners in June 2015. The criteria related to 'understanding and using the STAR' scored relatively well (3.5 or above on a 1-5 scale). Some people did not feel fully able to engage with the Star On-line system and this is reflected in the slightly lower average score (2.6).

Figure 1: To what extent did the training session this prepare you to



NB Scores averaged across all responses (0 = not at all -> -> 5 = Completely)

- 2.4 Overall participants felt that the training session was very helpful for preparing them to take part in the pilot project.

3 Feedback from Interim Evaluation Meeting held on 12th February 2015

- 3.1 A meeting was convened mid-way through the pilot to review progress and to give partners an opportunity to share experiences and approaches.
- 3.2 Most partners had begun to use the star with YP, but a few were yet to start as they were awaiting start dates for their programmes. Of those who had used the star the overwhelming experience was positive. Summarised overleaf are some of the key learning points established in the meeting. Full notes from the meeting can be found in appendix 5.
- The star was supporting practitioners to structure conversations with YP, in terms of keeping interventions and action plans focused, but at the same time providing consistency in the breath of conversations (i.e. addressing all areas of the star).

- The tool was proving effective because the visual representation was providing a clear and objective way of helping YP pinpoint specific areas where barriers existed and establish steps to overcome these.
- All practitioners reported that they found the process of scoring the star straightforward, and had not experienced any issues with this.
- Some partners were able to establish gaps in their programmes for supporting YP, as a result of using the star. For example Green Corridor had identified where they might need to provide additional support to develop skills for employment.
- A few practitioners commented that using the tool was enabling them to provide a more focused approach to matching needs of the YP to the opportunities available. Use of the star was helping them to identify very specific barriers for YP and broker specific opportunities to address these. This approach was proving very motivating for the YP.
- Some practitioners cited examples of using the star to challenge YP. Examples included challenging YP about whether their ambitions were realistic and challenging their commitment to wanting to progress into work.
- Managers reported that the tool was showing potential to support them to gain a greater insight into the needs of YP and to establish a more focused approach to staff supervision, particularly in regards to supporting and challenging staff in moving YP towards positive outcomes.

4 Feedback from On-line Evaluation (Survey Monkey)

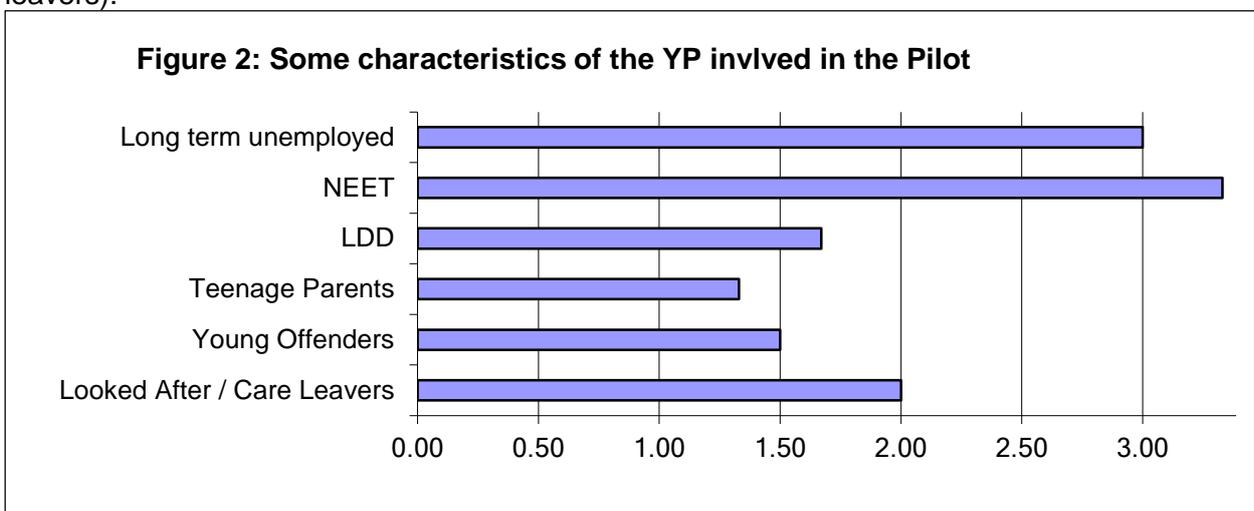
4.1 An online survey was developed to capture the views of participants in the pilot. The survey was structured to elicit the following information.

- Context of using the Work Star (as a practitioner and/or line manager)
- Characteristics of the young people involved
- Practitioner and manager perspectives on using the Work Star
- Impact on practice (practitioner and manager)
- Next Steps (within organisations)

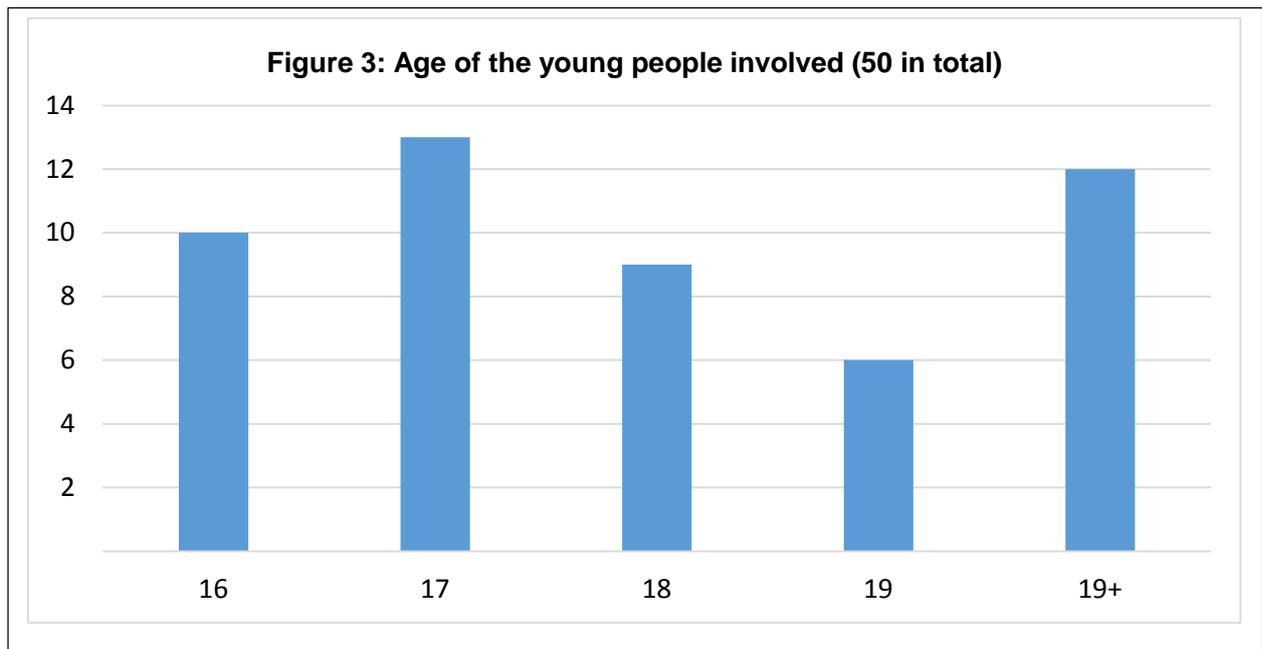
4.2 This section summarises feedback from this survey. Ten responses were received.

Characteristics and Age of YP (Young People)

4.3 Figure 2 below shows the characteristics of the YP involved. The majority were NEET and long term unemployed with a good representation of YP with other significant characteristics associated with engagement issues (LDD, Teenage Parents, Young Offenders and Care leavers).



4.4 Figure 3 shows the age profile of the 50 YP who took part in the pilot. This was a good spread from the youngest end at 16 to those who were 19+.



Context in which the star was used

- 4.5 The star was used in a variety of contexts, all with the common purpose of supporting YP into work or training. These included:
- within a 12 week Traineeship programme to evaluate trainees' work readiness at the programme start and end;
 - tracking YP's progress within a 6 week Job club and identifying any specific areas issues impacting on progress;
 - within careers guidance support, providing IAG to help YP identify goals and the next steps to enable them to make progression into training or work;
 - a drop in support session for LAC (Looked after Children/Care Leavers) where YP identified as being 'job ready' were offered support towards this goal;
 - measuring progress of learners within a roll on/ roll off employability programme, to identify progress to date (i.e. retrospectively) and establish key areas to focus on with YP for the remainder of programme;
 - within a 'transition mentor project' where the transition mentor carries on using Work Stars which have been provided by the host organisation in supporting participants in the transition from provider provision towards and into employment or other appropriate next steps.

Further details of some of the different contexts can be found in the Case Studies in Appendix 4.

Process of using the star

4.6 Feedback on how the star was used by different organisations is summarised below

Introducing the star

- 4.61 A variety of approaches for introducing the concept of the star to YP were cited by partners. These included:
- Providing a simple explanation of the purpose of the star, and how it would support the YP, e.g. '*a tool to view progression and target key areas to work on*';
 - Explaining the '*Journey of Change*' to YP (i.e. measuring readiness for work and progress). Examples included showing the Star diagram, discussing what each score looks like '*in the young persons world*' and assessing whether there is a common understanding of thresholds (i.e. between the practitioner and YP).
 - Using the star diagram as a starting point with YP and explaining the headings and process of scoring;
 - Not using the diagram at all but having the headings (in mind) to enable the conversation to be structured and all areas covered.

Scoring of the star

- 4.62 On the whole scoring was completed as an activity with the YP. Examples of approaches included:
- discussion with the YP with reference to the guide to gain a shared understanding of scores;
 - YP and practitioner scoring separately and moderating and agreeing actual score through discussion.

Involving YP in the completion of the star

- 4.63 Inclusive approaches were often cited by practitioners as a basis for ensuring YP's engagement with the Star process. Strategies referred to included:
- checking YP's understanding following explanation;
 - involving YP in the scoring process;
 - framing the development points established in a positive way;
 - providing a hard copy of their star for reference and reflection.

Developing action plans arising from discussions

- 4.64 All practitioners found the action planning arose naturally from completing the Star and focused on specific support needs. However there were a variety of approaches to prioritising action, including:
- reviewing very low scores in an area and placing extra emphasis for action here;
 - identifying those areas that would achieve a positive outcome for the YP;
 - asking the YP to lead the process by establishing which areas they felt progress could be made.

Experience of using the online system

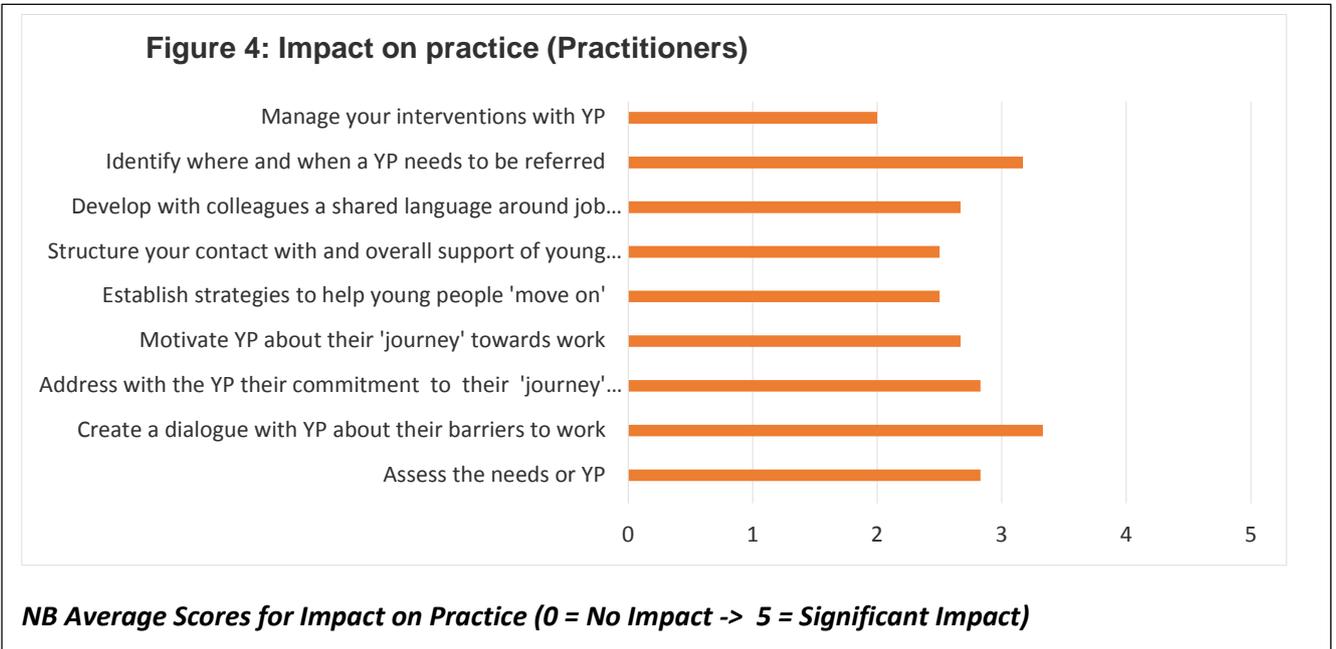
- 4.65 On the whole most practitioners used the paper versions of the tool and did not explore the IT element. Where the IT was used there were different views amongst those who found the system easy to navigate and one practitioner who found it problematic.

Impact of Work Star

- 4.7 This section looks at responses from practitioners and managers of using the Work Star within these specific roles. Participants were asked to rate the impact that using the Work Star has had on a number of different aspects of their role. A score of zero would be assigned where 'no impact' was felt, up to a score of 5 for 'significant impact'. The scores presented below have been collated across all participants to provide an average score for impact.

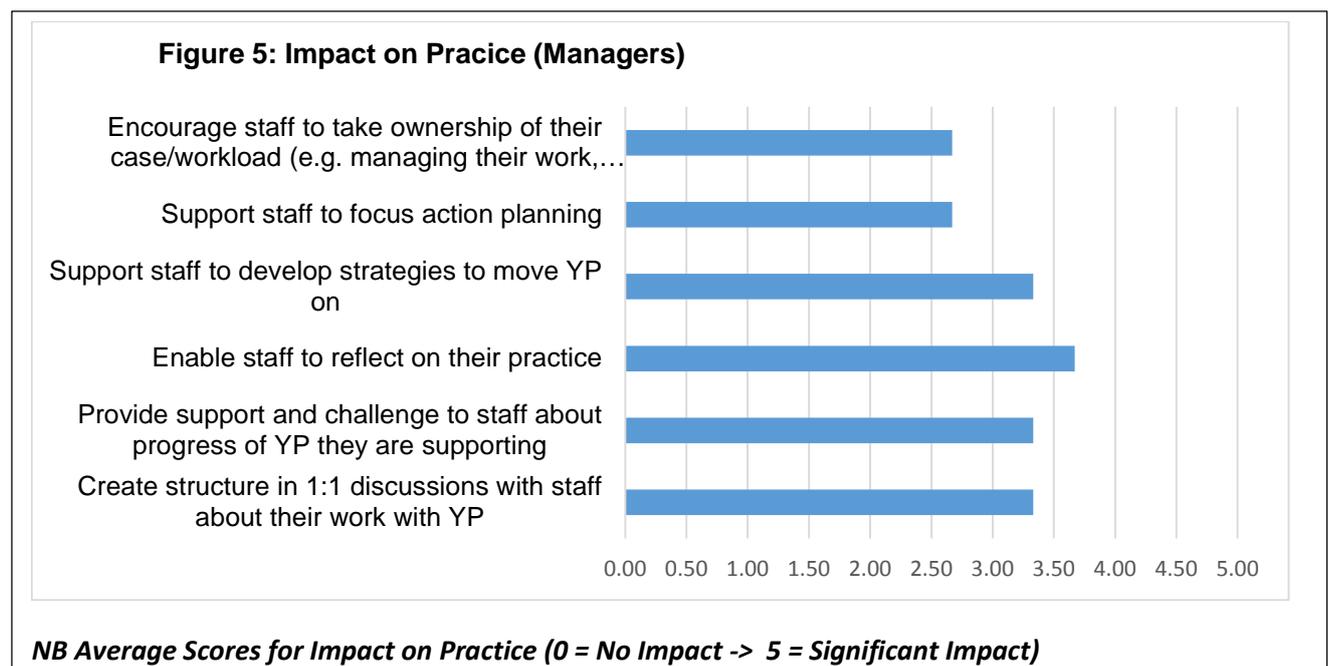
Practitioner Perspective

4.71 Figure 4 summarises the practitioners' responses when asked about the impact of using the Work Star with clients. In all areas some impact is acknowledged with a minimum of 2 ('*managing interventions*') and a maximum of 3.3 ('*Creating a dialogue with YP about their barriers to work*'). All other categories scored at least 2.5.



Manager Perspective

4.72 Figure 5 below provides the responses from those who had used the Work Star as part of line management/supervision of staff. In all areas scores of over 2.5 have been recorded. Most significant was the way the Star '*supported staff to reflect on their practice*' (3.6). '*Supporting staff to develop strategies to move YP on*', '*providing support and challenge about casework*', and '*creating a structure for discussions*' were also identified as having impact (3.3).



Views on how the star could be taken forward

4.8 This section summaries responses to next steps in using the Star both from a practitioner perspective as well as within an organisational/management context.

Practitioner Perspective

4.81 Overwhelmingly practitioners indicated they would like to continue using the Work Star to support their work with YP. One practitioner made mention of the fact that their organisation would like to explore using other stars in the suite of Outcomes Stars. The star is seen as a useful and simple tool to use with clients, which is captured in the following comment.

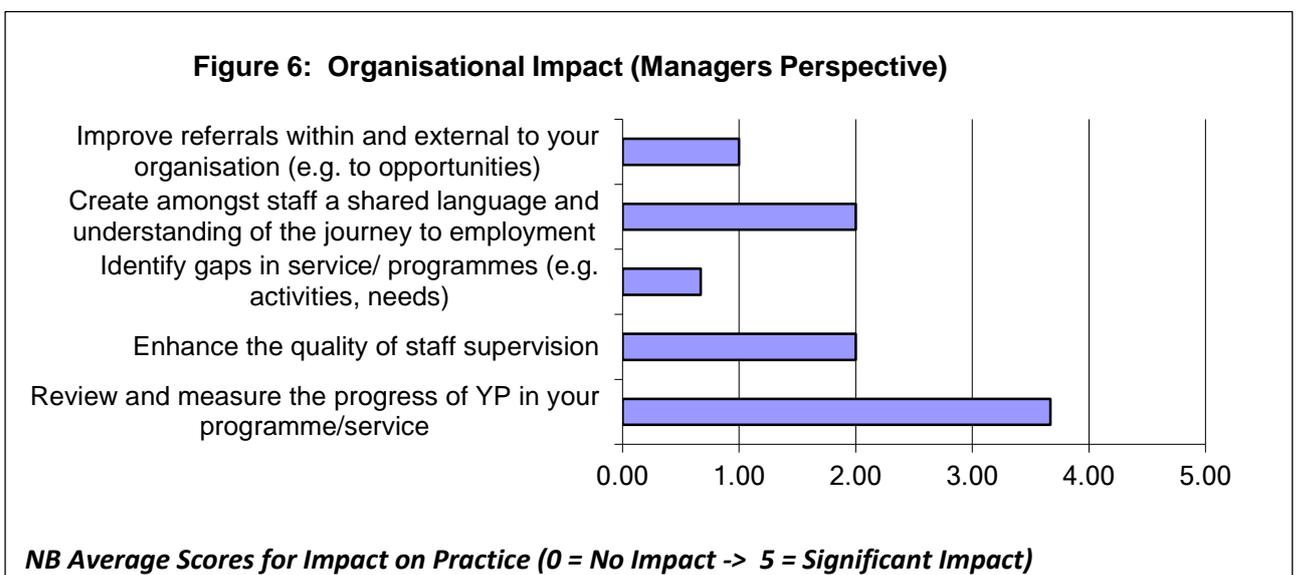
'This is one of three monitoring tools that I am required to go through with the trainees. As the main focus of our work is to help the YP become work ready, I found this tool by far the most relevant and useful'(Cultivate London)

4.82 Other benefits cited by practitioners included:

- The way the tool can be used to demonstrate impact both of individual practitioners and organisations;
- In an IAG context it was felt the tool might not be necessarily need to used for every single client, however it is a way of evidencing the areas that a client needs to develop and can be useful in pointing out issues, thereby supporting the assessment of the YP needs;
- Reference was made to the way in which the tool helps the practitioner develop a neutral or impartial position with the YP, thereby creating an environment where they can develop a *'person centred approach'* (Rogers, 1951) with the YP. The YP does not leave an intervention feeling criticised where barriers have been identified, since the tool supports objectivity for both the YP and Practitioner.

Management/Organisational Perspectives

4.83 Figure 6 below shows the responses from mangers on the organisational impact of the Work Star. The most significant impact is the capacity to *'review and measure the progress of YP'* through a particular course or intervention (impact score of 3.7). *'Creating a shared language amongst staff'* and *'enhancing the quality of staff supervision'* were also cited as positive outcomes.(impact score of 2). *'Improving referrals'* and *'identifying gaps in provision'* unsurprisingly scored low on impact given the short timescale of the pilot project and limited number of young people being supported.



- 4.84 All managers highlighted the benefits that the tool has brought to their organisation, and on that basis have confirmed they would like to continue using the tool.

“Work Star offers a way to effectively monitor and evaluate the progress trainees make while on our programme. It provides a sound structure which we plan to continue to integrate it into our evaluation strategies.” (Cultivate London)

Cultivate London reported that they would also like to develop the use of the tool as a way to progress trainees into further employment, rather than just evaluating their progress whilst on the programme.

- 4.85 For the recently restructured 14-19/Connexions service the use of Outcomes Star will be established and embedded into the processes of the new integrated team from October 2015.

“I would see this becoming central to the way in which we manage casework as managers and practitioners. There is also potential for the IT element to support strategic review and planning and evaluating the effectiveness of our service for young people.” (14/19/ Connexions)

5 Feedback from Final Evaluation Meeting held on 17th June 2015

- 5.1 After completion of the online survey participants in the pilot project were invited to a final evaluation meeting. This was an opportunity for each organisation to share their experiences with colleagues and to reflect on those things that had gone well (WWW), areas for development (EBI) and next steps.

- 5.2 Many points discussed at this meeting were reflected in the feedback from the online survey. The following additional comments were recorded.

- Green Corridor and Cultivate London reflected that the introduction of the star worked best where they had already establish a rapport and relationship with the YP (e.g. after a few weeks rather than a few days of a programme). However the Star had also been used successfully with a group of Care leavers in a one off meeting. Therefore the star can be used in a variety of ways, but the skill of the practitioner in establishing rapport is key to effective use of the star.
- It was suggested that the ‘Journey of change’ framework provided a structure for staff to reflect on the impact of their work with YP in moving them towards independence (i.e. away from dependence) Such reflections could feed into discussions with managers (and within teams) about when and where more intensive support might be appropriate or alternatively when support ought to be reduced or withdrawn.
- Some managers had gained insight into the way in which staff (i.e. practitioners) were managing their professional boundaries with YP with regards to the amount of support they were providing. They established that the star supported a reflective approach to line management of practitioners, encouraging practitioners to focus on how they were supporting YP to make progress. Other partners were keen to explore using the Star in this context going forward
- Developing the use of the tool to support transition (i.e. programme exit) was cited as a priority going forward for 3rd Sector partners

6 Summary and Conclusions

6.1 Feedback from partners involved in the pilot was overwhelmingly positive.

6.2 In relation to the original propositions (paragraph 1.10) the pilot project has generated positive feedback to a greater or lesser extent in all areas, as outlined below.

- ✓ *A consistent approach within and between organisations in how we describe where particular clients are on their journey towards employment.*
Widely reported and endorsed by partners.
- ✓ *A more efficient way of matching the needs of young people to available opportunities and making referrals between organisations.*
Some support for this proposition but the scale and length of the pilot project did not allow this to be fully tested.
- ✓ *The possibility of a needs led approach to developing opportunities to support progression.*
Some support for this proposition but the scale and length of the pilot project did not allow this to be fully tested. It was noted that a larger sample of YP would be required to begin to identify and gaps in provision.
- ✓ *The opportunity for line managers to systematically review case work and engage in outcome-focussed discussions during supervisions linked to specific clients.*
Very strong endorsement by both managers and practitioners of the value of the Work Star methodology in creating support and challenge and greater accountability for casework.

7 Next Steps identified by participants

Organisational Developments

7.1 HNAG partners are keen to extend the use of the Work Star both within their own organisations and across the wider partnership.

7.2 A number of organisations are keen to explore the use of other Stars from the Outcomes Star suite (e.g. 'My Star', 'Teen Star', Youth Star) and to introduce any that might help further focus needs identification and support for clients with specific barriers to engagement and progression.

7.3 The restructured Hounslow 14-19 Service (incorporating the former Connexions service) intends to put the Outcomes Star process and methodology at the centre of its client-focussed activity and as a means of evaluating overall service impact.

7.4 Green Corridor is seeking to explore the use of the Work Star across the organisation not only in staff supervision but also within teams to support provision planning and evaluation.

Continuing Professional Development

7.5 Partners are keen to involve their organisations in further training. This would involve training other staff and exploring other Stars.

7.6 There is a desire to develop CPD opportunities which would support practitioners to develop their existing use of the star and be able to use the tool in a more sophisticated way to support YP into outcomes.

- 7.7 Linked to the above was a suggestion to develop peer group sessions to share case scenarios as a means of moderating and standardising judgements. This would be particularly important where Stars are moved with YP from one organisation to another.

Developing processes to support collaborative working

- 7.8 As the Work Star model is more widely used partners, there will be a need to explore and develop process and protocols for data sharing.

Changes to Work Star

- 7.9 Members of the 14-19 team took part in an evaluation workshop run by Triangle Consulting on 29th April. The purpose of the event was to review and refine the current Work Star with stakeholders currently using it in their area. Following discussions at this facilitated workshop a number of changes have been made to the Work Star. A draft version was circulated to partners at the final evaluation meeting in June.

- 7.10 The main changes are summarised below.

- ‘Challenge’ and ‘Stability’ on the star have been collapsed into a single point of the star called ‘Stability’.
- Well-being has been added as a new point on the star to capture wider health issues separately. The new 7 point star therefore covers:
 - Aspiration and motivation
 - Basic Skills
 - Job skills and experience
 - Job-search skills
 - Workplace and social skills
 - Stability
 - Well-being
- New headings have been introduced to describe the journey of change, namely:
 - Stuck
 - Accepting help
 - Believing and trying
 - Building Skills and experience
 - Self-reliant
- Revised general (Holistic) descriptors (general) have been written for each of the 10 levels
- Revised detailed descriptors have also been written for each of the 7 points of the star against the journey of change criteria.

- 7.11 Tringle proposes to introduce the revised format from the Autumn term 2015. (TBC)

Appendices

<i>Appendix 1</i>	Work Star Chart and Journey of Change
<i>Appendix 2</i>	Project Rationale
<i>Appendix 3</i>	Work Star Training Programme (23 rd October 2014)
<i>Appendix 4</i>	Summary of Training Evaluation
<i>Appendix 5</i>	Notes from Interim Evaluation Meeting (12 th February 2015)
<i>Appendix 6</i>	Case Studies from Partner Organisations

Appendix 1- Work Star Chart



Star Chart



Work Star™

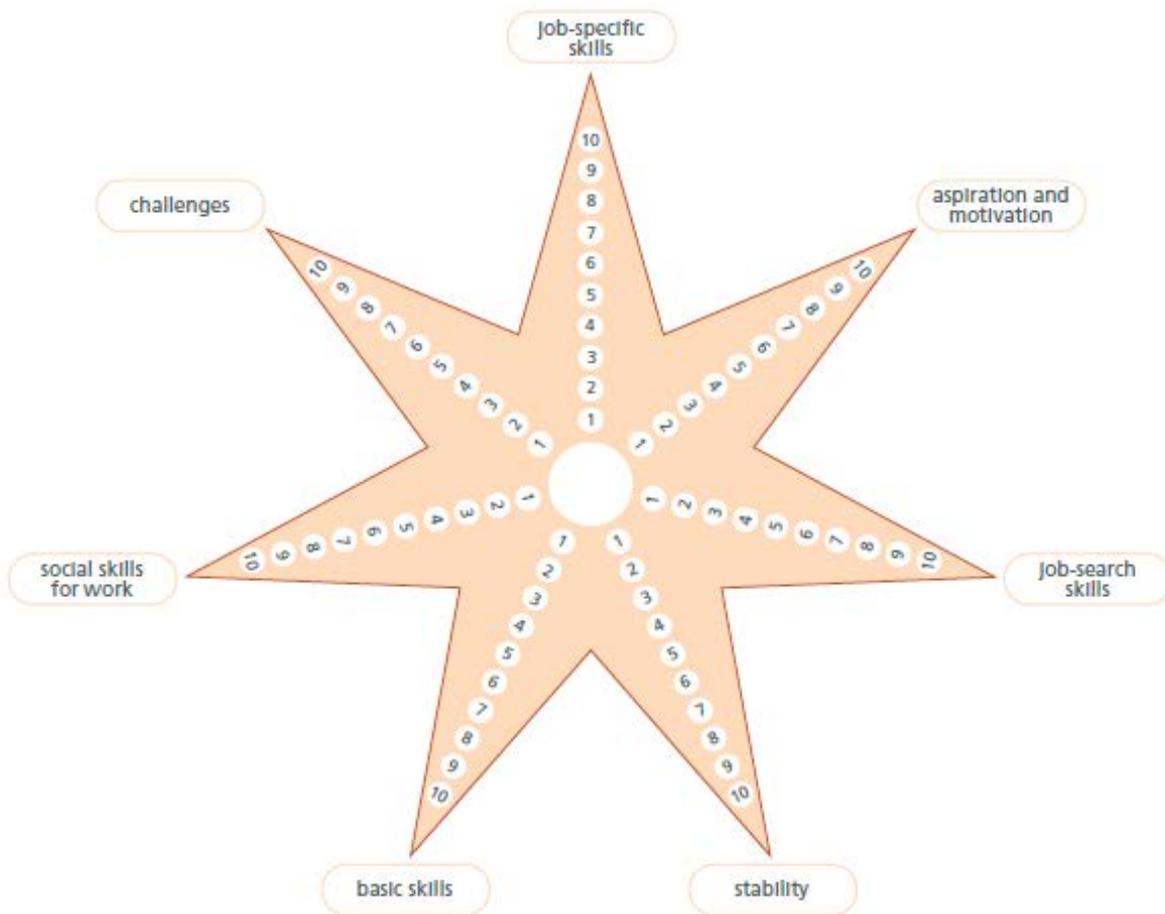
The Outcomes Star for work and learning

Client

Assessment Review Retrospective

Date of completion

Completed by Worker and client
 Worker alone
 Client



Client: I was involved in completing this Star Chart



Star Notes

Job-specific Skills

Aspiration and Motivation e.g. knowing what work you want to do

Job- Search Skills e.g. researching options, CV, interview skills

Stability e.g housing or other issues

Basic Skills e.g. IT, English, numeracy and literacy

Social skills for work

Challenges

Journey of Change

Everyone makes changes in different ways but journey is often similar. This is like a map of your journey to work. Not everyone starts at the beginning and you can move backwards as well as forwards. Where are you on your journey to work?



Action Plan

Priority area and score	Next goal	SMART actions	By who?	By when? (date)

Signatures:

Service user Date Staff Date

Other agency / advocate Date Staff Date



Appendix 2 – Project Rationale

Towards a common approach to supporting the progression of young people towards employment (Pilot Project using 'Work Star')

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to undertake this training and to be part of this Work Star Pilot. This document outlines the context and rationale for the pilot project and your commitment in agreeing to be involved.

Context

During the last two years the 14-19 and Connexions teams have worked closely to review and develop approaches which support the Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) agenda, namely:

- Influencing providers to develop appropriate provision for all learners;
- Providing (and promoting) appropriate guidance and support at points of transition;
- Intervening and supporting young people who disengage from learning or who are at risk of doing so.

Key to the RPA strategy has been the development of a range of internal and external partnerships particularly focussed on learners who are either at risk of not progressing into post-16 education, at risk of dropping out of learning or who become NEET and need to be reengaged.

Examples of these developing partnerships include:

- The 14-19 Training provider network
- The Hounslow NEET Action Group (3rd Sector)
- 16-18 Apprenticeships Project Group
- HSTEP/Skills and Employment Strategy Team
- Hounslow Virtual School for looked after Children
- Post 16 SEN group
- BSkB Construction Skills and Employment Group

Rationale for a Pilot Project

Increasingly the focus for partners has centred on how we better support young people towards and into employment. (Indeed the focus on progression towards employment is a significant new focus for all those working with young people.) The organisations involved in the partnerships above have all been involved in developing or brokering opportunities for young people to support this journey. Examples include job clubs, work experience/placements (including traineeships) and apprenticeships.

Much has been done in the last two years to improve communication between partners and to make opportunities for young people more widely understood and available between providers. Examples include HNAG coordination activity, Alternative Provision directories and the Opportunities Gazette. However a common theme emerging from partners is the apparent mismatch between opportunities established (supply) and the availability of suitable young people who are ready to engage (demand).

There are many people working with the NEET/pre NEET cohort and specific individuals or organisations hold information about the progress of their clients in whatever programmes they are engaged. However in terms of partnership working we do not currently have a 'shared language' describing exactly where young people are on their journey towards employment. Most commonly we simply distinguish our clients as being 'work-ready' or not 'work-ready'.

Work Star is a tool which enables those working with vulnerable young people (and their organisations) to describe measure and summarise a range of characteristics of clients as they support them on their journey towards employment. In this way it enables a more sophisticated assessment of young people in relation to available opportunities/next steps.

What are the potential advantages of Work Star?

For individuals, organisations and partnerships working with the NEET/PreNEET cohort there are a number of potential advantages of using a common assessment tool. It provides:

- greater shared clarity about what we are trying to achieve in working with our clients;
- a consistent approach within and between organisations in how we describe where particular clients are on their journey towards employment;
- a more efficient way of matching the needs of young people to available opportunities and making referrals between organisations;
- the possibility of a needs led approach to developing opportunities to support progression;
- the opportunity for line managers to systematically review case work and engage in outcome-focussed discussions during supervisions linked to specific clients.

The Pilot Project

The purpose of the pilot project is to evaluate the use of Work Star across a range of organisations working with vulnerable young people (Post 16) to assess the extent to which the advantages listed above can be realised in practice.

The organisations taking part in the pilot are:

- Green Corridor (3rd Sector)
- Cultivate London (3rd Sector)
- 14-19 team
- Connexions Team
- Skills and Employment Team

There are two strands of pilot activity, namely:

- Evaluation of the use of Work Star with young people (front line staff)
- Evaluation of work star within supervision/line management meetings (managers)

It is envisaged that those supervising staff using work star will focus on the management strand (although they may do both if they also work directly with clients).

Your Commitment

- Attend the training course
- Use the Star in your work during the next 3 months
- Engage in evaluation activities including a half day review session in February 2015 (date tbc)
- Keep a reflective diary to capture thoughts, quotes, feelings etc. along the way.

If the evaluation is positive we will look to roll out the process more widely in 2015.

Thank you

Appendix 3 - Work Star Training Programme

Introduction to the Work Star
Thursday 23rd October 9.30am – 4.30 pm
at St Giles Hotel,
Room 3, Hounslow Road, Feltham, Middlesex, TW14 9AD

9.30	Arrival, registration and refreshments	
9.45	Introduction to the day: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting the training in context • Introductions to trainer and participants • Purpose of the training • Exercise: Hopes and concerns 	Yetunde Onifade <i>(Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Limited)</i> Priscilla Hansberry <i>(LB Hounslow)</i> David Scott <i>(LB Hounslow)</i>
10.15	Introduction to the Star: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to outcomes • Development and purpose • Description of Work Star • The Journey of Change 	Yetunde Onifade
10.45	Completing the Star Chart	Yetunde Onifade
11.15	<i>Tea/Coffee break</i>	
11.30	Using the Star with young people	Yetunde Onifade
12:45	<i>Lunch</i>	
1.45	Using the completed Star to support change: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the Journey of Change can help inform interventions • Developing an action plan based on a completed Star 	Yetunde Onifade
2.30	Management information from Outcomes Star data across a service	Yetunde Onifade
3.00	Introduction to the Star Online	Yetunde Onifade
3.15	<i>Tea/Coffee break</i>	
3.30	Work with case studies to build consistency	Yetunde Onifade
4:10	Next steps, timetable and final questions	Priscilla Hansberry David Scott
4.30	Close	

Appendix 4 - Summary of training evaluation

1. Quality of training

(where 10 is excellent and 1 is very poor)

	Average	% scoring 8-10
Training as a whole	8.13	80%
Trainer's clarity and delivery	8.47	87%
Star materials (handouts)	8.40	87%
Practical exercises/ role play	8.13	73%

2. Learning outcomes

The table below summarises participants understanding of the Star on the following scale.

4.1 1-2: Not a clue!

4.2 3-4: Just aware of the issue

4.3 5-6: Some understanding

4.4 7-8: Good understanding

4.5 9-10: Confident to use it well

The aim of the one-day Introduction to the Star course is that people have a good enough understanding to start using the Star with their clients but that confidence is likely to come with time and practice:

	Average	% good understanding	% confident to use well
The Star and the journey of change	8.00	80%	20%
Completing the Star collaboratively with clients	7.80	67%	27%
Using the Star to create effective support plans	7.53	60%	27%
The value of service-wide Star data	7.60	60%	27%
Using the Star Online	7.93	67%	27%
How the Star will fit with existing systems	7.47	53%	27%
Consistently scoring service users on the star	7.73	73%	20%

Appendix 5- Notes from Interim Evaluation Meeting held on 12th February 2015

Work Star' Pilot

Interim Review meeting

12th February 2015 at Hounslow Civic Centre

Present:

Sophie Edney (Green Corridor), Adrienne Althorp (Cultivate London), Kevin Bittan (Cultivate London), John Blackmore (Action Acton), Sarah Matthews (Connexions), Margherita Rickwood (Connexions), Ian O'Hara (Connexions), Deborah Arojaye (Connexions), Susan Pieterse (LBH Skills & Employment Team), Nina Johal (LBH 14-19 Team), David Scott (LBH 14-19 Team), Priscilla Hansberry (LBH 14-19 Team)

Apologies:

Jonathan Petitt (GC) Tomi Moronkola (LBH Skills & Employment Team), Chris Mayo (Connexions)

Introduction

DS reminded all present of the key objectives of pilot and strands of the pilot:

- Evaluation of the use of Work Star with young people (front line staff)
- Evaluation of work star within supervision/line management meetings (managers)

Progress of pilots

Partners provided an update on their progress and how they are using the tool with YP.

Partner	Focus of pilot activity
LBH 14-19 Team (NJ)	Using the tool with group of LAC YP (10) who are NEET and have been identified as potentially 'work ready'. YP drop in on a weekly basis to access support to move into training/employment.
Green Corridor (SE)	Used with YP on GC programme (80% of current cohort). Some of this has been retrospective use as the YP joined prior to pilot. Therefore use of WS has focused on helping measure distance travelled over last 12 months to date. In addition establishing next steps.
Cultivate London (KB/ AA)	<i>Will be using with next Traineeship cohort from March</i>
LBH Connexions (MR/ SM/ CM)	Used with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 YP participating in Connexions Work Wise job club which runs over 6 weeks. WS has been used retrospectively to measure the distance travelled by the YP over 6 week programme. • 3 NEET YP working with Generic PA based in Connexions drop in centre. Two of these are existing YP on caseload and 1 new YP who has accessed drop in service • 2 NEET YP with Intensive PA at Hanworth Youth Centre
LBH Skills & Employment Team	<i>Will be using with YP currently on the LBH Apprenticeship scheme, who will be nearing the end of the programme and need support to transition into their next opportunity</i>

Experiences of using Work Star

All partners provided feedback on their experiences of using the tool in their work with YP.

Objectives for pilot	Feedback from partners
<i>Developing a consistent approach and 'shared language' within and between organisations in how we describe where particular clients are on their journey towards employment</i>	General consensus from partners that it was relatively easy to plot scores for/with YP for the 7 areas of the star. Using the tool ensured there was a structure to conversations, and that each area was addressed as part of the overall discussion, thereby developing a consistent approach to conversations.
<i>A needs led approach to developing opportunities to support progression</i>	Some partners have been able to establish gaps in skills and experiences for both individuals but also groups. SE (Green Corridor) has been able to identify a pattern in terms of the skills of YP (e.g. lack of telephone skills). They are now planning to embed this into their programme.
<i>More efficient way of matching the needs of young people to available opportunities and making referrals between organisations</i>	Various partners commented that using the tool enabled them to have a more focused approach in regards to matching needs and opportunities. NJ (14-19 Team) was able to identify a lack of work experience and functional skills as a barrier for YP being successful in their apprenticeship applications. Consequently NJ has been able to identify and help broker opportunities for the YP e.g. Traineeships and study programmes.
<i>Greater shared clarity about what we are trying to achieve in working with our clients</i>	Most of the practitioners reported that the tool has enabled them to focus and structure conversations with YP. They have noted that it has also focused action planning activities. SM (Connexions) gave an example of a YP who found this aspect of the tool really empowering. CM (Connexions) provided an example of using the tool to challenge a client and parent (in a non-judgemental way) about the realism of their goals. He and the client scored separately, then reviewed these together and established a notable discrepancy in scorings. This then allowed him to directly explore and challenge certain areas of the YP's readiness for work. He was also able to engage the parent in the findings, as their support was established as a key issue in the YP's journey of change. CM noted that the YP and parent engaged in the conversation because it was very tangible and objective (i.e. looking at the star), but also the conversation was focused on what the YP was trying to achieve, and steps to achieving this.
<i>Opportunity for line managers to systematically review case work and engage in outcome-focussed discussions during supervisions linked to specific clients</i>	All managers commented that the tool has enabled them to get to grips with the needs and circumstances of individual clients that staff are working with, opposed to discussing numbers. This has enabled managers to get a better understanding about how staff are helping YP to move on (i.e. distance measured). In addition the visual nature of the paperwork has been a useful resource in enabling managers to very quickly understand the client's current progress (i.e. before 1:1 supervision with staff).

Other feedback :

- Partners commented that the tool is useful for motivating YP who have already made progress but need ongoing motivation to progress. SE highlighted that this has provided useful (using the tool retrospectively) to enable YP to understand what they have achieved, and the areas they need to focus on going forward.
- All agreed the criteria was really clear for scoring and some had used this with directly with YP (i.e. for joint scoring)
- NJ (14-19) highlighted how using the tool has enabled the YP she is working with to take more ownership on decision making in regards to their aspirations and steps they need to take to achieve these.
- SE (Green Corridor) highlighted that they would be interested in using other tools in the suite of Stars, and have already contacted Triangle about getting a license for this.
- CM commented that the tool was more useful in conversations with YP than expected, having used many different type of tools in the past (i.e. as an experienced practitioner)
- DS noted that the feedback reinforced the notion that the skill of the practitioner is key to the success of using the tool with YP.

Overall conclusions and next steps

The overall conclusion drawn from the discussion was that the experience of piloting work star to date has been very positive. On this basis it was agreed

1. Partners should continue to use the tool, or begin using if they have not had the opportunity to do this so far.
2. Partners will participate in an electronic (via email) Survey Monkey questionnaire to collect some further feedback on experiences to feed into the final evaluation report. This will be distributed after the Easter period by PH.
3. The group will reconvene for final evaluation meeting in early June to review the final report.
4. PH will investigate prior to final evaluation meeting
 - a) how a star could be shared between organisations, for example where a YP is transitioning between support or provision
 - b) confidentiality and data protection issues arising from sharing of stars and licencing arrangements

Appendix 6 – Case Studies From Partners

Case Study 1 (14-19 Team)

<p>Introduction</p> <p>The 14-19 team seeks to work with and support all organisations that provide 14-19 education and training services to young people in Hounslow. The team lead on the Local Authority's statutory responsibility for <i>Raising the Participation Age</i>. This provides the framework within which we work with providers to secure sufficient high quality education and training provision for all young people, ensure that all young people receive high quality CEIAG that leads to appropriate decision making at key transition points and that we have appropriate systems in place to track all learners and prioritise additional support for those deemed at risk of becoming NEET or who become NEET.</p>
<p>Context for using the Work Star</p> <p>The focus for this pilot project was on providing better outcomes for our Care leavers. This group figures disproportionately in the data for both educational achievement and successful post-16 progression into education, employment and training. This cohort was also identified as a priority focus following the most recent LA Ofsted inspection in 2014. In partnership with the Virtual College and Connexions team we ran a series of Friday morning surgeries whereby we would seek to support care-leavers into Apprenticeships. For this pilot project we focussed on 10 young people. The 14-19 Development Officer (NJ) used the Work Star as a basis for engaging the young people in conversation and recording and identifying their next steps. The 14-19 Coordinator (DS) used the completed Work Stars as the basis for a focussed discussion during the subsequent 1-1 line management meeting.</p>
<p>What went well (Young People)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Excellent level of engagement and rapport achieved with young people. 7/10 offered positive feedback about the support they had been offered.• Excellent diagnosis of specific issues. (NB Holistic approach particularly relevant to this cohort with 'Stability' often a key consideration when addressing needs)• Excellent progression outcomes after just one meeting with the young people (and follow up calls) including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ securing apprenticeships (2)✓ securing places with training providers on pre-apprenticeship (1) or other vocational courses (3)✓ investigating and resolving a 'right to work' issue (1)✓ referrals to Connexions for specific support (3) <p>What went well (Line Management/Supervision)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Print-outs of completed WorkStars useful as a visual to discuss specific cases• Detailed discussion about individual cases made possible the opportunity for challenge and support
<p>Lessons learnt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Successful use of the Star with young people depends upon the skills of the caseworker (e.g. in establishing trust and rapport, introducing the Star, supporting the young person to reflect honestly).• Using the Star can ensure that young people are viewed holistically. Sometimes the issues identified will be beyond the remit of the case-worker and may need a further referral.• The Star brings consistency to conversations with young people whilst having the flexibility for these to have different starting points and areas of focus
<p>Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To assess the impact of the star over a longer time period in progressing young people towards and into sustained employment• To role out the use of the Star within the whole 14-19/Connexions team and embed it in casework and supervision• To introduce the Outcomes Star process into work with Risk of NEETs (14-19) in schools/College.• To assess the use of the Star as a means of monitoring individual and organisational impact on outcomes for young people

Case Study 2: Hounslow Connexions Service

Introduction

The Connexions service offers information, advice and guidance to young people aged 13-19 in Hounslow and up to 24 with a learning difficulty or disability. The focus of the work is on those young people who are most vulnerable to not making a successful transition into post-16 education, training or employment. We therefore work with those in school who are deemed at risk of becoming NEET as well as those residents who have disengaged and become NEET. The service also has a drop-in centre based in the Town Centre Library.

The support offered by the team includes

- finding apprenticeships, traineeships, and employment.
- assistance with applying for college courses, job search, writing CVs, cover letters, completing online application,
- providing information and referral to other organisations that can address their needs (e.g. health, benefits, housing, substance misuse).

Contexts for using the Work Star

- The Work Star was used by the NEET Project Coordinator (MR) during the Connexions pre-employment groups (Workwise). Young people are recruited from the local Job Centre Plus and caseloads of Personal Advisers. The Work Star was introduced towards the end of their programme and used retrospectively to gauge the distance travelled since the start of the programme.
- The Work Star was used by Personal Advisers (SM and DA) during their casework to identify YP strengths (e.g. skills, knowledge, experience, qualification, etc.) and the areas of improvement such as skills and qualifications required to progress into positive outcomes. The Work Star was also used to identify barriers such as housing, money issues, and substance misuse in order to make appropriate referral to other agencies that can provide suitable support.
- The Work Star was used by Managers (DA and IO'H) during supervision meetings. This enhanced and focused discussions, enabling managers to spend more time reviewing individual YP within caseloads. Managers were able to help staff reflect on the scores/judgements made, and establish how they were supporting YP to move on, and/or whether their case needed to be closed. Additionally managers were able and gain a perspective from staff as to the value and usefulness of the Work Star in their casework.

What went well

- Introducing the Work Star to YP was relatively straightforward particularly where rapport has been established (e.g. with long standing YP on caseloads).
- Good visual representation which the young people enjoyed using.
- Young people felt empowered, their opinion valued and taken into account. They found that it was possible to discuss solutions and act on suggestions.
- Having guidelines as a reference for discussions with YP to support scoring in key areas and developing action plans from discussions.

Lessons learnt

- Important for staff to use their judgement to choose the 'right time' to introduce Work Star to YP.
- Successful use of the tool depends on the YP maintaining ownership of the process for completing the Star. For example when scoring the star staff can encourage YP to explain and justify the reasons behind the scores they suggest for categories. This can be an empowering experience which enables YP to be actively involved in discussing issues and identifying solutions to help them move forward.

Next steps

- Embed the Work Star into personal practice
- Making sure that the process is recorded consistently with clients
- Inputting records onto the online system
- Supporting colleagues within the wider team to use the Work Star with clients.
- Create opportunities for sharing of practice amongst staff to support ongoing reflective practice.

Case Study 3 – Green Corridor

Introduction

Green Corridor is a charity that links young people with the environments around them, engaging them in volunteering programmes, accredited educational opportunities and practical education programmes as a route to improve their self confidence and their chances of gaining skills and employment. The primary aim is reducing social exclusion and improving education opportunities in some of west London's poorest areas. Their mission is to improve the access of disadvantaged 14 – 25 year olds to employment, education and training through practical environmental land based learning.

Context for using the Work Star

Within Green Corridor the Star was used to track the progress of learners whilst they were undertaking nationally recognised horticulture qualifications. The Star was used at the beginning, middle and end of the programme to track the progress of young people and to assess them in relation to being 'work ready'.

We also trialled the Star with some of our learners who had been on programmes for some time. We completed Stars for where they are now and then took a retrospective view of where they had been when they had first started with the organisation.

What went well (*Young People*)

- The Star worked really well for showing the young people how much progress they had made in different areas. Many learners find it hard to see that they are making progress.
- Printing off the Stars so the young people could take them home to discuss with parents/carers.
- Using the Stars retrospectively enabled established learners to see the difference the course had made and where they needed to continue to make changes in order to progress.

Lessons learnt

- Establishing a new way of evaluating and monitoring our young people's progress
- Identifying common areas where young people are lacking skills and introducing approaches to support these.

Next steps

- As an organisation we would like to carry on using the Star at part of our transitioning work with young people
- Investigating and using other Stars in the Outcomes Star suite.

Case Study 4 – Cultivate London

<p>Introduction</p> <p>Cultivate London is an urban farm and social enterprise based in a number of derelict sites across West London. As well as producing edible and ornamental plants for sale and row also operating a landscaping business. Cultivate London train unemployed young people in horticulture with a view to helping them into work or further training.</p>
<p>Context for using the Work Star</p> <p>The Work Star was added to the existing monitoring tools used by the Trainee Supervisor (KB) for young people on a 12 week programme.</p> <p>During week 1 each trainee was given a one-to-one meeting for an initial assessment. During this meeting the purpose of the Star was explained and the language of the Star was clarified. After some discussion, and with reference to the guidelines for each category, a score was agreed and assigned. During the trainee's final week the process was repeated. Progress and next steps were then discussed with the trainees.</p>
<p>What went well</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with clients about the areas covered by the work star categories. It helped to identify the strengths and areas to work on.• The Work Star created a consistent set of benchmarks with which to measure just how work ready a trainee was. Having a consistent set of guidelines by which to measure the various categories helped to create a consistent programme of work and training whilst at the same time making sure the training was flexible enough to be tailored for each trainee.
<p>Lessons learnt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In practice the trainees were probably allowed too much influence over their score for each category which, in some cases, led to misleading, inflated results resulting in trainees not getting as much help and support in certain areas as they need.• If scores are over inflated at the start then it is more difficult to get final results that show improvement. These problems were recognised and discussed in the review meeting and resolved.• It is important to allow the trainee to have input and ownership of their assessment but for the supervisor to oversee and manage the actual scoring process (explaining to the trainee in a positive way why their score has been arrived at).• Be clear that explain the numbers do not represent scores in a competitive sense; they are simply representations of different stages of development. A low score in any category means the possibility of focusing extra help in that area.• As well as helping to assess the needs of the trainees the Work Star process could also be useful to demonstrate impact of provision to potential funders.
<p>Next steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing skills in the application and use of the Work Star tool within the organisation

Case Study 4: Action West London (formerly Action Acton)

<p>Introduction</p> <p>Action West London's mission is <i>to help people in West London improve their lives through Education, Employment and Enterprise</i>. This is achieved through a wide range of projects for people from disadvantaged backgrounds in Ealing and Hounslow. Support is provided for individuals facing the most barriers to employment including NEET young people, young and adult offenders, care leavers, lone parents, long term unemployed, individuals with mental health and disability issues, black and ethnic minorities, refugees and older people. Action West London also promotes self-employment, business and social enterprise start-ups and youth enterprise through stalls at Acton Street Market and workspace. Action West London works in partnership with other charities and organisations, local authorities and public sector bodies and has a successful track record of delivering youth and adult programmes for over 12 years.</p>
<p>Context for using the Work Star</p> <p>Action West London is working with Green Corridor and Cultivate London to deliver a 'transition mentor' project. This project involves working with young people who are ready to progress from programmes within these organisations to further study or employment. The transition mentor provides support for the young person before, during and after the transition for a period of three months.</p> <p>It agreed with both organisations that the Work Stars that had previously been completed would be taken on by the transition mentor. After the first month the star is reviewed on a one to one appointment to identify progress, changing attitudes and well being. The star is then revisited 2 weeks before the end of the transition period again to identify YP's needs for future progression, and progress made during their journey.</p>
<p>What went well</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The visual element of the STAR enables managers to understand more easily the YP's current position and gives an insight into the YP's journey• By using all points of the tool you gain a more rounded picture of the YP's skills and abilities which enables us to agree an Individual Action Plan with the YP to focus on weaknesses.• The star provides a platform during supervisions, to see where the YP's attitudes and skills are and at what level. It also provides subjects for discussion and to identify the YP's needs. YP's skills and abilities are usually exaggerated initially and while working through the star their views can be challenged when you are not sure about their capabilities. This enables us to tailor the support provided for the individual YP.
<p>Lessons learnt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Important to inform YP that the first Star is an opening picture of their skills, abilities and attitudes. We don't expect them to have a very high number at the start, as throughout the project, we will be re-visiting the tool to see how the YP's journey is progressing.• Don't allow the YP to think that they are at a higher level without challenging them. They were inclined to give you the answer to the star category that they thought that you want to hear, and not necessarily the true picture.
<p>Next steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supporting young people to progress in key areas of employability identified through the Star, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ communication skills needed to talk to employers both over the telephone and in person, written English skills needed to complete application forms articulately and IT office skills.✓ ensuring that YP understand assertive job searching using the internet and composing applications forms correctly.✓ developing interview skills with a focus on oral communication and body language.✓ Working on employment sustainability (i.e. getting a job is substantially easier compared to keeping a job.)

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