



Using the Well-being Star™

1 Introduction

The Well-being Star works by encouraging people with long-term health conditions to consider a range of factors that have an impact on their quality of life. These are not restricted to health but cover a broader range of issues.

The overall aim is for people to do as much as they can so that any negative or limiting impact of the long-term condition on their life is as small as possible.

The Well-being Star was developed by Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise in collaboration with NHS North East Essex Primary Care Trust with funding from the Department of Health.

It can be used flexibly and consists of:

- Scales showing different areas of life, which the person completes, either independently or with a health practitioner or other worker
- A Star Chart plus Notes and a simple Action Plan
- This document, with guidance for workers completing the Star with people and/or supporting people to complete it on their own
- Brief guidance for those completing the Star on their own, including what the numbers mean.

The process of completing the Well-being Star is intended to be positive and helpful to people, to stimulate and focus thinking and discussion, and to provide a useful basis for action-planning and review.

The Well-being Star is a version of the widely recognised Outcomes Star – a tool for supporting and measuring change when working with people. It is an outcomes tool, which means that it enables organisations to measure and summarise change across a range of people and services. It is also designed as a motivational tool to support people in making changes.

The Outcomes Star is underpinned by the assumption that positive growth is a possible and realistic goal for everyone and is designed to focus on people's potential rather than their problems.

People like the Star because it helps them set their own goals.

Worker

We encourage patients to take control of their problems and find the Well-being Star extremely useful as a keywork tool.

Manager

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2 Well-being Star™ areas

The Well-being Star focuses on eight areas that patients, doctors, nurses and specialist health professionals have identified as key to enabling people to maximise their well-being and independence when living with a health condition. It can also help people clarify their priorities – what is most important to them and gives their life meaning.

For many people, the scale descriptions themselves will be enough of a prompt for reflection and discussion. If more detail is needed, the following questions can help open up reflection and discussion on each of the topics covered.

1 Your lifestyle

- What kind of lifestyle changes are recommended for your condition?
- How is your diet, in terms of eating enough healthy food and avoiding any foods and drinks that may be harmful with the condition you have?
- Tell me about your sleeping habits
- What exercise is recommended for your condition? How often do you manage to do that and/ or other ways to keep your body as strong and fit as possible?

2 Looking after yourself

- To what extent can you get around, in and out of your home, get up and dressed, shop, cook and clean? What do you struggle with?
- What is most important to you? Are there things you most want to do for yourself? What do you know about adaptations, equipment or support that are available to you?
- What more would enable you to do as much as possible for yourself?

3 Managing your symptoms

- What is most important to you and what information do you have about how to manage your symptoms?
- To what extent do you put this into practice and try new ways to manage your symptoms?
- How do you pace yourself during the day and rest when you need to?
- Tell me about your medication and what you understand about how it helps you. Do you always take it as prescribed and recommended?
- How do you recognise when you need to see a doctor or nurse? Do you always manage to?

The Well-being Star is extremely helpful for identifying areas to work on with clients.

Worker

The Star data helps us know what conversations to start and where to dig deeper.

Manager

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4 Work and other activities

- To what extent does the condition you have affect your ability to work, volunteer, study or engage in other activities you want to do?
- What is most important to you? Are there activities or different ways of spending your time that would make life more meaningful for you?
- If you can no longer do the things you used to do and/or are struggling at work, what do you know about possible changes in your working conditions, aids or support?

5 Money

- To what extent has the condition affected things financially?
- What do you know about – and do you already receive – the benefits you are entitled to? What changes have you made or planned to adjust your spending or other changes?
- What are your priorities in relation to money? What more would enable you to feel more in control of money?

6 Where you live

- To what extent is your home suitable and healthy enough for you with the condition?
- Tell me about any issues which may make things worse, for example damp, living in a polluted area, shops being far away or inaccessible and/ or stairs making it harder to live independently
- What are your priorities in relation to where you live? Do you know about adaptations or options open to you, possibly even the option of moving house?

7 Family and friends

- To what extent does having a long-term health condition affect your relationship with your family and friends?
- How do you find discussing the condition with them? Are there any areas where it is a struggle to adjust to new roles in the family or with friends?
- What would you like to change and what is most important to you in this area? What help do you have to work through any issues?

8 Feeling positive

- To what extent does having a long-term health condition affect how you feel about yourself or about life and the future? Does it lead to you feeling more anxious?
- What is most important to you and gives your life a sense of meaning?
- What ways have you found to help you feel calmer or happier or to deal with difficult times?

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3 The Well-being Star™ Journey of Change

The Well-being Star is based on an understanding of the changes people go through when learning to live well with a long-term health condition. We call this process the Journey of Change and it has five stages:

Stage 1 “Not thinking about it”

At this stage, the person is experiencing difficulties but not yet thinking about how to improve things. Perhaps they have recently been diagnosed or their condition has got worse and they are feeling too shocked or anxious to be able to think about it. Or perhaps they have had the condition for some time and are stable health-wise but don't believe anything can be done to improve things to improve their life or don't know what help is available.

Stage 2 “Finding out”

At this stage the person is **finding out** information, advice or sources of support to improve things in this area and perhaps to feel more in control. They may be sorting out their priorities and what is most important to them. This is an important step because thinking about the issues and finding support makes change and improvements possible.

Stage 3 “Making changes”

The next step is them using the information and advice they have discovered and at this stage they are actively trying to improve things in their life. This is likely to mean quite a bit of trial and error. Some things may be easy or quickly give benefits while other things may be difficult to keep up or they haven't yet experienced the benefits.

Stage 4 “Getting there”

At this point, they are already doing a lot to deal with the main issues they face and can feel positive about that. However, there are still some difficulties and they need to find a way forward. Some may lapse a bit if they get fed up with the adjustments they have had to make or overwhelmed by anxiety about what is ahead of them.

Stage 5 “As good as it can be”

The person is doing everything they can to manage this aspect of their life as well as possible. This doesn't necessarily mean that there are no problems or things feel easy, but they know what help is available, draw on it when they need to and are able to prioritise the things that are most important to them. It may still be tough living with the health condition and they may be very unwell and/or facing the prospect of things getting worse or of dying, but they are doing everything they can and, as a result, things are **as good as they can be**.

The Journey of Change reflects the stages people go through.

Worker

Clients find it helpful and encouraging to see a clear and visual display of their progress.

Worker

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4 Guidance for completing the Well-being Star™

Using the Star is meant to be a helpful process that stimulates and focuses discussion and provides a useful basis for identifying support, to help people maximise their well-being and independence and live according to what is most important to them, whatever their prognosis. It may raise issues that are hard for many people to discuss, so it is flexible and relies on the judgement of the workers using it and on a degree of understanding and trust. It should never be used in a way that undermines that relationship.

This guidance is designed to supplement training and to help you use the Well-being Star well with people you support, so that it is a positive experience for both of you.

How the Well-being Star™ can help:

- Engaging people and providing a clear focus for conversation
- Demonstrating and reinforcing progress – seeing the change set out in a visual way can be encouraging for those completing it and to workers
- Identifying what is needed – the Journey of Change helps to break change down into small, manageable steps
- Creating a more holistic approach – the Star requires conversations about many aspects of life and can help raise issues that might otherwise be missed
- Making support more systematic and consistent – the Star creates a consistent framework for support.

Make sure that you have received training in using the Well-being Star and that you are familiar with the eight areas and materials and know when and how the Star is used in your service. It is vital to understand and use the Well-being Star Journey of Change as this will ensure consistent results and reliable information for use by your organisation.

Triangle offers a range of options for training – for details contact info@triangleconsulting.co.uk or visit www.outcomesstar.org.uk.

Introduce the Well-being Star to people in groups or one to one. Use the names of the stages to present the Journey of Change step by step and draw out examples relevant to each individual. You may find it helpful to devise a short script to introduce the Star and/or show people a copy of the Scales and a completed Star with two readings demonstrating change.

Complete the Well-being Star with people one to one wherever possible. The Star is designed to be accessible and engaging on a one-to-one basis. How long it takes to complete will vary – the aim is to have a genuine interaction. It is flexible, so depending on the needs and abilities of each person, the process is:

- Let the person decide which scale to start with, or choose one that is concrete and may be easier to discuss (for instance, Managing your symptoms)
- Use the open questions for each area in turn, and/or use the Well-being Star Scales as a basis for discussion. Paraphrase and unpack and/or draw on examples of circumstances, attitudes or behaviours relevant to the person, as needed
- People at three or above should take the lead in placing themselves on the Star; those mainly at one/two may not see the possibilities open to them and need more direction

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- If someone appears to be between two points, think about where they seem to be most of the time or opt for the lower point so that growth is possible
- If working on the Star Online, select the relevant numbers and when all are entered a button will appear asking you to generate a completed Star.

Always use the scales and Journey of Change when deciding where a person is on their journey.

Without referring to the Journey of Change, one person's three could be another person's five and your organisation will not be able to treat collated Star data as reliable for reporting purposes.

Discuss each area to encourage self-reflection. The Star is a collaborative tool, not entirely your opinion or their view, and it is important that the person has an opportunity to discuss what is most important to them and gives their life meaning. Differences of opinion are helpful starters for discussion; ask people why they have chosen a particular point on a scale, challenge them and remind them of their achievements if they underestimate their progress. Discuss any discrepancies between their behaviour and their views, paving the way for a meaningful discussion. Where you cannot agree, record both perceptions on the Star, labelling which is which.

This process requires skill, some knowledge of the person and a good relationship with them. You will need to encourage those people with low self-confidence to see their strengths, while others may need to be encouraged to be more realistic. Use your professional judgement if further discussion is not likely to be helpful.

Be positive and non-judgemental: used well, the Star will support a conversation that covers potentially sensitive aspects of a person's life. Ensure that people don't feel they are being judged and clarify that the aim is to find out where they might need help and to celebrate their improvements.

Finally... The process of discussing and filling out the Star may well have quite an impact on someone, so ensure the session finishes positively, and that the next steps are clear.

5 Use the completed Star as the basis for an action plan

Encourage people to mark where they are on the Star Chart then join the points to create a shape. Look at the shape together then prompt the person to comment on it as a basis for what to do next. Potential questions are:

- Does the shape of the Star show how things are for you right now?
- What does it tell you about which areas are OK or good?
- In the areas that are going well, what are you doing that is working for you? Could you do that in other areas of your life, too?
- What does your Star tell you about areas where you need to make changes or where you could do with more support?
- What would you most like to work on first?

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