



## Using the Work Star™

Completing the Work Star is intended to be a helpful process that stimulates and focuses discussion and provides a useful basis for action planning. The Star is a flexible tool that relies on the judgement of the worker using it, and on a degree of understanding and trust between service user and worker. The Star is designed to be used one to one, but we are not prescriptive about the setting or how long it should take – the aim is to have a genuine interaction. It consists of:

- The Work Star Chart, Notes and Action Plan for completion by workers with service users
- The short illustrated Scales
- The Work Star User Guide with both brief and detailed scales
- An Implementation Guide for those in a management role
- This Guidance for Workers
- A web application for online completion at [www.staronline.org.uk](http://www.staronline.org.uk)
- Background and further information about the Outcomes Star suite of tools can be found at [www.outcomesstar.org.uk](http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk).

**Make sure that you have received training in using the Work 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 Work Star Journey of Change underlying the scales – **stuck, accepting help, believing and trying, learning, self-reliance** – as this will ensure consistent results and reliable information for use by your service. You also need to be familiar with the seven scales so you can unpack and rephrase them for the service user.

**Introduce the Work Star to service users.** 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 you meet with the service users 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
- By giving service users who are interested a copy of the short illustrated Scales or full User Guide to read before the session.

When introducing the Star:

- Explain that people may start anywhere on the journey, can move both up and down the scale and that 10 is the top of the Star scales but not necessarily the end of the journey
- Be clear that it's not about getting an overall score out of 70 but about building up a map of their world, their experiences and the journey they're taking
- Let the service user decide which scale to start with or choose one that is concrete and may be easier to discuss (for instance, Job Skills and Experience).

Some suggested phrases for introducing the Star include:

The Star helped me go deeper into areas and triggered questions. Points came up that had not come out before when we did the action plan.

Worker,  
Work Star pilot

Seeing the Star visually helps me to see that I am changing, that things are happening, that there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

Service user

The Journey of Change helps us to avoid over-supporting our clients.

Manager

*“The Work Star is a way of tracking your journey and finding out about your strengths and needs.”*

*“The Star tells us where you are now and what needs to improve, and it helps you and the service make that improvement.”*

**Complete the Star collaboratively with a service user** by discussing each area and referring to the Star scales. The aim is to engage the client in meaningful discussion, rather than to complete the Star as quickly as possible. There is a choice of three formats for the brief Star scales, according to service users’ abilities and preferences:

- If your organisation uses the Star Online, many people prefer to complete the scales on screen, provided you have a tablet or laptop and internet access when working with service users
- If not, give the service user the short illustrated Scales for reference, either in their current form or made into flashcards by cutting them into separate questions (preferably laminated or on card)
- Or use the short version in the User Guide.

**Use the scale descriptors as a basis for discussion** about that area, or have an open discussion about the area, then use the scale to place the service user on the Journey of Change. 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 service users, but avoid reading through the detailed scales with service users, because of their length. If you are completing the Star on paper, you may find it works best for the service user to have the short illustrated Scales and the worker to have the User Guide.

**It is important to recognise external factors** – although the Star focuses on the service user, their journey into work will be affected by external factors, particularly the local job market and opportunities available to them. Other external factors may include housing or benefits. These also 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.

**Always use the Journey of Change** – otherwise, one person’s 3 could be another person’s 8 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.

**If you don’t agree, have a discussion** – this can help you learn about the service user and help them reflect on their situation and see it in new ways. If a service user is able to engage meaningfully – likely if they are at 5 or above for most of the areas – encourage them to take the lead in placing themselves on the scales. You may need to be more directive for service users in the **accepting help** stage, and those who are **stuck** in all or most areas won’t discuss the Star meaningfully. Encourage those people with low confidence to see their strengths, and others to be more realistic. Use your professional judgement if further discussion isn’t helpful.

**If you can’t reach agreement, record both readings on the Star**, labelling which is the worker’s view and which is the service user’s. Use the Star Notes to record points from your discussion.

**When you have completed all of the scales, join the points to create a shape.** If working on paper, encourage the service user to mark each scale point on the Star Chart and join them up. If working on the Star Online, complete each scale and when all scale points are entered a button will appear asking you to generate a completed Star.

**Use the completed Star as the basis for an action plan.** Look at the shape together and prompt the service user to comment on it as a basis for agreeing what to do next. Depending on the service user, their understanding, and the approach used within your service, potential questions are:

- 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 aspects of finding work?
- What does your Star tell you about areas where you may need more support?

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