



Youth Star™

The Outcomes Star for youth work

“ People really open up and sometimes it leads to whole new conversations

“ Service users really enjoyed the interaction – and there were statistical results!

“ I could feed back to my head office some really impressive results

as made the support plans more imaginative and more individual

“ The Outcomes Star is an invaluable tool for our sector

“ Support is more systematic and structured

e to
l, even
is
needed

“ We have incorporated it into assessment and three monthly reviews

“ It helps identify training needs for staff and volunteers

or

“ We can now assist clients better - we love the Star!

“ Some people can't understand written reports, but can understand this

“ The Star is collaborative, rather than something that is done to people

“ It enables a clear direction for collaborating with a client

olistic approach
direction to the
port

“ The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and in some cases life changing

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or 020 7272 8765

Developed by Sara Burns,
Joy MacKeith and Kate Graham
of Triangle Consulting
Social Enterprise

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Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Ltd
The Dock Hub
Wilbury Villas
Hove
BN3 6AH
United Kingdom

Authors

Sara Burns, Joy MacKeith and Kate Graham
Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Ltd
www.outcomesstar.org.uk

Designed and edited by Jellymould Creative
www.jellymouldcreative.com

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Please contact info@triangleconsulting.co.uk to enquire about buying a licence and training.

Licences are also available for those wishing to translate the document into other languages.

The Outcomes Star™

This Star is part of a family of Outcomes Star tools. Each tool includes a Star Chart, User Guide or Quiz and guidance on implementation and some have visual and other resources. For other versions of the Outcomes Star, good practice and further information see www.outcomesstar.org.uk.

Acknowledgements

Many people have contributed to the development of the Outcomes Star over its long evolution and we would like to thank all the clients, workers, managers, funders, academics and commissioners who have generously given their time and expertise.

The original commission for an outcome measurement system came from St Mungo's, with financial support from the London Housing Foundation, and Triangle recognises their vital roles in the development of the Outcomes Star. We would also like to acknowledge Kate Graham's important contribution to the development of the suite of Stars, both as a founding partner of Triangle and as co-author of the original Outcomes Star (now called the Outcomes Star for Homelessness).

We would particularly like to thank the following people and organisations for their contribution to this version of the Star:

- Groundwork UK for collaborating with us on the development of the Youth Star, without which it would not have been possible.
- The staff and young people in the following Groundwork trusts for their contribution to the development and for helping us pilot the Youth Star: Greater Nottingham, Hertfordshire, Lancashire West and Wigan, Leicester and Leicestershire, London, Manchester, Salford, Stockport, Tameside and Trafford, North East, Northamptonshire, Oldham and Rochdale, South West, Thames Valley, Wakefield and West Midlands.

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Introduction

Introduction to the Youth Star™

The Youth Star is a version of the Outcomes Star, a family of tools for supporting and measuring change when working with people.

The Star is an outcomes tool that enables organisations to measure and summarise change made by a range of people with different needs. It is also a coaching tool that can help people make changes by providing them with a clear picture of the journey to success, enabling them to take manageable steps and plot their progress along the way.

The original version of the Outcomes Star was developed for the homelessness sector and tailored versions are now available for a wide range of client groups including people with a mental health condition, people receiving support to find work, and vulnerable families. These can all be viewed and downloaded at www.outcomesstar.org.uk.

The Youth Star has been developed for young people in community-based youth work. It maps progress towards a future where they are actively engaged and contributing in ways that are meaningful to them and are positive. It is suitable for young people with a range of needs and starting points, including those identified as at risk of exclusion from education or involvement in criminal behaviour and those in need of additional support in the first steps towards employment. It covers six key areas:

1. Making a difference
2. Hopes and dreams
3. Well-being
4. Education and work
5. Communicating
6. Choices and behaviour.

For each of these core areas, there is a five-point scale that measures where someone is on their journey in that area. These five points are based on an underlying model of change: an understanding of the journey for young people in youth work projects. We call this model the Journey of Change:

Stage 1 – not interested

At the beginning of the journey, the person is **not interested**. They see no point in getting involved or making an effort. They probably don't believe that they could get anywhere or achieve something with their life and/or feel there are no opportunities for them locally. It may seem like the person is not open or willing to try but they can get to the next step by reducing their resistance and beginning to consider getting involved.

Stage 2 – considering

The next stage is when the person starts **considering** getting involved in some way; they sometimes think about getting involved or trying something new and may observe from the sidelines. They feel it is too hard; they don't know what to do; they lack confidence or are not sure it's for them, but there is an opening to encourage them to have a go.

Stage 3 – having a go

The next step is **having a go**. At this stage they will get involved and may have some confidence that they could achieve something if they tried. They tend to give up when things don't go well or feel difficult so their involvement may be erratic, or they may try several different things without sticking to them.

Stage 4 – working on it

Next they start **working on it**. Some things are going well and they are taking responsibility, but they don't always believe in a positive future for themselves or can't overcome problems, so they are not very resilient and may stop when things get difficult or need support to find a positive way forward.

Stage 5 – enjoying and achieving

The end point of the Journey of Change is when the person is **enjoying and achieving** in ways that move them forward in a positive direction for them and others. They are enthusiastic, resilient and make a contribution. This is not the end of their journey and they have the rest of their life ahead of them but they are on track and feel positive about their future. They may also encourage others.

It is a good tool to facilitate a useful discussion with young people.

Youth worker,
Groundwork
Trust

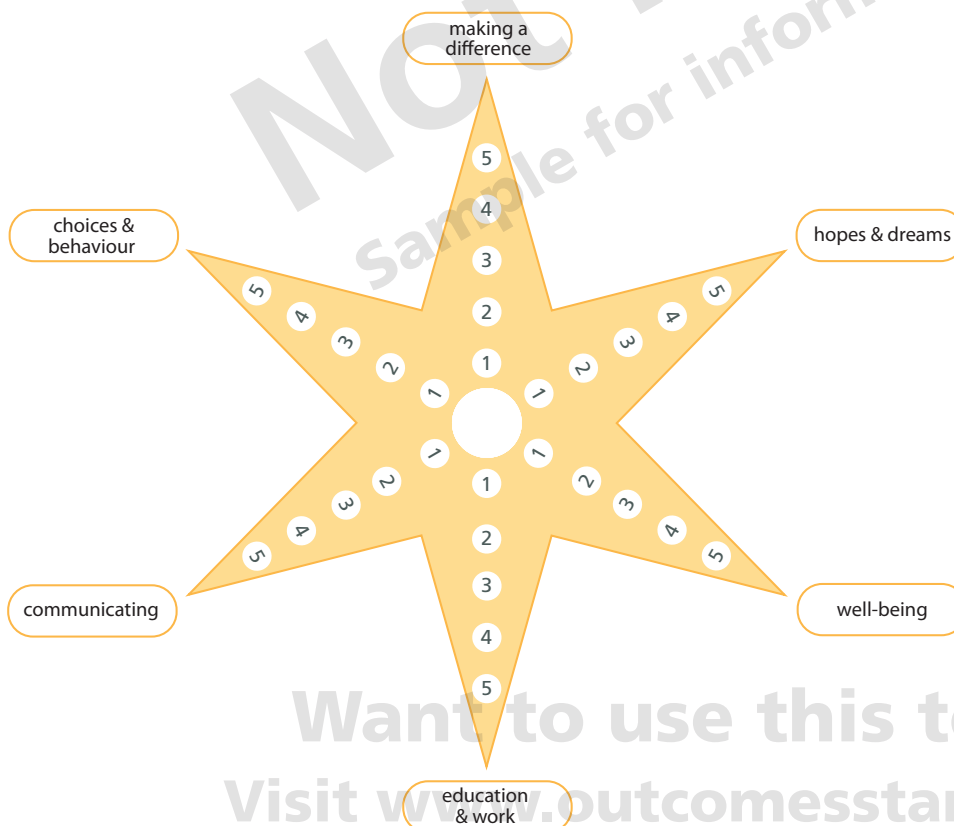


Figure 1: The Youth Star

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Youth Star™ resources

There is a range of resources available to help youth services and community projects use the Youth Star effectively.

Youth Star™ Chart and Action Plan

The Star Chart and Action Plan includes the Star Chart, on which the Star reading is marked, space for notes and a simple action plan for young people. It is completed with young people when using the Youth Star as a paper-based system. It also includes a summary, illustrated Journey of Change. This can be used to introduce the Journey of Change, particularly where young people have difficulty with or resistance to reading the Quiz.

Youth Star™ Quiz

The Youth Star Quiz provides concise, user-friendly scales in an accessible quiz format. The Quiz will usually be the main resource for young people choosing where they are on their journey. There are two versions of the Youth Star Quiz to choose between, a standard two-page A4 version and a more concise, folded version designed to fit easily in a pocket.

The Youth Star™ Online

This is an intuitive, online version of the Youth Star. It has a feature that allows users to complete the Star Chart with young people on screen. It incorporates the scales from the Quiz and guidance for workers and young people. Alternatively, the Star Online can be used in conjunction with paper versions of the Star. Workers and young people can complete the Star on paper and then input the reading on the Star Online later.

The Star Online web application is secure and provides a wide range of features allowing organisations to analyse and report on the outcomes data that workers and managers have added to the system and to compare their outcomes with averages for similar services and client groups. The Star Online is available to organisations using the Youth Star for an annual licence fee, based on the number of workers using the Star.

For more information, or to sign up to the Youth Star Online, go to www.staronline.org.uk.

This Organisation Guide

The remainder of the introduction to this guide presents the theoretical foundations and development process of the Youth Star. The following two parts are intended to support the implementation and use of the Youth Star. Part one is for those in a management role and provides guidance and good practice examples in implementing the Youth Star across a youth project. Part two presents guidance for youth leaders, hub workers, mentors and other relevant workers in using the Youth Star with young people.

Outcomes Star™ website

The Outcomes Star website – www.outcomesstar.org.uk – contains all versions of the Stars along with

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supporting information. Specific areas covered by the website include:

- How the Star was developed
- Research and validation material about the Star
- What people say about using the Star
- Good practice on implementation
- Use of Outcomes Star data for outcome measurement
- Use of the Star as a keywork tool
- Information for commissioners on using the Star.

Training

Training is extremely valuable before using the Youth Star. Triangle provides in-house training and runs a licensed trainer scheme for those wanting to cascade training within their service. For further details, see www.outcomesstar.org.uk or email training@triangleconsulting.co.uk.

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Sample for information only

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Theoretical foundations

Values and assumptions underpinning the Outcomes Star™

New approach

The approach underpinning the Outcomes Star family of tools is, we believe, an original approach to assessment and outcomes measurement. The Star approach can be described as Participatory Assessment and Measurement (PAM) because it draws on and extends Action Research and Participatory Action Research (PAR), both of which place empowerment, collaboration and integration at the core of research methods¹. In the same way, the Outcomes Star seeks to empower young people within a collaborative process of assessment and measurement that is integrated with support work, rather than a separate activity.

Empowerment

Underpinning the Outcomes Star is an understanding that, in order for change to take place in people's lives, services need to help young people to understand the motivation, beliefs and skills that are needed for them to create that change for themselves.

While practical changes in a person's circumstances, like a work experience placement, may be important, these things do not bring about lasting change. It is the change that takes place within the individual that is the key active ingredient in achieving a more permanent, self-sustained independence and happiness. This is why the primary focus in most versions of the Outcomes Star, including the Youth Star, is the relationship of the individual to the challenges that they face.

This contrasts with other assessment and outcomes measurement tools that focus on the severity of a defined problem, such as the number of units of alcohol consumed in the case of substance misuse, or on external circumstances, such as examination results or getting a job. The Outcomes Star approach assumes that these things are important and should be measured but that the picture they give on their own is limited.

Those using the Outcomes Star report that it provides a much more empowering context for their work where young people are able to be active participants in the process rather than having assessment done to them. Being involved in their own process of change – and in the validation of their experience and perceptions – is often critical to helping them make the changes they seek².

Collaboration

When using the Outcomes Star, the worker³ and young person assess the young person's needs together. Young people base their assessment on their knowledge and understanding of themselves and workers utilise their experience of working with other young people generally and their observations and reflections on this young person's behaviour in particular. The intention is that the assessment emerges through a dialogue

¹ O'Brien, R. (2001) "An Overview of the Methodological Approach of Action Research" in Roberto Richardson (ed.) *Theory and Practice of Action Research*, Joao Pessoa, Brazil: Universidade Federal da Paraiba (English version)

² Burns, S., MacKeith, J. and Graham, K. (2008) *Using the Outcomes Star: Impact and Good Practice*, London: Homeless Link

³ We use the term 'worker' in this document to refer to the adult using the Youth Star with a young person.

between young person and worker and this may include both the young person and worker shifting their views. Thus the Youth Star is neither a self-completion tool, to be used by the young person alone, nor a worker-only completion tool.

The Outcomes Star makes the model of change explicit and the information that is collected (the Star reading) is immediately presented back to the young person, in the form of a completed Star. This makes it possible for the young person and worker to take an overview together and to reflect on the completed Star as a basis for deciding what action to take.

This contrasts with extractive approaches to assessment and measurement in which the worker, in the role of expert, collects data from the young person and takes that data away to make an assessment on their own. The expert may then decide what course of action is most appropriate and try to persuade the young person that this is the best way forward for them.

Integration

The process of completing the Outcomes Star is an integral part of working with young people and it is intended to support as well as measure change. The process of completing the Star, engaging with the model of change and reflecting on the data as presented on the Star can result in a change of attitude within the young person in and of itself. It can have a similar impact on the staff working with the person. As a result, the assessment is a part of the intervention. In addition, discussions about where a young person is on the Outcomes Star scales and Journey of Change naturally leads to thinking about next steps and action planning. This is why it is recommended that the Outcomes Star is used as an integral part of coaching, mentoring or other support techniques.

This contrasts with traditional approaches in which the collection of data is seen as a separate process to the intervention and may be regarded as intrusive by workers and young people.

Values and assumptions underpinning the Youth Star™

The Youth Star is underpinned by the assumption that positive growth is both possible and a realistic goal for all and is designed to focus on people's potential not on problems.

How the Youth Star™ was developed

The Youth Star was developed in collaboration with Groundwork UK through their Positive Futures programme, which has a specific focus on working with young people in challenging situations and getting them involved in community projects.

Like other versions of the Outcomes Star, the methodology was based on Action Research⁴ and the Existential Phenomenological (PE) research method⁵. Action Research is a collaborative process of identifying issues, trying out solutions and assessing what works. This phenomenological method places a strong emphasis on understanding the subjective experience of the person being researched and the meaning of the experience for them.

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⁴ O'Brien, R. (2001) "An Overview of the Methodological Approach of Action Research" in Roberto Richardson (ed.) *Theory and Practice of Action Research*, Joao Pessoa, Brazil: Universidade Federal da Paraiba (English)

⁵ McCall, R. (1983), "Phenomenological Psychology", *Madison*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin

The Youth Star development process consisted of three main stages, and these are described below.

1) Data gathering

An initial one-day workshop was held in September 2011 with a working group comprising managers and workers from Groundwork trusts and staff from Groundwork UK.

The workshop explored the following key questions that are common to all versions of the Outcomes Star:

- What are the main areas in which the projects are seeking to create change? These areas become the points of the Star
- What is the desired end point of the change process? This becomes the end point on the model of change that underpins all the scales
- What model of change describes the steps that young people take on the journey towards that end point? This is described in a series of steps showing a clearly discernible, qualitative difference between each step of the journey.

A range of techniques were used to draw out participants' experience and knowledge including:

- Using the Outcomes Triangle tool to identify the overall aim of services, the specific changes they are trying to bring about and the activities the service carries out to achieve these changes
- Bringing to mind an individual young person who has undergone a substantial change and identifying the key areas of change for that person
- Structured questioning exercises to draw out the steps, one by one, in each outcome area. The focus with this session is on concreteness, drawing out information about the signs of change in detail.

2) Data analysis and the development of the draft Youth Star™

Triangle compiled all the material gathered at the workshop and reviewed it to allow meaning and common strands emerge. Material used within the participating projects was borne in mind, along with other versions of the Outcomes Star; however, the raw data was allowed to speak for itself rather than organised according to existing models or frameworks. On the basis of this material, a draft version of the Youth Star was developed.

3) Consultation and piloting

Through an iterative process of sharing, listening, refining and sharing again, the outcome areas, the Journey of Change and descriptions of the steps towards change in each outcome area were honed until they resonated with the young people, workers and managers participating in the development process. This process had four main steps:

- Workers and young people tested the pilot Youth Star during the first quarter of 2012, gathering feedback questionnaires and Star data for analysis by Triangle
- A second workshop in May 2012 where the results of the pilot were reviewed and participants shared

their experiences of using the Star with young people, and the value and meaning of the data generated

- Testing with Hub managers and workers in Oxfordshire early intervention services as a potential tool for their open access groups
- Further revisions were subsequently made to the Youth Star and the final stage involved editing and design to further ensure the tool is clear, accessible and user-friendly in advance of the first edition being published.

The pilot process and findings

The Youth Star was tested with young people in a wide range of settings, including environmental projects, sports projects and media work. Workers also tested it using a range of contexts and approaches, including working one to one with individual young people or introducing the Star during group sessions and facilitating young people to complete it in that context. In some projects, workers took young people aside individually during group activity sessions, with varied success. Overall the process of completing the Youth Star reportedly worked best in projects where the young people were relatively stable – rather than those with very chaotic lives – and workers had at least some opportunities to meet with them on a one-to-one basis for action planning or reviews.

The Youth Star was piloted with well over 150 young people, of which 135 completed two readings. Star data for these 135 young people was analysed by Triangle.

Most of the trusts piloting the Youth Star carried out two readings within the three-month pilot period. However, a small number of trusts asked young people to complete the Star twice in one session – once to take a snapshot of the current time and another reflecting on where they were on their journey when they first joined the project. For this reason, the time period over which change was recorded varies between the trusts involved and the outcomes should be viewed as indicative only.

Feedback on the pilot Youth Star suggested it covered all of the right areas but needed to be more concise. In response, the Quiz was substantially edited to ensure each descriptor was limited to one, brief sentence. An additional, further condensed version was developed that could fit easily into a pocket for use on the move. Trusts piloting the Star were also keen to have access to a mobile phone application (an app) or a mobile-enabled version of the Star Online web application, so that it could be used on a phone or mobile device.

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Highlights from the pilot

Of the 135 young people who completed two Youth Stars during the pilot period:

- 81 (60%) showed an increase in their overall Star reading, with 18 showing a substantial change (a shift of at least one point, on average, on a five-point scale)
- 48 (35%) showed no change in their overall reading and six showed a decrease
- The overall average increased from 2.8 to 3.6 during the pilot period
- The average start and review positions on the different scales varied between the six areas; the initial average readings ranged from 2.3 to 3.1. The average second readings were all between 3.4 and 3.8
- Within this, the greatest change was in Making a Difference and Communicating, with average increases of 1.2 and 0.8, respectively
- The least change was recorded in relation to Education and Work, with 53% of young people showing an improvement and an average increase of 0.6 on the scale.

Pilot feedback from workers and young people

Highlights from feedback on the Star™ from young people and workers

Analysis of the 34 feedback forms completed by young people showed that about half said they found the Star helpful:

- 50% said the Star helped them to see their strengths and to understand what needed to change
- 41% enjoyed completing the Star
- 35% said it helped them recognise what they needed to do next
- 71% thought the length of time it took to complete a Star was OK.

Feedback from 18 youth workers showed that:

- 72% said that completing the Youth Star helped them and the young person to have a useful discussion
- 61% said it helped them to get an overall picture of young people's strengths and needs
- 67% said that using the Star helped young people to see where they needed to focus and make progress
- 50% said that the Quiz helped them to understand where to focus their support to young people.

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Part 1: Implementing the Youth Star™

Implementing the Youth Star can affect an organisation's approach in a number of ways, for instance it can help:

- Create greater clarity about the aims of youth work generally and of the focus of different projects
- Increase understanding of the steps along the way to sustainable change and focus attention on the skills and attributes young people need, ensuring support is holistic and does not concentrate on a single area such as reduced anti-social behaviour or engaging young people in education, training or work
- Help young people understand that the project they are engaged with aims to enable them to make progress and to encourage them to set goals for themselves and take control of their own development
- Highlight the value of one-to-one time spent with young people discussing their strengths and needs and developing goals. It can also help identify the difficulty of finding one-to-one time with young people during group activities
- Demonstrate effectiveness and highlight the areas where improvement is needed and with which workers and managers need to engage.

Implementing the Star effectively, and achieving the full benefits of using it, takes time, attention, and a commitment to follow the process through and address issues as they arise. For these reasons, we strongly recommend that the implementation of the Youth Star is led from the top. Only in this way will the Star receive the profile and backing it requires for developments to be co-ordinated. We also recommend nominating a Star champion and possibly also setting up an implementation group to oversee the introduction of the Star.

The rest of this section covers a checklist of eight steps to introducing the Star. Many organisations find it helpful to have support with the implementation process. Triangle can help with specific aspects of this process and provide background support or mentoring to those leading the implementation. We also provide implementation packages that include Outcomes Star training and a licence to use the Star Online web application.

1 Review your reasons for introducing the Star™

Increasingly, youth work projects, like projects in other sectors, are under pressure to provide evidence externally of the difference they are making

I liked talking about everything and how I'd like to build up my Star from twos and threes to fives.

**Young person,
Groundwork trust**

It helped to get to know the young person better and getting a feel for their aspirations and feelings.

**Youth worker,
Groundwork trust**

The Star worked best when used by workers who were comfortable with a reflective approach.

**Manager,
Groundwork trust**

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to young people. The Star can help services capture and demonstrate achievements. However, it works best when there is also a focus on the benefits of the Star as a tool to support young people in making changes.

2 Check that the Star™ is suitable for you

The Youth Star is primarily designed to be used in one-to-one sessions, preferably by young people with a worker though it could be used within a peer-support context. It can be used in a group setting but it may not be the right tool for projects in which there is no one-to-one goal setting or planning.

The Community Star may be more suitable for community projects working with adults and the Shooting Star for young people in schools. Visit the Outcomes Star website to access these resources – www.outcomesstar.org.uk.

3 Try it out

It is quite likely that at least some workers will be concerned about or resistant to the introduction of the Youth Star, with valid concerns about finding the time or introducing an additional tool or measurement. This was certainly the case at the start of the Youth Star pilot, and research on the implementation of the Outcomes Star in 2008 found that there was resistance from workers within over half of the 25 organisations interviewed. However, in both the pilot and all the cases researched this was quickly overcome.

Encourage some workers to try the Star with a number of young people to test how it works in practice, explore practical issues and gather feedback from young people. This enables the service to address any problems before it is rolled out and, where it goes well, to demonstrate to others that it is a positive, helpful and usable tool. This is particularly effective if workers are given the freedom to test it in different ways with a range of young people and when there is time to allow young people and workers to experience the benefits.

4 Integrate the Star™ into your ways of working, paperwork and IT

The Star works best as an integral part of work with young people. It is up to individual services and projects to set a policy specifying:

- Which young people will use the Star – for instance all young people engaged in a particular activity or only those receiving individual support
- When young people should complete the Star

My advice is to see the implementation of the Outcomes Star as a change management process. It is vital to communicate to keyworkers how it will help them to do their job and that it will help the organisation as a whole to make its case to the outside world. It is also vital to integrate the Star fully into keywork processes and training.

**Manager at
St Mungo's**

Refers to the Outcomes Star for Homelessness

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- How it dovetails with other processes, avoiding duplication of other paperwork
- How the information will be recorded and summarised.

A pilot or trial period can help define a positive process. Following the pilot of the Youth Star, the participating projects decided to introduce the Star to all new participants that showed signs of engaging regularly. Most projects decided to review the Star with young people after three months – sometimes sooner for briefer interventions – though it is possible that a longer interval between reviews would capture greater change. The Star works best when it is completed at the times when young people are developing goals or action plans for themselves, where this is part of their engagement with a project.

If you operate paper-based files, it is advisable to keep a copy of each completed Star Chart and Star Notes on the young person's file. They may also want to have their own copy. The Star is not intended to increase the amount of paperwork that young people and workers need to complete. If the Star Action Plan is used, this should be instead of any existing action plans and projects should explore other ways in which the Youth Star might fully or partially replace existing paperwork.

Stars can be completed with young people on paper, using the Star Chart and Action Plan, or online, using the Star Online web application. Where laptops, iPads and other mobile devices are available, many young people will find the interactive experience of completing the Star online as engaging as using the paper version and some may find it more stimulating. A notable advantage of online completion is that the data is simultaneously captured, eliminating the need for data entry later, and providing immediate, up-to-date, service-wide reports for analysis. Visit www.staronline.org.uk to sign up for a free trial or contact info@triangleconsulting.co.uk about licensing to integrate the Youth Star with other IT systems.

5 Train staff to use the Star™

Although the Youth Star and Quiz are intuitive and straightforward to use, we strongly recommend that workers have training; the Star can require a different way of working with young people and training substantially increases consistency in the data. Effective use of the Star requires that those using it are skilled in working with young people. Introducing the Star may be an opportunity to review the training needs of your staff in this area and address any outstanding concerns. Email training@triangleconsulting.co.uk for details.

Workers were unsure at first but my approach was to give the Star to those workers likely to be most open and encourage them to just have a go with it in their own way. Almost immediately, positive feedback from those workers and their service users encouraged others to try it too.

**Manager,
Croftlands Trust**

Refers to the Outcomes Star for Homelessness

The best aspect is that young people reflect upon their progression in the different aspects.

**Youth Worker,
Groundwork trust**

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