



**Development Report**

# **Gambling Recovery Star™**

The Outcomes Star for people with gambling-related problems

**Published by**

Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Ltd  
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Edition 1.1 published February 2021

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**The Outcomes Star™**

This Star is part of a family of Outcomes Star tools. For other versions of the Outcomes Star, good practice and further information see [www.outcomesstar.org.uk](http://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 as a founding partner of Triangle.

We would like to thank Relationships Australia Queensland for collaborating with Triangle to develop of this version of the Star and the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General for their funding. Thanks too to Centacare North Queensland, Lifeline and UnitingCare Community for their help with the development.

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## Introduction

### The Outcomes Stars™ suite of tools

The Outcomes Stars are a suite of person-centred tools for supporting and measuring change when working with people. They are both keywork and outcomes tools, supporting effective interventions and giving management data on progress towards the end outcome. Because of this dual role, they bring together measurement and service delivery and can provide a shared language and framework across operations and data management for departments and between commissioners and service providers.

All versions of the Outcomes Star have five- or ten-point scales arranged in a star shape. Each point on each scale has detailed descriptors setting out attitudes, behaviour and sometimes skills or circumstances typical of that point on the scale. Underpinning these scales is a model of change (the Journey of Change) describing the steps towards the end goal that both the service and service user are trying to achieve.

The Outcomes Star suite of tools are different to other approaches to assessment and outcomes measurement<sup>1</sup>. They are designed to empower service users within a collaborative process of assessment and measurement that supports a positive conversation and is integrated with support work, rather than being a separate activity. The Star is closely aligned to person-centred, strengths-based, co-production and trauma-informed approaches and can support people and organisations to put those values into practice:

- **Person-centred:** The Star encourages and enables workers to listen to the perspective and priorities of service users and to work with them collaboratively. It helps engage service users to develop realistic action plans based on where they are on the Journey of Change
- **Strengths-based:** The Star is holistic and enables people to focus on aspects of life that are going well rather than have an assessment focused entirely on areas of difficulty. The

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<sup>1</sup> The Outcomes Stars share the core principles of Participatory Action Research (O'Brien, 2001; Carr & Kemmis, 1986) – empowerment, collaboration and integration – extending these beyond research into assessment and outcome measurement. Participatory Action Research seeks to empower the subjects of research, collaborate with them and integrate research into practical action to improve people's lives. The Outcomes Stars seek to empower service users within a collaborative process of assessment and measurement that is integrated with support work rather than being a separate activity.

scales focus on what service users can change, rather than the severity of their problems or circumstances

- Co-production: the collaborative approach to completion means that the service user and worker produce the assessment and measurement together and build a shared perspective as a basis for action. This is in contrast to expert assessment or self-report approaches in which the two perspectives remain separate
- Trauma informed: the collaborative nature of the Star helps to give the service user control, which has been shown to be important in building a sense of safety for people who have experienced trauma. The focus of the tool is primarily on how things are now, rather than past experiences that might trigger someone's trauma and put them outside their safe "window of tolerance". In addition, the guidance for use emphasises the importance of building of a trusting relationship and a shared perspective as an essential foundation to moving forward.

For a fuller description of the values and approach underpinning the Outcomes Stars suite of tools, see MacKeith (2011).

Background and further information about the Outcomes Stars suite of tools can be found at [www.outcomesstar.org.uk](http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk).

## The Gambling Recovery Star™

The Gambling Recovery Star is for use with people needing help to recover from harmful gambling.

The Gambling Recovery Star includes the following resources:

- The Gambling Recovery Star Chart, Notes and Action Plan
- The Gambling Recovery Star User Guide, with both brief visual scales and detailed scale descriptions
- A short Scales document
- An illustrated summary of the Journey of Change
- Guidance for Workers
- A web application for online completion and analysis at [www.staronline.org.uk](http://www.staronline.org.uk)

This Development Report provides a detailed description of the development process of the Gambling Recovery Star.

## Development process for the Gambling Recovery Star™

### Methodology

The methodology for developing all versions of the Outcomes Star is based on Action Research (O'Brien, 2001) and the Existential Phenomenological research method (McCall, 1983). 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 or people being researched and the meaning of the experience for them.

The development process comprises four main stages:

Stage 1: Exploring the scope and need for the tool

Stage 2: Creating the pilot version of the new Star in consultation with the working group

Stage 3: The pilot

Stage 4: Finalising the tool

Below we describe how this process was applied to create the Gambling Recovery Star.

### Stage 1. Exploring the scope and need for the tool

Relationships Australia Queensland approached Triangle to develop a new version of the Outcomes Star that would support their clients with gambling-related problems.

Triangle then carried out a scoping process, involving:

- An exploratory literature review
- Mapping the existing service landscape in the UK and Australia to identify the likely audience and usefulness of the proposed version
- Checking prior interest and enquiries from other services for a similar version.

As with any new version of the Star, this phase also included scoping the capacity for both Relationships Australia Queensland and Triangle to undertake the development within the budget and timescale needed. Based on this, Triangle's conclusion was to proceed with a version of the Star specifically for individuals experiencing gambling-related problems. The

Star would be designed to encourage best practice across the sector, ensuring the right level of support where and when service users needed it.

## **Stage 2: Creating the pilot version of the new Star in consultation with the expert working group**

An expert working group was formed to collaborate in the development of the new Star comprising managers and workers from Relationships Australia Queensland as well as several other Australian gambling support services (UnitingCare, Centacare North Queensland, Centacare Cairns and Lifeline Darling Downs and South West Queensland).

This expert group played a central role throughout the development process, providing in-depth knowledge of the issues faced by clients, the intended outcomes of service delivery and the process of change towards those outcomes. The working group's input was organised around three workshops. The first two contributed to the creation of the pilot version of the tool, and the third and final workshop reviewed the results of the pilot and contributed to refining the tool to create a final version (see Stage 4).

**Workshop 1** (January 2020): A one-day workshop was held in Brisbane, Australia to identify intended outcomes and processes of change in work supporting clients with gambling-related problems. The workshop included a series of focus groups to provide insight about their experiences and the positive outcomes they aim to enable clients to achieve.

The key questions explored in Workshop 1 were:

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

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

- Using the "outcome triangle" tool to identify the overall aim of services, the specific outcomes they are trying to achieve and the activities they carry out to achieve these changes

- Bringing to mind an individual who has undergone a substantial change and identifying the key steps in their process of change
- Hearing feedback about suggested outcome areas and discussing how they would work in different situations and with different clients.

Triangle compiled all the material gathered from the working group at Workshop 1 and reviewed it to allow meaning and common strands to emerge. On the basis of this combined with the literature review carried out in Stage 1, a provisional model of change and outcome areas for the Gambling Recovery Star were developed. These were then used as an outline or “skeleton”, from which the first draft of the Gambling Recovery Star was created.

Once the first draft was completed there was an iterative process of sharing, listening, refining and sharing again to hone the outcome areas, Journey of Change and descriptions of the steps towards change in each outcome area until they resonated with the client group and workers participating in the development process. The process included checking that the first draft took into account key themes that emerged from the literature review, and a second workshop with the expert working group.

**Workshop 2** (February 2020): A one-day workshop was held to present the first draft of the Gambling Recovery Star to the expert working group and to hear feedback to inform the pilot version of the Star. This workshop was held twice in the same week, in Brisbane and Townsville, to better enable members of the working group from northern Queensland to participate. On the basis of this feedback and the other activities listed above, the early draft was refined to create a pilot version of the Gambling Recovery Star with the Journey of Change and outcome areas listed below:

The pilot Gambling Recovery Star <b>Journey of Change</b>	5. Self-reliance 4. Learning what works 3. Taking responsibility and trying 2. Accepting help 1. Stuck
The pilot Gambling Recovery Star <b>Outcome Areas</b>	1. Gambling 2. Family and close relationships 3. Community and connection 4. How you use your time 5. Looking after your money 6. Healthy habits 7. Emotional and mental health 8. Your sense of identity



## Stage 3: The pilot

Unique Outcomes (Outcomes Star providers in Australia) trained 26 workers from Relationships Australia Queensland and several other Australian gambling support services (including those run in Queensland by UnitingCare, Centacare and Lifeline) to use the Gambling Recovery Star in March 2020. These workers then piloted the Star with 102 of their clients over an eight-month pilot period. Of these, 92 were reviewed once, so had two Star readings.

Clients and workers were asked to complete brief feedback forms on their experience of using the Star and to submit the Star data to Triangle for analysis of the psychometric properties of the pilot Star.

### Summary of analysis of client feedback forms

Triangle received 50 completed questionnaires from clients who had used the Gambling Recovery Star during the pilot period, of which 94% said that the Gambling Recovery Star provided: a) a good summary of their life and b) highlighted their support needs. Amongst those who had completed review Stars, 96% reported that they found it encouraging to see the progress they had made between Star readings.

### Summary of analysis of worker feedback forms

Triangle received 14 feedback forms from workers completing the Star with clients. Of these respondents, all but one (93%) said that using the Star helped them to get a better overall picture of a) clients' situations and b) their support needs. All respondents felt that the Gambling Recovery Star helped open up better conversations, and 86% found it easy to see where clients were on the Journey of Change.

### Psychometric analyses of the pilot Star data

Analyses of the Star data from the 102 initial Star readings and 92 second Star readings showed the following:

*Distribution:* There was some skew across the Journey of Change, which is often the case with ordinal data. Skew on first readings was towards the bottom of the Journey of Change, so did not restrict responsiveness, and second readings were moderately skewed towards the top – so overall the 1-10 scale was well used.

*Internal consistency:* Cronbach's alpha was .94 – well above the threshold of .70, suggesting good internal consistency.

*Responsiveness:* Effect sizes were large ( $r > .5$ ) and change was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ) for all outcome areas, indicating good responsiveness to change. At least 70% of clients moved forward in each outcome area.

See the Appendix for more detail on client and worker feedback and the findings from the Star data.

Further research into the psychometric properties of the final published version of the Gambling Recovery Star was initiated following publication. For the latest information on this, please contact [info@triangleconsulting.co.uk](mailto:info@triangleconsulting.co.uk).

## **Stage 4: Finalising the new Star**

After the end of the pilot on 31 October 2020, Workshop 3 was held to draw together the learning from the pilot.

**Workshop 3 (1-2 December 2020):** The third and final meeting of the expert working group (held on Zoom) gathered in-depth feedback on the process of using the tool from a wide range of people in different contexts. It also focused on the detail of the tool itself – the areas covered, Journey of Change, scale descriptions and range of materials.

The working group was asked some specific questions about the Gambling Recovery Star and the responses are briefly summarised below.

*What did you think of the pilot Gambling Recovery Star?*

Of the 15 attendees who had used the Star during the pilot, 13 were very happy with it and 2 had a mixed response.

*What worked in the pilot Gambling Recovery Star?*

Overall, it was felt that the Star was well designed, and the feedback was very positive. Professionals reported that it was a flexible and helpful tool that highlighted where support was needed, including areas that could otherwise have been missed. It facilitated in-depth discussions with clients and had a positive impact on clients. Professionals appreciated the emphasis on identifying the path towards self-reliance.

It was also reported that clients found completing the Star empowering and interesting. Comments included:

“Clients want to keep a copy – they found it really fascinating how it captured their life”

“It’s a gentler way of working – it’s not us being voyeuristic, it’s helping them remind us of all the aspects of their lives that are affected”

“It had a positive impact on our clients. A validating experience for them”

“A really agile tool – you can use it differently with clients as needed”.

#### *What didn’t work in the pilot Gambling Recovery Star?*

There were some concerns about duplication when using the Gambling Recovery Star in combination with current ways of working mandated by funders and a preference for just using the Star. There was also a feeling that each outcome area was too gambling-specific and the bidirectional nature of gambling problems and other issues needed to be recognised:

“We talk about healing being a holistic process, when to the Star it’s all about gambling. People say ‘I’m more than my gambling’”.

#### **Changes made to finalise the Star based on learning from the pilot**

On the basis of the worker and client questionnaires, psychometric analyses and Workshop 3 feedback, a number of changes were made to the pilot version of the Gambling Recovery Star to create the final version. The main changes are summarised below:

##### *Journey of Change*

- One of the Journey of Change stage names (points 5-6) was changed: **taking responsibility and trying** changed to **believing and trying**, to avoid any implicit criticism of people not taking responsibility earlier in the scale.

##### *Outcome areas*

- Overall, gambling was given less emphasis at the higher end of the scales and references to gambling were reduced throughout.
- References to unhelpful beliefs in the “Gambling” area were moved to the “Money” area, on the grounds that these tended to be about gambling as a way to make or replace money. References to impulses to gamble were moved into the “Gambling” area.
- “Family and close relationships” was further focused on healthy supportive relationships that support people in their recovery. There was more emphasis on the

bidirectional links between close relationships and gambling – while gambling can cause problems in relationships, relationship problems can also trigger or worsen harmful gambling.

- “How you use your time” was more specifically focused to avoid potential overlap with other areas, including the removal of references to “stressful work”
- “How you use your time” was more specifically focused to avoid potential overlap with other areas, including the removal of references to work (“stressful work”)
- “Looking after your money” was renamed “Money”. This area now includes holding unhelpful or unrealistic beliefs about money (previously in the “Gambling” area).
- “Healthy habits” was renamed “Physical health” to clarify the difference between this and the scale about emotional and mental health. There is greater emphasis on drugs and alcohol. Impulsiveness and risk-taking were removed to make the scale more specifically about physical health and well-being.
- The “Emotional and mental health” scale was renamed “Emotional well-being”. It now includes managing strong feelings and self-regulation.
- There were overall wording changes throughout (for example, changing “engage with help” to “accept help”), and some further tightening or clarification. Some phrases were rewritten to ensure that people did not interpret them as potentially blaming or shaming clients.

The finalised Gambling  
Recovery Star  
**Journey of Change**

5. Self-reliance
4. Learning what works
3. Believing and trying
2. Accepting help
1. Stuck

The finalised Gambling  
Recovery Star  
**Outcome Areas**

1. Gambling
2. Family and close relationships
3. Connection and community
4. How you use your time
5. Money
6. Physical health
7. Emotional well-being
8. Your sense of identity

## **Completion**

Once these changes had been made, the draft final version of the Star went through final checks:

1. The expert working group was invited to review and comment on the final draft
2. It was reviewed again by Triangle to ensure clarity of descriptions and distinctions between each stage of each scale
3. It was edited and proofed before being typeset

The Gambling Recovery Star was completed and made available to the collaborator in February 2021 and published on the Star Online in March 2021.

## References

Carr, W. and Kemmis, S. (1986) *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action research*. London: Falmer Press.

MacKeith, J. (2011) The development of the Outcomes Star: A participatory approach to assessment and outcome measurement. *Housing, Care and Support*, 14(3), 98-106.

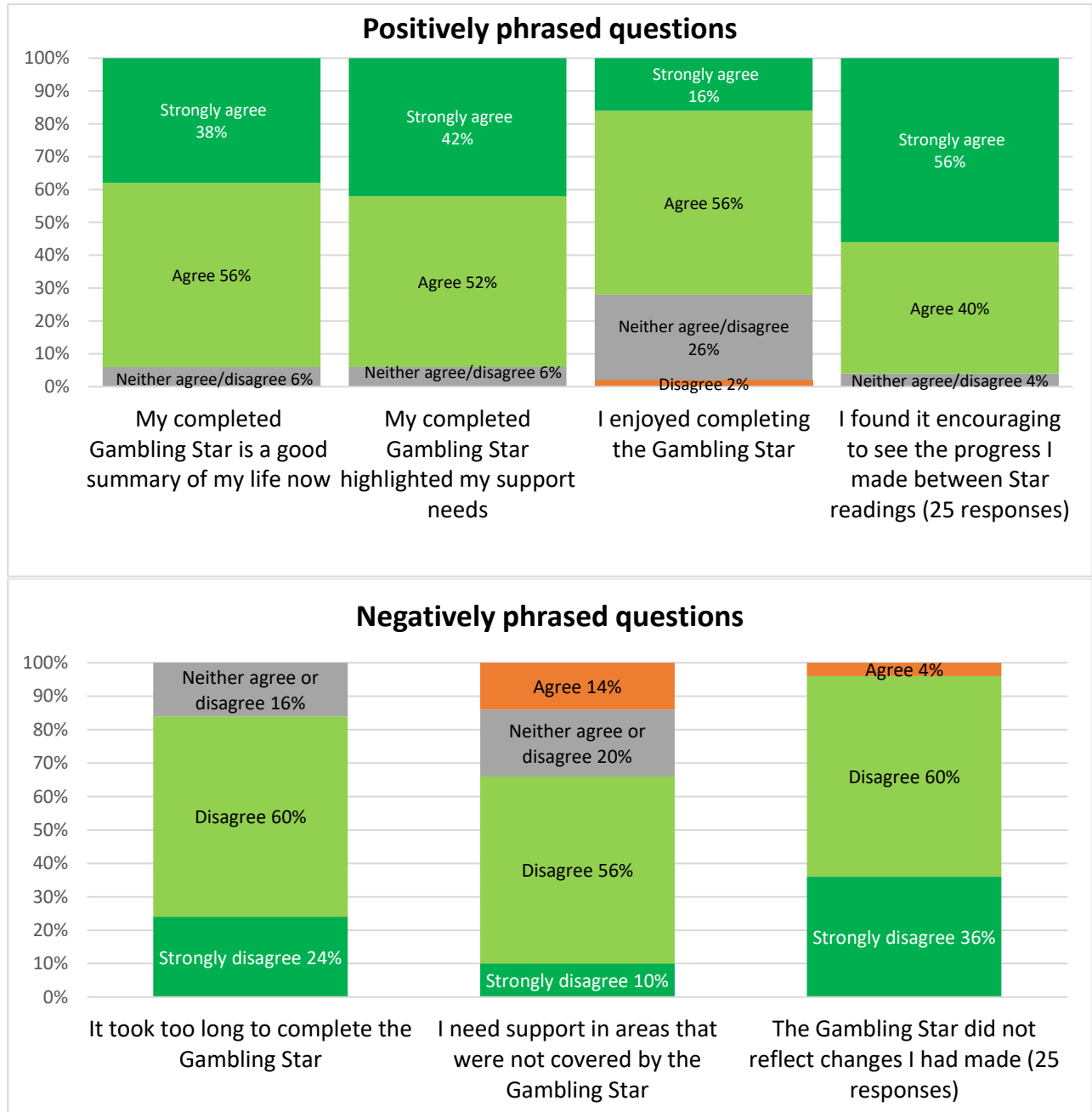
McCall, R. (1983) *Phenomenological Psychology*, Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press.

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).

## Appendix

### Worker and client feedback following the Gambling Recovery Star™ pilot

#### Feedback from 50 clients



## Open-ended responses

The positive feedback centred around how useful the Gambling Recovery Star as a tool for reflection on the current situation in different life areas as well as the progress that had been made. For example:

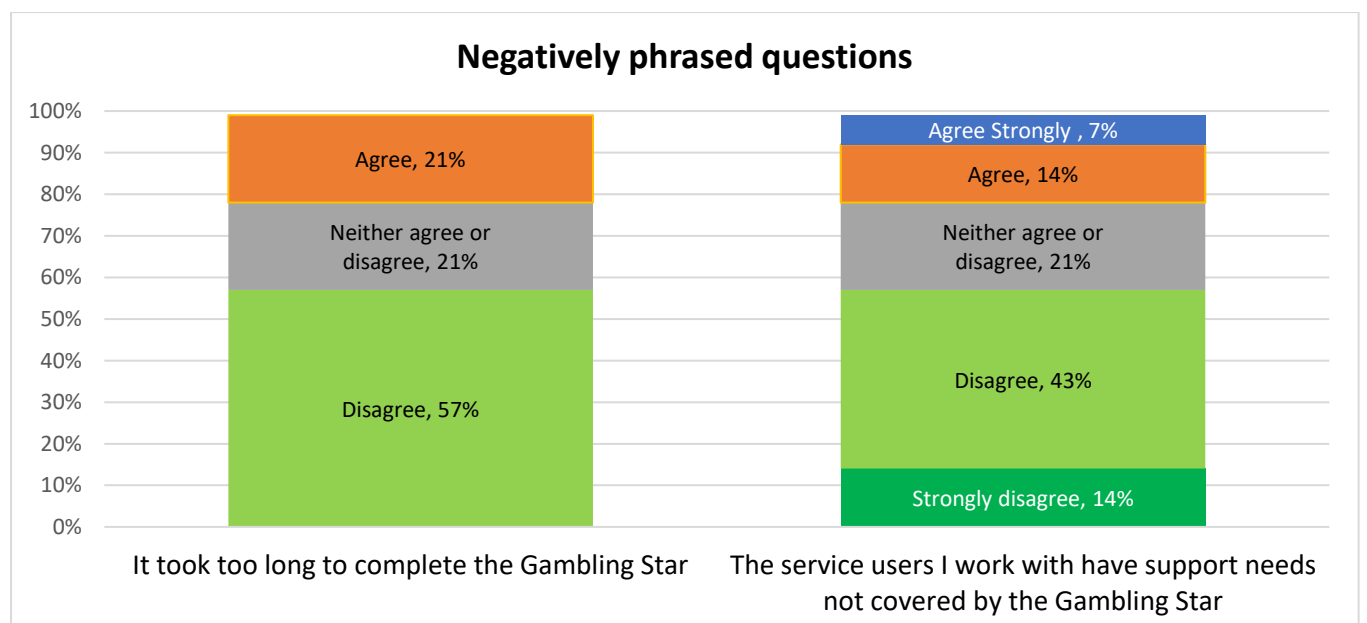
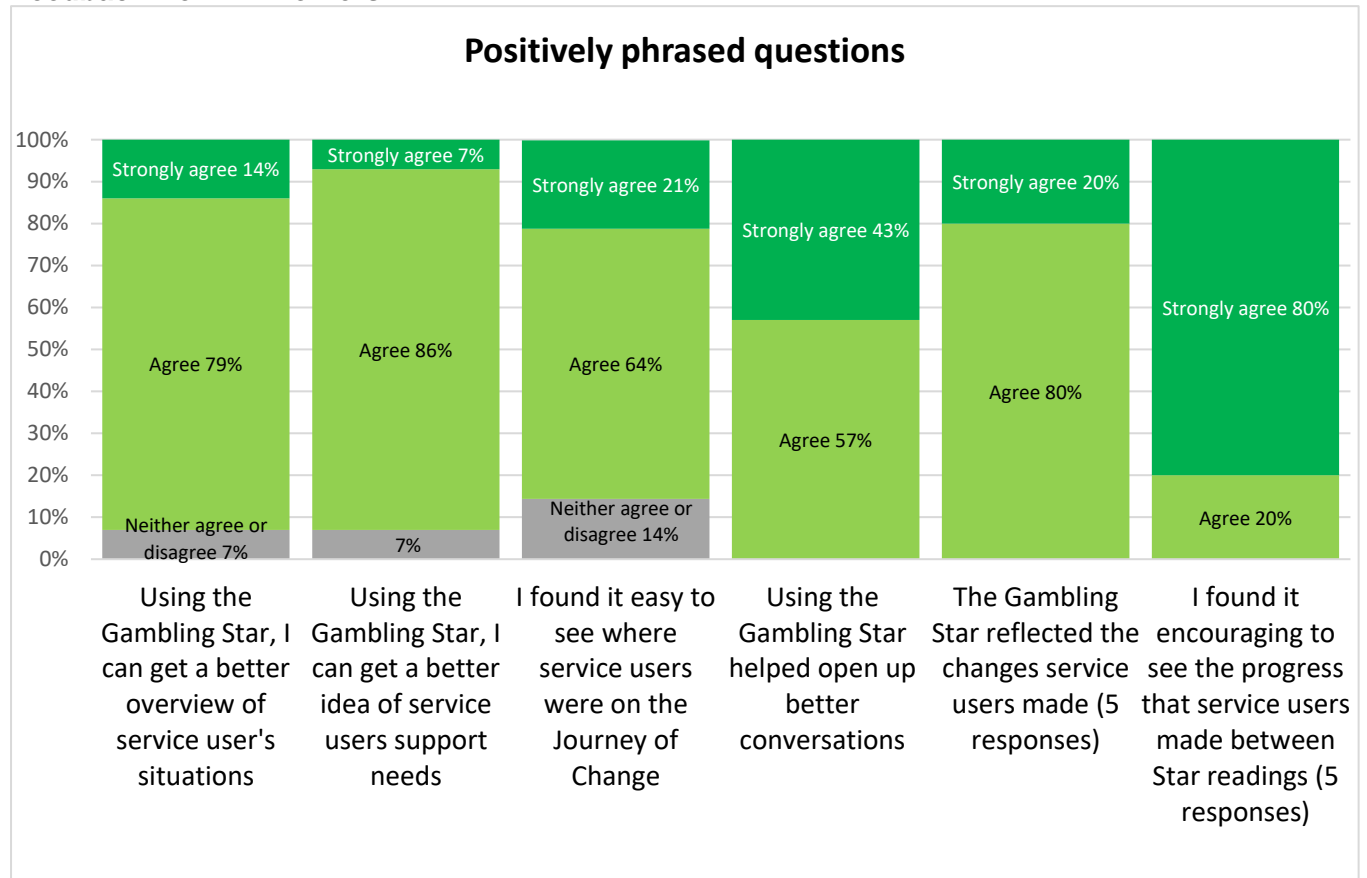
- “I am glad to be using the Gambling Recovery Star as it gives me a glimpse of where I am in my recovery journey and what I need to work on to live a more balanced and meaningful life”
- “The Gambling Recovery Star is a useful tool for self-reflective purposes and as an incentive for further change in addiction and self-concept”
- “It was a positive process to see how far I've come and how much I have learnt/improved during my time in counselling”.

Two clients felt it was too focused on gambling:

- “It was a good tool but a bit focused on gambling. I'm sure my recovery is about more than gambling”
- “Too much about gambling. Gambling is my coping mechanism. The underlying health problems are the cause”.



## Feedback from 14 workers



## Open-ended responses

There were many positive comments about the relevance of the outcome areas and that the Gambling Recovery Star provided a good reflection of where clients were and where they had improved. For example:

- “Very client focused and relevant for clients”
- “Provides clear and measurable feedback for the client that serves as motivational material to support their journey”
- “Was a good reflection of where a client is at”.

Workers also commented on the clarity and ease of use of the Gambling Recovery Star. For example:

- “Different domains were easy to explain and work through the scales”
- “The wording was client friendly. The wording of each number helped with discussion of where each service user sits on the Star items”

There were some comments about the need to emphasise that gambling can be a result of problems in other areas as well as the cause:

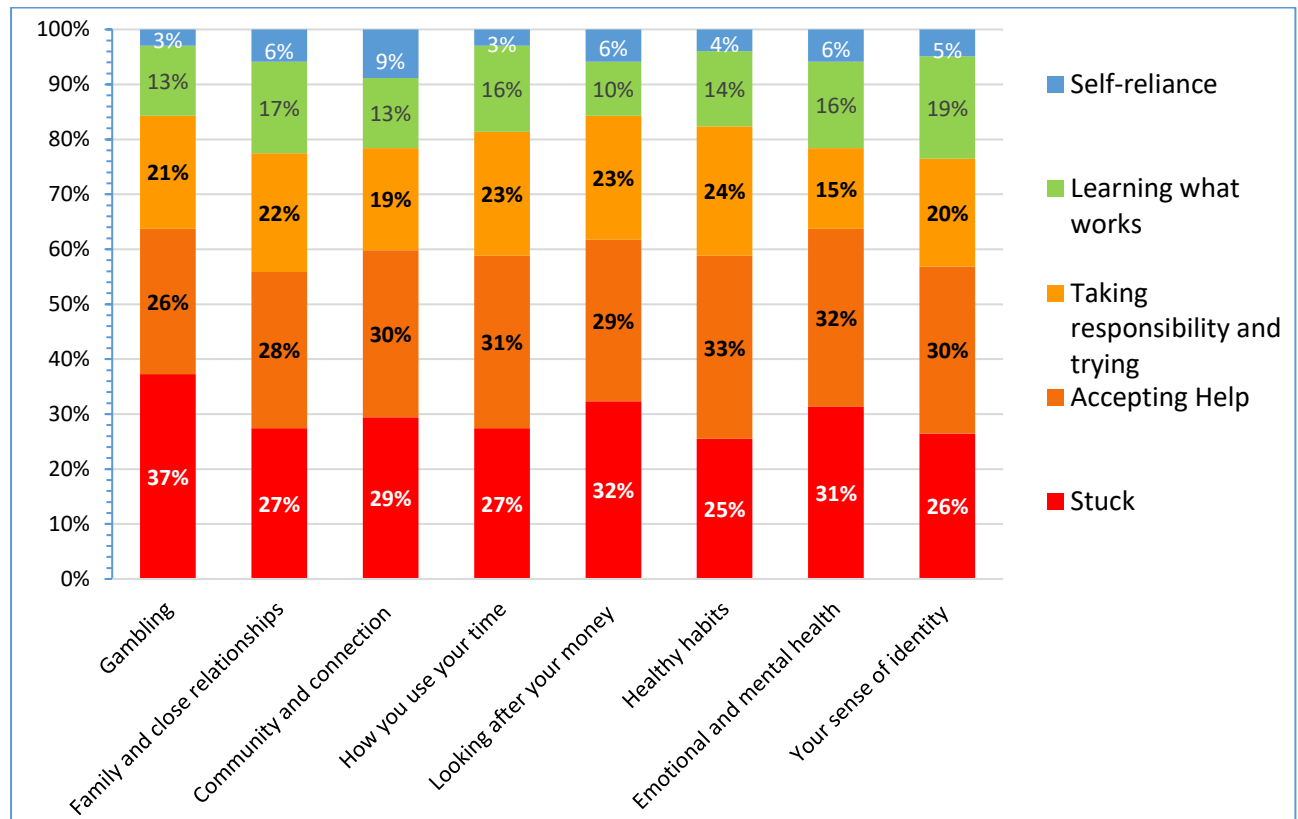
- “Gambling of course does impact the outcome areas, however dysfunction in these outcome areas may also be the reason clients may try and regulate and do so in an unhealthy way by using gambling to self soothe”.

Some points were raised about specific outcome areas. For example:

- “The “Family and close relationships” area insinuates that the service user is responsible for the relationship breakdown. Also only addresses relationship issues linked to gambling. Often clients gamble due to relationship breakdown”
- “The “Looking after your money” area makes gambling about money when really, it’s a mental health issue. Also, it insinuates that people who gamble are irresponsible because they don’t look after their money when that’s not usually the case, many of our clients are particularly frugal”.

## Details of the psychometric analyses of the pilot Gambling Recovery Star™

The distribution of initial Star readings across the Journey of Change stages during the pilot of the Gambling Recovery Star™



	Skewness statistic	Result
Gambling	.68	Moderately skewed
Family and close relationships	.46	Normal
Community and connection	.62	Moderately skewed
How you use your time	.58	Moderately skewed
Looking after your money	.68	Moderately skewed
Healthy habits	.57	Moderately skewed
Emotional and mental health	.62	Moderately skewed
Your sense of identity	.33	Normal

### Factor structure and internal consistency

A unidimensional factor structure was advised, with one factor explaining a large proportion of the variance (85%).

Cronbach's alpha was .94 – well above the threshold of .70, suggesting good internal consistency.

### Responsiveness

	First Star median	Final Star median	Z***	Effect size $r^1$	size
Gambling	3.0	7.0	-7.72	0.56	large
Family and close relationships	4.0	7.0	-7.48	0.55	large
Community and connection	4.0	7.0	-7.44	0.54	large
How you use your time	4.0	7.5	-7.74	0.56	large
Looking after your money	3.0	7.0	-7.60	0.55	large
Healthy habits	4.0	7.0	-7.64	0.56	large
Emotional and mental health	3.0	7.0	-7.67	0.56	large
Your sense of identity	4.0	7.0	-7.48	0.55	large

\*\*\*All were statistically significant ( $p < .001$ )

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