

HOW TO...

Use the Star in a trauma-informed approach

Information and guidance for practitioners: the Outcomes Stars can effectively support work with people who have experienced trauma and is designed for use in trauma-informed approaches. This document summarises some of the ways in which the Stars do this, in terms of the tools themselves and our guidance and training for good use of the Star with service users. The final section summarises our plans for further development in this area.

The Star tools

The Star is designed to support you in having better conversation with the people accessing your service. It helps keep these conversations trauma-informed by:

- **Focusing on now rather than someone's history.**

Completing the Star is a conversation about someone's life, how things are for them and what they are doing now, not why things may be the way they are or about their past experience with abuse, crime, drugs or other trauma. Many clients will have repeated their history many times and may find talking about past traumatic experiences unhelpful or even re-traumatising

- **Being strengths based and using positive language.**

Focussing on the steps they are taking helps avoid deficit-based language and thinking. The scale descriptions focus on the process of change not on the severity of problems, so we don't disempower clients by focusing on how bad things might be in some areas

- **Providing perspective through an easy to grasp, visual representation.**

People who are impacted by trauma may have a different 'window of tolerance' for engaging with more complex constructs or too many words. The Star chart provides a quick and accessible way of visualising life.



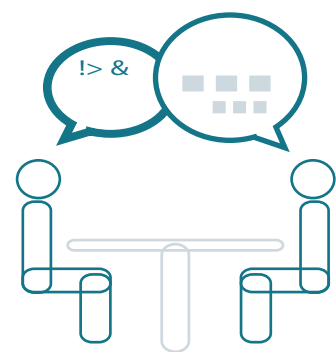
The Star supports you in having better conversations

The Journey of Change:

- **Acknowledges important steps at stages 1-2;** particularly for people who have experienced trauma, the shift from not feeling able to trust anyone to accepting help from someone is big and highly significant, not least because it opens the possibility of real change. This shift is integral to the early steps on the Journey of Change, highlighting the importance of a shift that might otherwise not be recognised
- **Acknowledges that it is a positive step to accept help** and also okay to need others to take the lead for you at certain stages in your recovery. This is integral to the 'accepting help' stage
- **The 'stuck' stage acknowledges where trauma might leave someone,** including not being able to trust support. The detailed wording at this stage acknowledges the reasons why somebody might not be ready to accept support, including in some versions the fact that the support on offer may not be right for them. In general, the language simply describes what is happening rather than implying any blame on the service user or worker for why things are stuck at that stage
- **The Journey of Change helps people make sense of where they are** and where they could be; many service users find it helpful to see those early steps on the Journey of Change described, to make sense of why it feels so difficult to progress, and also to see what the next steps look like and to understand that they may go back and forth

The Star areas:

- **Take a holistic approach** and cover all key areas of a person's life. This is likely to include areas in which things are not stuck, they are already doing well or have never had problems. This helps them to get a more rounded view. Some clients may be very used to conversations purely focusing on their problems or 'needs', and find it empowering and enabling to see where they are doing well, that they are not defined by their problems
- **It highlights common themes** across areas and can enable people to see how what they are doing in one area of their life can impact on other aspects, helping them to prioritise the changes they want to make
- **Purpose, meaning and relationships** are covered in different ways in all versions of the Star and are important areas to include for people who have experienced trauma.



The Star helps people provide support which is collaborative, outcomes-focused, person-centred, trauma-informed and strengths based.

Guidance and training on good Star use

- **Relationship-based and collaborative;** the process of discussing and completing the Star includes lots of reflecting back and checking with the person, to support building a trusting and positive relationship
- **Flexibility in the Star guidance** about when and how the Star is completed can support workers to be responsive to service users' 'window of tolerance' and to choose when to complete it or whether to delay it until another time – although the extent to which they can delay may depend on their organisation's internal processes and time-frames
- **Using the Star as the 'third person'** in your conversations with a service user can help you address more challenging topics, within the Star's framework of Outcome Areas
- The option to not agree and to record 'worker only' and 'service user only' Star readings allows workers to **affirm the perspective of the service user** without having to agree with them
- Action planning reflects where people are now; Linking interventions to the journey of change **helps workers identify interventions that are trauma-informed**, taking account of somebody's capacity to drive change themselves and identifying the appropriate type of support
- **It's practical and enabling;** used well, the Stars can support someone to gradually change their habits through small steps, which can be very enabling. The focus is on current shifts in attitudes and behaviours, not on the achievement of potentially distant goals
- **The Star bears witness to someone's journey** by recording the different shifts they are achieving and showing their progress from one Star reading to another
- **It is motivating for the worker** when they can see service users develop their internal resources, reducing the risk of secondary trauma.

Further plans to ensure the Stars are trauma-informed

- **Our Star Development team** have engaged with experts on trauma informed approaches and with organisations using the Star to understand the detail of language that is enabling and appropriate. This is leading to a plan to develop the language in older versions of the Star, particularly around the earlier stages of the journey of change. New additions will then be published
- **Our training and implementation teams** have received training in trauma informed approaches, and are exploring additional ways to bring this learning even more into the Star training and support with implementation, including how services and workers can ensure a positive environment in which to complete the Star and use it as a helpful basis for action planning and support.

We are keen to hear from people using or considering the Star within trauma informed approaches and to keep learning how we can ensure that the Stars are as relevant and helpful as possible.

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Triangle

The social enterprise behind the Star

Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise is an innovative, mission-led organisation that exists to help people reach their highest potential and live meaningful and fulfilling lives, often in the context of social disadvantage, trauma, disability or illness.

We do this by creating and supporting the Outcomes Star and other tools to unlock the potential of both individuals and the workers and organisations who support them. We believe that by balancing clear thinking, human connection and action – using the head, heart and hands – we can make a real difference in the world.

Find out more

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If you are not in the UK, contact the licensed Outcomes Star service provider in your country. Contact details can be found on the Outcomes Star website.

