

HOW TO...

Research into or use the Star in a study

The following notes are intended to provide guidance for researchers carrying out studies relating to the Outcomes Star. Researchers should also look at the Organisation Guide or Development Report for the relevant Star and also review the extensive material on the Outcomes Star website. For up-to-date information or in-depth discussion, please contact Triangle.

1) The Star is a suite of tools comprising different versions tailored to the needs of different client groups.

Some versions have different models of change and measure the journey towards different end outcomes. For example, the Recovery Star, Homelessness Star and Alcohol Star measure a journey towards self-reliance, whilst the Life Star and Older Person's Star measure a journey towards the maximisation of independence and well-being. The tools are intended to both support key-work and also provide outcomes data.

2) The Organisation Guide or Development Report for each Star contains information about the development process.

Each Star is developed through an iterative process of drafting and refinement alongside service users, workers and experts in the relevant field. For more information on the theoretical foundations of the collaborative approach please see MacKeith (2011).

3) The Star tools are collaborative measures with features designed to reduce subjectivity.

The scoring is intended to be arrived at through a collaborative process of discussion between workers and service users. Subjectivity may be lower than traditional self-report or worker rated Likert scales since the Star readings are informed by both the worker and service user and because they are guided by the scale descriptors for each point on the 5- or 10-point scale.



Each Star is a collaborative, evidence-based tool which is co-written for sector-specific outcomes with users, workers and organisations

4) The data collected through the Star is ordinal.

The scales measure the service users' movement from one stage in addressing the issues to a subsequent stage. Although each stage has a number attached this is not intended to imply that the data is continuous and that there is an equal distance between stages. For this reason, statistical tests that are applied to the data should be appropriate to non-parametric data (for example Spearman's rather than Pearson's Correlation Coefficient).

5) The Outcomes Star is a reliable and valid outcomes measurement tool.

A number of peer-reviewed articles have been published demonstrating the psychometric properties of the Star (see the research library on the Outcomes Star website). One of these articles documents an approach for testing the inter-rater reliability of the Star and demonstrates that it can be applied reliably by workers (MacKeith, 2014). In addition, our Research Analyst, Dr Anna Good, has analysed the psychometric properties of most variants of the Star and produced 'psychometric factsheets', which are also available on the Outcomes Star website:

www.outcomesstar.org.uk. We expect to have a Family Star Plus validation paper published in a peer reviewed journal shortly.

6) The Outcomes Star can be used to evidence change in service evaluations.

A key part of the Outcomes Star is that it can be used to demonstrate change and examine differences in change across outcome areas during engagement with a service. When using the Star for this purpose we recommend excluding those who cannot (and do not need to) move forward in a particular outcome area because they begin at the highest point on the Journey of Change. If statistical tests such as the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test are used to assess this change, effect sizes should be reported as these are not contaminated by sample size.

7) The Star can be used as a measure in academic research, but care should be taken with the methodology.

The 'mere measurement' effect, whereby completing measures affects participants' attitudes, intentions etc. is well documented and whenever pre-intervention measures are used, there is a risk that simply completing these measures will influence outcomes directly or through effects on the intervention. These issues may need particular attention in research using the Outcomes Star as it is designed to be a keywork tool, which increases awareness and informs action planning/ intervention content. This means that a) completing pre-intervention Stars is likely to shape the intervention provided and b) that Stars completed by those in the control

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condition may minimise differences between experimental and control conditions. For these reasons, when the Star is used as an outcome measure in experimental research, we recommend that the Solomon 4-group design is used when possible:¹

Fig 2: Solomon Four Group Design

Groups A and B constitute the normal pre-post experimental design. The 4-group design also enables the following things to be checked:

1. Whether completing an initial Star influenced final scores:

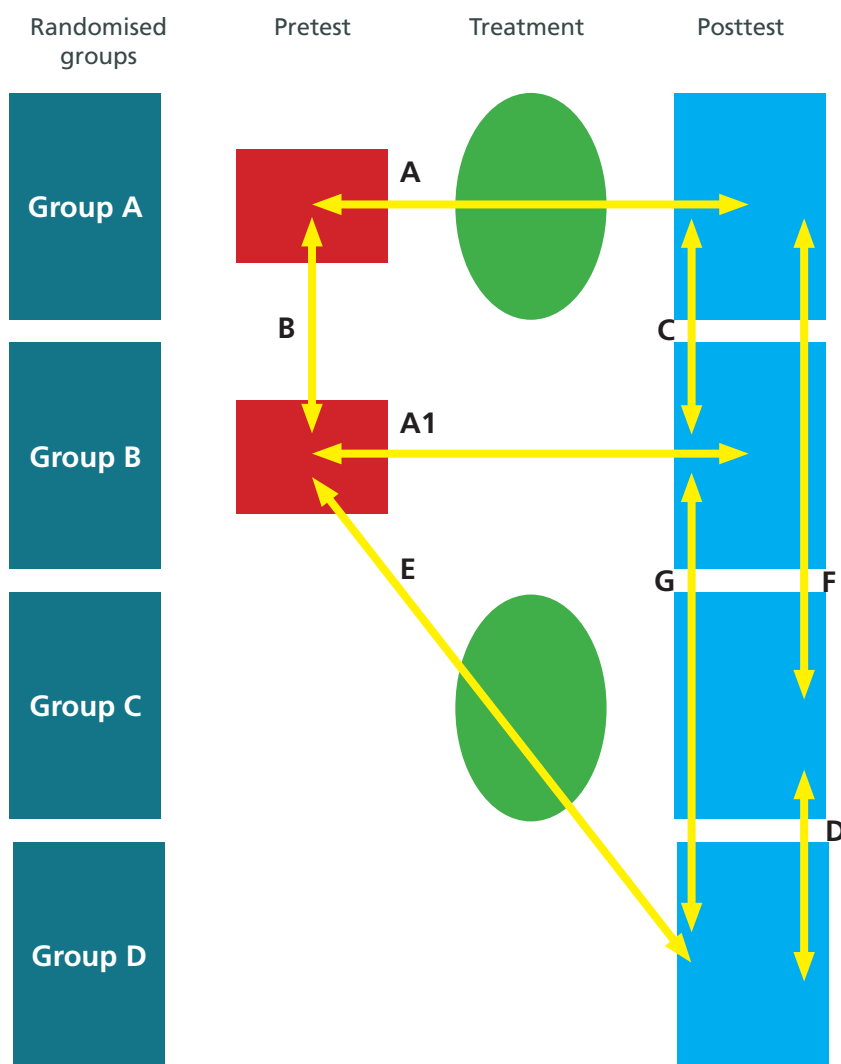
Compare the difference between experimental and control final scores when there is/isn't a first Star (lines C & D)

2. Whether completing an initial Star influenced final scores by affecting the intervention:

Compare final scores for group A (intervention, first Star) and group C (intervention, no first Star) – line F

3. Whether completing an initial Star influenced final Star scores directly:

Compare final scores for group B (no intervention, first Star) and group D (no intervention, no first Star)



¹ Researchers may also want to consider using the Regression discontinuity design, whereby initial Star scores would be used to assign individuals to the intervention or control condition.

References

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.

Mackeith, J. (2014). Assessing the reliability of the Outcomes Star in research and practice. *Housing, Care and Support*, 17(4), 188-197.

Next steps

If you would like to discuss any of the suggestions set out in the document or if you would like to get more support from Triangle with using the Outcomes Star, please get in touch with us by either contacting the implementation lead supporting your organisation or contact Triangle through our website: www.outcomesstar.org.uk or emailing, info@triangleconsulting.co.uk or calling us 0207 272 8765.



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.



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