

Development of the Home Star™

Introduction

In April 2022, Triangle launched the Home Star, an improved and updated version of the Outcomes Star for housing and other needs (known as the Homelessness Star). This document describes the process of arriving at the Home Star and how it differs from the Homelessness Star.

The Homelessness Star was the first version of the Outcomes Star – a suite of collaborative, person-centred tools that both support and measure change. Although it was specifically developed for homelessness services, its holistic approach meant that it has been widely used as a generic complex needs tool as well as within homelessness services in the UK, other European countries, the United States and Australia.

There are now over 40 versions of the Outcomes Star, including those tailored to young people, families and people with learning disabilities. All versions have a series of outcome areas arranged in a star shape, with a five step 'Journey of Change' underpinning the detailed descriptors for each of the five- or ten-points on the scales.

The Homelessness Star has been updated several times over the years, in response to feedback and new learning. Since the most recent edition (3.1) was published in 2017, much has changed – in the sector, the clients accessing services, increased economic pressures and housing challenges – and Triangle has learned a lot about use of language and accessibility, including being more trauma-informed and client-centred. The Home Star was developed in response to these changes and was grounded in extensive feedback and consultation.

Given the significant advantages of using the Home Star, Triangle will no longer support the Homelessness Star once services using it have had time to switch to the Home Star. This will be no sooner than April 2023 and the timing is subject to consultation.

The Home Star includes a wider range of resources to support engagement of clients and to be accessible for a broader range of people:

- The Home Star Chart, Notes and Action Plan
- The Home Star User Guide, with brief and detailed scales for each of the ten outcome areas and a detailed description of the Journey of Change
- Short illustrated scales
- Flashcards
- Guidance for Workers
- A web application for online completion and reporting at www.staronline.org.uk.

Background and further information about the Outcomes Star suite of tools can be found at www.outcomesstar.org.uk.

The first edition of the Homelessness Star

The prototype of the first version of the Outcomes Star was developed by Triangle in 2003 with and for St Mungo's, a London-based charity providing a wide range of services to people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or being supported in the journey out of homelessness. This work was part funded by the London Housing Foundation.

Focus groups were conducted with more than 80 staff in St Mungo's services ranging from street outreach and hostels to work and learning services. These staff identified their intended outcomes, together with the journey that people travelled towards achieving them. St Mungo's piloted the prototype Star, which was then improved and finalised by Triangle and implemented across St. Mungo's from 2003.

Other London-based organisations in the homelessness sector then also adopted or tested this prototype star during 2004-05; they were grappling with the same issues of how to meaningfully and accessibly capture client outcomes and a condition of London Housing Foundation's funding was that the model be freely shared within the sector. This revealed the potential and benefits of this tool for supporting keywork as well as capturing outcomes and led to Triangle developing the first Outcomes Star. The Outcomes Star, incorporating learning from these organisations, was published by the London Housing Foundation in 2006 as part their Impact through Outcomes programme.

The second edition of the Homelessness Star

The Mental Health Providers Forum approached Triangle in 2007 and Triangle worked with them and a number of their members to develop the Mental Health Recovery Star, published in 2009. This led to advancements, particularly in the presentation of the Journey of Change and the format of the Star materials, which highlighted the need to improve the original Homelessness Star in the same way.

At the same time, the London Housing Foundation commissioned Triangle to research the impact of the Homelessness Star on service delivery and reporting, resulting in the publication of a report about how to implement the Star well. Drawing on this report and the learning from the Mental Health Recovery Star development, the second edition of the Homelessness Star was published in 2008, using the new materials format including detailed scales in the User Guide.

A survey conducted by Homeless Link in 2011 found that, after the compulsory Supporting People outcomes form, the Homelessness Star was the most frequently used outcomes measure in the homelessness sector, used by 20% of all agencies surveyed.

The third edition of the Homelessness Star

The third edition of the Homelessness Star was published in 2013, then a design update to create edition 3.1 in 2017. The third edition benefited from the learning Triangle had gained through developing many more versions of the Star in other sectors, including for families and employment support, and included an Organisation Guide, a more visually appealing design and 'key points' for each of the outcome areas to support accuracy of use.

In 2021, data from the third edition was used in an article entitled 'psychometric validation of the Homelessness Star', published in the Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness. This peer-reviewed article, authored by Triangle's Research Analyst, Dr Anna Good and Strategic Director, Joy MacKeith, supported the validity of the Homelessness Star, including associations between Star readings and hard outcomes.

The Home Star

The Homelessness Star was then formally reviewed in 2020-2021 in response to feedback and changes in the sector, client needs, the wider environment and learning from more recent Star developments e.g. the need for the Star to be a better fit for women, use more trauma-informed language and have the same additional resources to support accessibility as newer versions of the Star.

The formal review began in April 2020 with a roundtable of seven organisations. However, this built on over a year of informally gathering feedback and consulting key users, including meeting with Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) services, a workshop for services supporting women with complex needs at Brighton's Women's Centre and anecdotal feedback via our network of trainers and Implementation Leads. Following the roundtable, we put out a wide call for feedback to all users of this Star, emailing them directly and through our newsletter and a blog.

Based on all that feedback, we revised the Star to produce a draft new edition in April 2021 and sent this to people from a range of organisations in the UK and Australia who had expressed an interest and willingness to read, test and provide feedback on drafts. We then also gathered feedback on a revised draft in November 2021, including from workers, managers and service users attending a December 2021 workshop organised by Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE).

We are grateful for the feedback received from many keyworkers, managers and service users, including from: Homeless Link, Crisis, PIE, MEAM, Brighton Women's Centre, Two Saints, P3, C2C Social Action, Unique Outcomes, Salvation Army Victoria and Ruha.

The review suggested the need for changes that were significant enough to create the Home Star - a new version of the Star based on the old Homelessness Star. Successive versions of the Home Star were drafted, reviewed, and refined. The key improvements made in the final version of the Home Star are as follows:

- The Home Star is better suited to clients with more complex and ongoing needs, women – including those who have children, or who are victims of crime including domestic abuse.
- The language and accompanying guidance have been carefully worded to be even more trauma-informed, strengths based, and client-centred, and the names of all ten outcome areas and some of the Journey of Change Star have changed to be more inclusive. There is also greater recognition of external factors that may be beyond the person's control.
- There is a dual end point, recognising that for some people it is not appropriate to aim for self-reliance from the service and they need ongoing service support to remain safe and well. For those people, 8 is an appropriate end point on the scales.
- In comparison to the Homelessness Star, the outcome areas of the Home Star are better aligned with the environment service users now find themselves in, as well as with the latest understanding about supporting people with complex needs. These changes, as well as the changes to the underlying Journey of Change are described in the table below:

Homelessness Star	Home Star	Key differences
1. Motivation and taking responsibility	Trust and hope	The focus of this scale has been changed to be more from the perspective of the client. It now focuses on the person having hope and trust that they can have a positive future based on beliefs about themselves, others and the world in general. "Taking responsibility" was removed as, for some people, it implied blame.

		The “Motivation and taking responsibility” area in the Homelessness Star was more focused on the person having confidence and drive to change their behaviour.
2. Self-care and living skills	Caring for myself and my space	The Home Star more explicitly refers to keeping well-nourished and safe and uses more client-centred language.
3. Managing money	My money	The Home Star mentions meeting responsibilities to dependents– this was not explicitly covered in the Homelessness Star.
4. Social networks and relationships	Friends and relationships	The Home Star includes more references to family, including having a healthy relationship with any partner or children. The Home Star also has references to domestic abuse in the detail of the scale.
5. Drug and alcohol misuse	Alcohol and drugs	References to ‘misuse’ are removed in the Home Star to acknowledge that drug and alcohol use may be a coping strategy. The reference to not taking drugs by 10 in the Homelessness Star has been removed in the Home Star, so workers can use their judgement as to whether someone is at 10 with some non-problematic drug use.
6. Physical health	My health	The main content remains the same, but the language has been changed and is more trauma informed.
7. Emotional and mental health	My well-being	The Home Star is clearer that at 10 someone no longer needs a homelessness service but can still be on medication and monitored by a mental health professional such as a psychiatrist.
8. Meaningful use of time	How I spend my day	The Home Star places less emphasis on work, training and volunteering and more emphasis on activities that are meaningful to the person.
9. Managing tenancy and accommodation	Where I'm living	The Home Star focus more on the suitability and safety of accommodation and is less about compliance. The Home Star also makes it possible for people to progress further up the scale without having any accommodation, provided they and the service are doing what they can.
10. Offending	Safety and crime	The Home Star area is broader to cover not only engaging in criminal or antisocial behaviour but also safety from crime, exploitation and harassment. Being a victim is mentioned before breaking the law in the scale descriptions. References to ‘offending behaviour’ are replaced with more neutral terms.

<p>Journey of Change stages</p>	<p>In the “Stuck” stage, more trauma-informed language is used, omitting references to negative experiences that might be a trigger or language that may appear blaming such as “I don’t want to”. The stage description is clearer that things may be ‘stuck’ in the first stage because people don't have the service they need, or the service isn't delivered in a way that works for them.</p> <p>“Accepting help” was replaced by “Getting help”, to be more from the client perspective and clearer that there are many reasons why someone may not be meaningfully engaged with a service.</p> <p>“Believing” was replaced by “Believing and trying”</p> <p>The “Learning” stage was replaced by “Finding what works” and it is clearer that 7 is starting to find what works and 8 is the outcome achieved with ongoing support to maintain it. The Home Star clarifies that eight is the top of the scale for people with ongoing support needs for whom independence is not an appropriate goal.</p>
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For more information and to download preview versions of the Home Star materials go to www.outcomesstar.org.uk and search for Home Star.