

How to introduce and complete Outcomes Stars™ within group settings

Practical guidance for organisations using the Outcomes Stars and working with groups to provide support

Words we use and what they mean:

- Group – this could refer to support group, youth group, community group
- Facilitators – this could refer to support workers, volunteer group leaders, therapists

1 Introduction

Outcomes Stars help to build trusting relationships and effect personal change by enabling open and supportive conversations with appropriate challenge. Because of this, they are primarily designed to be used as a key working tool one-to-one with service users.

However, we also understand that not all services are delivered in a one-to-one way. By nature, these are services that engage people with similar needs to meet shared outcomes, for example in relation to health and wellbeing, communication, confidence, identity or changing behaviour.

There is value in helping people explore their current situation within a group or communal setting, where the group can talk together to explore, collectively and individually, their vision for their future goals and ambitions. Introducing and completing Stars as a group when built on mutual trust and a respect for privacy and safeguarding can be a supportive and encouraging experience.

Of course, such work also carries the risk that some people could feel embarrassed, defensive, vulnerable, unable to express themselves, competitive to be the best, or fearful of judgement. When engaging in group work there needs to be consideration that the work may trigger bullying or victimization and re-living trauma when completing Stars with peers. **The additional safeguarding issues created could be detrimental to the individual and the group as a whole.**

Therefore, prior to using the Star within a group approach, it is important for any facilitators to carry out due diligence to consider safety, confidentiality, equality, inclusion and accessibility to be sensitive to individual and group needs. This guide will help you to considering the group dynamics, risk and benefits associated with this method and any protective and mitigating factors that can be added to enhance and enable this process.

2 Things to consider

- Consider which version of the Star you are using, as some may be more appropriate for group settings – eg Youth Star, Well-being Star, Carers Star – and some may work only if supported with additional and targeted one-to-one interventions such as Recovery Star, Empowerment Star, and Drug & Alcohol Star.
- Think about the group set-up and how you can deal with any unforeseen issues that may arise – upset, lack of engagement, safeguarding, triggers etc. and create a form of safety plan to respond to such issues.

- Plan how many facilitators are required for the group. Where possible, there should be two staff present - this allows one to run the session and one to be on hand for any one-to-one support.
- The facilitators must complete 'Core Outcome Star' Training and ideally have flagged during the course that they will be using it in a groupwork setting to get support from their trainer.
- At the beginning of the session, the facilitator may consider encouraging the group to think about ground rules for the session, either creating them or revisiting them if they exist already – with 'rules' such as confidentiality, respect of others and wider support available to the group.
- It may be wise to share with the group that Star 'group work' is not of a competitive nature and comparison between group members of how someone may be higher or lower on the Journey of Change is to be discouraged. Group members may feel disheartened by such comparisons, especially those with existing low-esteem or self-regard. Everyone is on their own individual 'journey' even if this is a shared experience of Star usage as part of wider group dynamic.
- Participants should be given the opportunity to consent or not to the Group work and not feel judged if they decide that this format of approach is not suited to them.
- Consider the literacy, access or language needs of any specific group members.
- Where there is a regular group programme of activity or group contact, the Star should form part of the programme with the same group participants on an on-going basis, rather than a changing mix of participants. This helps to maintain continuity and on-going shared understanding – although we appreciate this is not always possible.

Group work should be a positive, safe, supportive conversation where group members are supported to raise any concerns with the staff team, and assisted if they find such an approach detrimental to their needs or preferences or desire for more one-to-one support with Star usage.

3 Practicalities face-to-face groups

- Set up the room/seats/meeting space so each person has space and some privacy to complete their own Star.
- Start by handing out the notes page,pens etc.
- Explain that 'you' (a group member) are going to complete your own Star. However, the group (we) will go through how to complete the Star 'together' as a group at the same time.
- You may need to explain what 'together' means in case service users become confused or worried – i.e. – does this means someone else in the group is going to fill in 'my' Star for me or vice versa? The answer is no – we will fill our own Stars individually but 'together' at the same time.
- We have learnt from our clients that if the Star Chart is given out first without context or explanation, this increases the likelihood of group members plotting their Star without understanding the outcome areas or Journey of Change – practical guidance on this is covered in the following section.
- Think about how you need to capture data as a service. It works well when group members are given a copy of their own completed Star to help them work on their own goals, so you may need to make a copy of completed Stars at the end of the session. Taking a photograph on a phone or tablet may also work.

4 An approach for introducing the outcome areas

1. Pick an outcome area and explain it by talking through all the topics that are covered in that area.
2. Pose questions to the group to enable them to think about how their life is currently. Explain that they should think about them 'internally' and don't have to answer these questions verbally or out loud in the group.
3. The facilitator should take time for understanding, questions and clarification around what each of the outcome areas may appear to mean to each individual service user.
4. It is important that when they think about each area, they are not too focused on the past and what has happened previously - we want them looking at their current situation. Encourage them to aspire and imagine what their life could be like so they can write about any changes they may want to make now or in the future.
5. Be wary of pace and volume of information – some group members may not be comfortable signalling their confusion in a group dynamic, so regular checking of understanding can be valuable.
6. Where some concepts may feel harder to understand, you may pose open questions to gain a shared understanding and use the group to assist individuals to understand the Star through peer-to-peer learning.
7. Once you have explained the outcome area, ask participants to make notes about their current situation and feelings linked to that area. These notes are for them to reflect on, and the facilitator can provide guidance on the level of detail needed as appropriate for the group.
8. Repeat this process until you have covered all the areas in the Outcome Star you are using.
9. As appropriate for the group rules and the facilitator's judgement, the group may wish to share their thoughts, experiences, or feelings about the activity of filling in these outcome areas throughout or at this stage.

5 An approach for introducing the Journey of Change

1. The facilitator should take the group through the stages of the Journey of Change, explaining each stage in turn in a format that suits the interests/needs of the group (for example, visuals/role-play/steps).
2. The facilitator may ask questions about or give examples around how 'someone' might feel or think or act at each of the stages of the Journey of Change. Group members may offer up their own opinions on each stage. Guidance can be found in the Journey of Change training handout.
3. Individual Star Charts can be handed out. Explain that the numbers are a way of plotting the Journey of Change onto the Star Chart.
4. It is important at this stage for group members to be equipped to link the outcome areas to the Journey of Change. Consider using the flashcards, short and/or detailed scales as appropriate to the group and version of the Star. Again, the group may need time to think, consider and question these materials before you progress further.
5. Ask the group members to examine their notes again for each outcome area and use these decide where they are on the Journey of Change, referring if they need to other resources like the short-detailed scales or flashcards.
6. Ask them to plot their readings on the Star Chart. Remind them not to look at or comment on other group members readings unless this is part of a group sharing agreement.

7. Once completed you may want to engage the group to discuss the process in general terms, such as for example, if they have enough information to inform their decision and plot their own Star.

6 Individual support

It is helpful to offer one-to-one short 'breakout' sessions with group members, for example to help anyone who is struggling with what they have thought about or identified.

If possible, these could be done throughout the session, whilst the rest of the group complete another activity or have a break, or it could be something set up for a later date.

7 Action Planning

As with completing the Star, the facilitators need to consider how action planning will work regarding their individual groups.

They can encourage individuals to use their completed Star to write an action for any area they wish to work on. At this point depending on the group experience and knowledge, they may wish to explain SMART action planning and help people to make their own plan.

There may be sufficient trust and mutual regard established within the group for them to share their action plans with the group as a whole or smaller break out groups to help make these action plans as 'SMART' as possible and the advice and insight of their peers may be a valuable addition.

Again, linking back to group rules around what is being discussed in such 'action plan' break out groups to ensure that comments are constructive and supportive rather than overly critical or dispiriting to others.

For groups who are working to a pre-designed programme of activity or goal, action planning individually may not be appropriate at this stage. For example, a programme designed to increase knowledge, develop skills, and support motivation might find that action planning works best completed individually at the end of the programme, after a final/review Star has been completed.

8 Review Stars

When reviewing Stars, you could follow the same process. Complete review Stars on a new Star Chart document to avoid bias influencing changes on the Journey of Change.

Where appropriate, questions can be explored with the group as to any reflections on the changes they can see in the readings. It is important to celebrate where things have been maintained even if not progressed and recognize that it is okay when things drop back because now you can reflect on why and get support.

9 Further Support

If you would like to discuss this approach further, or if you have any questions about any aspects of the Outcomes Star, please contact the person supporting you at Triangle or at one of our international partner organisations. You can also contact us on info@triangleconsulting.co.uk or on +44 207 272 8765, and find more information at www.outcomesstar.org.uk.