Outcomes Star™

Implementation Guide

For organisations planning to use the Outcomes Star™

Triangle

Introduction to Outcomes Star implementation planning

Implementing the Outcomes Star effectively will help you maximise the benefits for front-line keyworking and for service users. It also helps ensure that the Star data you collect is reliable, valid and useful both for organisational learning and for evidencing the impact your service makes.

Before implementing the Star, make sure it is the right tool for your service and that you know the version of the Star that is right for you. Talk to Triangle or visit our website to find out more.
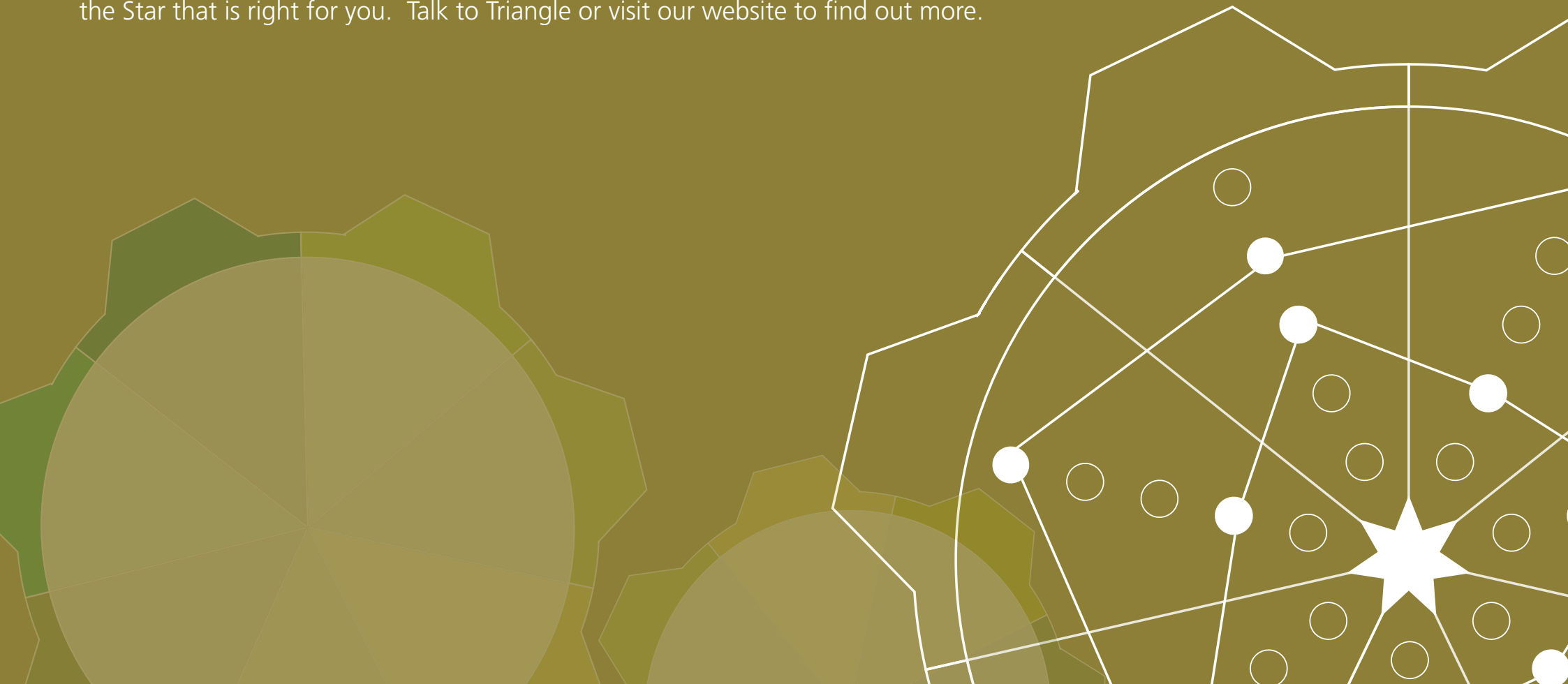
> *My advice is to see the implementation of the Outcomes Star as a change management project. It is vital to communicate to keyworkers how it will help them to do their job, and to make sure the Star is seen as something that will help the organisation as a whole to make its case to the outside world. It is also vital to integrate the Star fully into keywork processes and training.*
>
> Manager, St Mungo's, UK

This guide has been designed for all Licensed Star Users to use at the beginning of their journey with the Star. It takes you through how to plan the implementation of the Star as a project for your organisation, setting out the key areas you will need to look at and the decisions you will need to make.

If you are implementing a single Star in a single service with a small number of skilled staff, then your implementation plan might be very straightforward. If you are implementing the Star across an organisation with a variety of services, teams, staff roles and existing ways of working, then your implementation plan may be more complex.

The framework for successful implementation that is set out in this document can be used and applied by anyone, even though the plans you need to create might look very different.

This guide is accompanied by a series of templates for creating your own implementation plans. To use this guide and the templates, you don't necessarily need to work on all the areas at once, or in the order they are set out here. However you should try to have as much of your implementation plan as possible in place before any Star training takes place, or to be prepared to fill in any gaps as soon as possible afterwards. This will ensure that people can get started with the Star in the right way as quickly as possible.

For organisations in the UK, Triangle offer ongoing support for all Licensed Star Users and can provide a range of additional implementation services. For organisations outside of the UK, please contact the licensed Star provider in your country – contact details can be found on our website **www.outcomesstar.org.uk**.

Licensed Star Users also receive the Outcomes Star Implementation Tracker. This is a Star-like tool for organisations who are up and running with the Star and will help you monitor and improve your use of the Star over time.
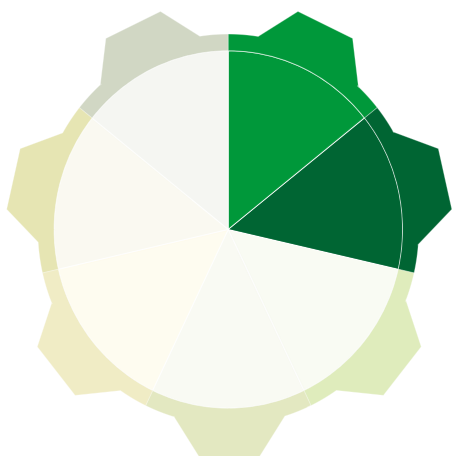
The areas covered in the Tracker link to the areas set out in this planning guidance and the templates:

A PLANNING AND BUY-IN ACROSS THE ORGANISATION

Start here: planning and monitoring and buy-in across the organisation

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B INTEGRATION WITH PAPERWORK, PROCESSES, STAR ONLINE OR OTHER IT

How the Star can work alongside existing processes within your organisation

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C THE ROLE OF KEYWORKERS AND THE ROLE OF MANAGERS

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D USING OUTCOMES STAR DATA AND MONITORING

How to gather and ensure consistent data and then how to use it within your organisation

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Planning and buy-in across the organisation

This area is focused on the people in and outside your organisation. Although the Star can seem like a simple tool on the surface, it has far-reaching implications within a service or organisation and is likely to trigger changes in the way you support service users, handle paperwork, supervise staff and report on outcomes. This area will help you to think about who to involve and in what way, so that the changes triggered by the Star can be managed in a positive and constructive way.
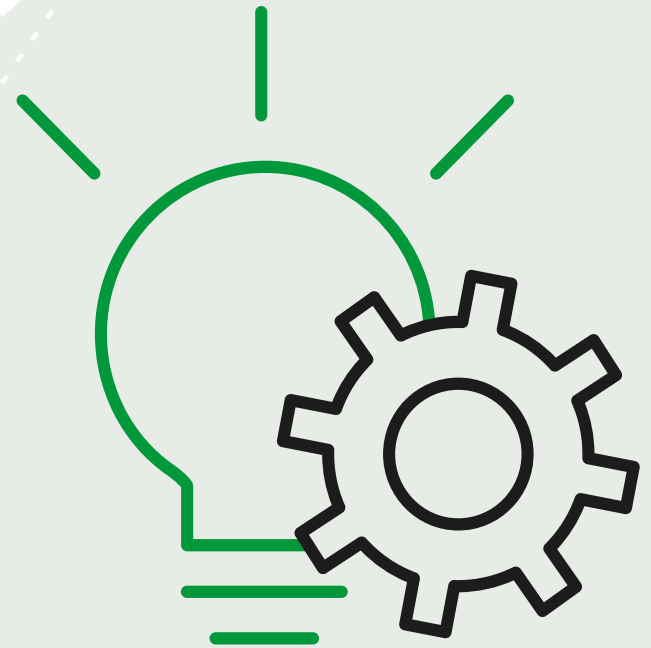
> "The introduction of the Star had an extraordinary impact on how we approached our work and it changed comprehensively the ethos of the service as well as every aspect of service delivery. It led to more straight forward and effective management and evidencing of work.
>
> Operational Manager, Family Action

1. Appoint someone to manage the implementation of the Outcomes Star

You will need someone (or a group of people) in your organisation to oversee the implementation of the Star and to take responsibility for the Star being used effectively.

This person, or group, should take the lead on planning how you use the Star – they should read and 'own' this document and create an implementation plan specific to your organisation.

They will also need to monitor how the implementation is going over time, gathering feedback from practitioners and managers as they start to use the Star and responding to any queries or issues that arise.

You can also set up a Steering Group or other collaborative forum, made up of people from different roles and levels within the organisation. At regular intervals the group should meet to plan, review and discuss how your organisation is using the Star.

2. Consider whether to pilot the Star

We recommend that you start small by running a pilot or an informal road test with a small selection of keyworkers and managers, especially if your organisation has not used the Star before.

Research shows that when there is initial resistance from keyworkers and managers, a pilot can help them understand how the Star will make their job easier and improve results, rather than simply adding another administrative loop.

A pilot will help you to test out how the Star works in practice and to iron out any practical issues before rolling the tool out more widely. Also, early users can often become champions of the Star and be a useful source of motivation and support to the rest of the organisation.

Workers involved in the pilot will need to complete core Star training and have licences to use the Star. Talk to Triangle for further guidance on running a pilot and for information about training and licences for pilot programmes.

3. Understand what else is going on

Because the Star can trigger a lot of change, it is useful to be aware of what other change is happening, the other demands that people may have on their time and energy and the timescales that other projects are working to.

Understanding how these factors may affect the response to the Outcomes Star can be useful. For example, lots of change might bring uncertainty, competing projects and priorities and less time for people to focus on the Star. However, it might also be a good time to set in place new ways of working for the future and to link the Star to broader strategic goals for your organisation.

4. Identify how many members of staff will use the Star with service users

The Star is designed for use by frontline keyworkers who work one-on-one with service users over a period of time.

You will need to identify how many people in your organisation will use the Star with service users, including keyworkers and managers.

This number will inform the number of Star licences you need and which of the Star training options will be right

for you (for more detail on Licences see Section B and for more detail on Training see Section C).

5. Define your key messages about the Star for frontline staff and service users

Organisations are increasingly under pressure to demonstrate the effectiveness of their services to funders and commissioners. The Star is focused on sustainable outcomes and can help you measure success for individual service users, services and your organisation as a whole.

However implementation of the Star works best when there is also a focus on the benefits of the Star for service users and for frontline practitioners. The Star involves service users in their own change, helps develop their resilience, and ensures that they receive the right support from workers at different stages in their journey.

Even if you are introducing the Star primarily for external reasons, we recommend that you adopt it in the spirit of learning and service improvement, and capitalise on the internal benefits too.

It can be hugely positive to communicate this broader range of reasons for choosing the Star to those members of staff who will be using the Star in their work day-to-day It can be useful to write these reasons down as a few short statements, which will help you reinforce them consistently, incorporate them in Star training and help to overcome any initial resistance, anxiety or misunderstanding about the Star itself, the new ways of working, or the concept of outcomes and outcomes measurement generally.

See the Briefing: What is the Outcomes Star? for more information about the internal and external benefits of the Star.

6. Involve the right people - identify your 'stakeholders'

It helps to inform and engage with the right people from the beginning, so that they don't receive any surprises, they understand the Outcomes Star and they can make decisions needed to implement change.

You should identify who the 'stakeholders' are for your organisation – these might include:

- Other service delivery teams in your organisation that work with those using the Star

- Commissioners and funders

- Trustees and Board members

- Training and development professionals

- Evaluation and impact leads

- IT and data systems experts

- Local partner agencies – these can be key to successful multi-agency working.

Triangle can help you run workshops, deliver briefing sessions or provide you with resources to communicate within your organisation – get in touch for more details.

7. Prepare for the investment over time

Using the Star is not a one-off intervention. In addition to the ongoing financial resources needed for Star licences and training, it will also take ongoing motivation and commitment from your staff to make the most of the Star.

You may need to incorporate the Star into any planning, budgeting or other internal management processes.
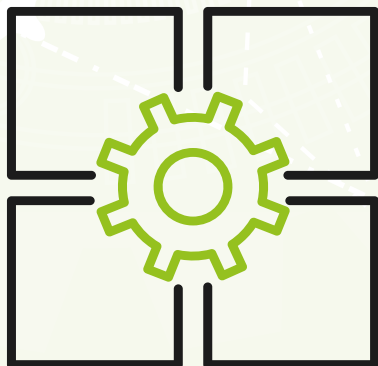
> "Using the Star has led to a fundamental change in casework. We now look at the service user holistically.
>
> Manager, Single Homeless Project

Integration with paperwork, processes, Star Online or other IT

This area is focused on how the Outcomes Star will work alongside other processes and ways of working that exist in your organisation. The Outcomes Star is unlikely to meet all of your data collection, assessment and other needs, so it will need to be one tool in your frontline service 'toolkit.' Avoiding duplication of paperwork and confusion over processes, particular for IT systems and data recording, is vital for effective implementation of the Star. This area sets out the key questions you will need to answer for your organisation to integrate the Star effectively.

1. Choose how you will use the Outcomes Star

- How you use the Outcomes Star will determine which type of Star licences you need. See the 'Briefing: Your Choices for using the Outcomes Star' for more information on the choices available and what you need to do for each option

- If you decide to use the Star Online system, familiarise yourself with the way reports work (see area D) before setting up your services as this will affect how Star data can be aggregated for analysis.

2. Think about how the Star fits with service delivery

- The Star is designed to be used by keyworkers – people who build a one-to-one relationship over time with service users, and who support service users holistically across many areas of their life. They also need to be able to complete Star training, and be able to complete the Star multiple times with a service user

- To use the Star effectively it is important that this model fits with the delivery of your service and that you have thought through how the Star will work for you

- For example, are there skilled staff who play a keyworker role with service users? Is the Star a tool for your managers, co-ordinators, support workers or volunteers? Does that person complete an assessment/review with a service user more than once – when and how will they capture change?

- You may also need to consider how you will support people with each area of the Star version you are using, or how you will record people in any areas where you are not providing support

- For support with fitting the Star with service delivery, contact Triangle.

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Manager,
St Mungo's

Type of paperwork/process	How it links to the Star
Needs or eligibility assessment	The Star is unlikely to go into enough detail to work as a needs assessment on its own. Completing a first Star could be linked to a separate, detailed needs assessment process and provide supporting context and information.
Risk assessment	The Star does not measure risk. You will need to ensure that there are separate tools in place to assess and monitor risk – these will differ by sector.
Other assessment frameworks	These may be specified by sector, for example the CAF in family services. It may be possible to 'map' the areas covered by the Star across into the areas required by the assessment framework. If so, you may be able to use information gathered by the Star and populate other frameworks without needing to complete two assessments with the client. There may be areas that do not map into the Star and/or are needed for data collection – you may need to create separate forms or processes to gather this information alongside the Star.
Care plans, support plans, action plans	Using the Star to inform targeted, realistic action plans is a key benefit of the tool. The Star Chart provides a template for Action Plans, but organisations can choose not to use this and to use their own format whilst still getting the benefits of the Star.
Practice models or approaches	The nature of these will differ by sector and service user group. If the approach does not have a ready-made tool for measuring progress over time, it may be that the Star can be used alongside it. For approaches focusing on being person-centred, personalised and strength-based, the collaborative and empowering nature of the Star will be a good fit and can help to practically put those values into action.
Other measuring or scaling tools	You may need to measure more specific outcomes, for example with long-term health conditions. These tools can be used alongside the Star, as they are not designed to be holistic and to support the change process by being part of the ongoing relationship between service user and keyworker in the same way as the Star.
Other reporting or data requirements	If services are already required to provide specific data for analysis and specific reports, it is useful to check how the data collected by the Star relates to this and whether the Star will replace any of it or be additional to it.
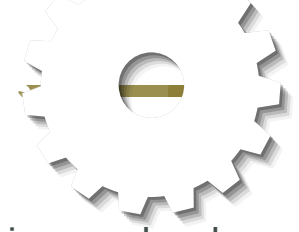
3. Create your own guidelines for using the Star

The detail of how to use the Star will vary for each organisation. Below is a list of the 'rules' you need to set and some guidance on what works well.

When to start using the Star

Staff need to know if there is a cut-off date for any existing tools they may be using, and when they need to be ready to start using the Star. Staggering the change may help you to manage it more effectively.

How to access Star resources, the Star Online or an approved IT system

As a minimum, staff need to be able to access the Star Charts and User Guide or Quiz, plus the short Scales if provided, in order to start using the tool.

Who to contact with queries

Queries tend to be about two areas – keyworking and record keeping. For keyworking, it may be beneficial for staff to go to someone in the front-line team. For IT and record keeping, they could contact an administrator or IT expert.

When to complete the first Star with a service user

Depending on how the Star fits with other risk and needs assessment tools, you may find the Star works better if introduced at the second contact.

Which service users should use the Star

The Star may not be right for all service users or services – this should be identified before staff start using the Star.

Some service users or services might work better with different versions of the Star so this should also be identified as early on as possible.

Whether existing service users should complete the Star, and how

For existing service users, it can be helpful to complete a Star retrospectively, particularly if they have been with the service for a long time. Retrospective Stars can help them reflect on where they were when they joined the service and give you some baseline data for your records.

When further Stars and reviews should be completed with a service user

Short-term services with young people or services in which change is rapid may want to review every six weeks (we don't recommend that the Star be completed in shorter periods).

For organisations where reviews are linked to action plans/care plans/support plans, every three months can work well. For longer-term services with gradual change, every six months or longer periods may work better.

When the readings on the Star should prompt further action by the keyworker

Completing a Star may need to trigger other assessments or paperwork. In addition, specific readings on key areas of the Star/stages of the Journey of Change may mean staff should signpost or refer service users to other interventions.

What to do if a service user doesn't complete a Star

Conversation and relationship-building are key and the Star should only be completed if the process is ultimately beneficial to the service user.

If someone has left the service completing an exit Star, a worker-only Star can be helpful to give your service data that can be compared with earlier Stars.

When to use worker-only or service user-only and retrospective Stars

Service user-only Stars can be useful if there is disagreement between service user and keyworker on where to place the service user on the scales.

When the Star can be shared with other professionals

This should be agreed based on your organisation's confidentiality and data sharing policies. This should be agreed based on your organisation's confidentiality and data sharing policies.

What information to enter into the Star Online and/or approved IT system

The Star Online has set fields for:

- Service user information including Unique ID
- Star readings
- Star notes
- Action Plans.

You should identify whether staff should use all fields on the Star Online or not – this depends on the other paperwork and processes you have.

What unique ID's to use for service users

The Unique ID works best where this is a unique number allocated to the service user, perhaps from another case management system, NHS number or other identifier already in use (allowing you to cross-reference information between systems).

C. The role of keyworkers and the role of managers

This area focuses on what keyworkers and managers will need to be able to use the Star as effectively as possible. Although most people find the Outcomes Star intuitive and straightforward to use, our experience is that very few workers and managers use it accurately and well without training. Once people are trained, ongoing monitoring, review and discussion through supervision is also vital to use the Star well and collect accurate and meaningful Star data. This area will take you through the considerations for Star training and ongoing supervision of the Star.

1. Understand existing keywork skills

- To use the Star, members of staff need to be skilled in working with service users, comfortable with working holistically across all aspects of a service users life, confident in challenging service users constructively and motivated to support service users in changing their life for the better

- These skills are all part and parcel of keywork, and it can be reassuring for workers to understand that the Star will help them to make the most of their existing training, qualifications and skills

- If there is not a strong base of keywork practice and skills within your organisation, you should consider additional training on top of core Star training

- Triangle offer a keyworking course alongside core Star training which can introduce or reinforce key keyworking skills vital to effective use of the Star.

2. Plan Star training for keyworkers

- Core Star training is designed for frontline workers to equip them with an understanding of the Star and the Journey of Change, the information it captures and measures, how it fits with keywork skills and how best to use it with the people they support

- Triangle offer a number of options for completing the core course in the UK

- Before workers attend training, it is useful to orientate them as to what to expect by explaining why the organisation has chosen to use the Star and providing some information about how it will work

- For the training sessions themselves, it is useful if you have completed the Star guidelines for your organisation, as often the key questions workers have are around

implementation. What can work well is to have a draft of the guidelines and to be open to feedback from workers once they have completed the training and have a detailed understanding of the Star.

3. Plan Star training for managers

- Managers can only support keyworkers if they understand the tool and ideally have experience of using it with service users themselves

- We recommend that line managers attend core Star training along with keyworkers, as this can help show a commitment to the tool, ensure everyone has the same information and managers can respond to questions or concerns as they arise

- Depending on the nature of management and leadership in your organisation, it may also be useful to run focused manager sessions. Triangle can design and provide these for your organisation, and they can include a mix of basic Star training, implementation planning, guidance around supervision and/or using Star data.

4. Incorporate the Star into supervision

'Using the Star well' means:

- Keyworkers are using it as an integral part of their work with the service users in their caseload, as part of assessment, reviews and support planning

- Keyworkers are using it collaboratively with service users (only completing worker-only Stars when necessary) and able to constructively challenge a service user to get to an agreed reading

- Keyworkers have a good understanding of the Journey of Change and refer to the detailed scales when completing the Star
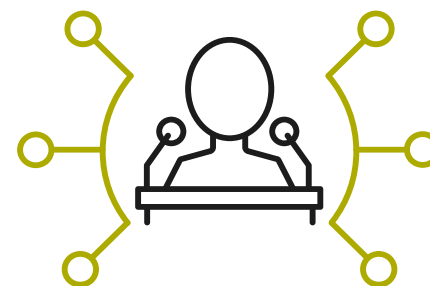
> We must never assume that workers can use the Star without training. This is about worker confidence, support, training and about taking the Star seriously as an organisation, not just putting it on the table.
>
> Manager, Eaves

- Keyworkers use the Star as a conversational tool to encourage and empower the service user to reflect on their own story, strengths and needs

- The Star is being used in line with your organisation's guidelines and your guidelines are up-to-date.

Embedding the Star into your ongoing supervision process is vital to making sure these elements are in place. For example, although training is important, it will also take time and practice for workers to become really familiar with the detailed scales and Journey of Change and to use them naturally with service users.

One way to embed the Star in supervision is to adapt the supervision policies and procedures – if you are a large organisation this may take some time to achieve.

Some areas you might want to cover in supervision include:

- Highlighting cases where there are particular issues and using completed Stars as a basis for discussion

- Taking a sample of service users and checking that the planned actions are consistent with their position on the Journey of Change

- Looking together at a caseload report as an average of the keyworker's caseload and checking for very high readings (are workers challenging service users and having difficult conversations?) or very low readings (do they have lots of clients who are not engaging and what impact is this having?).

Triangle can provide more support around how to use the Star in supervision.

5. Support consistency of use over time

One-off Star training is only one part of using the Star well. Reflective practice and ongoing improvement can be encouraged by establishing the Star as a regular feature for discussion in team meetings. For example, you can include:

- Using completed Star Chart and Action plans when reviewing cases as a team or celebrating success stories from your service

- Completing a Star for a service user in pairs or as a group, to encourage consistency of understanding and use of the scales

- Updates on service data, especially the sharing of positive outcomes

- Discussing one outcome area from the Star, or one stage of the Journey of Change, to identify which actions have the most positive impact on Star readings.

If your organisation has a separate data team who will be analysing Star data, it can be useful to include them in these meetings so that they gain an understanding of how the Star is used in practice

Another regular activity that can support effective use of the Star is to routinely audit case files and to check when and how Stars are being completed.

Triangle also offer refresher training for the Star to review and improve Star practice, which can be combined with training for new staff too.

6. Plan ahead for new staff

All new staff using the Star need to be trained, either by Triangle or a licensed Star trainer within your organisation, and they must have a Star licence.

Many organisations find it helpful to prepare a talk about the benefits of the Star within their organisations for use in inductions or for newly promoted staff, before they complete Star training.

You will need a system for monitoring the Star training and licensing of staff in your organisation, particularly if you have a high turnover or flexible workforce.
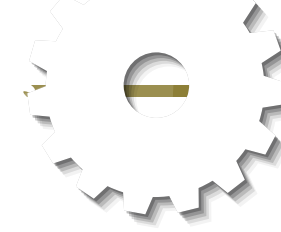
Using Star data and monitoring

There are two key stages that organisations must go through before they can use Star data to its full potential – the first is gathering enough data by completing a significant amount of Stars. The second stage is to assure the accuracy of the data, exploring how reliable it is and putting in measures to address bad Star practice and inconsistent data. With these in place, organisations can use Star data for a number of different purposes, such as celebrating achievements internally, learning for service improvement and reporting for accountability. This area focuses on what you need to put in to your implementation plan to achieve the first two stages and to get started with Star data.

1. Monitor how the Star is being used

- The very basic thing to do is to make a plan for how you will check if the Star is being completed, when and how. If you are using the Star Online system, you can run a report to see this information or check from the Star Lead dashboard

- Although first Stars are important, you should also look ahead to when you would expect people to be completing 2nd or more Stars with people – these are vital to be able to show change/distance travelled between the baseline and the review

- Whilst you are monitoring use of the Star, you can be looking out for signs that the Star is not being used properly and try to resolve any issues as they arise – for example:

- If the same date has been entered for a first and second Star – this may show that workers are not clear on how to use the date fields when entering data from Stars that are completed on paper, or other issues

- Too many worker only or service user only completed Stars – this may show that workers are not clear on the importance of collaborative completion and may need more supervision or training.

2. Check the reliability of your Star data

- Being confident in the accuracy and reliability of your Star data will help you to make the most of its potential for your organisation

- We recommend that anyone working with Star data also has a good understanding of the Star and how keyworkers are actually using the Star day to day – for example by joining frontline team meetings

- Identify and address any practice issues that could be causing problems for your data. For example, one common issue is that initial Star readings are too high, and therefore not enough change can be demonstrated between the baseline and the review Stars. This may be because workers cannot challenge a service users view of their situation at the early stages of a relationship, in which case you may need to consider not fully completing a first Star with service users until later, or planning to use second Stars as your 'baseline'.

3. Understand the ways in which Star data can be used

It is important that anyone analysing or reporting with Star data understands the nature of the data collected by the Star and the scope for how it can be used.

The Outcomes Star should not be used to judge individual worker or service performance on its own. Individual change is complex and there are many factors involved. Star data should not be interpreted simplistically but instead provide a basis for asking better questions and gaining a deeper understanding about the strengths of a service and the areas in which it can improve.

Reassuring practitioners that the Star is not going to be used as a blunt performance management tool and sharing Star data and analysis with them can support effective implementation and deeper engagement with the tool.

Star data can be used for a variety of purposes, such as learning and development, celebrating achievement and demonstrating effectiveness, at a number of different levels, from an individual service user through to the services and organisations. Triangle offer a number of briefings and information sheets about how Star data can be used.

4. Identify the reports you will need, will do them, and how

Start to plan what information will be needed by different people and when this information might be needed. For example, this might include:

- Annual outcomes or impact reports for external publication

- Contract reporting for funders or commissioners including aggregated service data and individual case studies written using the Star and Journey of Change

- Quarterly reports for senior managers showing an aggregation of Star data across the organisation and comparing distance travelled by service

- Monthly service reports for team meetings

- Caseload reports for supervision

- Individual service user reports for casework, supervision or case audits.

If you are using the Star Online system, you should familiarise yourselves with the ready-made reports that can be easily created as well as raw data exports for further analysis. Try to do this before you set up services on your Star Online account, as that will determine the levels at which data can be aggregated.

Identify who will create these reports and how – be aware that you may need additional data skills or technical resources if you do not use the Star Online system or you want to undertake any advanced data analysis.

Triangle can provide support with your Star data and are always looking to work closely with organisations using the Star to learn more about best practice and in particular to further explore 'what works' with Outcomes Star data.
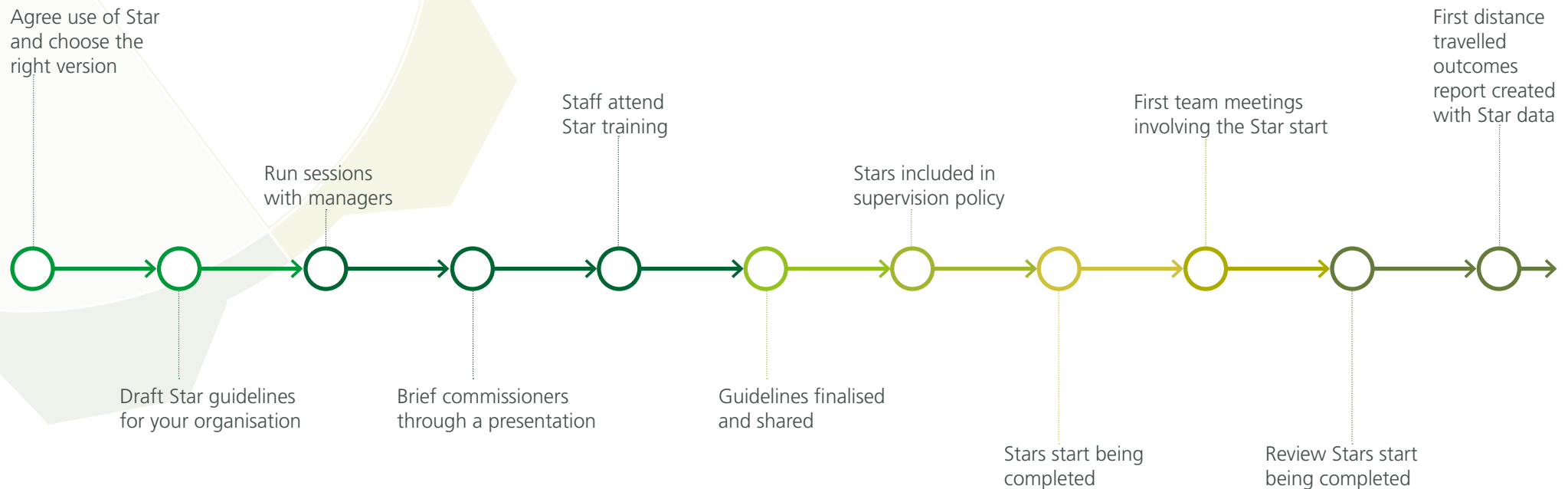
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Example of a Star implementation schedule

It can be helpful to create a timeline for your organisations implementation of the Star, using all the decisions and planning set out in areas A to D of this guide. Below is an example of what this might look like.

Please note the order is just for illustration and how long things take will depend on your organisation and the scale of your Star implementation.

Agree use of Star and choose the right version

Run sessions with managers

Staff attend Star training

Stars included in supervision policy

First team meetings involving the Star start

First distance travelled outcomes report created with Star data

Draft Star guidelines for your organisation

Brief commissioners through a presentation

Guidelines finalised and shared

Stars start being completed

Review Stars start being completed

Please recycle after use