



Using the Parent and Baby Star™

The Parent and Baby Star is a tool for parents who may need extra support during pregnancy and for the first year after having a baby (the perinatal period) because of issues with their emotional well-being or mental health. This includes people who are finding it hard to cope or to go out, who are getting overwhelmed by practicalities, or who are feeling low or anxious. It can also include people with physical health difficulties and/or other symptoms. The Star can be used with both mothers and fathers who are struggling with the additional challenges of preparing for or having a baby. It is designed for a range of issues and severity, from diagnosed postnatal depression through to those who might benefit from preventative support.

It is a version of the Outcomes Star, a suite of tools for supporting and measuring change when working with people.

The Parent and Baby Star resources consist of:

- The Parent and Baby Star Chart, Notes and Action Plan for use with parents
- The Parent and Baby User Guide, with both brief visual scales and detailed scale descriptions, which can be shared with parents as needed
- The short illustrated Scales for use with parents
- This Guidance for Workers
- A web application for online completion and analysis at www.staronline.org.uk

The Parent and Baby Star was developed by Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise in collaboration with Hertfordshire County Council, Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group, East and North Hertfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and For Baby's Sake, a service delivered by the Stefanou Foundation. The process involved workers, managers, service users and associated professionals.

Completing the Parent and Baby Star is intended to be a helpful, engaging and empowering process that stimulates and focuses discussion and provides a useful, shared basis for an action or support plan. It is a flexible tool that relies on the skills of the workers using it, as well as on a degree of understanding and trust between worker and parent. The Star is designed to be used one to one; the aim is to have a genuine interaction and complete it collaboratively.

Before using the Parent and Baby Star, all workers need training from Triangle or a licensed trainer.

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

Contact info@triangleconsulting.co.uk
or 020 7272 8765

I feel the Star opens up more in-depth discussions than we would usually have.

Mental health practitioner

It made me honestly think about how I was feeling.

Service user

The Star is really respectful for clients.

Worker

Before you use the Parent and Baby Star™

Make sure that you have received training in using the Parent and Baby Star and that you are familiar with the materials and know when and how it is used in your service. It is vital that you understand and use the Journey of Change underlying the scales – **things aren't OK, accepting help, believing and trying, finding what works** and **managing well**, plus the slightly different Journey of Change for the "Housing and essentials" scale. This will ensure consistent and reliable information as a basis for support planning and for use by your service. You also need to be familiar with all the scale descriptions, so you can unpack and rephrase them as needed.

How to introduce the Parent and Baby Star™

Before you introduce the Star to someone for the first time:

- Devise a short script to introduce the Star in a way that feels natural to you and clear for those you are working with
- If you meet with the parents you support in groups, it can be useful and save time to explain the Star to the group before starting one-to-one work within individual sessions
- Consider giving parents who are interested a copy of the short illustrated Scales or even the User Guide to read before the session. Although the User Guide is quite detailed and relies on someone being comfortable with reading, the whole document is worded in accessible language, so it can be shared.

When introducing the Star:

- Explain that people may start anywhere on the journey, can move both up and down on the scale and that 5 is the top of the Star scales but not the end of the journey
- Be really clear that this is about establishing where they are and building up a map of their world, experiences and journey – it is not about being judged or being awarded an overall "score". It is best to avoid the word "score" completely
- Let the parent decide which scale to start with, or choose one that is concrete and may be easier to discuss, such as "Physical health" or "Housing and essentials".

Some suggested phrases for introducing the Star include:

"The Parent and Baby Star is a way of tracking your journey and finding out about your strengths and the areas where you need more information or support – there are no right or wrong answers."

"The Star tells us where you are now and what needs to happen next, and it helps you and me plan our work together."

"This is about hearing your voice and what you think about what's going on for you now, so that together we can work out what support you need."

Want to use this Star?

Visit www.outcomesstar.org.uk

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How to complete the Parent and Baby Star™

Complete the Star collaboratively with a parent in a way that responds to their needs and abilities. The aim is to engage them in meaningful discussion, and to listen and learn about them, rather than to complete the Star as quickly as possible. The worker's role includes helping parents gain insight into what's going on for them and what might help. This needs to be done in a skilful and supportive way, preferably using open questions, listening and feeding back to check understanding.

Use the scale descriptors as a basis for discussion about the chosen area, or have an open discussion about the area and then use the scale to place the parent on the Journey of Change. The illustrated short Scales and the brief visual scales in the User Guide are designed to be used directly with parents. Although the detailed scales are intended primarily as a resource for workers, they are written to be accessible, so feel free to refer to specific points for clarification with parents. Avoid reading them out in their entirety because of their length.

Always use the scales – these are designed to reduce subjectivity, otherwise one person's 2 could be another person's 4 and the completed Star won't be a useful basis for completing the action plan and your service won't be able to treat collated Star data as reliable for reporting purposes.

If you don't agree, have a discussion – this can help you learn about the parent and help them reflect on their situation and see it in new ways. Encourage parents with low confidence to see their strengths. If a parent is able to engage meaningfully and is at 3 or above for most of the Parent and Baby Star areas, encourage them to take the lead in placing themselves on the scales. You may need to be more directive for parents in the **accepting help** stage. Those who are in the **things aren't OK** stage in all or most areas will not discuss the Star meaningfully and you may need to do a worker-only reading.

If you can't reach agreement, record both views on the Star, labelling which is your opinion and which is the parent's, using the Star Notes to record points from your discussion. Use your professional judgement to decide when further discussion is not helpful.

Recognise external factors. While the Journey of Change focuses on the parent, there may be societal factors or other conditions beyond their control – and beyond the control of your service – which make it harder for things to improve. These may include poor housing, financial difficulty or lack of suitable mental health provision or any other services they need. These also need to be acknowledged and recorded when using the Star. Your service may then be able to use this information to identify gaps in provision, plan future developments or raise issues with policy-makers.

When you have completed all of the scales, join the points to create a shape. Mark each point on the Star Chart and join the points. Encourage parents to do this and to create the shape themselves. This applies whether you and the parent are completing the Star on paper or on screen, for example, using the Star Online.

Seeing the Star visually helps me to see that I am changing, that things are happening, that there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

Service user

How to use the completed Star as the basis for a support plan

Look at the shape of the completed Star together and prompt the parent to reflect on it as a basis for what to do next. Ask questions such as:

- Is the shape of the Star an accurate picture of how things are for you now?
- What does it tell you about what is and is not going well?
- What are the strengths that you bring to the areas that are going well? How might you apply those strengths in other areas?
- What is it most important to address first?

Once you have chosen the areas to be included in the support plan, further motivational questions for each area include:

- Where on the journey do you want to get to and by when?
- What needs to be done to bring about this change?
- Who is responsible for these actions? When can they be completed?

Complete the Parent and Baby Star Action Plan or use your service's support planning documentation. The Journey of Change provides valuable pointers for thinking about the goals of support with the parent as well as achievable, realistic actions, as summarised on the next page.

Not for use
Sample for information only

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