



# Parent and Baby Star™

The Outcomes Star for perinatal mental health and well-being

mental & emotional health

physical health

housing & essentials

Not for use  
Sample for information only

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Licences are also available for those wishing to translate the document into other languages.

## The Outcomes Star™

This Star is part of a family of Outcomes Star tools. Each tool includes a Star Chart, User Guide or Quiz and guidance on implementation and some have visual and other resources. For other versions of the Outcomes Star, good practice and further information see [www.outcomesstar.org.uk](http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk).

## Acknowledgements

Many people have contributed to the development of the Outcomes Star over its long evolution and we would like to thank all the clients, workers, managers, funders, academics and commissioners who have generously given their time and expertise.

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- East and North Hertfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group
- The Stefanou Foundation

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# Introduction to the Parent and Baby Star™

## We are here to help you care for your baby and yourself

Having a baby can be wonderful but it brings many changes for both mothers and fathers. During pregnancy and the first year after having a baby (the perinatal period) there can be a lot to deal with and many people have times where they struggle to cope, even when things go well. Parents talk about feeling overwhelmed by practicalities, finding it hard to go out, feeling low, depressed, anxious or fearful, or having other symptoms or physical health difficulties. Having some extra support at this stage can make all the difference.

The Parent and Baby Star is a tool for parents who may need extra support in the perinatal period. It is designed to be completed one to one through discussion and is a version of the Outcomes Star, a suite of tools for supporting and measuring change when working with people.

## Outcome areas

The Parent and Baby Star covers seven areas and there is a scale for each:

1. Mental and emotional health
2. Physical health
3. Housing and essentials
4. Relationship
5. Support network
6. Looking after your baby
7. Connecting with your baby

## Journey of Change

Each scale follows the same pattern, or Journey of Change, with five stages:

1. **Things aren't OK** (red)
2. **Accepting help** (orange)
3. **Believing and trying** (yellow)
4. **Finding what works** (green)
5. **Managing well** (blue)

The "Housing and essentials" scale has a slightly different Journey of Change as it focuses on your context as a parent and whether you have what you need in practical terms to raise a baby. This difference affects stages 3 and 4; stage 3 is **basic needs met** and stage 4 is **mostly OK**.

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# The Journey of Change

Change doesn't happen in one go – it's a journey and it can help to understand the steps along the way. Everyone makes changes in their own way but the pattern is often similar. The scales in the Parent and Baby Star are underpinned by a five-stage Journey of Change:

## 1. Things aren't OK

People are concerned about you and perhaps your baby and you don't have the support you need. Perhaps no support has yet been offered or you don't recognise that you are struggling, so at this stage **things aren't OK** and this is not yet improving.

You may feel very low, depressed, anxious or fearful or be experiencing strong mood swings. You may find it hard to cope or to go out, or feel overwhelmed or resentful – anything on a whole spectrum of emotions. Perhaps you are finding it hard to bond with your baby at the moment or you struggle to look after your baby and/or yourself well enough. Perhaps pregnancy or looking after a young baby is not going the way you expected, and you are struggling with the change.

## 2. Accepting help

At this stage, the concerns are the same as at 1 but you are aware that you need some extra support and are **accepting help**. You may be experiencing emotions or responses that you are concerned about and/or you may be struggling to prepare for or look after your baby or come to terms with how your life has changed, but you are talking to someone about what is happening. You go along with at least some support to look after yourself or your baby, even if you don't think it's needed. However, you don't yet believe things can really improve and you don't take the initiative yourself.

## 3. Believing and trying

At this stage, **believing and trying**, you can see that change is possible and recognise that you can do things to make a difference to your situation. You believe that you can adjust to the changes that being pregnant or having a baby bring and you take the initiative to address some of the issues you are facing, for example by introducing new routines or strategies or other approaches. This behaviour is new and often things don't go well at first and you may need lots of support and encouragement to keep trying.

## 4. Finding what works

The next stage is **finding what works** for you. Some of the new things that you have tried make a difference and so you start seeing some reward for your efforts. You and perhaps your partner<sup>1</sup> may be learning how to manage your health and well-being or learning what to do when you experience difficulties or symptoms. You may be finding ways to do things that help you cope or feel better, build a positive connection with your baby or sort things out at home. However, some things don't work, and it's important to have support to reflect and learn from these and stay on track.

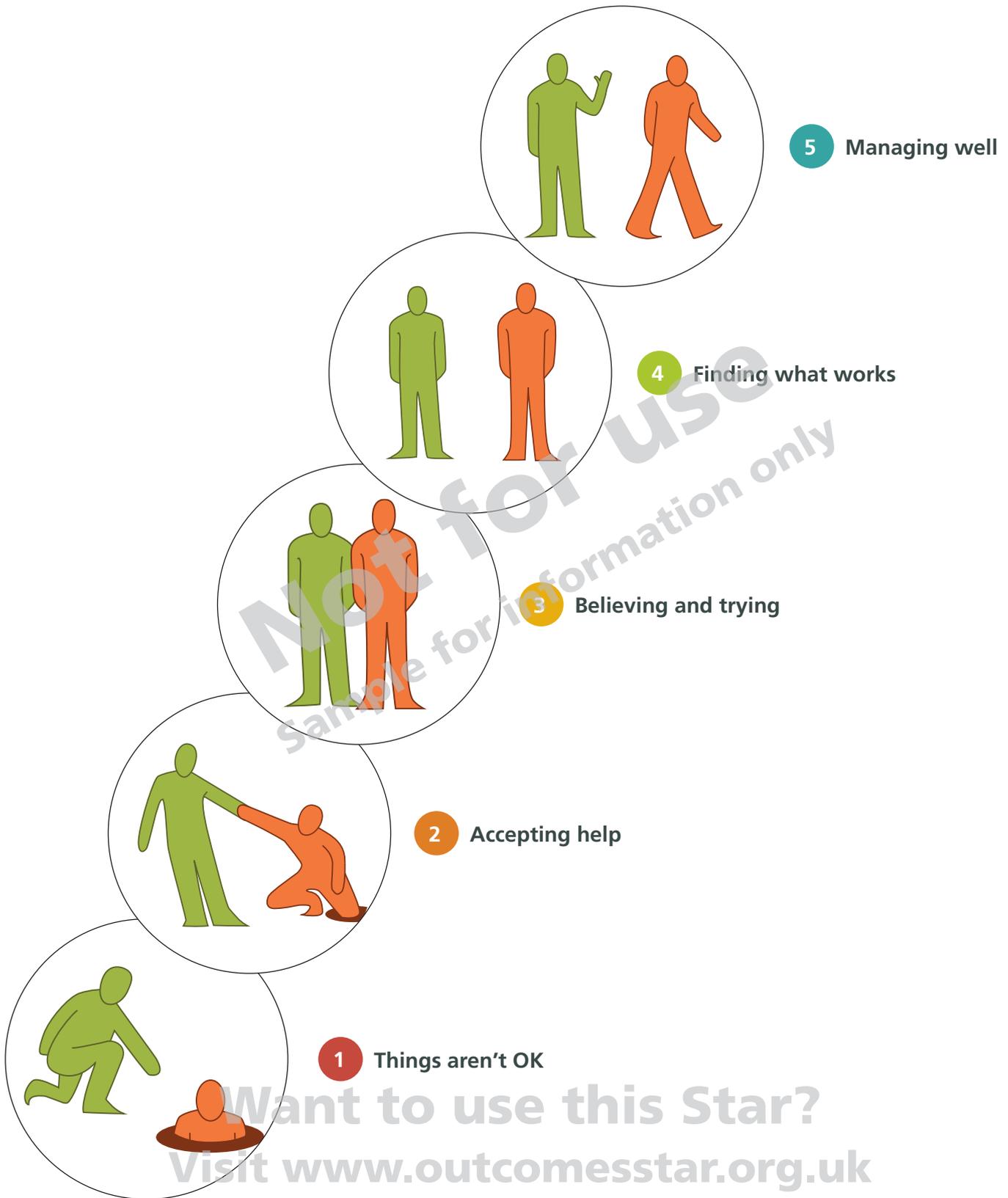
## 5. Managing well

At this stage, you are **managing well**. Things may still feel new and you are still adjusting but you can look after yourself and your baby well enough without help from a specialist service. You draw on support from your partner, family, friends, community and/or non-specialist services as needed. You probably need to keep adjusting to the changes of being pregnant or having a baby, but you mostly feel stable and OK mentally and emotionally, within life's normal ups and downs. You know how to keep well and to access support if you need it in the future. Perhaps you feel more resilient after what you have been through.

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1. We have used the term "partner" throughout. If you are not together as a couple but continue to have a relationship as co-parents, this term can include that relationship. If you have both a partner and a co-parent, you will be asked to focus on one or other relationship when completing the "Relationship" scale (scale 4).

# The Journey of Change



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# 1 Mental and emotional health

Medication and treatment, coping with difficulties and anxieties, time for yourself

## Key points

- If you have a mental health condition, such as postnatal depression, focus on that when discussing this scale
- At 5 you can mostly cope with the added ups and downs and changes that being pregnant or having a baby brings

## 5 Managing well

I manage my mental health well enough and mostly feel OK. I can deal with life's ups and downs

## 4 Finding what works

I'm finding ways to manage my mental health and/or emotional well-being, with support

## 3 Believing and trying

I believe I can improve my mental health and/or emotional well-being and am trying, but it's hard

## 2 Accepting help

I often feel low or anxious or have other strong symptoms but I'm getting help with this

## 1 Things aren't OK

I often feel very low or anxious or have other strong symptoms. I don't talk about it

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# 1 Mental and emotional health (detail)

This scale is about how you manage your mental health and emotional well-being during pregnancy and once your baby is born. It's about learning how to manage your emotions, behaviour and symptoms, and taking medication as appropriate. It's also about finding healthy ways to cope with the inevitable changes and with any stress, exhaustion and anxiety, as well as creating time for yourself to do things you enjoy.

## 5 Managing well

### **I manage my mental health well enough and mostly feel OK. I can deal with life's ups and downs**

- You keep adjusting to the changes of being pregnant or having a baby, you mostly feel OK mentally and emotionally and you bounce back when things go wrong
- You have healthy ways to feel good and do those things when you can
- If you have been experiencing depression, anxiety or other mental health difficulties, you are managing your symptoms well or they have reduced or gone
- You don't need professional help with this, except for regular check-ups, and any support comes from family or friends

## 4 Finding what works

### **I'm finding ways to manage my mental health and/or emotional well-being, with support**

- You are finding what works to make you feel better, for example by using techniques to manage irritability, negative thoughts or worries. Perhaps you get more sleep or breaks during the day
- You are developing strategies that help you cope better when things don't go well, such as when your baby cries a lot or you or your baby are unwell or overtired
- If you have a mental health condition, you follow agreed treatment and are learning to understand triggers and to manage symptoms for yourself
- There are a few problem areas and it helps to have support to stay on track

## 3 Believing and trying

### **I believe I can improve my mental health and/or emotional well-being and am trying, but it's hard**

- You want to improve how you feel and are trying out a few changes such as attempting to relax or take time for yourself, but it's early days and you often slip back
- Pregnancy or having a baby may not be as you expected but you believe you can adjust to the changes they inevitably bring
- If you have a mental health condition, you are testing out prescribed medication or treatment but don't know yet what works for you

## 2 Accepting help

### **I often feel low or anxious or have other strong symptoms but I'm getting help with this**

- As for 1, but you realise you need help and are talking to someone about how you are feeling, though you don't take the initiative to try new things
- You may have had a diagnosis and are (re)starting medication or engaging with therapy or other treatment but are not confident things can change

## 1 Things aren't OK

### **I often feel very low or anxious or have other strong symptoms. I don't talk about it**

- You often feel low, depressed, fearful, stressed, overwhelmed or exhausted, or you may be hyperactive, very irritable or experiencing a lot of mood swings. Perhaps things are not how you expected, and you are struggling with this
- You may get very anxious, perhaps about aspects of looking after your baby, such as feeding or keeping them safe, or with coping with more than one child
- Your behaviour may be causing concern or putting you, your baby or others at risk
- You don't talk about this or engage with support if it's offered. Perhaps you have tried everything you can think of but it's not worked or you don't believe things can improve

## 2 Physical health

Food, exercise, sleep, doctors and treatment, alcohol, smoking, drugs, sexual health

### Key points

- It can be hard to focus on your health, especially with a small baby. This scale isn't about doing everything well but about doing what you can to look after your physical health so that you feel as well as possible
- At 5 your health supports your well-being

### 5 Managing well

I look after my physical health well enough and my lifestyle is healthy enough

### 4 Finding what works

I'm finding ways to look after my health better, but there are a few issues

### 3 Believing and trying

I know I can do more to look after my health and am trying to make changes but it's hard

### 2 Accepting help

I'm not managing to look after my health well enough but I have some help with this

### 1 Things aren't OK

People are concerned about my health or lifestyle. I don't talk about this

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## 2 Physical health (detail)

This scale is about how well you look after your physical health, both during pregnancy and once your baby is born. It includes attending appointments with doctors, midwives, and health visitors as needed and following their advice. It also covers making sure you exercise, eat enough healthy food, look after your sexual health, don't smoke, and don't use drugs or drink too much alcohol.

### 5 Managing well

#### I look after my physical health well enough and my lifestyle is healthy enough

- You take care of your physical health. You attend health appointments, treat minor health problems at home and look after your sexual health
- Your lifestyle is mostly healthy. You mostly eat enough healthy food, take exercise, get enough sleep and don't smoke. You don't drink beyond safe limits or use drugs
- You may use exercise, healthy eating or prioritising sleep to help manage your emotions
- If you have a health condition you are doing everything you can to manage it well
- You don't need professional help with this and any support comes from family or friends

### 4 Finding what works

#### I'm finding ways to look after my health better, but there are a few issues

- You mostly attend health appointments and follow treatment and advice as needed
- You are finding ways to be healthier, such as eating more healthy food, exercising or managing to get at least a little more sleep
- You may recognise that looking after your physical health helps your mood, as well as being good for your unborn baby during pregnancy
- If you used to smoke or drink too much alcohol, you have stopped or do so only rarely
- There are a few problem areas and it helps to have support to stay on track

### 3 Believing and trying

#### I know I can do more to look after my health and am trying to make changes but it's hard

- You know that having a healthier lifestyle yourself will help you and your baby and may also improve your mental health and/or emotional well-being
- You try to attend most health appointments and follow any treatment
- You are trying to make changes to your lifestyle, for example by eating more healthily, trying to get more sleep, giving up smoking or avoiding drinking too much but it's early days and you have not established new habits yet

### 2 Accepting help

#### I'm not managing to look after my health well enough but I have some help with this

- As for 1, you don't look after your health, but you attend some health appointments and sometimes follow advice or treatment
- You have help to look at your lifestyle if this is unhealthy, and may be getting advice, such as on healthy eating, but don't yet take the initiative yourself

### 1 Things aren't OK

#### People are concerned about my health or lifestyle. I don't talk about this

- You don't know what you need to be healthy or don't make healthy choices. Perhaps you don't eat well or hardly get any sleep. You may feel you are doing all you can but it's not helping. This is having a bad effect on you, your mental health and/or your baby
- You may not be attending health appointments with the doctor, midwife or health visitor when necessary
- You may be smoking, using drugs or drinking more alcohol than is good for you, or not taking care of your diet during pregnancy. You may not look after your sexual health
- You don't talk about this or engage with support if it's offered – perhaps you don't recognise a problem or don't believe things can improve

# 3 Housing and essentials

A suitable, stable home, money for basics, essential equipment

## Key points

- You may be doing all you can to provide for your baby but still be at 1–3 in this scale because you don't have a suitable home or the essentials for your baby just now
- Being at 4 or 5 means that you have a suitable home and you have the essentials to look after your baby

## 5 Managing well

I have a home and essentials for my baby and me

## 4 Mostly OK

I mostly have what I need to look after my baby, but there are still a few things to sort out

## 3 Basic needs met

I have the basics in terms of home and money but there is a lot to sort out and I'm finding it hard

## 2 Accepting help

I don't have what I need to look after my baby but I have help with this

## 1 Things aren't OK

I don't have what I need to look after my baby. I don't have help or don't talk about it

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