



Using the Recovery Star™

The Recovery Star is for use with people who are experiencing problems with mental health. It is designed as an integral component of one-to-one keywork¹ or support focusing on recovery or managing well with mental health problems. It is suitable for people experiencing a wide range of mental health difficulties for short or long periods of time.

Completing the Recovery 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 supports strengths-based, person-centred and trauma-informed approaches. The Star is a flexible tool that relies on the skills of the professionals using it, as well as on a degree of understanding and trust between them and the service user. The Star is designed to be used one to one; the aim is to have a genuine interaction and complete it collaboratively. This can help someone feel more in control and support their recovery.

The Star is a flexible tool that consists of:

- The Recovery Star Chart, Notes and Action Plan for completion by workers with service users
- The Recovery Star User Guide, with accessible and detailed scales for each of the ten outcome areas and a detailed description of the Journey of Change
- This Guidance for Workers
- Flashcards for use with service users
- A web application for online completion at www.staronline.org.uk

In addition, Triangle have also published the following supporting documents:

- An overview of the development process
- A review of the supporting evidence for the fourth edition
- A review of the psychometric validation of the Recovery Star.

This guidance supports the fourth edition of the Recovery Star (2019). The introduction to the User Guide details improvements made for this edition. Background and further information about the Outcomes Star suite of tools can be found at www.outcomesstar.org.uk.

Visit www.outcomesstar.org.uk

Contact info@triangleconsulting.co.uk

¹ Keywork may have another name in your service, but includes assessing a service user's needs, agreeing goals and providing support and referrals to help them meet those goals. The keyworker is the person who is assigned special responsibility for working with that service user.

Not only is this a useful tool for assessment and identification of needs, its use over time can demonstrate to commissioners that they are getting the right outcomes from the services they fund.

Department of Health
Green Paper, 2009 (on
the Recovery Star)



Before you use the Recovery Star™

Make sure that you have received training in using the Recovery Star

and that you are familiar with the materials and know when and how the Star is used in your service. It's vital that you understand and use the Journey of Change underlying the scales – **stuck**, **accepting help**, **believing and trying**, **learning**, and **self-reliance**. 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 for the service user.

How to introduce the Recovery Star™

Think about where to complete the Star, and try to find a place where the service user can feel at ease. Take account of situations or topics that may trigger anxiety or anger, perhaps from trauma, to give the best possible conditions to support the conversation and enable the service user to focus and take an overview of their life.

Before you introduce the Star to service users 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 service users 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 service users who are interested a copy of the User Guide to read before the session. Although this 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 10 is the top of the Star scales but not the end of the journey
- Be clear that this is about exploring where they are and building up a map of their world, experiences and journey – it is not about being judged as good or bad
- Avoid using the term “score” – refer to where someone is on the scale or Journey of Change and refer to the stage names, colours and numbers, depending on what works best for each individual
- Encourage people to ask questions so they feel as comfortable as possible about the Recovery Star and reassure them that they will have choices about the pace and process.

I felt fully involved; it was clear and easy to understand and focused on me as a whole person, not just as a problem.

Service user, Tulip Day Centre

It felt like a conversation – it felt as if for the first time someone had really listened to me.

Service user, Tulip Day Centre

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Overall, the skills and approach needed to introduce and use the Recovery Star well are likely to be in keeping with being person-centred and trauma-informed, as well as other good practice in your service. Some suggested phrases for introducing the Star include:

“The Recovery Star is a way of tracking your journey and finding out about the areas where you need more information or support.”

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

How to complete the Recovery Star™

Complete the Star collaboratively with a service user 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.

Discuss each area. Let the service user decide which scale to start with or choose one that is concrete and may be easier to discuss (for instance, “Physical health”), to help build their sense of control and put them at ease.

Do more asking than telling to help the service user share their perspective and build a better picture of their needs. This also helps to build the relationship and show that the Star is about helping people achieve their goals.

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 service user on the Journey of Change. The brief visual scales in the User Guide and the Flashcards are designed to be used directly with service users. 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 service users. Avoid reading them out in their entirety because of their length.

Always use the detailed scales and be aware of the Journey of Change when deciding where a service user is on their journey. These are designed to reduce subjectivity – otherwise one person’s 3 could be another person’s 8 and the completed Star won’t be a useful basis for completing the support 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 service user and help them reflect on their situation and see it in new ways. If a service user is able to engage meaningfully and is at 5 or above for most of the Recovery Star areas, encourage them to take the lead in placing themselves on the scales. You may need to be more directive for service users in the **accepting help** stage, and those who are **stuck** in all or most areas won’t discuss the Star meaningfully and you may need to do a worker-only reading.

This process requires good keyworking skills, some knowledge of the person and a relationship with them. You will need to encourage those people with low confidence to see their strengths, and others to be more realistic.

If you can’t reach agreement, record both readings on the Star, labelling which is the worker’s view and which is the service user’s. Use the Star Notes to record points from your discussion. Use your professional judgement to decide when further discussion isn’t helpful.

Spend time reflecting on areas where the service user has strengths, drawing out the abilities and skills they are using, as well as on the areas where they have difficulties. This can build their awareness of what they are good at and confidence that they can meet other challenges.

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Recognise external factors. While the Journey of Change focuses on the service user, 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 other services. These also need to be acknowledged and recorded when using the Star. For example, lack of money may affect how people can participate in activities or eat well. Your service may then be able to use this information to identify gaps in provision, plan future developments or raise issues with policy-makers.

Recognise other factors. While the emphasis in the Recovery Star is on where someone is now and how they can be supported to make progress, there may be trauma or other factors from their past that contribute to their mental health issues and/or to what they need now. As with external factors, these need to be acknowledged and will affect how you work with someone, in line with good practice in your service.

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

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 service user to comment on it as a basis for agreeing 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 isn't 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 of your life?
- What does your Star tell you about areas where you need to make changes or where you could do with more support?
- 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 that change?
- Who is responsible for these actions? When can they be completed?

Complete the Recovery Star Action Plan or use your organisation's action planning documentation. The Journey of Change provides valuable pointers for thinking about the goals of support with the service user and achievable, realistic actions:

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

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