

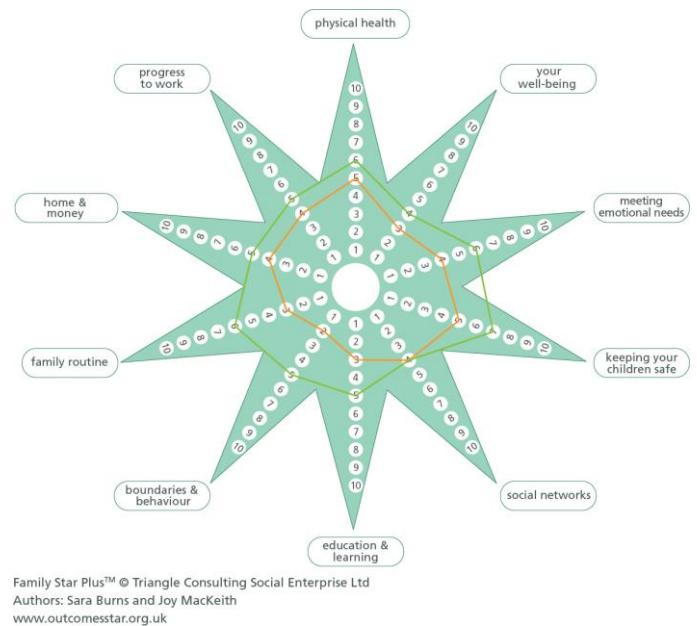
## The benefits of the Outcomes Star™ over typical outcomes measures

### What are the Outcomes Stars™?

The Outcomes Stars are a suite of evidence-based outcomes measurement and keywork tools, which encourage and facilitate an enabling approach to service delivery.

They support person-centred, collaborative and trauma informed working and give service users, workers, managers and commissioners vital information about needs and progress.

Since the first version was published in 2006, the unique features of the Outcomes Star have made it extremely popular, with over 1,000 organisations licensed to use the Star including over 500 charities and 170 local authorities.



### What does the Outcomes Star™ offer over typical outcomes measures?

This briefing explains what the Star offers, over and above what can be gained from typical outcomes measures, such as 1-7 ‘Likert scale’ self-report measures that were often designed for use in academic research. Typical outcomes measures can offer some useful information and are often free and quick to complete, but in many settings the Star offers a multitude of additional benefits including better and more effective keywork, more insight into what is likely to work for an individual, greater success in achieving outcomes and in-depth information for service delivery. These benefits are summarised in the table below and described in more detail on the next page.

	Typical outcomes measures	The Outcomes Star
<b>1 Are underlying components of an end outcome captured?</b>	General measures of one overarching construct – e.g., quality of life	Five to ten individual components <i>underlying</i> broader outcomes such as quality of life
	Measure an end outcome – e.g., employment	Captures the full journey to end outcomes
<b>2 What do the response options on the scale tell you?</b>	A score of where someone is on a sliding scale, in which the response options are only defined only by labels (e.g., ‘not at all’ to ‘very much’)	Where the person is in terms of a) acknowledging an issue, b) engaging with support, c) attempting new things, d) the success of strategies and e) self-reliance
<b>3 How are they completed?</b>	Either self-report or professional only. They are often seen as additional paperwork that takes away from the ‘real work’	An integral part of keywork, with the Star completed collaboratively to build a shared understanding

<b>4 How well is action planning supported?</b>	May help to identify the areas of support needed <i>or</i> level of support, but rarely both	Information about the areas in which support is needed <i>and</i> the nature of that support
<b>5 What support is provided to use the tool well?</b>	Little or no support to use the measure well	Tailored support to ensure the Star is a good fit, that staff can use the Star and the upgraded Star Online app well
<b>6 Does it support good service delivery?</b>	Limited impact on keywork – and potentially detracts from it	Encourages and provides a means of implementing holistic, strengths based, person-centred working

### The Star outcome areas capture the underlying components of end outcomes

Organisations and commissioners sometimes focus on ‘hard outcomes’ such as whether someone has entered employment or secured accommodation, or single scores representing constructs such as well-being or quality of life. While there is value in these simple measures, it can be extremely valuable to know more about the reasons *why* someone has low scores on these sorts of measures so that these can be addressed.

Completing the Star prompts detailed discussion about what is happening in areas such as accommodation, relationships, employment, physical and mental health, as well as clarifying the interrelationships between areas. This process helps all involved to understand the factors that may be contributing to well-being and what support might be needed.

*“The holistic nature of the Star means we have conversations about areas that we might not otherwise, and it also reminds people (clearly and visually) of their strengths”*

### The points on the Journey of Change provide an in-depth picture of a person’s situation

Typical Likert scale self-report scales (e.g., well-being measured on a 1-7 scale) provide a simple idea of the degree if something and are often defined only at the top and bottom (e.g., ‘not at all’ – ‘very much’). Without detailed definitions of each point on the scales, the number can mean different things to different people and aggregated data such as people having an average score of 5.4 or progressing 1.3 points is not particularly meaningful for managers or commissioners.

In contrast, the Star captures ‘distance travelled’ on the journey towards sustainable changes in people’s well-being and circumstances. There is a clearly defined Journey of Change, which highlights the stage someone is at on a defined outcome area in terms of a variety of attitudes, behaviours and situation. For most versions of the Star, the Journey of Change measures the following constructs:

- Awareness of problems
- Acceptance of support
- Hope that things can change, and belief in the value of personal action
- Personal actions and how effective and embedded these actions are
- The degree of self-reliance and need for support from a service in each specific area

- The degree to which the person is managing well, is resilient and equipped to seek help

At an individual level, it is important to know how much those providing support need to take the lead and what type of support is needed – for example, is it helping someone to open up and acknowledge a problem, or is it supporting them to overcome challenges they are having in trying to address the problem? This may differ across outcome areas, so it is helpful to know the different types of support needed for each. Triangle provides detailed guidance about what someone at each stage may be experiencing, reflections to support the keyworker, and possible open questions and actions.

As well as intermediate changes often being necessary to reach hard outcomes, they can greatly increase the chances of outcomes being maintained over time. For example, someone who has learnt coping strategies and knows where to seek help will have greater resilience in staying in employment. Recognising the earlier transitions is also motivating for all involved.

At an aggregated service level, it is useful to know where people are when they arrive – for example, are people generally at the stage of accepting help in a particular outcome area or are they further up on the journey? Aggregated Star data can also facilitate learning about which stage transitions are working well or not so well in the service – for example, the service may be good at encouraging acceptance of support but struggle to help people to become more self-reliant. The data can be reported in a way that is meaningful for commissioners and others who may be unfamiliar with the Star. For example, ‘75% of service users who were who were struggling to find time for themselves progressed to feeling they had now gained some social life or activities and time for themselves outside the caring role’.

*“We have started sharing outcomes data with commissioners...and have had very positive responses. One said they wished they had that sort of information for other services they commission”*

As discussed in our [Making Change visible](#) briefing, there is increasing recognition that to fully understand and facilitate important achievements made through service provision, outcomes measurement should include the whole continuum from realising the need for change to being able to sustain observable changes in situation, behaviour and hard outcomes. The popularity of the Outcomes Star is in part down to its ability to capture this journey, with the latter stages of the Journey of Change indicating change in the outcomes commissioners have traditionally required.

*“The Family Star is an effective tool for measuring intermediate outcomes”*

### **The collaborative process of completing the Star builds a shared perspective**

Typically, outcome measures are completed as self-report or professional only. This is simple and often more suitable in academic research, but in real-life service delivery settings there are considerable benefits to drawing on the insights of both parties – both in terms of the accuracy of data and facilitating the process of change.

The discussion that occurs during collaborative completion of the Star brings in the unique perspectives and insights of both the practitioner and the person being supported. Each can sense check the other and agree the most accurate representation of the situation with reference to detailed descriptors of each point on the scale. Where agreement cannot be reached, it is possible to record separate readings, which can be useful information in itself. It may be for example, that

separate readings must be recorded initially, but as the relationship builds, more agreement and understanding is reached.

From a keywork perspective, this collaborative process is greatly appreciated by those using the Star as a means of building trust, and a shared understanding of the issues and the actions that are needed. In a recent survey of Star users, more than 90% agreed that the Star ‘supports good conversations and collaboration between staff and service users’ and ‘helps them to get an overview of the situation’.

*“I love using the Star with families. It really helps to encourage your client to work with you rather than against you”.*

Action planning is supported by working together in planning the way forward- and as discussed above, the type of support that is likely to be most suitable in each outcome area can be guided by the Star.

*“The Star gives parents a real understanding of how we can support them”*

By virtue of being integral to the keywork process and being user-friendly, the Star is often welcomed by those completing it. Instead of being extra paperwork that takes away from time that could be spent doing the ‘real work’, completing the Star is the real work of service delivery.

*“Often practitioners will choose My Star because of the child-friendly resources”*

### **Ongoing support is provided to help services use the Star well**

Simple Likert scale measures are often accessed without guidance on their suitability or support to use them well. At Triangle, we have a dedicated team to support services right from the start when the Star is being considered. We invest a lot of time getting to know the needs and nature of services to ensure the Star is a good fit, provide in-depth training and support to use Star Online app to record readings, visualise change and create tailored reports. Ongoing support is included as part of the license model, and All organisations have a named staff member to help them to get the most from the Star, as well as access to a large body of resources and support from our research and data experts.

*“It has changed the way our keyworkers operate and we are getting better results”*

### **Using the Star alongside more typical outcomes measures**

Services that use the Star greatly benefit from going beyond handing service users a quick survey at the end of an intervention. We understand the pressures that are on services, and that commissioners and national initiatives sometimes require them to only use specified typical outcome measures. The Star is not always the right option and we are genuinely invested in making sure that it is only used when it can be of benefit. In many cases, it is helpful to use the Star alongside other self-report or professional-only measures. For example, pure risk assessments can be complemented by the holistic picture provided by the Star.

## Further information

The Development reports and case studies on our website provide further evidence of these benefits. Further to this, there is evidence of improvement in service delivery ([details here](#)) and hard outcomes following the introduction of the Star, peer-reviewed articles have identified more than ten different keyword benefits (see our [Research library](#)).

To find out more about the Outcomes Star please see our website <https://www.outcomesstar.org.uk> or get in touch on [info@triangleconsulting.co.uk](mailto:info@triangleconsulting.co.uk) or **+44(0) 207 272 8765**.