



# Using the Youth Star™

The Youth Star is designed to be used with young people taking part in community-based youth projects. It is aimed at young people aged 12 to 21 but may be used with younger or older children or young people if workers and managers feel it is appropriate.

The Youth Star resources consist of:

- The Youth Star Chart, Notes and Action Plan for completion by workers and young people
- The Youth Star User Guide, with both brief visual scales and detailed scale descriptions and a detailed description of the Journey of Change
- Short, illustrated Scales and Flashcards for use with young people
- An illustrated summary of the Journey of Change
- This Guidance for Workers
- A web application for online completion at [www.staronline.org.uk](http://www.staronline.org.uk)
- A Development Report, describing the development process and presenting the pilot findings.

The Youth Star is a really engaging tool.

Youth Worker

Project leaders have found the Star easy to pick up and use.

Youth Worker

The Youth Star was developed by Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise in collaboration with Groundwork UK. Second edition changes were developed in collaboration with Young Solutions and young people, youth workers and managers from RYCE (Redditch), Woodrush Youth and Community Centre, Street Games and Riverside Youth Centre (Pershore). The Lancashire Youth Service (Preston) also provided feedback for the second edition.

Completing the Youth 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 plan and goal-setting. 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 them and the young person. The Star is designed to be used one to one; the aim is to have a genuine interaction and complete it collaboratively.

Background and further information about the Outcomes Star suite of tools can be found at [www.outcomesstar.org.uk](http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk)

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or 020 7272 8765



## Before you use the Youth Star™

**Make sure that you have received training in using the Youth Star** and that you are familiar with the materials and know when and how they are used in your project. It is vital that you understand and use the Journey of Change underlying the scales – **stuck, considering, having a go, working on it** and **enjoying and achieving**. This will ensure consistent and reliable information as a basis for action plans and goal-setting. You also need to be familiar with all the scale descriptions, so you can unpack and rephrase them as needed.

## How to introduce the Youth 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 mainly work with young people 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 young people who are interested a copy of the short illustrated Scales or 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 and can move both up and down on the scale. Point out that 5 is the top of the Star scales, but not the end of their journey – they will be on the right track at this point but will continue to improve and grow
- 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 or being awarded an overall number
- Avoid using the term “score” – refer to where someone is on the Journey of Change using stage names, colours and/or numbers, depending on what works best for each individual
- Encourage the young person to ask questions so they feel as comfortable as possible about the Youth Star and reassure them that they will have choices about the pace and the process
- Let the young person decide which scale to start with or choose one that is concrete and may be easier to discuss, such as “Interests and activities”.

Some suggested phrases for introducing the Star include:

*“We are here to help you make the most of opportunities, enjoy learning and feel confident, so that you can be your own person. The Youth Star helps us do that.”*

*“The Youth 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.”*

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## How to complete the Youth Star™

**Complete the Star collaboratively with young people** 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.

**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 young person on the Journey of Change. The brief visual scales in the User Guide and the short illustrated Scales and Flashcards are designed to be used directly with young people, so you can choose which option works best. 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 young people. Avoid reading them out in their entirety because of their length.

**Always use the scales and be aware of the Journey of Change when deciding where someone is on 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 project 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 young person and help them reflect on their situation and see it in new ways. Ask young people why they have chosen a particular number, challenge them or remind them of their achievements as needed. You may need to be more directive for young people in the **considering** stage. Those who are **stuck** in all or most areas will not discuss the Star meaningfully and you may need to do a worker-only reading.

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

It starts a reflection process – they can see that where they are isn't good and that they need to change.

Youth worker

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

**Recognise external and other factors.** While the Journey of Change focuses on the young person, there may be societal factors or other conditions beyond their control – and beyond the control of your project – which make it harder for things to improve. These may include poor housing, family problems or lack of educational or work opportunities. These also need to be acknowledged and recorded when using the Star. Your project may then be able to use this information to identify gaps in provision, plan future developments or raise issues with policy-makers.

While the emphasis in the Youth Star is on where someone is now and how they can be supported to make progress, there may be trauma or other factors that affect their progress and/or what they need now. As with external factors, these may need to be acknowledged and may 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 young person to do this themselves and create the shape. This applies whether you and the young person are completing the Star on paper or on screen, for example using the Star Online.

The Star is massive for us in identifying the areas we need to work on.

Youth worker

Not for use  
Sample for information only

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## How to use the completed Star as the basis for an action plan

Look at the shape of the completed Star together and prompt the young person to reflect on it as a basis for what to do next. Ask motivational 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 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 most important to address first?

Once you have chosen the areas to be included in the action plan, further 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 Youth Star Action Plan** on paper or on the Star Online or use your service's support planning documentation. The Journey of Change provides valuable pointers for thinking about the goals of support with the young person and achievable, realistic actions.

We have arranged all sorts of group-work topics in response to what's come out from doing the Star.  
**Youth worker**

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