

Alcohol Star™

The Outcomes Star for alcohol recovery

“ People really open up and sometimes it leads to whole new conversations

“ Service users really enjoyed the interaction – and there were statistical results!

“ I could feed back to my head office some really impressive results

has made the support plans more imaginative and more individual

“ The Outcomes Star is an invaluable tool for our sector

“ Support is more systematic and structured

ve to
d, even
e is
s needed

“ We have incorporated it into assessment and three monthly reviews

“ It helps identify training needs for staff and volunteers

“ We can now assist clients better - we love the Star!

“ Some people can't understand written reports, but can understand this

“ The Star is collaborative, rather than something that is done to people

“ It enables a clear direction for collaborating with a client

holistic approach and direction to the support

“ The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and in some cases life changing

Developed by Sara Burns and Joy MacKeith
of Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise

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Please contact info@triangleconsulting.co.uk to enquire about buying a licence and training.

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.

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.

The original commission for an outcome measurement system came from St Mungo's, with financial support from the London Housing Foundation, and Triangle recognises their vital roles in the development of the Outcomes Star. We would also like to acknowledge Kate Graham's important contribution to the development of the suite of Stars, both as a founding partner of Triangle and as co-author of the original Outcomes Star (now called the Outcomes Star for Homelessness).

We would particularly like to thank the following people and organisations for their contribution to this version of the Star:

- All the alcohol services that participated in the development of the original Alcohol Outcomes Spider on which the Alcohol Star is based
- Aquarius for their enthusiasm and work that made the 2009 test version of the Alcohol Star possible and Birmingham DAAT for funding the development of the test version
- East Midlands DAAT, Derbyshire Drug and Alcohol Service (DAAS), Addaction and Lincolnshire NHS service for testing the Alcohol Star in 2010 and input into this final version.

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Introduction

Introduction to the Alcohol Star™

The Alcohol Star is a version of the Outcomes Star, a family of tools for supporting and measuring change when working directly with people.

It is an outcomes tool that enables organisations to measure and summarise change across a range of services and people with different needs. It is also a keywork tool that can support service users to make changes by providing them with a map of the Journey of Change and a way of plotting their progress along the way.

The original version of the Outcomes Star was developed for the homelessness sector and tailored versions are now available for a wide range of client groups including people with a mental health condition, people receiving support with work and learning, teenagers and vulnerable families.

The Alcohol Star focuses on ten core areas that have been found to be critical in supporting people to progress towards and maintain a life free from problem drinking, and from drug misuse, where this has been an issue alongside the drinking:

1. Alcohol
2. Physical health
3. Use of time
4. Social networks
5. Drug use
6. Emotional health
7. Offending
8. Accommodation
9. Money
10. Family and relationships.

For each core area, there is a ten-point scale that measures where the service user is on their journey towards addressing each area and identifying the amount of support they need. These are all based on the Journey of Change, which is an understanding of the steps people go through towards recovery from alcohol dependency. This Journey of Change comprises five stages:

Stuck (1-2)

Accepting help (3-4)

Believing (5-6)

Learning (7-8)

Self-reliance (9-10).

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The full Journey of Change is described in detail in part two of this guide and the Alcohol Star User Guide provides the detailed scales for each of the ten core areas within these five stages.

The Alcohol Star is underpinned by the assumption that positive growth is a possible and realistic goal for all service users. The Star is designed to support as well as measure this growth by focusing on people's potential rather than their problems. The Alcohol Star has been designed for people for whom problem drinking is the main or only problem. It includes a scale on drug use because some clients may also have drug-related problems.

It is one of the few tools that both commissioners and the commissioned agree on – both see it as a good tool that works for clients, workers, managers and commissioners.

**Derbyshire
Alcohol Advisory
Service**

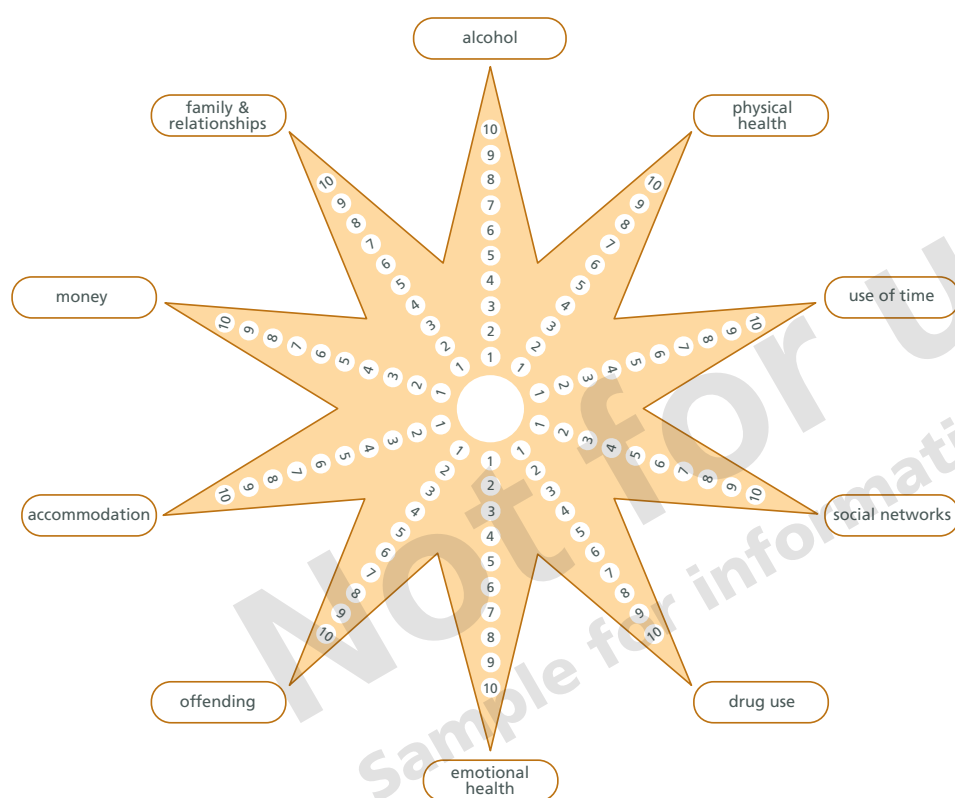


Figure 1: The Alcohol Star

How it was developed

The Alcohol Star brings up to date the Alcohol Outcomes Spider, which was developed for Alcohol Concern in 2004 by Sara Burns, now a director of Triangle and co-author of the family of Outcomes Star tools. Around 40 alcohol services participated over a period of around nine months in a thorough, bottom-up process of development and testing for the Alcohol Spider. The process consisted of:

- An initial all-day workshop to identify the intended outcomes of alcohol services and the underlying model of change
- A first draft of the Alcohol Outcomes Spider based on this material and drawing on the concept developed by Triangle's directors for St Mungo's in 2003 – the St Mungo's Star

- Feedback on an early draft through another series of workshops, followed by further improvements to the tool
- A four-month pilot period when the draft Alcohol Outcomes Spider was tested in the participating services, which included residential, structured day and community based services with philosophies of both abstinence and controlled drinking
- A series of end-of-pilot workshops to gather feedback on the tool and the value of the data gathered in the process of using the Spider with service users
- Finalising the Alcohol Outcomes Spider in response to this feedback and developing guidance
- Publication of the Alcohol Outcomes Spider by Alcohol Concern in January 2005.

Between 2006 and 2010, Triangle developed a number of versions of the Outcomes Star, using a similar, thoroughly bottom-up process in each sector. This led to learning and improvements, particularly in making these tools more accessible and user-friendly. In 2009, Triangle worked with Aquarius and Alcohol Concern, with funding from Birmingham Drug and Alcohol Team to review the Alcohol Outcomes Spider, to benefit from the learning from the Outcomes Stars, including the more user-friendly scales and presentation. The Alcohol Star was first published by Alcohol Concern as a test version in 2009.

This test version was piloted from February to June 2010 through collaboration between the East Midlands Regional Alcohol Programme, Alcohol Concern and Triangle. Three East Midlands services were trained in and used the Alcohol Star at assessment and three-month review with over 100 service users, while at the same time alcohol consumption was measured.

Feedback was positive on all aspects of using the Star with service users, the tool itself and the relevance and value of the data generated by analysis of the 100 service users' completed Stars. The main suggestions for improvement were to add a scale on housing, as some services reported that the majority of their clients had accommodation issues, and to have separate scales for use of time (including work) and social networks. These and other feedback has been incorporated into the current edition of the Alcohol Star, which is now a ten-point Star.

Validity of Alcohol Star™ data

Organisations taking part in the pilot completed the Alcohol Star with around 100 clients at assessment and review alongside a measure of alcohol consumption. Analysis of this pilot data, as set out in table 1 on the next page, shows a strong correlation between progress as measured by the Alcohol Star and a reduction in consumption. Key findings are:

- All of the clients with a substantial or moderate decrease in their alcohol consumption showed an increase in their overall Star reading
- Of the clients who showed an increase on their Alcohol Star reading, 86% had decreased their alcohol consumption and a further 7% had stayed abstinent
- Three out of four people who were abstinent at both Star readings showed an increase in their overall Star reading, indicating progress in other areas
- Two thirds of those who had increased their alcohol units showed no change on their overall Star reading
- Nine out of ten people who showed no progress on their Stars had increased their alcohol consumption.

Table 1: Correlation between progress on the Alcohol Star and reduced alcohol consumption

	Large decrease in alcohol units	Some decrease in alcohol units	Maintaining abstinence	Increase in alcohol units
Large increase (>1 on average)	20	5	2	0
Small increase (<1 on average)	12	4	2	4
No change	0	1	0	9
Decrease	0	1	1	2

The data shows the number of service users out of 100 taking part in the pilot study for whom the description applies

How the Alcohol Star™ fits with other tools and models

The Alcohol Star measures a service user's attitude and behaviour in relation to ten areas of their life that have been found to be critical in supporting people to progress towards and maintain a life free from problem drinking. However, it does not measure the frequency or quantity of alcohol consumed. Services therefore need to gather this information at assessment in addition to completing the Star, for instance through a drink diary.

The Alcohol Star may partially replace assessment and review paperwork in a service and section one of this guidance recommends combining and streamlining paperwork. However, it does not provide specific information, such as a client's living situation, work status, family context or the frequency or type of any offending, so this information still needs to be gathered by the service as part of their assessment.

At the time of publication, services are required to use the TOP¹ form with drug clients but not with alcohol clients. Joint drug and alcohol services may find themselves using TOP with clients where the primary use is drugs and the Alcohol Star where the primary use is alcohol and because the Star is favoured by workers and managers as an effective keyworking tool. If both tools are used with a client, the three 1-20 scales in TOP partially duplicate information gathered using the Star and TOP provides a measure of consumption.

The Alcohol Star is underpinned by the Journey of Change. This maps closely onto the Cycle of Change model² and is commonly used and understood within the substance misuse sector. It is therefore relatively easy for workers familiar with the Cycle of Change to understand and use the Journey of Change model and approach integral to the Star.

Want to use this tool?
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¹ The Treatment Outcomes Profile (TOP) is a drug treatment outcome monitoring tool developed by the National Treatment Agency for substance misuse (NTA). It is intended for use in all structured treatment for drug misusers and consists of a brief set of questions for completion at both baseline and every three months during treatment. There are questions related to drug misuse, injecting risk behaviour and offending and three scales covering psychological health, physical health and quality of life.

² Prochaska, J.O., DiClemente, C.C. (1982) "Transtheoretical Therapy: Towards a more integrative model of change" *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, Vol. 19 pp 276-88

Scale point	Star stage	Cycle of Change equivalent
1	Stuck	Pre-contemplation
2		
3	Accepting help	Contemplation
4		
5	Believing	Decision
6		Action
7	Learning	
8		
9	Self-reliance	Maintenance
10		

The Alcohol Star effectively replaces the Alcohol Outcomes Spider. It is recommended that services using the Alcohol Outcomes Spider change to the Alcohol Star and that no service should use both tools.

Alcohol Star™ Resources

The following resources are all available to support effective use of the Alcohol Star.

Alcohol Star™ Chart and Action Plan

The Alcohol Star Chart and Action Plan is completed with service users when using the Alcohol Star as a paper-based system. It is a four-page document and includes the Star Chart itself, on which the Star reading is marked, a summary of the Journey of Change for quick reference and space for notes. A simple action plan is also included that your organisation may also choose to use.

Alcohol Star™ User Guide

The Alcohol Star User Guide contains brief visual scales and detailed scales. There is also a brief introduction to the Alcohol Star for service users. The User Guide is essential for all workers using the Alcohol Star and is designed so that it can also be given to clients, when appropriate.

The Alcohol Star™ Online

Triangle has developed and recommends an accessible and intuitive online version of the Alcohol Star. The Star Online has a facility for on-screen completion of the Star Chart with service users, incorporating the scales from the User Guide and guidance for workers and service users. Alternatively, the Star Online can be used in conjunction with paper versions of the Star, completing the Star on paper with service users and then inputting the reading onto the system later.

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The Star Online is secure and provides a wide range of features allowing organisations to analyse and report on the outcomes data that workers and managers have added to the system and to compare their outcomes with national or regional averages for similar services and client groups. The Star Online is available to organisations using the Alcohol Star for an annual licence fee based on the size of organisation.

For more information or to register for the Alcohol Star Online go to the Star Online website www.staronline.org.uk.

This guide

The guidance that follows is intended to support the implementation and use of the Alcohol Star. Part one is intended for service managers and provides guidance and good practice examples in implementing the Alcohol Star across a service or organisation. Part two presents guidance for support workers in using the Alcohol Star with service users.

Outcomes Star™ website

The Outcomes Star website – www.outcomesstar.org.uk – contains all versions of the Stars and supporting information. Specific areas covered by the website include:

- How the Star was developed
- Research and validation on the Star
- What people say about using the Star
- Good practice on implementation
- Use of Outcomes Star data for outcome measurement
- Use of the Star as a keywork tool
- Information for commissioners on using the Star.

Training

It is essential that workers receive training before using the Alcohol Star. Both Triangle and Alcohol Concern can provide in-house training for managers or staff teams and there may be some open courses available. See the Outcomes Star website: www.outcomesstar.org.uk or the Alcohol Concern website:

www.alcoholconcern.org.uk or email training@triangleconsulting.co.uk or info@alcoholconcern.co.uk.

Triangle

For more information about Triangle, please visit their website: www.triangleconsulting.co.uk.

Alcohol Concern

For more information about Alcohol Concern please visit their website: www.alcoholconcern.org.uk.

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Part 1: Implementing the Alcohol Star™ in your service or organisation

Implementing the Star can affect the way the service is delivered and managed in a number of ways. For instance, it can:

- Provide greater clarity about what the service is trying to achieve and the process of change for service users and keyworkers, resulting in more focused keywork
- Change the way that keyworking is carried out, documented and supervised, depending on your existing systems
- Introduce new data collection and therefore the need to consolidate paperwork, avoid duplication, integrate with IT systems and ensure all levels of management have the information they need
- Demonstrate effectiveness and highlight the areas for improvement with which workers and managers need to engage
- Provide a focus for discussion with commissioners about the role and contribution of the service in the wider local strategic context.

Implementing the Star effectively and achieving the full benefits of using it can therefore take time, continuous attention and a commitment to follow the process through and address issues as they arise. For these reasons, we strongly recommend that the implementation of the Alcohol Star is led from the top of the organisation. Only in this way will the Star receive the profile and backing it requires for developments to be co-ordinated across the organisation.

There are eight steps to introducing the Star to your organisation:

1. Review your reasons for introducing the Star
2. Assess the suitability of the Star for your service
3. Run a pilot
4. Integrate the Star into your ways of working, paperwork and IT
5. Train staff to use the Star
6. Ensure quality and consistency in the use of the Star
7. Analyse and interpret the data
8. Share and act on the learning.

My advice is to see the implementation of the Outcomes Star as a change management process. It is vital to communicate to keyworkers how it will help them to do their job and that it will help the organisation as a whole to make its case to the outside world. It is also vital to integrate the Star fully into keywork processes and training.

St Mungo's

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1 Review your reasons for introducing the Star™

There are a number of reasons why organisations decide to introduce the Star.

Internal reasons:

- They want to take an outcomes approach to their work in order to measure success for individual service users, for services and for the organisation as a whole and to use this information to inform their service delivery
- They feel it will improve keywork.

External reasons:

- To demonstrate the value of the service to funders or commissioners
- Because a funder or commissioner requires that they use the Star as a condition of contract.

Our experience and research indicates that implementation is smoother and satisfaction is higher when organisations are motivated by internal reasons primarily. Even if you are introducing the Star for external reasons, we recommend that you adopt it in the spirit of learning and service improvement and capitalise on the internal benefits, too.

2 Assess the suitability of the Star™ for your service

Firstly, you will need to be confident that the Alcohol Star is the right tool for your service. There are four key questions that will help you do this.

i) Do you have an ongoing keywork relationship with service users?

The Star has been designed to be used in situations where a service user and worker are engaged in a one-to-one keyworking or other support relationship over a period of time. We would suggest at least six weeks.

If you only see a service user once or twice for a short period of time, or have a drop-in service with little or no one-to-one contact, then it is probably not suitable for your service.

ii) Are you aiming to help service users make changes in their attitudes, behaviour or skills and abilities?

The Star is designed to help you and your service users assess changes that they are making in their attitudes, behaviour and skills. If your service is not intended to work on changes like these, the Star is not suitable for you.

iii) Do you work holistically with service users?

Do you aim to support people in a number of aspects of their life? If your service focuses on one or two aspects of a person's life, the Alcohol Star will not be suitable as it is holistic, covering a number of aspects. However, it will work well if you are aiming to help service users with most but not all of the areas described in the Alcohol Star.

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Your service may aim to help clients make changes in areas that are not included in the Alcohol Star. If this is the case, you may wish to assess your service users' progress towards this goal in another way.

If you are not sure that the Alcohol Star is right for your service, visit the Outcomes Star website – www.outcomesstar.org.uk – to find out about other versions of the Star. If there is currently no version that fits your service adequately, please contact Triangle to enquire about new versions in development or the possibility of working with us to create a new version to meet your exact needs.

Organisations are not allowed to make changes to the Star under the terms of copyright for the tool. For more information, please refer to the copyright statements on the Star Chart and guides or on the Outcomes Star website.

iv) Does the Journey of Change describe the journey you help your service users to take?

The Journey of Change underpins the scales for each outcome area. If this journey does not fit with your understanding of the steps you are helping people to take towards a life free from problem drinking or drug misuse then the Star is probably not suitable for your service.

Some services concentrate on one or two parts of the journey. It is helpful to have a sense of which part of the journey your service or services focus on. If you only work with service users on a very small part of the journey, say at the **learning** and **self-reliance** stages, you may find that the Star will not pick up the small and subtle changes people make within one stage. In this case, you may want to supplement the Star with some additional measures.

If you have answered yes to these four questions, it is likely that the Outcomes Star will be appropriate for your service. If you have answered no to one or more of them, it may not be. You may wish to contact Triangle to discuss how to proceed.

3 Run a pilot

It is advisable to pilot the Outcomes Star in one or more services before rolling it out across your whole organisation. The benefits of running a pilot are that:

- It enables you to test how the tool works for you in practice
- It helps you to answer the practical questions set out on the next page about how to integrate the Star into your ways of working prior to full implementation
- If it goes well, it creates a demonstration project and staff with experience of using the Star who can reassure, motivate and train others
- If there are problems, these can be addressed before the Star is rolled out across the organisation.

Research on the implementation of the Star found that there was resistance from workers within over half of the 25 organisations interviewed. However in nearly all cases this was quickly overcome. The following are examples of tried and tested options for addressing worker resistance effectively:

- **Taking time to allow people to realise the benefits** so that keyworkers see the Star as making their job easier and better, rather than as another administrative loop. This can be done through formal training and/or discussions in team meetings.

- **Allowing people to express reservations and ask questions.** The Star represents a significantly new way of working and staff may need to have their concerns and questions heard and addressed.
- **A flexible approach at first.** Allowing the more willing and enthusiastic workers to give it a try can work well. If these workers come back to the team with positive experiences, this can enthuse others. In addition, feedback from their service users can provide invaluable concrete evidence of the benefits and popularity of the Star and offset fears that service users will find it lengthy or intrusive.
- **Involving service users in the process.** This not only means that service users understand and have a say in what is happening but their support also adds credibility and legitimacy to use of the Star within the service.

4 Integrate the Star™ into your ways of working, paperwork and IT

The Star works best as an integral part of the keywork process with Star Chart readings taking place at the point when assessment and action planning would normally occur in your service. It is important that the Star is fully incorporated into this process so that it does not duplicate other discussions or paperwork, such as needs assessments. This may mean amending existing paperwork to cover the same areas as the Alcohol Star and ensuring that any specific information on consumption, accommodation, family context, work or offending is retained but kept to a minimum. We recommend that the Star is not used in parallel with other outcomes tools.

When to use the Star™

It is up to your organisation to set a policy specifying when service users should complete the Star and how that fits with other processes. This policy will depend on the length and intensity of a service and how quickly people are anticipated to change. For most types of service, we recommend:

- A first reading at the point of developing a support plan and within the first four weeks ideally
- Using the Star every three to six months, linking it to reviews of support or action plans
- On exit from the service.

It may not be appropriate to complete the Star the first time workers meet new service users or as an assessment tool to decide whether they will use the service. This may be too soon for something as in-depth as the completion of the Star.

Workers were unsure at first but my approach was to give the Star to those workers likely to be most open and encourage them to just have a go with it in their own way. Almost immediately, positive feedback from those workers and their clients encouraged others to try it too.

Croftlands Trust

(Refers to the Outcomes Star for Homelessness)

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There is a balance between getting to know a service user and the need to record an accurate start point before too much change happens. If the service user is not able to engage in keywork or with the Star, in their first month, you could ask workers to record a “worker-only” initial reading to provide a baseline. This can be recorded as such on the Star Chart and when entering the data on the Star Online.

The frequency with which the Star will be completed depends on:

- **How quickly people change.** With young people and other services where a considerable amount may happen in as little as three months, readings could be more frequent. In services such as those for people with enduring mental health issues, where change is slow or maintenance is the norm, the gap could be longer.
- **The intensity of service delivery.** With intense interventions, such as residential rehabilitation services, it may be appropriate to complete a Star more often. For services seeing people less frequently, for instance monthly, a longer gap would be appropriate.
- **How long service users stay with your service.** For short-term services of 6-12 weeks it is recommended to complete Stars at the start and end of the service. Longer-term services – such as those of over a year – may allow six months or more between readings, particularly where clients change slowly. It is not recommended to use the Star in services of less than six weeks in length.

Comparing the first and last Star will give a clear picture of the outcomes for that person.

Can it replace other paperwork?

The Star is not intended to increase the amount of paperwork an organisation requires service users and workers to complete.

Services may find that the Star Chart and Star Action Plan can fully or partially replace their existing needs assessment and/or action or support plans. Many organisations may find they still need a separate risk assessment.

If your organisation decides to continue to use an existing action plan format, it is not necessary to complete the Star Action Plan in addition to this.

How will the information be recorded and summarised?

It is advisable to keep a copy of each Star reading and the Star notes on the client's file. Service users may also want their own copy. It is also necessary to enter the Star readings onto some kind of database so that the information can be summarised and analysed for a whole organisation or group of projects.

We recommend that you use the Star Online for this. You can access the Alcohol Star Online on the Star Online website: www.staronline.org.uk.

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5 Train staff to use the Star™

The Star is as good as the workers who use it, so it is vital that all members of staff working directly with service users receive some training. This can be provided by Triangle, see the resources section of this guide for details.

You might find it helpful to set up a steering group made up of managers, workers and, in some cases, service users, to oversee the introduction of the Star.

It is important to make clear how the Star fits with other initiatives and training that staff have received. For example, if your organisation uses Motivational Interviewing, it will help workers if you can integrate the Star into this approach.

Effective use of the Star requires that those using it are skilled in working with service users. Introducing the Star may be an opportunity to review the training needs of your staff in this area and address any outstanding concerns.

We set out to use the Star to measure outcomes because we wanted to gather outcomes data. We have ended up with an improved keyword system!

**Simon
Community,
Dublin**

(Refers to the Outcomes Star for Homelessness)

6 Ensure quality and consistency in the use of the Star™

Star data will only provide an accurate picture of the progress of service users if those using it have a good understanding of the tool and apply the scales consistently. We recommend that you ensure this happens in the following ways.

Staff supervision

When discussing a worker's caseload, draw on the service users' completed Stars – using all or a sample, depending on the caseload. This will help managers to ensure that the Star is being used as planned and completed accurately, with an understanding of the Journey of Change. It can also provide the manager with a quick, visual overview of a worker's caseload.

File auditing

As part of the normal process of auditing files, managers should ensure that Star records are present, accurate and stored confidentially.

Team meetings

When discussing service users in team meetings, look at their Stars and explore where they are on the Journey of Change. This kind of discussion enables the team to develop a shared understanding of how to use the scales and the Journey of Change and become familiar with the framework.

Data quality

Users of the Star Online will need to confirm that the quality of the data being entered is ensured through the measures described above, or that plans are in place to do this.

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7 Analyse and interpret the data

You can draw on your Star data in two ways:

- As part of the routine monitoring of the service
- To carry out in-depth research into the effectiveness of services.

7.1 Routine monitoring

We recommend that for routine monitoring purposes you compare the initial service user reading with their most recent reading, or the most recent reading with the one previous to this.

The table below provides mock data based on the Stars completed during the Alcohol Star pilot carried out in the East Midlands in 2010 (see page 6 for details). It shows the data for the first and three-month review readings on the Alcohol Star.

Table 1: Starting points, change and end points

This table shows the average reading in each of the Star areas, as in the above Star:

- At the first reading, averaged across all clients
- At the review point, three months after the first reading
- The change from assessment to three-month review (outcomes).

Star area	Assessment	Review	Change
Alcohol	4.3	7.7	3.4
Physical health	5.5	7.4	1.9
Use of time	4.4	6.9	2.5
Social networks	4.5	5.9	1.4
Drug use	9.5	9.7	0.2
Emotional health	4.6	6.5	1.9
Offending	9.3	9.6	0.3
Accommodation	6.9	7.6	0.7
Money	5.3	6.6	1.3
Family and relationships	5.8	7.0	1.2
Average	6.0	7.5	1.5

Early on we found that some clients had high readings on the Star and realised they were making unrealistic assessments and staff were just agreeing with them. Training helped considerably. Staff now understand the Journey of Change and readings are more consistent and realistic.

Croftlands Trust

(Refers to the Outcomes Star for Homelessness)

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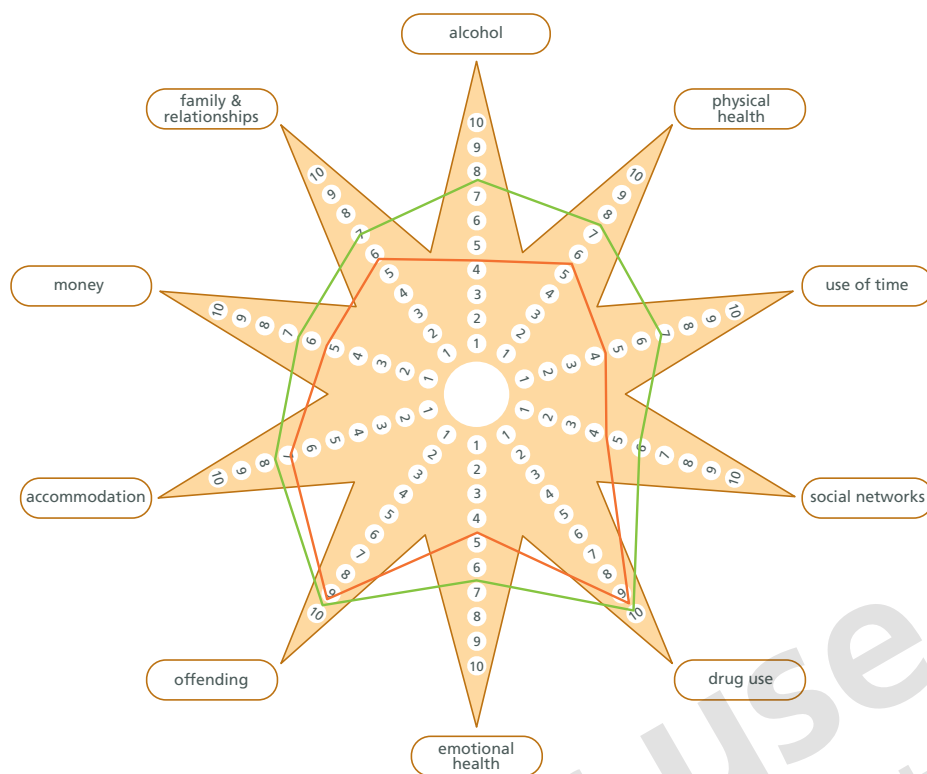


Figure 2: The average across two readings displayed visually on the Star (data taken from table 1)

Table 2: Percentage of clients showing change

This data is for the same people over the same time period as table 1. It shows the proportion of service users who made positive progress, stabilised or went downhill, in each of the Star areas.

Star area	Positive change	Negative change	No change
Alcohol	80%	5%	15%
Physical health	50%	2%	48%
Use of time	74%	0%	26%
Social networks	64%	6%	30%
Drug use	10%	2%	88%
Emotional health	68%	3%	29%
Offending	15%	0%	85%
Accommodation	37%	10%	53%
Money	57%	6%	37%
Family and relationships	45%	8%	47%

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Table 3: Proportion improving on their Star overall

This table shows service users' readings averaged across all scales, giving a picture of their progress overall. It shows the number and percentage of service users who made a large or moderate improvement in their Star reading overall, stayed about the same or decreased. None of the clients went downhill by more than one point on average.

Large increase (>1 overall)	Moderate increase (0.25-1 overall)	No significant change overall	Decrease (> -0.25 overall)
37	40	20	6
36%	39%	19%	6%

It is one element in understanding clients coming into a service and the changes they achieve once they are there and can be a really helpful basis for asking better and more useful questions about what is happening and why. However, the Star data needs to be viewed in context and alongside other information, particularly change in alcohol consumption.

Starting readings on the Alcohol Star provide useful information about people coming into a service. The mock data in table 1 indicates:

1. **The greatest area of need at the start was related to alcohol misuse.** This is reassuring and indicates that on the whole clients are correctly signposted into the service.
2. **Other significant needs at the start were related to use of time and emotional health.** This fits with what workers say about the key areas that need to be addressed if people are to make lasting changes in their problem drinking.
3. **The starting reading for Alcohol is 4.3,** indicating people were between the **accepting help** and **learning** stages on the journey overall. This reading may be a better indication of the most common starting point of the service's users than the overall average figure as this is misleadingly high because it includes scale areas with which most clients have no issues, for instance Drug Use and Offending.

The change in reading between assessment and three-month review shows the development in both attitude and behaviour of clients in relation to each aspect of their life that is covered by the Alcohol Star. After some further investigation of the raw data, the progress shown in the mock data provides the following highlights and possible interpretations:

1. **75% of clients showed an increase in their overall Star reading, with a further 17% showing no change and 8% slipping back.** This is a positive indication of the effectiveness of the service in enabling clients to make change. The service might want to explore the raw data for the people showing no change. If these are already in a maintenance stage and near the top of the scales, it may be that there is little more that the service can do for them and it is time to look at supporting them to move on. If they are still drinking problematically and **stuck**, it raises questions about how to engage them and effectively start the process of change, or whether this is the right service for them.
2. **Overall progress made was an average of 1.5 across the ten areas of the Star.** This is a substantial average change within the first three months of support from a service. In addition, this average will be artificially flattened by inclusion of negative change for those clients slipping back. An average of only those clients making progress would show greater average change per person making progress.

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