

Using the Disaster Recovery Star™

1 Introduction

The Disaster Recovery Star is designed to be used with people who have been affected by a natural disaster and who may benefit from support with the practical or emotional impact. The Star is relevant at any point when people receive support, whether in the immediate aftermath or months or years later if the impact is ongoing.

The Disaster Recovery Star resources consist of:

- The Disaster Recovery Star Chart, Notes and Action Plan
- The Disaster Recovery Star User Guide, with both brief visual scales and detailed scale descriptions
- A short Scales document for service users
- This Guidance for Workers
- All materials and the Star Online web application at www.staronline.org.uk

[The Star] gave a wonderful feeling of achievement in what I have overcome and progression for the future.

Disaster recovery service user

Excellent visual... developed to map the journey and work alongside the person.

Worker

The Disaster Recovery Star was developed by Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise in collaboration with Gippsland Lakes Complete Health (Bushfire Case Support Program) with funding from Bushfire Recovery Victoria. The process and workshops involved workers, managers and people with lived experience from GLCH plus people invited to participate from Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), cohealth and Windermere Child and Family Services.

Completing the Disaster 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 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 where there is support provided over a period of time. The aim is to have a genuine interaction and complete it collaboratively.

Visit www.outcomesstar.org.uk

Before using the Disaster Recovery Star, all workers need training.

Background and further information about the Outcomes Star suite of tools can be found at [www.outcomesstar.org.uk](mailto:info@triangleconsulting.co.uk)

or 020 7272 8765

2 Before you use the Disaster Recovery Star™

Your service may be the main point of contact for people needing practical and emotional support and some may be traumatised. Workers can play a vital role in providing a safe environment for people to acknowledge their needs and find appropriate support. As a holistic keywork tool, the Disaster Recovery Star supports the opening up of conversations, by providing a framework to explore all aspects of a person's life affected by the disaster. However, it needs to be used well.

Make sure that you have received training in using the Disaster

Recovery Star, and that you are familiar with the materials and know when and how they are used in your service. It is vital that you understand and use the Journey of Change underlying the scales – **not ready**, **taking it in**, **moving into action**, **making progress** and **managing well**. 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, depending on people's culture, understanding and use of English.

3 How to introduce the Disaster Recovery 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 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 or short Scales document to read before the session. Although the User Guide is quite detailed and relies on someone being comfortable with reading, both documents are worded in accessible language, so can be shared.

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When introducing the Star:

- Explain that people may start anywhere on the journey, can move both up and down on the scale and that 5 is the top of the Star scales but not the end of the journey
- Be clear that this is about establishing 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 “score”
- Refer to where someone is on the scale or Journey of Change using the stage names, colours and/or numbers, depending on what works best for each individual. Avoid using the term “score” – replace with “where you are on the journey/scale” or other alternatives depending on the context
- Encourage people to ask questions so they feel as comfortable as possible about the Disaster Recovery Star and reassure them that they will have choices about the process and pace of completion
- Let the service user decide which scale to start with or choose one that is concrete and may be easier to discuss, such as “Home and essentials”.

It is a useful tool to begin conversations and comprehensively explore areas of a service user's life.

Disaster recovery service worker

For many residents it was a good opportunity for some reflection and therefore some acknowledgement of their journey of change.

Disaster recovery service worker

Some suggested phrases for introducing the Star include:

“The Disaster Recovery Star is a way of tracking your recovery from the impact of the disaster and finding out about where things are OK for you and where you need more information or support.”

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

Overall, the skills and approach needed to introduce and use the Disaster Recovery Star well are likely to be in keeping with being person-centred, trauma-informed and other good practice in your service.

For example, when responding to people who might be experiencing emotional distress:

- Listen and allow the person to settle – give them space and time and don't pressurise them into talking
- Be empathetic and demonstrate a caring approach
- Provide reassurance that emotional distress and the symptoms they are experiencing are normal and to be expected after traumatic experiences.

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4 How to complete the Disaster Recovery Star™

Complete the Star collaboratively with service users 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 service user on the Journey of Change. The brief visual scales in the User Guide and the short Scales document 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 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 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 3 or above for most of the Disaster 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 **taking it in** stage. Those who are **not ready** in all or most areas will not discuss the Star meaningfully and you may need to do a worker-only reading. Encourage service users with low confidence to see their strengths, and perhaps others to be more realistic about what the impact of the disaster has been on them.

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

Recognise external factors

While the Journey of Change focuses primarily on the service user and on them taking in and responding to the impact of the disaster for them, 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 lack of suitable 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. Your service may then be able to use this information to identify gaps in provision, plan future developments or raise issues with policy-makers.

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 service users to do this and to 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.

Completing the Star after a period of time clearly demonstrated how much I had progressed and was a positive experience.

Service user

The process put different aspects of our life into perspective.

Disaster recovery service user

Not for use
Sample for information only

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5 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 reflect on it as a basis for 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 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 is most important to address first?

Once you have chosen the areas to be included in the action 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 this change?
- Who is responsible for these actions? When can they be completed?

Complete the Disaster Recovery Star Action Plan or use your service's support planning documentation.

The Journey of Change provides valuable pointers for thinking about the goals of support with the service user and achievable, realistic actions, summarised in the table overleaf:

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