

How to 'forecast' Outcomes Star™ data

A guide for services aiming to get the most out of their Star data and define expectations for their service

1 What do we mean by 'forecasting'?

We use this term to mean when a service who is using the Star identifies some broad expectations of what they would expect to see in the Star data they collect with service users, to help them learn from their Star data. Because each service using the Star has its own context, remit and approach, it makes sense that each service needs to set their own expectations around their Star data. It is possible to apply the same approach to forecasting Star data at different levels, from whole organisation, to a specific service, caseload or even an individual service user.

The grid on the next page illustrates how you can forecast your Star data – breaking down the Star into its outcome areas, capturing your hypothesis about the data and the people you support, and using the Journey of Change as a consistent framework for describing how people change whilst being supported by your service. A separate Word document is available with an empty grid for you to complete.

2 How forecasting can help – and why caution is needed

Forecasting can be useful in that it provides you with a working hypothesis that you can test against the real data you collect with the Star. This helps you to ask better questions of your data, for example by highlighting where the data is different to what you would expect and giving you a starting off point to try and understand why this might be. This can help you pin point implementation issues with the Star in your service or highlight broader questions around the nature of the service users you are supporting and the support you are providing.

However, it is important that any forecasting is just used as a working hypothesis for learning purposes. Using forecasting to set targets or to enforce expectations will undermine good Star practice and using the Star in the first place.

3 What to forecast and what it can tell you

What to forecast	What you can learn by comparing forecasts to actual Star data
Starting points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether first Star readings are a good baseline for your Star data – or whether a more realistic baseline is achieved on second Stars when a practitioner has started to develop a relationship with a service user Whether people are entering your service with the expected and appropriate levels of need, perhaps relating to the funding you receive or the remit your commissioned service Whether the initial Star readings seem accurate (ie if practitioners are completing first Stars correctly)
End points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether the final/review Star readings being recorded seem accurate (ie if practitioners are completing final/review Stars correctly) Whether people leaving your service have achieved the expected outcomes in key outcome areas
Key milestones in the journey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether people are making the progress that you would expect and if they are likely to achieve the end points you think are likely across different outcome area <p>Not all areas may have 'interim' milestones – it will depend on the nature of your service and the people you support.</p>

4 Suggested forecast activity with Star data, illustrated with an example service, Star and a selection of outcome areas

Name of service		Local Outreach					
Context of service		Working with around adult men and women who are experiencing street homelessness, with an intensive 6-month programme of support based around supported housing followed by ongoing support					
Outcomes Star version used		Outcomes Star for homelessness and other housing needs					
Outcome area from Star	Relevant support offered from service	Start point description <i>What is someone's life like in this area when they join your service?</i>	Star data forecast <i>Where on JoC?</i>	End point description <i>What are you aiming to achieve by the time people stop getting support from your service?</i>	Star data forecast	Key milestone <i>What would be a change or action that signifies someone is moving from the start point towards the end point?</i>	Star data forecast
Self-care and living skills	Conversations and guidance through support sessions; money for new clothes or resources; going with people to laundrette and other tasks	People tend to be living chaotic lives and not looking after themselves – they may be accepting help but not consistently or it is not a priority for them	From 1 (Stuck) to 4 (Accepting help)	People are looking after themselves and much less intensive or frequent support is needed	9 (Self-reliant)	People have the desire and motivation to look after themselves better and they have started doing something about it, however small a step	6 (Believing)
Offending	None	People do not have current issues with offending because it is a condition of receiving the support	10 (Self-reliant)	People will continue to have crime-free lives and may be more likely to sustain this given other support received	10 (Self-reliant)	N/a	N/a
Social networks and relationships	Conversations and guidance through support sessions; referrals to Talking Therapy and counselling; confidence building programme; going with people to new social and community activities; referrals to other community groups	People's lives in this area will vary – some will have positive connections, and some will be totally isolated or unwilling to step away from negative influences	From 1 (Stuck) to 10 (Self-reliant)	People make at least one step to improve their social relationships or they maintain the good ones they already have	At least 1 step of positive change or maintain at 10	Ideally everyone would be at least accepting help with this issue	(3 Accepting help)