

Using the Little Star™

The Little Star is designed to support children with cerebral palsy or other motor impairments who are receiving Conductive Education and/or other therapies. It is most suited to approaches that work holistically across gross and fine movement, perception, cognition, social skills, emotional development, speech, language and communication, based on the understanding that development in these areas is mutually reinforcing. The aim is to help children move towards as much independence as is possible for their age, condition and ability, while recognising that although some children will move on to mainstream schools, with support, many will continue to require a lot of specialist help.

The Little Star was developed by Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise in collaboration with the Dame Vera Lynn Children's Charity.

The resources consist of:

- The Little Star Chart, Notes and Action Plan
- The Little Star User Guide, with both brief visual scales and detailed scale descriptions
- The short illustrated Scales
- This Guidance for Workers
- A web application for online completion and analysis at www.staronline.org.uk
- A Development Report.

Completing the Little Star is intended to help those supporting a child to get a picture of what is going well and where other support is needed, provide a visual of change, and enable a service to measure holistic outcomes. It can also help stimulate and focus discussion with the child's parents or between different professionals supporting the child. It is a flexible tool that relies on the skills of the professionals using it. It is most likely to be used alongside other progress-monitoring methods.

Before using the Little Star, all workers need training from Triangle or a licensed trainer.

The Little Star is a version of the Outcomes Star. Background and further information about the Outcomes Star suite of tools can be found at

www.outcomesstar.org.uk

The Little Star is very helpful in identifying where my child needs support as well as celebrating what he has achieved.

Parent, Little Star Pilot

I like the holistic approach.

Worker, Little Star Pilot

Want to use this Star?
Visit www.outcomesstar.org.uk

Contact info@triangleconsulting.co.uk
or 020 7272 8765

Before you use the Little Star™

Make sure that you have received training in using the Little 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 yet settling**, **settling**, **responding**, **actively exploring** and **progressing 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.

Options for completing the Little Star™

The Outcomes Stars are intended to be used collaboratively and one of the main strengths of the tools is supporting a conversation, usually between a service user and a worker. Although this is different for the Little Star, those using it are encouraged to complete it through discussion where relevant. The main options are likely to be:

1. **Discuss the Little Star with parents** of the child and see if it is possible to combine observation in sessions with descriptions of how they are at home or in daily life and build a shared picture of how the child is progressing. This may help the parents understand and engage more in the child's learning and development
2. **Discuss the Little Star between professionals** and others supporting the child. This may include a conductor, a speech and language therapist, other relevant therapists and an outreach worker if the family has one, to get their perspective on how the child is at home
3. **One professional completes the Little Star** alone, based on observation and possibly other information.

Always use the scales, whichever method is used to complete the Little Star. 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, nor will your service be able to treat collated Star data as reliable for reporting purposes.

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.

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Completing the Little Star™ with parents

Complete the Star collaboratively with parents where appropriate. The aim is to engage them in discussion and to listen and learn about their child and develop a shared view.

Before you introduce the Star to parents 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 parents as a group, it may be useful to explain the Star to the group first
- Consider giving parents who are interested a copy of the short illustrated Scales or User Guide to read in advance.

When introducing the Star you may want to explain the following:

- The Journey of Change is about ensuring that children are able to learn and develop as well as possible. It is not about what an individual child can and can't do in the way of movement, cognition or communication
- Children may start anywhere on the journey. They can move both up and down on the scale, and 5 is the top of the Star scales but not the end of their development
- You can start anywhere on the Star and there is no need to complete the scales in order.

A suggested phrase for introducing the Star to parents is:

"The Little Star is a shared, visual way of tracking your child's learning and development. It helps tell us where your child is now and informs what needs to happen next."

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 child on the Journey of Change. 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 parents.

If you don't agree, have a discussion – this can help you learn about the child and help the parent reflect on how their child is learning and progressing. If you don't agree after discussion, record both views on the Star and use the Star Notes to record points from your discussion.

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Recognise external factors

The Journey of Change focuses on the child and the progress they are making, which will be through a combination of professional input and support at home. However, various factors will affect their progress. The main ones are the child's condition and how that affects their physical movement and their cognition. The family's resources and ability to support the child may also be factors. There may also be wider issues beyond the control of their families and your service that make it harder for things to improve, such as poor housing and lack of resources or 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.

How to use the completed Star as the basis for a support plan

Look at the shape of the completed Star and ask questions such as:

- Is the shape of the Star an accurate picture of how things are for the child now?
- What does it tell us about what is and is not going well?
- What are the strengths that support the areas that are going well, such as the child being motivated by help from parents at home? How might those be applied in other aspects of the child's development?
- What is it most important to address now?

Complete the Little 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 and achievable, realistic actions:

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