

Using the Outcomes Star™ in supervision

Top tips to help managers make the most of the Outcomes Star™

This is a short guide for any manager who is responsible for a team of frontline keyworkers using the Outcomes Star. It's designed to be a starting point to work from – helping you to develop Star supervision that's right for you, your team, and your organisation.

1 Why is supervision important for effective use of the Star?

Research into the Star has shown that if used well, the tool leads to better quality conversations and improved relationships between service user and keyworker – both essential factors in motivating change. 'Using the Star well' means that keyworkers are using it:

- as an integral part of their work with the service users on their caseload, as part of assessment, support planning, and reviewing processes
- collaboratively with service users (completing worker-only Stars only when necessary)
- by referring to the User Guide/Scales and the Journey of Change underpinning each scale on the Star
- as a conversational tool to encourage and empower the service user to reflect on their own story, strengths and needs
- as directed by the service – for example, using the right ID number etc.

Traditionally, models of supervision between managers and frontline workers focus on three key areas – and the Star can have a relevance to all 3:

Areas of focus in supervision	Relevance of the Outcomes Star
Practice issues relating to the service user	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Star is a strengths-based and holistic tool – and a completed Star can provide a meaningful 'snapshot' of where a service user is in their life • Reviewing a service user's Star in supervision can help both manager and worker reflect holistically on a service user's life, the response from the services they are receiving support from, and future priorities
The development and other professional needs of the worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Star is a conversational tool - effective use is reliant on good keywork and relationship skills, and the ability to have difficult conversations that positively challenge service users • Discussing the actual process of completing a Star, either with a specific service user or caseload, can highlight areas of strength or improvement in a worker's practice
Internal and external accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Star is designed to capture 'distance travelled' data in a meaningful and objective way • Reviewing Star data with a worker, either for a specific service user or caseload, can help ensure data accuracy and support meaningful reporting to internal and external audiences

2 What areas should be covered in supervision?

Managers who have been managing teams using the Star say they tend to cover 4 different aspects in one-on-one supervision sessions:

- **The process of completing the Star with a client** – how it was used, what worked well, what worked less well, ideas for next time or for other service users
- **Interpreting individual service user's completed Stars** – do the Stars and the readings accurately describe the client and capture their needs, is any distance-travelled shown and is it realistic and sustainable
- **Interpreting aggregated data from completed Stars for the worker's caseload** – where is the worker making the biggest progress, where are they meeting resistance to change, are there any areas on the Star that are strengths or challenges for the worker
- **Reviewing action plans** – in particular, do the action plans reflect the clients position on the Journey of Change

They stress that they may not necessarily cover all 4 aspects in one supervision session, but will aim to cover them across a series of supervision discussions.

3 What sort of specific questions could I ask, and what topics should I expect?

Suggested supervision questions relating to the Star and individual service users:

- How did the client engage (or not) in the process of completing the Star – and what are the factors that may have influenced this?
- Did the client respond differently when discussing different scales on the Star – were they more or less interested/defensive/talkative in some areas than others?
- Did the client take part in completing the Star – did they agree on the 'reading'?
- How do the results of the Star relate to the referral or other information you have about the client – anything unexpected or revealing?
- Is the client's Action Plan compatible with the results of the Star – do the actions fit the stage of the Journey of Change?

Suggested supervision questions relating to the Star and the worker's practice and approach:

- What do you think the role of the Star is for the service – are there any concerns? An opportunity to manage perceptions, such as how the Star won't be used to crudely judge performance or that there are 'targets' to achieve for Star scores
- Are there any outcome areas that you're making more or less progress in across the caseload? The Star may highlight areas where the worker is less skilled, has had no/little training in, is less interested in helping the client; or (rightly or wrongly) does not think they have a role to play
- Is the Star being used as a reflective tool to open up conversations between client and worker, or does the supervisor get the feeling it's more like a 'tick-box' exercise? Is the worker using the Star meaningfully as an engagement and motivational tool to support the change process?

Suggested supervision questions relating to the organisation and the Star (including specific issues relating to quality use of the Star)

- Is the Star being completed within the organisation's policy and guidelines in terms of frequency, recording requirements, etc

Suggested supervision questions relating to the organisation and the Star (including specific issues relating to quality use of the Star) - *continued*

- Explore the process of completing the Star – checking ‘readings’ are made with reference to the Journey of Change, that the User Guide is being used with all clients
- Checking the worker is clear about what the Star is measuring – generally engagement with the problem rather than how bad the problem is
- Run a caseload report and explore this – what might it say about the types of clients the worker is seeing and their needs? Might the worker have a preponderance of clients at the stuck stage, compared to the average for other workers? Does the worker consistently get better (or worse) results in one area of the Star than other workers? (Remember, Star data should not be used to judge simplistically, as many variables influence outcomes).

4 How should I approach supervision using the Star?

Supervision is a good opportunity for you as the manager to model best practice, including the skills and qualities that your team will use when completing the Star collaboratively and effectively with service users. For example:

- Use person-centred skills with the worker, by taking an exploratory and reflective approach to help foster a spirit of enquiry. Ask open-ended questions: e.g. “Tell me more about that”; “How did the client respond”; “Give me an example of that”
- Just like the worker needs a good relationship with the service user to complete the Star, build a positive working alliance with the worker in supervision. Ask their views about what the organisation could do differently, so that the Star works better for everyone
- Decisions and actions agreed between you and the worker should be co-produced and SMART
- Where there is disagreement between you and the worker, there is transparency about this and both parties are heard.

5 What else should I consider?

Speaking to managers who have been using the Star, they suggest three areas to consider for effective implementation and managing use of the Star:

- Undertaking ‘case audits’ using the Star – deep-diving into a service user’s life with a team of workers (observing necessary data protection rules) to discuss as a team how the Star has been used and the readings that have been completed
- Writing the Outcomes Star into official supervision policy – if there is the opportunity, this helps to fully embed the Star into service delivery and to ensure consistency across managers and teams
- Encouraging peer-to-peer review and best practice sharing – for example, by setting up a monthly ‘surgery’ for Star-related questions or other Star-related forums

6 Next steps

If you have any further questions about using the Star in supervision, want to see examples of what others have done or want to find out more about implementing the Star well in your service, get in touch with the **person leading on Star implementation in your organisation**, or with Triangle - via your **Account Manager**, on info@triangleconsulting.co.uk or on **0207 272 8765**.