

Using the Star with groups

We are often asked if or how the Outcomes Star may be used in group work. The short answer is *“most Stars can’t and there has to be some one to one time to make it work at all”*. This document gives more detail and guidelines. If having read it, you still want to pursue this option, talk to one of the Triangle account managers about your specific context.

Overall guidelines

The Outcomes Stars are designed for use within a keywork relationship where one to one sessions are held regularly over a period of time. This gives the structure and time needed for a worker and client to reflect together, in a confidential space, to complete the Star then develop and work towards an action plan. The Star is not generally recommended for group situations. However, it may occasionally be possible to meaningfully use the Star with a group if it is integrated and used well, and provided that three initial conditions are met:

1. A stable group, with the same people meeting regularly
2. Commitment and capacity to include some one to one time alongside group work
3. Using one of the briefer versions of the Star, with short, illustrated scales

Good practice example

A service for young people wanted to use the Star within an 8-week group work program. After talking to Triangle, they extended the program to 10 weekly sessions:

- Weeks 1 and 2: group work, during which they introduced the Star journey of change and areas and showed how they related to the aims of the program
- Week 3: the group was replaced by workers meeting with each of the young people for up to 45 minutes to complete a Star one-to-one
- Weeks 4-8: group sessions following the program
- Week 9: one-to-one sessions to review the Star
- Week 10: concluding session as a group, including discussion of the progress and people had made as measured by their Star

Integrating discussion of the Journey of Change and Star into group work can support effective group work and learning and help make the developmental agenda explicit. The first step is to introduce the Star areas and Journey of Change so people understand them well and have time to discuss them and reflect. Possible exercises include:

- Write the five stages of the Journey of Change on flipchart sheets and place them in a row on the wall or floor. Ask people to stand where they think they are on their journey.
- Encourage them to discuss the reasons for their choices – which may result in them moving to another point.
- This can also be done using enlarged images from the illustrated journey of change placed on the wall or floor (e.g. the orange and green stick figures). It could be repeated for each Star area
- Draw an enlarged Star on the floor or wall, with each of the Star areas identified. Invite people to use named or numbered stickers or (on the floor) a distinctive token, such as a model figure, and place these on each of the six scales to show where they are.

One suggestion was to invite the group to think about a person they know who has turned their life around and describe how their process fitted with the Journey of Change.

Completing the Star in a group

In rare situations, it may be possible for people to complete the Star themselves within the group. This will depend on the group; young people may be especially reluctant to reflect honestly in a group and most influenced by their peers. It may be more effective with, say, the Well-being Star in a group supporting people to self manage long-term health conditions. With experienced peer mentors, it may be possible for service users to support each other to complete the Star peer-to-peer, so this could be considered as an option.

Workers who have tried group-completion sessions suggest:

- Know the group to some extent before you use the Star.
- Always include a clear introduction to the Star areas and Journey of Change
- Keep the session snappy; the anonymity of using numbers, a fast pace and/or approaching this exercise as a game can support people to be open and honest, especially young people
- Begin with a scale that is most accessible to everyone
- People choose their own sticker or token (if used)

Whatever the group, it is essential that there is also some one-to-one time to discuss, check, and build on the completed Star to plan and review actions. Without this one-to-one time, service users will not be able to benefit properly from the Star, and the service will not be able to trust the reliability of the data.

Recording individual Star readings in a group

To report accurately on the proportion of people who have made progress, it is essential to record each individual's Star reading, to compare where each person was at the start and review/end and report on the proportion of people showing improvement, staying the same or slipping back. If the Star is completed within a group, the readings can be recorded by:

- Recording where each person has put their sticker or tokens on each scale. If the stickers have names or numbers, this is straightforward.
- You may want to photograph where the stickers are on flipcharts or an enlarged Star diagram, or of people standing at their stage on each scale (with appropriate permission)
- To speed up the task of recording scores, use a simple grid with a list of people's names/ reference numbers and columns to write in their number for each scale.

Without the Star readings recorded per person at the start and end, the only reporting possible is the overall change within the group, including the average point at the start and the end. It will not be possible to identify the proportion (percentage) of people making changes and the amount of change per person. Please talk to a Triangle account manager if this is not clear.

Final reminder

Whatever approach you choose, it is vital that the discussion and agreed number is based on the defined scales and that people understand the Journey of Change. Otherwise, one person's 3 could be another person's 5 and although the process may still be helpful on a

one-to-one basis, the collated Star data will not be useful.

The Outcomes Star is a tool to support as well as measure change, so the first question to ask if considering use in a group, is how the Star might be integrated and used to empower and inform people, support the work being done and encourage change. If the aim is solely numbers to evidence change, this can be more simply achieved using a questionnaire. Overall, the Star is not usually recommended for groups and we do recommend you talk to us before attempting to use it for a group intervention.