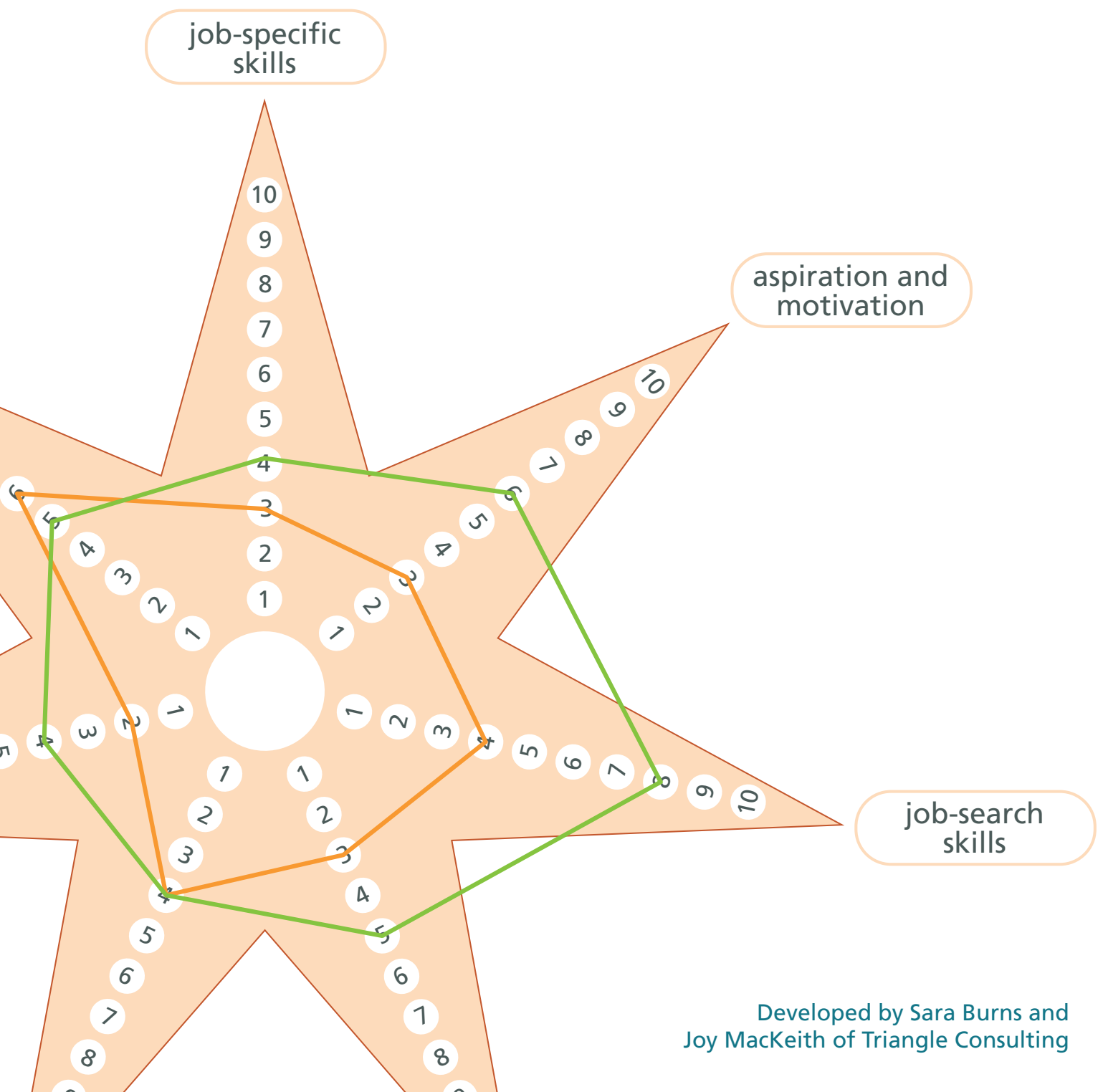




Work Star

The Outcomes Star for work and learning



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- The London Housing Foundation and St Mungo's for their respective roles in the creation of the original Outcomes Star in homelessness
- The sector bodies and commissioners who have commissioned new versions of the Star including the Mental Health Providers Forum, Camden Council and Alcohol Concern. Each new partner that we work with contributes to the development of the Star as well as the breadth of its reach
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Introduction

Introduction to the Star

The Outcomes Star is a family of tools for supporting and measuring change when working directly with vulnerable people. The Work Star is the version which is tailored to the needs of employability and work services.

The Star is an outcomes tool, which means that it enables organisations to measure and summarise change across a range of clients and projects. It is also a tool to be used in one-to-one sessions, which means that it supports clients in making changes by providing them with a map of the Journey of Change and a way of plotting their progress and planning the actions they need to take.

The Work Star focuses on seven core areas:

1. Job-specific skills
2. Aspiration and motivation
3. Job-search skills
4. Stability
5. Basic skills
6. Social skills for work
7. Challenges

The Journey of Change

For each of these seven areas there is a 1-10 scale to help you and the client identify where they are now. These scales follow the same five stages:

- Not thinking about work (1-2): substantial barriers to work or advancement and you can't see a way round them
- Thinking about work (3-4): substantial barriers but you are working out how to address them
- Making progress (5-6): some barriers overcome but others are still there
- Work-ready with support (7-8): barriers mostly overcome or can be worked around; you need support to maintain progress
- Self-reliance (9-10): in work, work-ready or engaged in work-related training. You don't need support from the programme.

All Outcomes Stars are underpinned by the assumption that positive growth is a possible and realistic goal for all clients and are designed to support as well as measure this growth by focusing on people’s potential rather than their problems.

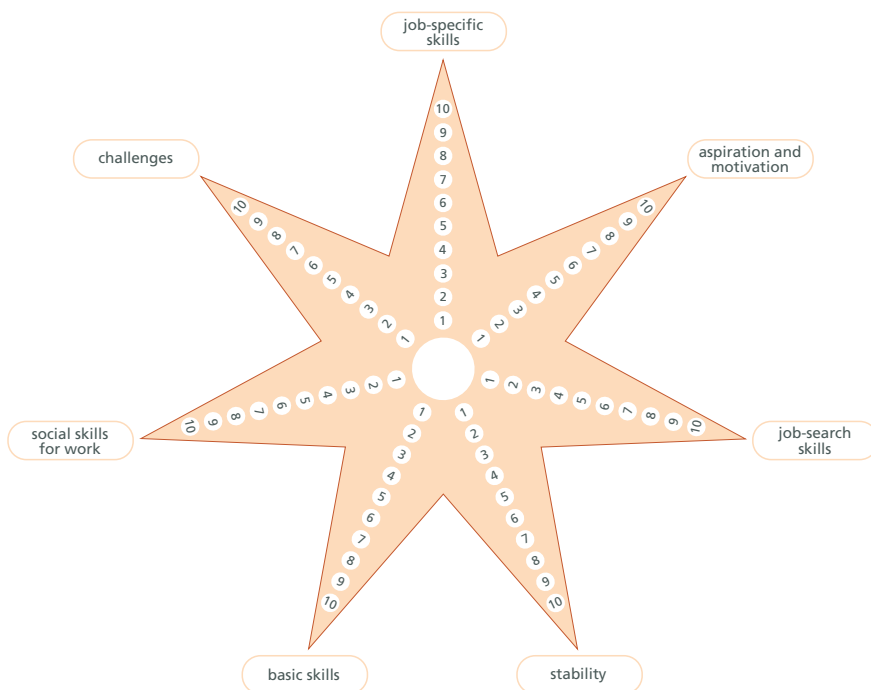


Figure 1: The Work Star

The Star helped me go deeper into areas and triggered questions. Points came up that had not come out before when we did the action plan.

Feedback from Work Star pilot

This Guide

This guide is intended to support the implementation and use of the Work Star in a range of settings. Part one provides guidance and good practice examples for service managers implementing the Star within a service or organisation. Part two presents guidance for workers¹ in using the Star with their clients.

Star Resources

As well as this organisation guide the Work Star comprises the following resources.

Work Star User Guide

This contains descriptions of each of the seven scales and a brief introduction to the Work Star for clients.

¹This term is used for Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) workers, mentors, coaches and other workers or volunteers in a one-to-one support role with clients.

Work Star Chart

This is the document to complete with clients if using the Star as a paper-based system. It consists of the Star Chart itself, on which the scores are marked, a summary of the Journey of Change to use for quick reference and space for notes. There is also a simple action plan included which your organisation may choose to use.

Star Online

All versions of the Outcomes Star are available online as well as paper tools. The online versions provide a wide range of facilities for analysing the outcomes data generated through using the Star and allow projects to benchmark their outcomes against similar projects nationally. More information about the Star Online is available from the Outcomes Star website.

Outcomes Star website

The Outcomes Star website – www.outcomesstar.org.uk – contains all versions of the Outcomes Star which can be downloaded free of charge and a wide range of information and good practice. Specific areas covered by the website include:

- How the Star was developed
- Research and validation on the Star
- What people say about using the Star
- Good practice on implementation
- Use of Outcomes Star data for outcome measurement
- Use of the Star as a tool for one-to-one working
- Information for commissioners on using the Star

We absolutely love the Outcomes Star! It is a fantastic tool to illustrate, motivate and demonstrate change.

Humbercare

Part 1: Implementing the Star in your Project or Organisation

Implementing the Star can affect the way the service is delivered and managed in a number of ways, including:

- Providing greater clarity about what the service is trying to achieve and the process of change for clients and workers, resulting in more focused one-to-one work
- Changing the way that sessions are carried out, documented and supervised, depending on your existing systems
- Introducing new data collection and therefore the need to consolidate paperwork, avoid duplication, integrate with IT systems and ensure all levels of management have the information they need
- Demonstrating effectiveness and highlighting areas for improvement
- Providing a focus for discussion with commissioners about the role and contribution of the service in the wider local strategic context.

Implementing the Star effectively and achieving the full benefits of using it can therefore take time, ongoing attention and a commitment to follow the process through and address issues as they arise. For these reasons we strongly recommend that the implementation of the Star is led from the top of the organisation. Only in this way will the Star receive the profile and backing it requires for developments to be co-ordinated across the organisation.

There are eight steps to introducing the Star in your organisation:

1. Review your reasons for introducing the Star
2. Assess the suitability of the Star for your service
3. Run a pilot
4. Integrate the Star into your way of working, paperwork and IT
5. Start using the Star/Train staff to use the Star
6. Ensure quality and consistency in the use of the Star
7. Analyse and interpret the data
8. Share and act on the learning.

It is vital to communicate to workers how the Star will help them to do their job, and that it will help the service make its case to the outside world. It is also vital to integrate the Star fully into systems and training.

St Mungo's

1 Review your reasons for introducing the Star

Organisations may decide to introduce the Star for one or more of a number of reasons.

For internal reasons:

- Because they want to take an outcomes approach to their work, i.e. they want to be able to measure success for individual clients, for projects and for the organisation as a whole, to use this to inform their service delivery
- Because they feel it will improve work with clients.

For external reasons:

- To demonstrate the value of the service to funders or commissioners
- Because a funder or commissioner is requiring that they use the Star as a condition of contract.

Research on implementation of the Star has indicated that implementation is smoother and satisfaction higher when organisations are motivated primarily by internal reasons. Even if you are introducing the Star for external reasons, we recommend that you adopt the tool in the spirit of learning and service improvement and capitalise on the internal benefits too.

2 Assess the suitability of the Star for your service

There are four key questions which will help do this:

Do you have an ongoing support relationship with clients?

The Star is designed to be used in situations where a client and worker are engaged in one-to-one support over a period of time. We would suggest at least one month, as a guide. If you only see a client once or twice for a short period of time or have a drop-in service with little or no one-to-one contact, then it is probably not suitable for your service.

Are you aiming to help clients make changes in their attitudes, behaviour or skills and abilities?

The Star is designed to help you and your client assess changes that they are making in their attitudes, behaviour and skills. If your service is not intended to work on these changes then the Star is not suitable for you.

Do you work holistically with clients?

Do you aim to support people in a number of aspects of their life? If your project only works on one or two aspects of a person's life the Star will not be suitable as it covers a number of aspects.

Does the Journey of Change describe the journey your project helps its clients to take?

The Journey of Change is a key feature of the Work Star and underpins the scales for each outcome area. If this journey does not fit with your understanding of the steps you are helping people to take towards work or advancement then the Work Star is probably not suitable for your service.

Some services concentrate on one or two parts of the journey. It is helpful to have a sense of which part of the journey your service focuses on. If you only work with clients on a very small part of the journey, say at the 'work-ready' and 'self-reliance' stages, you may find that the Star doesn't pick up the small and subtle changes people make within one stage. In this case you may want to supplement the Star with some additional measures.

If your project is about work and learning and you have answered yes to these four questions, it is likely that the Work Star will be appropriate for your service. If you have answered no to one or more it may not be.

3 Run a pilot

It is advisable to pilot the Star in one or more services before rolling it out through a whole organisation. The benefits are:

- It enables you to test how the Star works for you in practice
- It helps you to answer the practical questions set out below about how to integrate the Star into your ways of working prior to full implementation
- If it goes well it creates a demonstration project and staff with experience of using the tool who can enthuse and train others
- If there are problems, these can be addressed before it is rolled out across the organisation.

Research on the implementation of the Star found that there was resistance from workers within over half of the organisations interviewed. However, in nearly all cases this was quickly overcome. Good practice includes:

- **Taking time to allow people to realise the benefits** so that workers see the Star as making their job easier and better, rather than another administrative loop. This can be done through formal training and/or discussions in team meetings
- **Allowing people to express reservations and ask questions.** The Star may represent a significantly new way of working and staff may need to have their concerns and questions heard and responded to

Workers were unsure at first but my approach was to give the Star to those workers likely to be most open and encourage them to just have a go with it in their own way. Almost immediately, positive feedback from those workers and their clients encouraged others to try it too.

Croftlands Trust

- **A flexible approach at first.** Allowing the more willing and enthusiastic workers to 'just give it a try' can work well. If these workers come back to the team with positive experiences this can enthuse others. Further, feedback from their clients can provide invaluable concrete evidence of the benefits and popularity of the Star and offset fears that clients will find it lengthy or intrusive
- **Involving clients in the process.** This not only means that clients understand and have a say in what is happening, but their support also adds credibility and legitimacy to use of Star within the service.

4 Integrate the Star into your way of working, paperwork and IT

The Star works best as an integral part of the way of working with a client, with Star readings taking place at the point when assessment and action planning and reviews would normally take place in your service. It is important that the Star is fully incorporated into this process so that it does not duplicate other discussions or paperwork. We recommend that the Star is not used in parallel with other outcomes tools.

When to use the Star

It is up to your organisation to set policy about when clients complete the Star and how that fits with other processes. This will depend on the length and intensity of a service and how quickly people are anticipated to change. For most types of service we recommend:

- A first reading at the point of developing the first action plan, and ideally within the first two to three sessions
- Using the Star at the same time as reviewing support or action plans
- On exit from the service.

It is not usually appropriate to complete the Star at a first meeting or at an assessment to decide whether someone can use the service. This is often too soon for an in-depth tool. There is a balance between getting to know the client and the need to record an accurate start-point before much change happens. If the client does not want to or is not able to engage in sessions or with the Star in their first month you can opt for a worker-only initial reading to provide a baseline.

The frequency with which the Star will be completed depends on:

- How long clients stay with your service; more frequent with short-term and longer gaps for long-term
- How quickly people change; with work and employability services where a considerable amount may happen in a few months, readings could be every four to six weeks. In services where change is slow, every six months may be more appropriate.

Comparing the first and last Star will give a clear picture of the outcomes for that person.

Can it replace other paperwork?

The Star is not intended to increase the amount of paperwork an organisation requires clients and workers to complete. This can be a particular issue for some work and employability services, depending on the source of funding. Some funder requirements include lengthy, mandatory monitoring. In such cases, careful consideration needs to be given to whether and how the Work Star is introduced.

Ideally, services will use the Star Chart and the suggested action plan format to fully or partially replace their existing needs assessment and/or action or support plans. If your organisation decides to continue to use an existing action plan format it is not necessary to complete the action plan included in the Star as well.

How will the information be recorded and summarised?

It is advisable to keep a copy of each Star reading and Star Notes in the client's file. Clients may also want their own copy. It is also necessary to enter the Star readings onto some kind of database so that the information can be summarised and analysed for a whole project or group of projects.

We recommend that you use the Star Online for this.

5 Train staff to use the Star

The Star will only be as good as the workers who use it, so it is vital that all members of staff working directly with clients receive some training, either internally by managers or peers, or externally from Triangle Consulting. Information about training and other services to support the implementation of the Star can be found at www.outcomesstar.org.uk.

You might find it helpful to set up a Steering Group made up of managers, workers, and in some cases clients, to oversee the introduction of the Star. It is also important to make it clear how it fits with other initiatives and training that they have received. For example if your organisation uses Motivational Interviewing it will help workers if you can integrate the Star into this approach. Effective use of the Star requires that those using it are skilled in working with clients. Introducing the Star may be an opportunity to review the training needs of your staff in this area and address any outstanding concerns.

6 Ensure quality and consistency in the use of the Star

Star data will only provide an accurate picture of the progress of clients if those using it have a good understanding of the tool and apply the scales consistently. We recommend that you ensure this happens in the following ways.

Staff supervision

When discussing a worker's caseload, draw on the clients' completed Stars – either all or a sample depending on the caseload. This will help managers to ensure that the Star is used as planned and are completed accurately with an understanding of the journey to work. It can also provide the manager with a quick, visual overview of a worker's caseload.

File auditing

As part of the normal process of auditing files, managers should ensure that star records are present and accurate and stored confidentially.

Team meetings

When discussing clients in team meetings, look at their Stars and include discussion of where they are on the Journey of Change. This enables the team to develop a shared understanding of how to use the scales and the Journey of Change and become familiar with this framework.

Data quality

Users of the Star Online will need to confirm that the quality of the data being entered is ensured through these measures, to maintain the integrity of the national evidence base.

7 Analyse and interpret the data

You can draw on your Star data in two ways:

- As part of the routine monitoring of the service
- To carry out in-depth research into the effectiveness of services.

7.1 Routine monitoring

We recommend that for routine monitoring purposes you compare the initial client reading with their most recent reading, or the most recent reading with the previous one. The following table provides mock data for a fictional information, advice and guidance service for enabling local people to find suitable work. It shows the data for the first and most recent readings on the Work Star for current clients.

Early on we found that some clients had high scores on the Star and realised they were making unrealistic assessments and staff were just agreeing with them. Training helped considerably... Staff now understand the journey of change and scoring is more consistent and realistic.

Croftlands Trust

Table 1: Average increase and decrease in scores

This table shows the average level of need of the clients as recorded on the Star during their first month in the project (column one) and their most recent reading (column two). Column three shows the difference between the two scores – the outcome for those clients at this point in time.

	Start	Review	Average change (outcome)
Job-specific skills	3.8	5.8	2.0
Aspiration & motivation	5.5	6.8	1.3
Job-search skills	4.5	5.5	1.0
Stability	4.2	4.8	0.6
Basic skills	4.3	5.8	1.5
Social skills for work	6.0	6.5	0.5
Challenges	3.5	4.2	0.7
Average	4.5	5.6	1.1

In the figure below the same data is presented as a Star for the whole project. The red line shows the first reading and the blue line the most recent reading. The Star shows very graphically the overall progress clients at this project have made.

Star for fictional IAG project

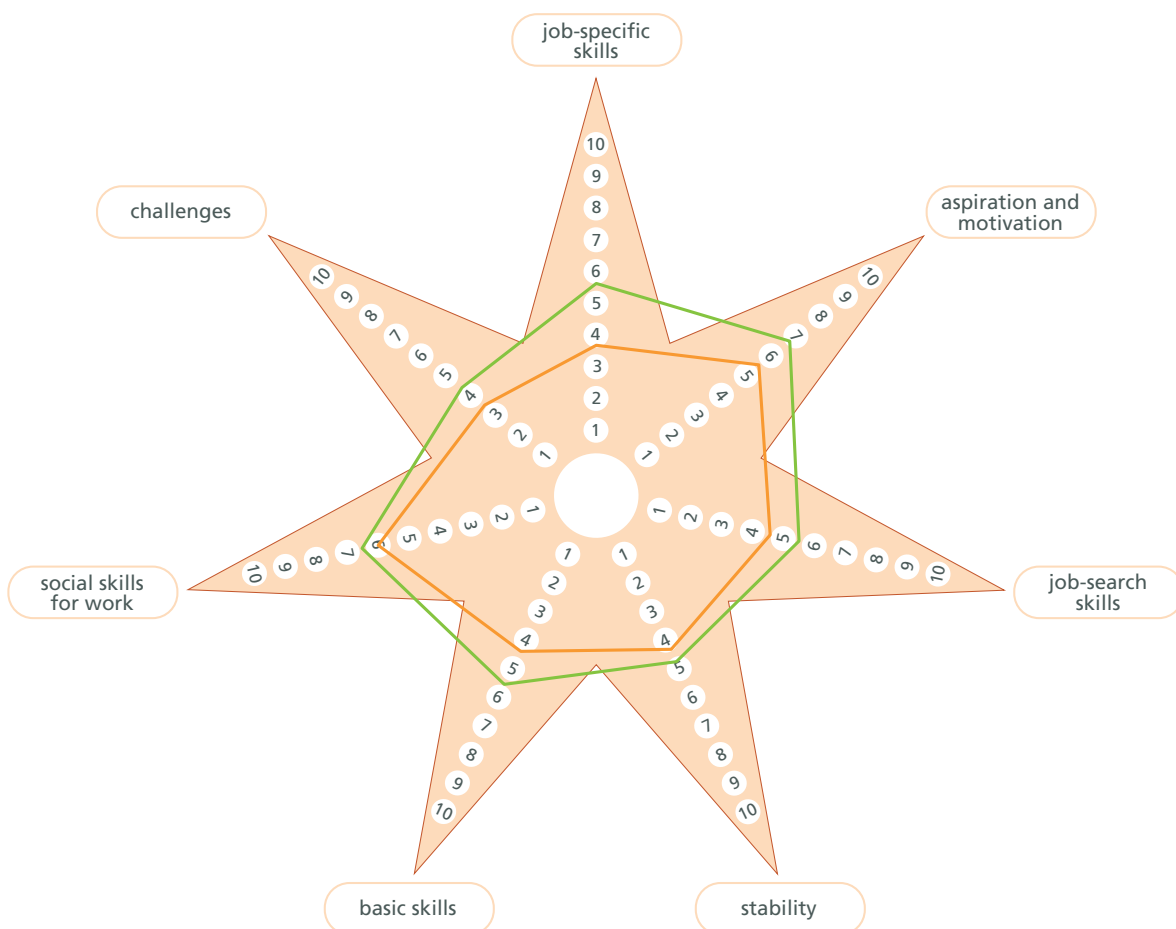


Table 2: Percentage of clients showing change

This table shows the proportion of service-users in the pilot who made positive progress, stabilised or went downhill, in each of the seven Work Star areas.

	Positive change	Negative change	No change
Job-specific skills	76%	5%	19%
Aspiration & motivation	78%	10%	12%
Job-search skills	83%	0%	17%
Stability	32%	15%	53%
Basic skills	45%	6%	49%
Social skills for work	40%	10%	50%
Challenges	36%	14%	40%

What does the data show?

This basic monitoring data provides a wealth of information and can help your service in a number of ways:

- The initial score when clients arrive can indicate whether people are entering the project at an appropriate point of the journey to work. If the initial scores are not as you would expect, you may need to review referral routes and selection process, or your ideas about who the project is intended for
- The level of progress clients make whilst they are with the project can indicate whether or not they are making the amount of progress you would expect
- Areas in which clients make good progress can highlight good practice, which can be celebrated and reported to the Board, funders and other stakeholders
- Where clients do not make as much progress as hoped, this can focus management attention on changes that may be needed within the service.

All of this is food for reflection and exploration, rather than judge and jury, on what is good or bad about your service.

The fictional data presented above can give rise to the following learning, questions and hypothesis:

- People are entering the service between the “thinking about work” and “making progress” stages, so are reasonably motivated and likely to be engaged
- The average starting point is highest on the Aspiration & motivation and Social skills for work scales. This may be at least partly due to a proportion with no issues in these areas pulling up the average or even a proportion over-estimating these scores at the start
- Clients are progressing well at the service. In several of the outcome areas the average score has moved from 3/4 – the ‘thinking about work’ stage to around 5 – the “making progress” stage. This is a very significant step
- Clients are making particularly good progress in Job-specific skills and Basic skills and less progress in Job-search skills and Social skills for work. It may be that Job-search skills and Social skills for work take longer to develop

- Less change is made in relation to Challenges and Stability – areas where clients may have entrenched issues that are hard to shift and outside the direct remit of the service. The service could consider their role in this area and whether to improve signposting, for example, but it would be appropriate not to expect rapid change.

Comparing projects

If your organisation has a number of different projects providing a similar service, you might want to compare the outcomes they achieve. This kind of comparison raises interesting questions for further exploration, such as:

- Why does one project consistently achieve more positive change than another?
- Why is one project taking in clients at an earlier stage on the Journey of Change?
- Why does one project help clients make significant improvements in their Basic skills whilst others do not?

Many factors contribute to the outcomes a project achieves. Some of them such as the quality of work and management are within the control of the project. Others, like the local job market, will be harder to affect or outside the project's control. For this reason, outcomes information from the Star should not be used on its own to judge a project as successful or unsuccessful, but should be used as a basis for discussion and further exploration.

Benchmarking with a national or regional average

This can be very useful in identifying areas where you have good practice to share and also areas where you could learn from others to improve your performance. If you are registered with the Star Online, this will give you instant access to anonymous benchmarks with similar projects and client groups at the touch of a button.

7.2 In-depth research

It is valuable to take an in-depth look at the data you have collected – say every one or two years. When looking in-depth you can:

- Identify particular groups of clients and look at how their outcomes compare with others. For example you could compare women and men, or people under 25 with other age groups, or see how a particular ethnic minority has fared. You can even look at particular clusters such as mothers of young children with good job-related skills
- Explore whether certain kinds of need are associated with positive or negative progress. For example, whether people with low scores on the Basic skills scale do better or less well than the client population as a whole
- Look at clients' typical journeys in different projects. For example do people tend to make rapid progress and then plateau?
- Benchmark your project's outcomes with an average of similar projects in other organisations.

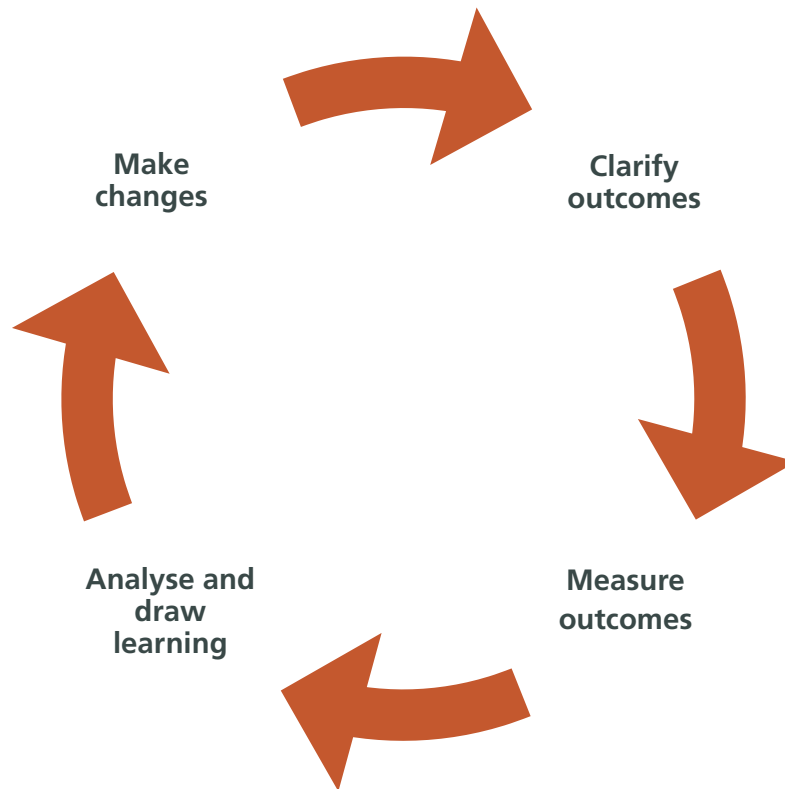
There are many other ways to analyse the data. The best way to start is to develop some hypotheses about the factors affecting your client outcomes and then use the data to put them to the test.

The Outcomes Star website – www.outcomesstar.org.uk – has more information and advice about carrying out an in-depth analysis of your outcomes data.

8 Share and act on the data

The Star is designed to be used as part of an ongoing process of measurement, learning and service improvement as illustrated in the Outcomes Learning Cycle diagram below.

Figure 3: The Outcomes Learning Cycle



This means that it is vital to share your learning with others and make changes in the light of it. There are a number of different audiences:

- The **management team**: The data can provide a means of reviewing service effectiveness and highlighting possible difficulties. Once the Star is fully implemented the management team might want to review the data regularly.
- The **workers**: Seeing the data can help to keep them motivated to collect the information and provide a boost to morale if it shows positive change. If the data shows that there are areas for development, then change will be easier to implement if workers have evidence of the problem themselves.
- **Boards**: They usually receive regular financial reports but often get only anecdotal information about services. You might want to present them with information on service outcomes on a six or 12-monthly basis.
- **Funders and commissioners**: The data can provide evidence to help you demonstrate your outcomes to funders and commissioners in a way that really captures the heart of what you do. You can draw on Star data when putting in a funding bid, use it as part of your routine reporting or as a one-off exercise to demonstrate the value of your service. It should add to your credibility and show that you are taking the initiative when it comes to measuring your outcomes.

Part 2: Using the Star with Clients

The Star is designed to be used as an integral part of your work with clients. It is meant to be a positive, helpful process, stimulating and focusing discussion and providing a useful basis for an action plan or review.

The Star is a flexible tool which workers can use in a way which meets the needs and preferences of each client and fits with existing ways of working and any particular techniques which are being used such as Motivational Interviewing. This part, therefore, presents guidelines and suggestions for use rather than step-by-step instructions. You will need to apply it in the way it works best for the context in which you work.

In addition to reading this guidance we recommend that workers receive training and follow-up support and that the Star is regularly discussed within supervision and team meetings.

The guidance in this part of the document is organised into the following sections:

1. What to do before first using the Star
2. Ways to introduce the Star to clients
3. Different approaches to using the Journey of Change and scale descriptions
4. Arriving at an agreed score
5. Using the completed Star Chart as the basis for an action plan
6. Using the Star at reviews
7. What to do when clients leave the service

There are also brief sections on the ways in which using the Outcomes Star has been found to improve work with clients, how the model of change underpinning the Star can help inform ways of working with clients and answers to some frequently asked questions.

1 Before you use the Star

Before you use the Star you need to:

- Have a good understanding of the underlying Journey of Change. The journey underpinning the Work Star is focused on skills, attitudes and behaviour and how these change as people move towards readiness for work and advancement within work. The stages are described in the User Guide
- Be familiar with the scales. Practise using the scales by thinking of one or two clients you have worked with and deciding where you would place them on each scale. It's best if you can do this together with a colleague who has experience of using the Star to check your understanding with theirs
- Know how to introduce the Star to a client. The introduction at the beginning of the Work Star User Guide presents key information in a user-friendly way and the section below runs through options for how to introduce the Star.

- Know how the Star is being used in your organisation, including:
 - when it is first completed with new clients
 - how often readings are taken
 - what happens to the form and the data
 - what to do if you need help with any aspect of using the Star
 - familiarity with the Star Online if your organisation is using it
 - we do not recommend that the Outcomes Star is used in conjunction with other similar tools, but if that is the policy and practice in your organisation, you will need to know how they fit together.

2 Introducing the Star

The process of completing the Star is intended to be helpful to the client as well as providing useful outcomes data for the project. In order to participate meaningfully, the client needs to understand the Star and the underlying Journey of Change in particular. This can take a little time to explain and so you may want to consider introducing the Star to clients before the first session in which it is completed.

Introducing the Star can be done in one of a number of ways:

- By talking the client through the points in the introduction at the beginning of the User Guide during a one-to-one session
- If you have a number of new clients starting around the same time or if you are introducing the Star for the first time to existing clients, you could introduce the Star in a group setting
- By giving the client a copy of the User Guide to read before the session (for those who are literate and interested)
- By inviting a client who has already completed the Star and found it a positive experience to describe the process to the new client.

Whichever approach or combination of approaches you take it is important that you check with each client individually that they understand the tool and why it is being used.

3 Using the scales

The Star is a flexible tool and can be used in a number of different ways depending primarily on:

- Where a client is on the journey to work and therefore their level of engagement and perspective on where they are at
- How comfortable someone feels talking about themselves and whether they are forthcoming or not
- The extent to which they are comfortable with written information in English.

Let the client decide which scale to start on or, if they are not sure, choose one you think will be easier to

discuss, for instance one that is concrete and not too sensitive (e.g. Job-specific Skills). There are a number of options in using the scales:

- **Have an open discussion** of the topic to get a feel for the issues and then look at the underlying Journey of Change and/or scale descriptions at the end to hone down to a score
- Or start **with the Journey of Change and/or scale descriptions** as a basis for discussion of that area
- Either way, you may choose to **refer to specific points within the scale descriptions** for clarification or further information. It should not be necessary to read through the whole of the scales with clients and this is probably too much information
- If someone is put off by the paperwork, you can **have just the Star Chart on the table** and verbally explain the underlying Journey of Change and how it relates to each outcome area.

Whatever approach you choose it is vital that the discussion and the score you choose is based on the Journey of Change and the defined scales. Without this, one person's three could be another person's eight and although the process may still be helpful on a one-to-one basis, your service will not be able to learn from the collated Star data.

4 Choosing a score

The process of agreeing a score on each of the scales can provide a rich basis for discussion and for learning about each client and how they view themselves and their life. In research into the use of the Star, workers consistently report that through using the Star they have learnt new things about clients even after working with them for months or years.

This process is also flexible. Options are:

- To invite the client to say where they consider themselves to be on the journey, including their reasons for their choice, or
- To suggest where you think someone is, based on your experience and on discussion with them
- To use both of these approaches and drawing on any differences of opinion as a basis for further discussion.

If a client is within the top half of the Journey of Change in all or most areas of their life, they probably have the perspective and experience necessary to take the lead in placing themselves on the journey. If they also struggle with confidence and self-esteem, the worker's role might be to provide specific evidence of their behaviour to enable them to recognise the point they have reached. If, as can particularly be the case with young people, the client places themselves unrealistically high on the journey, the worker's role might be providing evidence for a more realistic assessment from which progress is possible.

Conversely, people not thinking about work (1-2) will probably not be able to step back and place themselves within the whole Journey of Change, so workers may need to be more directive and leading in arriving at a score.

Although the ideal is for an agreed score and the client being clear what that means within the context of the Journey of Change, this may not always be possible. If there is no agreement and your professional judgment

is that further discussion of differences is not helpful, you can choose to record both scores on the Star, clearly labelling which is which.

People often find that it takes longer to complete the first Star than follow-up Stars when clients are familiar with the tool. If necessary the Star can be completed over two sessions, though preferably quite close together.

5 Using the completed Star Chart as the basis for an action plan

The visual of the completed Work Star provides an excellent basis for generating an action plan, including opportunities for asking Motivational Interviewing questions to help the client build on strengths and progress in some areas and apply those to other areas of their life.

Once you have talked through each of the areas and agreed where the client is on their journey to work, mark each score on the Star Chart or Star Online and either join the points (on paper) or generate a completed Star (online).

You can choose to use the Star Notes section to record points from your discussion that you want to keep, for instance the reason for the score, an insight the client had, reasons for any difference of opinion or specific details. These notes are optional but can be useful to look at when reviewing the Star especially if the allocated worker has changed.

Once you have the completed Star, either on paper or on screen, look at it together and prompt the client to reflect on it as a basis for what to do next. How you do this will depend on you, the client and the approach used within your service, but possible questions are:

- ? Is the shape of the Star a fair and helpful picture of how things are for them right now?
- ? What does it tell them about what areas are going well and where they have no issues?
- ? What are the strengths that they bring to those areas that are going well? What might they learn from those to apply in other areas of their life?
- ? What does the shape tell them about which areas need attention and might be holding them back?
- ? Which areas would they most like to address first? These may not be the lowest scores, but could be aspects that would then have a knock-on effect in other areas or where the client feels most confident or motivated at the moment.

Once you have agreed which areas are to go on the action plan, these can be noted and for each area further questions might include:

- ? Where on the journey do they want to get to by the next review?
- ? What needs to change in order to be at that point?
- ? What actions are needed in order to bring about that change?
- ? Who is responsible for those actions?
- ? Is it appropriate to set a deadline for completing them?

You can complete the Star Action Plan or use your organisation's own action planning documentation.

6 Revisiting the Star at reviews

The Star is designed to be completed at regular intervals, usually somewhere between every 3-6 months with longer-term interventions, but as little as every 4-6 weeks with briefer interventions. The time period depends on the type of service and client and needs to be agreed within your organisation as part of implementing the Star (see Part 1 for guidance). It usually makes sense to integrate the Star with action plan reviews.

At each review, repeat the process of discussing each of the Star areas and agreeing where the service-user is on each scale. We recommend you do this initially without reference to the previous Star scores, to focus on a snapshot in time without being influenced by previous scores. However, once the scores are agreed, it is helpful to display current and previous readings on one Star Chart to give an instant visual picture of change. If you are using the Star Online you can opt to display any number of previous Star readings on the same Star.

You can then look at the new Star shape and visual of progress and encourage open discussion. Here are examples of the kinds of questions you might use:

- ? How do they feel about what they see? Does what they see on the Star fit with their own sense of how they have changed?
- ? What response do they have to seeing any change visually on the Star? Particularly, how do they feel about seeing where they have moved up one or more of the scales?
- ? Do they realise the achievements they have made?
- ? What has helped them make progress? What strengths have they brought to this? What might they learn from that to help them in other areas?

The Star shows how far I have come – it is a very different shape now. It has helped to motivate me and gives me a sense of direction. Seeing it visually helps me to see that I am changing, that things are happening, that there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

Client

- ? What areas do they want to address now – the same or new ones?
- ? Where do they want to get to by the next review? What is needed to get to that point? What do they want to include on the action plan?

Then complete a new action plan, file the forms and/or enter the data as required.

When positive change occurs, reviews can be very helpful in encouraging and motivating both the client and the worker as the Star makes progress very evident. Change is hard; particularly around the middle of the journey people can get overwhelmed by the challenges or feel low when things go wrong. Seeing progress on the Star can help to encourage people and reinforce change as they start to try out new ways of doing things. You can use your discussions with your client to help point this out.

The Star shows both improvement and where people need more support; it reinforces the progress made and helps engage clients in their own process.

Croftlands Trust

7 When clients move on

It is a good idea to complete a final Star when the client leaves the service. This means that the project has a snapshot of the client when they leave the service which is useful for measuring the final outcome for that client.

If it is possible to complete this final Star with the client it is also likely to be helpful to them, enabling them to review the time they have spent at the service and the progress they have made there. If this is not possible – for instance with unplanned exit – the final reading can be done as a worker-only assessment and recorded as such.

If the client is moving to another service-provider then it may also be helpful to share this final Star with the new project, especially if they use the Star as well. This will provide valuable continuity, enabling the project and client to continue to look at their progress. Even if the new service does not use the Star, the client may want to take a copy of their Star with them.

The effect of using the Star with clients

Using the Star may have a significant impact on the way that you work with clients. In research with 25 organisations that had been using the Star for two years or more – the majority within the homeless sector – all said that one-to-one work had improved as a result. The ways in which it was reported that the Star enhanced one-to-one work were:

- **Increasing client engagement** because it provided a clear focus for conversation
- **Demonstrating and reinforcing progress** – seeing the change set out in a visual way was very encouraging to clients and workers
- **Helping with goal-setting** because the Journey of Change helps to break change down into small manageable steps
- **Creating a more holistic approach** – because the Work Star requires conversations about aspects of lifestyle stability and barriers it can draw information out and help break the ice when there are areas that feel difficult to touch on
- **Increased focus** because the Star sets out the key areas that the project is there to help the client with
- **More systematic and consistent work** because the Star creates a consistent framework for sessions.

How the Journey of Change can help inform one-to-one work

Some organisations find that the Journey of Change underpinning the Star can provide valuable pointers for how to work with someone, particularly in relation to what someone might be able to engage with independently and the likely level of support needed. For example:

- Some feel the pressure of failure when clients repeatedly do not attend appointments, but realising they are in the not thinking about work stage (1-2) means they can let go of unrealistic expectations and focus on realistic goals. Some projects may also decide that they cannot work with someone at that point in their journey, depending on the remit of the service.
- Some services tend to start reducing support and expecting greater self-reliance when clients reach the “making progress” stage (5-6), but the Star has helped them realise that this is too soon and reducing support at this stage could mean people slip back.
- Realising that some clients are in the self-reliance stage has helped some workers focus on the client’s reluctance to let go of the project, support them in building external sources of support and be firm about the need to move on.

Frequently Asked Questions

Using the Star may mean working with clients in a different way. The extent to which it is a change in approach and how natural and easy it feels will depend on ways of working prior to the introduction of the Star. Most people find that it is fairly self-evident and it feels familiar and comfortable after using it a few times.

The following questions are most frequently asked in training:

What if the client won't engage with the Star?

If the client is not thinking about work or engaged in sessions they are unlikely to engage meaningfully with the Star. If you know the client well enough, you can assess for yourself where the client is on the Star. You may choose to share your worker-only assessments with the client at a later date, to demonstrate progress or prompt discussion.

In our experience, it is unusual for a client to engage in sessions but not want to do the Star. If this happens, ask why and check they have had a full enough introduction to the Star or have not misunderstood how the Star works or how the information will be used. Make sure they understand the key points and answer any questions or concerns. You may also want to point out that the Star is an integral part of how your service works and the basis for action planning. If they still do not want to engage in the Star, discuss with your colleagues and manager what to do next.

What if we don't agree on the scores?

This is a rich starter for discussion! Part of the process of making changes in an area that isn't working for us is developing a realistic picture of how we are at the moment. Here are some pointers:

- **Listen carefully to what the person has to say** – it will help you understand their perceptions and also they may have information that you are not aware of that will change your view
- **Present evidence for why you see things differently.** This will work best if you have already built up some trust and understanding in the relationship and if you present them with evidence rather than just general statements. For example “you missed both your appointments last week” rather than “you're not very reliable at the moment”. Or, if the person is underestimating their progress, providing specific evidence of their achievements for instance “it was you who decided you wanted to do that course and found out the information”
- **Take into account the client's current situation.** In the early part of the journey, the person is likely to be less self-aware and this can result in a higher personal rating. Or if they are new to the service, they may feel that they want to present themselves in a positive light.

If, following discussion, you and your client still disagree, record both scores on the Star Chart. However, we recommend that it is the workers' scores that are used for analysis of service-wide outcomes.

What if the client doesn't want to discuss certain areas?

This can happen where a client feels that some of the scales are not relevant to them because they do not have an issue in that area. If you also feel that this area poses no problems, they simply score '10' in that area and move on.

It may also be that an area is sensitive or the client is not willing to discuss a problem. Many workers find that simply having an area as a scale on the Star can be a helpful way to introduce sensitive areas that do need to be discussed. However, at the end of the day, the relationship of trust between the worker and client and supporting progress are more important than the Star – if it is not helpful to continue, opt for either 10 or 1 and move to the next scale.

This person fits the description of several parts of a scale at once

This can appear to be the case. Here are some tips:

- Read the scale descriptions and see if that helps
- Go back to the description of the stages in the underlying journey to work and use this as your guide to where someone is overall – when in doubt the big picture is more important than the detail
- If things are very changeable then think about where the person has been at most of the time over the last week or so
- Discuss the issue with a colleague or manager to get another perspective.

It may be that there are two separate aspects of one scale in which the client is behaving differently. For example, you may have jointly identified three or four challenges and the client is making progress in two to three of these but sees the other as insurmountable and is not thinking about ways beyond it. To complete the scale meaningfully in such cases, you and the client need to choose which of the aspects to represent on the scale and note this choice in the Star Notes section. It is best to complete the Star for the aspect the client most wants or needs to actively address in an action plan.

Won't clients be demotivated if they go back down the scales?

When negative change occurs, workers are sometimes concerned that seeing this so clearly on the Star will demotivate the person. Usually, the client is only too aware that they have moved further away from their goal and acknowledging this can be a helpful first step in reversing the trend. It can be helpful to remind people that change is difficult and that it isn't a linear process – it is normal for people to have setbacks. You could remind them of previous setbacks that they have recovered from.

It is also possible that a client may self-score lower in a review than in an initial assessment. This can be a positive step, showing greater self-awareness and trust in their worker. It is therefore important to identify why their scores are showing a decrease and whether this is a slipback or the result of greater self-awareness, trust and honesty. Record the reason for the dip in score in the Star Notes or other relevant place.

If our clients don't make progress will my performance be in question?

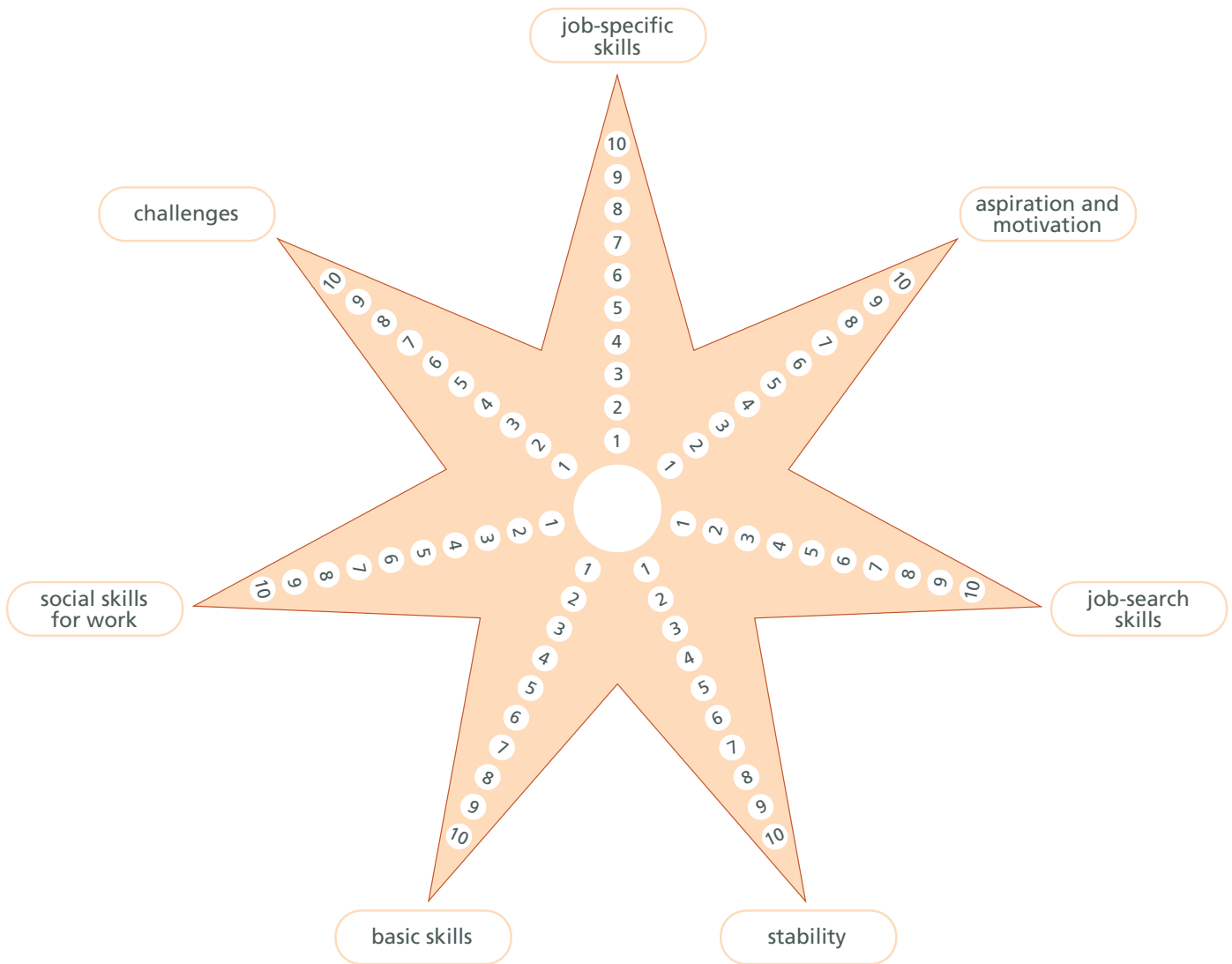
The purpose of the Star is to help clients see where they have come from and where to go next, and to help give your service an overview of where it is helping clients make positive changes and which areas may need further attention. It is not about judging the work of individual workers.

When people do not make progress on the Star there are many possible explanations. There are some plateau points for people in their journeys and it may be that it is important for clients to consolidate their progress by staying in the same place – so this could be a successful outcome for that person at that time. Equally, it could be a useful pointer to the need for a new way of working, different interventions or new environments

to enable the client to move to the next step. In some cases it may indicate that you have a particularly difficult caseload which you may want to discuss with your manager. It could also indicate that the people you are working with are not suitable for the project or that you need further training in some areas.

The Star is designed to give evidence for these issues and as such should be a positive addition for workers and for discussion in supervision.

If you have a question that isn't answered here, or if you have concerns, raise them with your manager – it is important that you have the chance to discuss them. The Star will only work well for you and your clients if you feel comfortable with it.



The Work Star is a version of the Outcomes Star, a family of tools developed by Triangle Consulting for supporting and measuring change when working with vulnerable people.

For more information see www.outcomesstar.org.uk

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