

# Completing the Homelessness Outcomes Star: Hints and Tips

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## Introduction

This practice guide has been developed to support projects taking part in Big Lottery Fund's Fulfilling Lives: Supporting people with multiple needs initiative. This includes funded projects and organisations taking part in the counterfactual study. CFE Research and University of Sheffield are undertaking the national evaluation of Fulfilling Lives (Multiple Needs). As part of this, projects are collecting data on beneficiaries using the Homelessness Outcomes Star. Refresher training sessions have been provided by Homeless Link and Triangle to support workers to take a consistent approach in using the Star. This practice guide provides hints and tips from the training session – some are based on advice from the trainers, others are suggestions about what works from the workers themselves.

## Using the Star with clients

- Don't try and introduce the Star on a first meeting with a client.
- Completing the Star is a **collaborative** process between worker and client. The more involved clients are, the less subjective the readings.
- Refer to facts and observations about the client to inform the conversation – not opinions.
- Try discussing where on the journey of change someone is without using numbers, which may reinforce perceptions that low numbers are bad and higher numbers good.
- Print out the Star Chart in black and white if the colours have similar negative connotations.

## Deciding on a score

- **Use the User Guide** – it provides important information about what each point on the scale means, provides simple phrases to use in conversation and will ensure consistency of scores.
- Remember, the Star measures attitude, motivation and **engagement, not the severity** of the underlying problem or risk. If someone has a mental illness or disability, for example, this cannot be changed, but the person's attitude and ability to deal with it can.
- Scores should be based on the client's overall progress and attitude over the six months since the last Star reading, rather than a snapshot of the day when the Star is completed.
- The score must be in whole numbers!
- If you are struggling to fit a client to one of the detailed descriptions for an area, look at the more general statements on the different journey stages.

- Use the Star Notes to provide more detail on where someone is at. This is a useful way to record and review progress.

## Dealing with disagreement

- **It is OK to disagree!**
- Don't be afraid to gently challenge the client's view – this is how change happens.
- Ask the client to give examples to illustrate the score they are suggesting.
- You as the worker also need to give evidence and refer to the User Guide to explain your view.
- If you cannot agree on a score, record both the worker's and client's view in the Star Notes and let them know you are doing this. However, the worker's score should be recorded and submitted to the evaluation team.

## Quality assurance

- **Quality assure** by reviewing case studies in team meetings and discuss your scores to help improve consistency across teams.
- Discuss the Outcomes Star in supervision and as part of reviewing case files.
- Have a go at the self-assessment exercises that were provided as part of the refresher training pack. These are available from the Grant Holders' area of the Multiple Needs Evaluation website <http://mcnevaluation.co.uk>

## Using the data

- Outcomes Star scores should NOT be used as a performance management tool – this can encourage inflation of scores and the results will not accurately reflect the needs of your clients.
- The only valid performance indicator based on the Star is that it is completed when required.
- Ask to see the data dashboard provided by the national evaluation team to see what Outcomes Star scores look like for your project.
- To get started in analysing the data, identify your own theories about how change happens. Explore whether the Star scores back this up. For example, progress in meaningful use of time predicts progress in other areas; as drug and alcohol misuse improves, emotional and mental health can often worsen.



## A reminder of the basics

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