

Using the New Mum Star™

The New Mum Star is designed to be used with women who need support as they prepare to be mums and after their baby is born. It is primarily designed for young, first-time mums but can be used more broadly. You will probably complete an initial Star reading – and possibly one or more reviews – with a service user when they are pregnant and continue working with them, and completing Star readings, sometimes up until the baby is two years old.

The New Mum Star resources consist of:

- The New Mum Star Chart, Notes and Action Plan
- The New Mum User Guide, with both brief visual scales and detailed scale descriptions
- An illustrated summary of the Journey of Change
- The short illustrated Scales and Flashcards for use with mums
- A web application for online completion at www.staronline.org.uk
- This Guidance for Workers
- An alternative New Parent Star Chart, Notes and Action Plan, Scales and Flashcards for use with birthing parents who do not identify as a mum.

The New Mum Star was developed by Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise in collaboration with the Family Nurse Partnership. The process involved workers, managers, service users and associated professionals.

Completing the New Mum Star is intended to be a helpful, engaging and empowering process that stimulates and focuses discussion and provides a useful, shared basis for an action or support plan. It is a flexible tool that relies on the skills of the professionals using it, as well as on a degree of understanding and trust between them and the mum. The Star is designed to be used one to one; the aim is to have a genuine interaction and complete it collaboratively.

Background and further information about the Outcomes Star suite of tools can be found at www.outcomesstar.org.uk.

New Parent Star materials

We also have an adapted set of materials for the New Mum Star which are designed for birthing parents who do not identify as a mum. The New Parent Star materials include Star Chart, Flashcards and Scales. Please note that these materials are not suitable to use with parents who are not the birthing parent – this is because all materials are specifically designed for use with people who are pregnant or post-partum.

Before you use the New Mum Star™

Make sure that you have received training in using the New Mum 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 – **stuck**, **starting to engage**, **trying for yourself**, **finding what works** and **self-reliance**. 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.

How to introduce the New Mum Star™

Before you introduce the Star to someone 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 the new mums you support in groups, it can be useful and save time to explain the Star to the group before starting one-to-one work within individual sessions
- Consider giving mums who are interested a copy of the User Guide to read before the session. Although this is quite detailed and relies on someone being comfortable with reading, the whole document is worded in accessible language, so it can be shared.

When introducing the Star:

- Explain that people may start anywhere on the journey, can move both up and down on the scale and that 5 is the top of the Star scales but not the end of the journey
- Be clear that this is about establishing where they are and building up a map of their world, experiences and journey – it is not about being judged or being awarded an overall “score”
- Let the mum decide which scale to start with or choose one that is concrete and may be easier to discuss, such as the first three scales (“Life skills”, “Your health and well-being” or “Looking after your baby”).

Some suggested phrases for introducing the Star include:

“The New Mum Star is a way of tracking your journey and finding out about your strengths and the areas where you need more information or support.”

“The Star tells us where you are now and what needs to happen next, and it helps you and me plan our work together.”

How to complete the New Mum Star™

Complete the Star collaboratively with mums in a way that responds to their needs and abilities. The aim is to engage them in meaningful discussion, and to listen and learn about them, rather than to complete the Star as quickly as possible.

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 mum on the Journey of Change. The brief visual scales in the User Guide are designed to be used directly with mums. 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 mums. Avoid reading them out in their entirety because of their length.

Always use the scales – 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 and your service won’t be able to treat collated Star data as reliable for reporting purposes.

If you don’t agree, have a discussion – this can help you learn about the mum and help her reflect on her situation and see it in new ways. If a mum is able to engage meaningfully and is at 3 or above for most of the New Mum Star areas, encourage her to take the lead in placing herself on the scales. You may need to be more directive for mums in the **starting to engage** stage. Those who are **stuck** in all or most areas will not discuss the Star meaningfully and you may need to do a worker-only reading. Encourage mums with low confidence to see their strengths, and others to be more realistic.

If you can't reach agreement, record both views on the Star, labelling which is your opinion and which is the mum's, using the Star Notes to record points from your discussion. Use your professional judgement to decide when further discussion is not helpful.

When you have completed all of the scales, join the points to create a shape. Mark each point on the Star Chart and join the points. Encourage mums to do this and to create the shape. This applies whether you and the mum are completing the Star on paper or on screen, for example using the Star Online.

Recognise external factors. While the Journey of Change focuses on the young mum, there may be societal factors or other conditions beyond their control – and beyond the control of your service – which make it harder for things to improve. These may include poor housing, financial difficulty or lack of suitable mental health provision or other 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.

If you are working with the father or other co-parent as well, complete a separate Star for them and use it to generate actions they can take. This version of the Star is created for mothers, so you may need to verbally adjust the language in some scales to be appropriate for them.

Pages 6-8 have the responses to some Frequently Asked Questions.

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

Look at the shape of the completed Star together and prompt the mum to reflect on it as a basis for what to do next. Ask questions such as:

- Is the shape of the Star an accurate picture of how things are for you now?
- What does it tell you about what is and is not going well?
- What are the strengths that you bring to the areas that are going well? How might you apply those strengths in other areas of your life?
- What is it most important to address first?

Once you have chosen the areas to be included in the support plan, further motivational questions for each area include:

- Where on the journey do you want to get to and by when?
- What needs to be done to bring about this change?
- Who is responsible for these actions? When can they be completed?

Complete the New Mum 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 with the mum and achievable, realistic actions:

Seeing the Star visually helps me to see that I am changing, that things are happening, that there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

Service user

The Star is really respectful for clients.

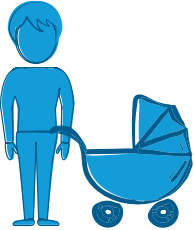
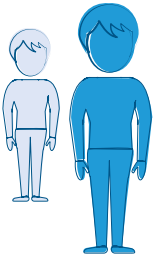
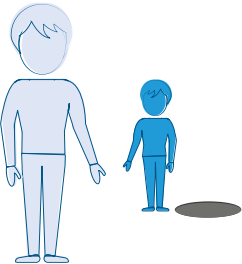
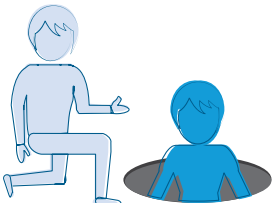
FNP supervisor

It helps us to have challenging conversations.

FNP family nurse

The Star brings everything back to the baby, so it brings real clarity to the mum.

FNP family nurse

Journey of Change stage	Goals of keyword
<p>Self-reliance (5)</p> 	<p>At this stage, a mum is helping her baby to thrive, looking after herself sufficiently well and no longer needs support from the service, so the main actions will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to reinforce the learning • Building and reinforcing support networks outside of the service • Ensuring the mum knows how to spot the warning signs and seek help again if needed in the future. <p>Example: if a phone call needs to be made, the mum makes it independently.</p>
<p>Finding what works (4)</p> 	<p>At this stage, a mum is finding ways to look after herself and to be a mum, and her baby is benefiting. The focus of support may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping mums to reflect on how they have overcome problems and how they can learn from this • Celebrating their achievements • Supporting them to deal with manageable difficulties themselves and offering more support through setbacks or larger difficulties. <p>Example: if a phone call needs to be made, at this stage the worker may help the mum prepare for it and make sure she has all the information she needs – and be nearby if it is a difficult call – but the mum makes the call.</p>
<p>Trying for yourself (3)</p> 	<p>At this stage, a mum is trying new things for herself and may give up or struggle to keep going when these don't seem to work, so goals and actions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering sufficient support and encouragement • Helping mums to identify what is working and make changes where approaches are not working • Helping mums to take actions themselves rather than doing it for them. <p>Example: if a phone call needs to be made, at this stage the mum may make it but with the worker nearby to take over if it becomes difficult.</p>
<p>Starting to engage (2)</p> 	<p>At this stage a mum will accept some help from your service but does not take the initiative and may not believe in her ability to be a good mum. The approach may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the situation by giving practical support • Setting up appointments and perhaps accompanying mums • Helping mums to set achievable goals with guidance on practical steps • Building on any signs of greater confidence and initiative. <p>Example: if a phone call needs to be made, at this stage it will be made by the worker but with the mum present and giving her consent.</p>
<p>Stuck (1)</p> 	<p>At this stage, a baby is not able to develop well or is at risk and the mum may also be at risk but does not recognise the problems or willingly accept help. Actions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing on safety – preventing or minimising harm • Providing feedback and information • Providing practical and proactive help, perhaps directly with the baby where needed, even where the mum is resistant • Developing trust and starting to build a relationship. <p>Example: if a phone call needs to be made, at this stage it will be made by the worker alone.</p>

Revisit the New Mum Star™ at regular reviews

Make sure you know the timing and frequency of Star reviews in your service; these work best when integrated with support plan reviews and usually happen around every three months. At each review, repeat the process of discussing each of the Star areas and agreeing where the mum is on each scale, preferably without reference to the previous Star readings. Once completed, you can show the current and previous readings to give an instant visual picture of change, either on paper or on screen if using the Star Online.

The mum's life, situation and support needs are likely to change a lot before the baby reaches two, particularly during the pregnancy. Some areas of the Star may seem positive during pregnancy and then show a drop after birth. This is natural and useful information, so don't be concerned if some of the mums you support go back down the scales. It will help your service to identify which areas are likely to be more challenging post-birth and it provides a basis for planning and effective support.

For example, in pregnancy someone may have no conflict in their relationship with their partner, but after their baby is born their relationship may become volatile or problematic. The mum would have had an initial Star reading of 5 in the "Relationship" scale as she was **self-reliant** in this area of her life at that time. However, her review Star reading would reflect the change in the relationship and have a reading lower down the scale. This is important to know and will show that the change in situation caused more challenges.

To reduce the potential change in readings between pregnancy and the baby being born in the "Looking after your baby" scale, the scale descriptors include any concerns from the worker or others about how an expectant mum will manage once the baby is born. This will help indicate whether concerns do show up during pregnancy.

Encourage open discussion, looking at the new Star shape. Possible review questions include:

- How do you feel about the shape of the Star now?
- Where do you see the progress you have made?
- What has helped you to make progress? What strengths have you brought to this? What can you learn from this and apply to other areas?
- What areas do you want to address now – the same as before or new ones?
- Where do you want to get to by the next review? What actions will it take to make this happen?

The Star shows improvement and where people need more support, it reinforces to staff the progress made and helps engage service users in their own process.

**Manager,
Croftlands Trust**

Complete a new action plan and, if working on paper, file the Star Chart and Action Plan and enter the data as required. If you complete the Star on screen with the mum, for example using the Star Online, the data should be captured automatically, but make sure you are familiar with your organisation's policy. You may need to print the Star Chart, Notes and Action Plan for your files and/or to give a copy to the mother to take away.

When positive change occurs, reviews can be encouraging and motivating for you and the mums you work with, as the Star makes progress very evident. Seeing progress on the Star can help reinforce change.

Frequently asked questions

Using the Star may mean working with mums in a different way. How natural and easy it feels for you will depend on your way of working prior to using the Star. Most workers find that the Star is fairly self-evident and feels familiar and comfortable after they have used it a few times, but the following questions often come up in training.

What if a mum refuses to engage with the Star?

Mums who are **stuck** in most or all areas of the Star are unlikely to be able to engage meaningfully with the Star. You may choose to do a worker-only assessment and share that with them later, to show how things have improved or to prompt learning and discussion.

However, it is unusual for mums to engage with support but resist using the Star. If this happens, listen to their reasons, check they have understood how the Star works and how the information is used and answer any questions or concerns they have. You may also want to point out the benefits of the visual, shared picture and that the Star is an integral part of how your service provides support.

What if a mum doesn't want to discuss certain areas?

This can happen when mums feel that some of the scales are not relevant because they do not have an issue in these areas. If you also feel that a particular area poses no problems, simply place the mum at 5 for that scale and move on.

Some areas may be particularly sensitive or the mum may not be willing to discuss them. Many workers find that seeing an area on the Star can be a helpful way to introduce sensitive topics that need to be discussed. However, the relationship of trust between the worker and mum is more important than the Star. If it's not helpful to continue, opt for either 5 or 1, and move to the next scale.

What if we don't agree on where a mum is in an area?

This is a helpful starter for discussion and it's important to listen carefully to what the mum has to say. However:

- If mums are not yet trying for themselves, you will need to take more of a lead
- If you suspect they do not want to acknowledge difficulties they are experiencing, use your professional skill and judgement in the same way as you would without the Star. Unless there is a realistic picture of how things are, the mum and baby may not get the support they need
- If you and the mum still don't see things the same way after discussion, record both views on the Star Chart, either during the session or afterwards. Your views may converge later.

If things don't improve for mums, will that reflect badly on me?

The purpose of the Star is to help mums see where they have come from and where to go next. It will also help your service see where it is assisting mums to make positive changes, and identify areas that may need further attention. When mums do not show improvement on the Star, there are many possible explanations. It is not about judging the work of individual members of staff. However, this may be something to raise in supervision, for support where things are difficult.

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

When things get worse, workers are sometimes concerned that seeing this so clearly on the Star will demotivate clients. Usually, however, people are only too aware of this and acknowledging it can be a first step in addressing it. It can be helpful to point out recent changes that could have made things harder for a while and to reassure mums that if they were **finding what works** or **self-reliant** before, they probably have what they need to tackle the new situation and things will improve again.

What if a mum has limited literacy or English?

The Star materials are designed to be used flexibly. If a mum's English is limited, you may need to paraphrase in simplified language to support her understanding. If a mum has limited literacy, you could give her the Star Chart and the short illustrated Scales and read out the short scale descriptions of the stages you feel she is closest to at that time. Make sure you still refer closely to the detailed scales in this guide yourself.

Why do the bold statements say "I" and the detailed bullets say "you"?

The bold statement at the start of each detailed scale stage is an 'I' statement/first person, and is the same as the statement in the brief visual scales in the User Guide, and in the short illustrated Scales – these are in the client's voice, to support them to talk about and recognise where they are on the scale. The bullet points below are worded as 'you'/second person, as in your voice talking to the client.

Not all the bullet points in the detailed scales are relevant for my client – does that matter?

Some of the bullet points are written as an absolute statement and some are prefaced by "you may" or "perhaps". All the absolute statements need to apply in order for a mum to be at that stage. Those prefaced by "perhaps" may or may not apply for a particular mum – sometimes such statements are there to suggest possible reasons for someone being at a given stage and to help people recognise where they are on the scale.

The examples of behaviours or context given in the bullet points can never be exhaustive. Use whichever examples are most relevant for the person you are with and feel free to add further examples verbally. Not all the examples will run through the full scale – some examples will only apply towards the start of the scale and others become relevant higher up. For example, concerns about hygiene may be in stages 1 and 2, then stage 3 discusses sorting out these issues and stage 4 states that this is no longer a concern. This is then assumed to still be the case at 5 and so is not repeated. This avoids undue repetition and allows space for more relevant examples, such as good nutrition.

Why do alcohol, drugs and smoking appear in different scales?

Smoking, drinking and taking illegal drugs are included in:

- “Your health and well-being” purely with reference to the mum’s health
- “Your baby’s development”, with reference to their effect on the development of the unborn baby
- Smoking is also included in “Looking after your baby”, where a mum can’t go beyond stage 2 if she or others in the household smoke around the baby, as this scale covers the baby’s health.

It is important to be aware of national and local guidance when discussing these issues.

In the “Your health and well-being” scale, the focus is on mums engaging with and making changes in relation to alcohol, drugs or smoking, as needed. Only at stage 5 are they never smoking or taking drugs at all and only drinking alcohol within safe limits (if at all). This scale does not require mums to avoid alcohol completely for their own health, as UK government guidance offers safe limits (which isn’t the case for smoking or illegal drugs). The effect of drinking while pregnant is covered in “Your baby’s development”.

In the “Your baby’s development” scale, if a mum is smoking, drinking alcohol and/or taking illegal drugs during pregnancy, she will not be able to get beyond stage 2. This is because of the risks to an unborn baby’s development, which are higher than the risk to the mum’s health. Stage 3 in this scale states “During pregnancy, you don’t smoke, take drugs or drink alcohol” and this is assumed to be also the case further along the scale at 4 and 5.

In relation to smoking around or in the same house as the baby, UK government guidance states that it’s helpful for people to change their outer clothes and to wash their hands before contact with the baby, even when smoking outside, and that smoke can linger in the house for two to three hours after a cigarette is finished and can spread to other rooms. This can be added verbally as it is not specifically referenced in the scale.