

# Quality & Impact Reporting in Supporting People Projects

## A Demonstration Pilot using the Outcomes Star

July 2008

Project Sponsors



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## Executive Summary

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This Demonstration Pilot, funded by the Northern Rock Foundation, was commissioned Norcare in partnership with Aquila Way.

The aims of the Pilot were to demonstrate how the use of social performance indicators can

- enhance the quality of service to users
- demonstrate the positive impact of building in value added aspects to the service
- enable all partners to better identify the links between service outcomes and the government's policy targets.

Three projects – two from Norcare and one from Aquila Way participated in the pilot. 12 support workers and 33 service users trialled the Outcomes Star as part of their regular support sessions.

### Findings from Support Workers & Service Users

73% of the feedback forms from the pilot rated the overall experience of using the Outcomes Star as positive. It is a useful visual aid, and can act as a good prompt for identifying needs and setting goals in support planning. Some service users were motivated by being able to chart their progress in this way, especially at Elizabeth House (Aquila Way). Others noted that external factors (accommodation, family, mental health) could have a string influence upon a service user's self-perception, and their ability to relate to the Star.

The Outcomes Star uses a scoring scale called 'The Journey of Change' (page 6). In general that service users with average scores of 6 or more responded more positively to the Star.

### Management Information Systems (MIS) Applications

The Outcomes Star lends itself to a variety of applications as an MIS tool. A workshop of project staff and management from Norcare and Aquila Way gave a generally positive endorsement to its use as a tool for recording and reporting 'distance travelled'. There was concern that it should remain client focused, and that management should adopt a flexible approach in the knowledge service users progress at different rates.

### Evidencing Outcomes to Service Commissioners

The Outcomes Star can be used to evidence distance travelled for individual service users and in aggregate across a cadre of service users. Under the Local Area Agreement framework local authority commissioners will be seeking evidence of delivery against the authority's improvement targets. Used alongside 'hard indicators' about move-ons, employment and training, and in support of narrative data, the Outcomes Star can provide such evidence.



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## Management Response

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### Norcare

Commissioners are increasingly interested not just in the *outputs* but the *outcomes* of service delivery. Norcare was also acutely aware that in future we would need to be able to demonstrate the impact of our service to a far wider range of partners.

When we started out on the project we weren't sure how we would be able to evidence the distance travelled by our service users. We were therefore delighted to pilot the use of the Outcomes Star as a means of demonstrating distance travelled, not just at the individual service user level but also at the corporate level, by aggregating individually derived data.

The challenge for Norcare now is twofold. Firstly, to ensure that in designing our new management information system, we build in the ability to reporting on this type of data. Secondly, to ensure that everyone within the organisation receives sufficient training to enable them to make informed use of the Outcomes Star with the individual service user and also at an overall organisational level.

Finally, we hope to share our experience further within the sector. We shall shortly be running some training on outcomes measurement as part of the Regional Outcomes Champions project.

Susan Bickerton  
Chief Executive, Norcare

### Aquila Way

The invitation to participate in the Quality and Impact pilot project was timely for Aquila as we were grappling with how to capture and evidence our 'softer outcomes,' to evidence what we believed to be excellent support work by staff. We did have some initial concerns to not overload project staff with more paperwork and equally not wishing to 'inflict' more interventions in the lives of our service users.

However, we found that using and recording the Outcomes Star fitted well with current Supporting People planning requirements. More importantly, it gave rise to useful conversations and work with the service users that participated.

Aquila Way has determined to introduce the work as standard practice within support planning from Autumn 2008. The challenge now is to incorporate the data into our MIS system. Our hope is that such a tool will become more widely used so that commissioners.

Phil Dobson  
Projects Director, Aquila Way



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## Background

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This Demonstration Pilot was commissioned to inform the debate between service providers and service commissioners in the supported housing sector about outcome indicators and measures of value added.

Norcare<sup>1</sup>, a leading service provider in the North East, had already commissioned research from AnyBodyCan as part of a needs analysis for its new MIS system. Following the recommendations of that research, Norcare began to seek partners for a Demonstration Pilot of an appropriate tool to measure 'distance travelled' by service users and value added by service providers. The Northern Rock Foundation invited Norcare to apply for funding for such a pilot, to be undertaken in partnership with another service provider and to be delivered by AnyBodyCan<sup>2</sup>.

Funding was approved in December 2007. Aquila Way<sup>3</sup> accepted an invitation to become a partner in the Pilot. The first project planning meeting was held in January 2008. This project report is published following dissemination event on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2008.

### Aims of the Pilot

*The aims of the Pilot were to demonstrate how the use of social performance indicators can*

- *enhance the quality of service to users*
- *demonstrate the positive impact of building in value added aspects to the service*
- *enable all partners to better identify the links between service outcomes and the government's policy targets*

### Steering Group

A Steering Group was formed to:

- inform the action research process,
- provide 'critical support' to the project team, and
- guide the dissemination process.

Research, training, data analysis and reporting was delegated to AnyBodyCan as project consultants.

The Steering Group met on three occasions. Membership comprised – senior management from Norcare and Aquila Way, AnyBodyCan's project consultants, Louise Telford (Northern Rock Foundation) and Chris Ford (NECE). Representatives from local authority commissioning teams were invited but unable to attend.

### Project Selection

Three projects providing supported accommodation and floating support were engaged in the Demonstration Pilot, two managed by Norcare and one by Aquila Way. The three projects were chosen deliberately to introduce different groups of service users with different needs into the Pilot. An initial fact-finding meeting was held with each of the three projects before a decision was made about the choice of outcome measurement tool.



The three projects chosen were:

- Kairos (*Norcare*) - a supported accommodation project for men and women whose use of alcohol has affected their lives in a detrimental way
- SAIL (*Norcare*) – a service supporting single men and women who have experienced mental ill health. [Note - the SAIL project also invited participation in the Pilot by South Tyneside Tenancy Support Service – a tenancy support project working in partnership with the Probation Service]
- Elizabeth House (*Aquila Way*) - providing residential accommodation and support to young mothers and their children as a stepping stone towards independent living

In all 12 support workers and 33 service users from across the three projects provided evidence for the Demonstration Pilot.

## Timetable

It was always recognised that the timetable for the Pilot – less than 6 months from inception to report back - was artificially short. The choice of timetable was influenced by the imminent switch of funding from the existing *Supporting People* outcomes framework to the Local Area Agreement (LAA) framework – see also page 13. It was agreed that the findings of the Pilot should be available and published in July 2008, so as to make a timely contribution to thinking about measurement of outcomes and value added in the context of the LAA framework.

Given the short time for data collection, the data values should be treated as illustrative of the method rather than definitive measures of service users' progress.

## Choice of the Outcomes Star

A range of possible tools were considered:

- Norcare already had a qualitative measurement tool in use – the quality of life questionnaire
- AnyBodyCan had recently piloted a framework for Personal Awareness and Social Skills in another project
- SITRA<sup>4</sup> provided information on a range of tools in use including:
  - Bridges to Progress
  - The Bromford Outcome Measuring Model
  - Measuring Change (Carr Gomm)
  - OSW Employability Map
- Aquila Way arrange for a demonstration of the new on-line tool for service users – Blue Salmon

However, having reviewed the range of tools available, the Steering Group readily accepted the consultants' the recommendation to use the Outcomes Star. Its advantages include:

- it has been specifically developed for the supported housing sector
- it is based upon an easily understood 'journey of change'
- guidelines are provided for scoring, reducing subjectivity
- the tool can be used in support planning
- it is visual, intuitive and 'service user friendly'
- it allows the service user to chart her/his progress over time
- it produces numerical data which can be aggregated over time
- it is already widely in use in the sector and therefore already has some acceptance



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## About the Outcomes Star

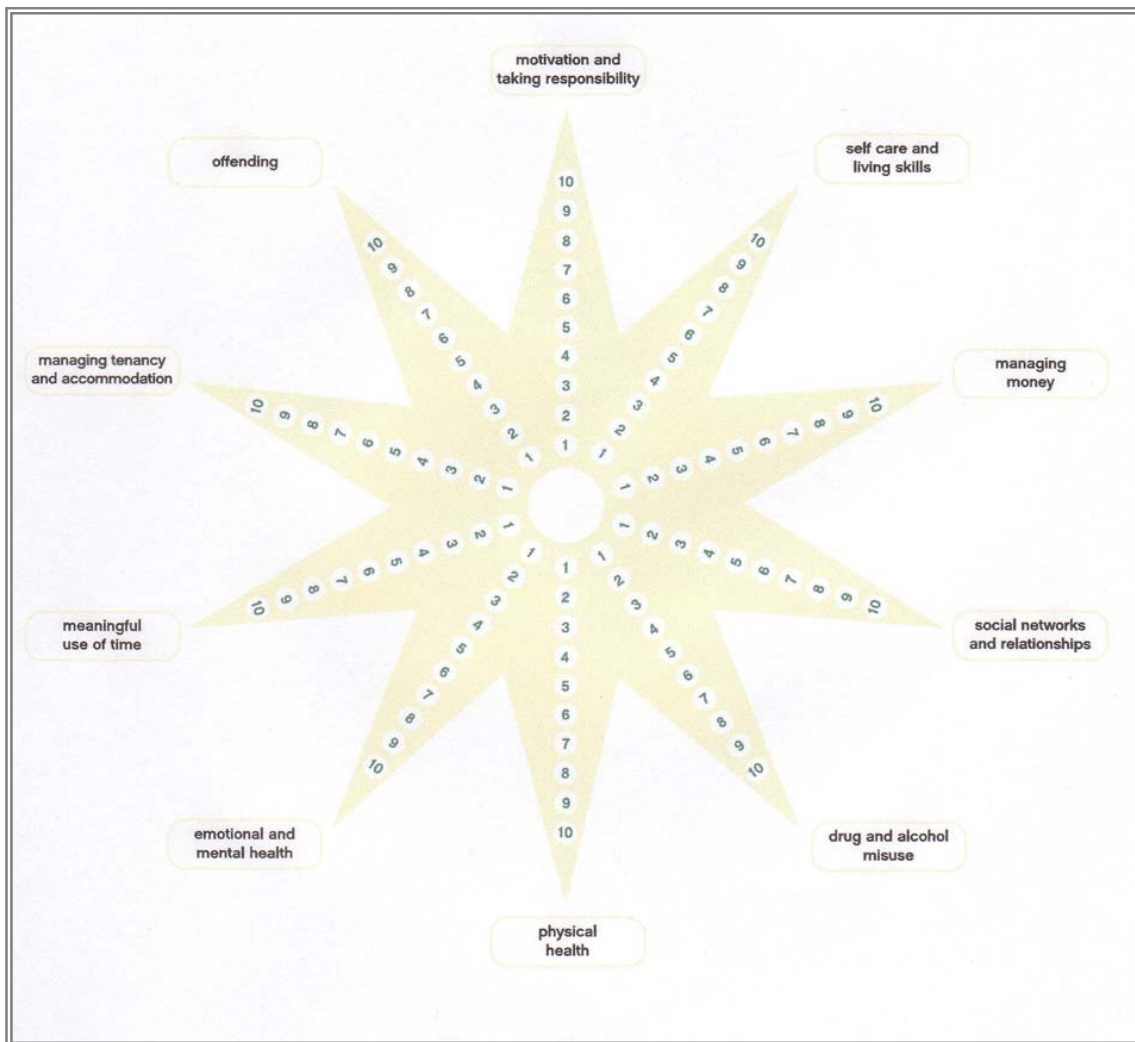
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The Outcomes Star<sup>5</sup> is a visually intuitive tool for measuring the 'distance travelled' by service users in supported housing projects.

The Outcomes Star has been developed by Triangle Consulting and the London Housing Foundation and is available under a Creative Commons licence. It is already widely used by *Supporting People* providers across the UK.

The Outcomes Star offers the opportunity to chart a service user's progress over 10 headings – see fig 1 below

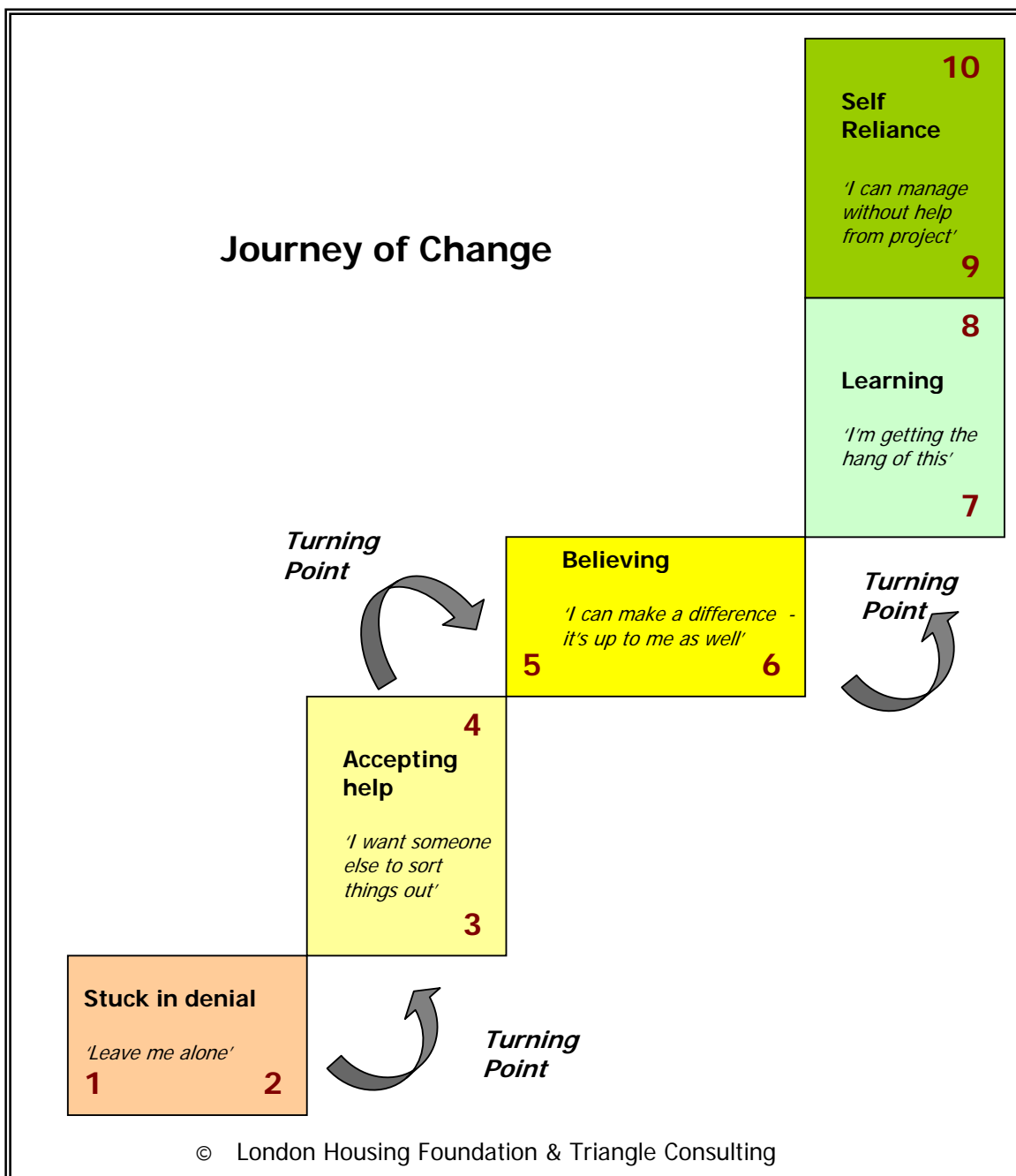
**Fig. 1**



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Fig. 2



The appropriate point on the chart is determined by reference the 'journey of change' scale – see fig 2 above. This charts the journey of experience from denial (lowest scores), through the turning points of passive acceptance of support and early self-belief to growing responsibility and self-reliance (highest scores). The Outcomes Star Guide for Key Workers includes guidance about how to apply the journey of change model to each of the Start chart's 10 arms.





## Findings - Support Workers and Service Users

The first aim of the Pilot was: *to demonstrate how the use of social performance indicators can enhance the quality of service to users.*

A key consideration for the Demonstration Pilot was that any new outcome indicator should not intrude upon the working relationship between support worker and service user. At worst the effect should be neutral. At best, the indicator may become a useful tool for support planning and motivating the service user.

The Demonstration Pilot involved some artificiality; the timeframe was very short, the Outcome Star was introduced over and above the existing support planning tools. Nonetheless for the majority of service users, the experience proved positive and useful.

### Results by Project

In all 33 service users completed at least one reading of the Outcomes Star during the Pilot. Support workers completed a brief feedback form after each reading. 73% of those feedback forms reported that the overall experience of using the Outcomes Star as positive. The service user's understanding of the Star as a means of measuring progress and its perceived relevance were also generally rated positively, especially at Elizabeth House.

	SAIL	Kairos	Elizabeth House	Total
No: of Key Workers	4	5	3	12
No: of Service Users	12	13	8	33
<b>Scale of 1 – 10</b>				
No. of 1st Readings	12	13	8	33
No. of 2nd Readings		10	8	18
Retrospective Readings			6	6
<b>Scale of 1 – 10</b>				
Mean Score	5.5	6.0	7.8	
Mean Improvement		0.6	1.9	
Mean Score on Admission			5.9	
<b>Scale of 1 – 6</b>				
Overall Relevance	4.0	3.9	5.1	
User Understanding	3.3	3.9	5.0	
Relevance	3.5	4.4	5.3	

It quickly became apparent that there was a strong correlation between the service user's engagement with the Star and their point of progression in the 'Journey of Change' – Fig. 2 (page 5). Those who were scoring more than 6 on average had already reached the turning point for taking control of their own lives. For them the Star became a satisfying way of acknowledging progress already made, and a goal for becoming even more self-reliant. Those who average scores were below 5 were still passive in their acceptance of help, and in general they saw less relevance in the Star.

Some service users' lives were pre-occupied with other externalities – homelessness, health issues, new baby. A dominant external concern can also make the Star seem less relevant to the service user.



## Feedback Comments

A range of feedback comments below serve to illustrate the range of experiences in using the Star chart on different occasions

SAIL	Kairos	Elizabeth House
<i>Service user is having a difficult time presently and was not motivated to complete</i>	<i>At the time of using it this service user was not engaging – their life is very chaotic</i>	<i>Service user is new parent and very tired much of the time –sometimes struggling</i>
<i>A lot of the outcomes are due to outside factors (eg NHS) therefore it will be difficult for the service user to relate to Star Chart</i>	<i>Service user really struggled to see the relevance of the form</i>	<i>Service user has reading difficulties and did not understand some of the comments/journey of change</i>
<i>The Service user is homeless at present therefore cannot see the value in filling in forms but realises we are trying to help</i>	<i>Some of the discussion about the scores created a bit of anxiety and panic for the service user</i>	<i>Good discussion with service users about scores – happy when key worker suggested higher, willing to accept recommended lower score after thought</i>
<i>Service user is an elderly person who does not hold out much for the future.</i>	<i>Service users are ‘up and down’ depending upon the time of day, etc</i>	<i>New resident – useful to begin charting progress from the start</i>
<i>The service user could see this was a method of recording his progress and gave Norcare some records to work from</i>	<i>Could be used with support plan but important not to lose the client’s interest</i>	<i>Positive reaction from service user who placed cross appropriately to mark progress – no difference of opinion</i>
<i>As a method of recording outcomes and gathering statistics it is a useful tool.</i>	<i>Helped service user to identify what support they need and how well they are doing</i>	<i>For this service user the second reading went really well. The scores are a good representation</i>
<i>Helpful as visual tool and easy to explain and understand</i>	<i>Service user was able to appreciate where they had come from – made them think about themselves and their needs</i>	<i>Service user said Star chart was good and was happy to discuss progress and plan for next time</i>
<i>Supplement support planning and help plan/focus</i>	<i>We could use the Outcomes Star to monitor progress</i>	<i>Service user enjoyed looking at progress from retrospective to 2nd Reading and monitoring progress</i>

### Additional Observations:

At the Aquila Way project, support workers encouraged service users to write a ‘retrospective’ Star – ‘What were things like when you first came here?’. This proved very beneficial in terms of being able to demonstrate progress already made – which was affirming to the service user. The flip side of this approach in the context of the Pilot was that service users were asked to complete three ‘Stars’ in less than 8 weeks – some boredom began to creep in on the third reading.



In general support workers were able to use the guidelines to mediate any difference in the service user's and the key worker's perception of the correct score. The exceptions to this were in situations where the relationship between support worker and service user had not yet been formed (or when a stand-in support worker was guiding the process). In those instances the support worker did not know the service user well enough to know when to challenge.

The service users' mood, as well as other externalities, could affect the completion of the Star. In the case of floating support contracts other immediate crises may make the Star irrelevant or inappropriate for use on that visit. Floating support workers also expressed concern about leaving issues unresolved from an Outcomes Star session (eg a problem or difference of opinion identified), and anxieties which this might cause the service user.

Although expressed in simple language the Star still requires some literacy skills. One service user with reading difficulties found it hard to sustain her concentration even with help from the support worker.

SAIL is a project serving clients with long term mental health needs. It was not appropriate to engage some of their service users with the Star.

<b>Some Comments collected at Feedback Workshop – 12<sup>th</sup> June</b>	
<i>Self esteem is core to service users</i>	<i>Need a period for service user to adjust to their new surroundings before introducing something like the Star</i>
<i>Some clients want to give the right answer to please their support worker</i>	<i>It would be useful to do an 'retrospective' like Elizabeth House – ie introduce the Star after they have been at the project for a while</i>
<i>There needs to be a period of time to build up trust between the service user and support worker first – before using the Star</i>	<i>It can take quote a long time to do – practical issues, especially for floating support</i>
<i>Even though it is visual (good) the guidance notes/journey of change is still too wordy</i>	<i>Disengaging after solving the initial problem</i>
<i>Support workers need to be well/consistently trained</i>	<i>Good potential as a support planning tool</i>
<i>It may not always be appropriate to engage the Service User in completely the Star – is it OK for a Support Worker to make the assessment alone?</i>	<i>Needs a flexible approach around some agreed 'norms' – not all projects are alike, service user make progress at varying rates</i>



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## Findings - Support Planning

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The Outcomes Star Guide for Key Workers includes materials to link findings to a support plan. However, Norcare and Aquila Way already have established support planning frameworks, and so for these materials were not used in this Pilot. We asked support workers:

*How useful do you consider the Outcomes Star could be for planning support and target setting with this service user?*

	SAIL	Kairos	Elizabeth House
	Scale of 1 – 6		
Usefulness for Planning Support & Target Setting	4.4	4.3	5.4

There was positive feedback from a number of support workers about the potential for using the Outcomes Star in support planning for the reasons identified above – it is an ‘intuitive’ tool, it enables the Service User to set target and to chart progress, it identifies areas for focus, etc.

However, a number of concerns were also raised:

- a significant minority of Service Users failed to engage with the Star
- there were fears that Star would be introduced ‘on top of’ existing planning systems – ie would add to workload
- a flexible approach to timing (of readings and review dates) would need to be allowed
- using the Star could be more challenging in ‘floating support’ relationships – other distractions during the session, not always enough time to complete and discuss the Star with a client in a single session
- it was not clear to some support workers how the Star would relate to *Supporting People* outcomes.

Discussion at the Feedback Workshop reinforced a consensus view that if the Outcomes Star was to be used as part of the support planning framework, there should be flexibility/discretion allowed at project level to ensure the process remained service user focused – eg as a general rule the Star was a preferred element of support planning, but could be omitted when the support worker/project manager considered it inappropriate.

The potential for using the Outcomes Star in support planning was also widely discussed at the Dissemination Event on 3<sup>rd</sup> July. The Star was seen as providing a useful framework for evidencing needs, and for setting achievable goals

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## Findings - Management Information System (MIS) Applications

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The second aim of the Pilot was: *to demonstrate the positive impact of building in value added aspects to the service.*

In this respect the Pilot was seeking to go beyond the question: *'Does this tool help the service user and support worker to record and celebrate distance travelled?'*, and to ask *'Can we meaningfully aggregate data within a project, and across projects, as a means of performance measurement, and to demonstrate value added by a support service?'*

### Potential Applications

There are a variety of potential MIS applications of such aggregated data:

#### Project Design & Acceptance of Referrals

- Do the average scores of service users on admission to the project, and their average scores on move-on, match the intended design of the project? If not, should the project design be reviewed, or does the referrals and admissions policy need to be revised

#### Resource Allocation

- What are the identified needs of service users on admission (the average scores on admission); What are the average (or expected average) scores at move on? What resources will be required? Are the right resources available to the project?

#### Targeted Interventions

- What are the particular areas of focus identified in the support plan? Should a 'target improvement score' be agreed? How does 'actual distance travelled' compare with 'expected distance travelled'? Is there a measurable correlation between specific and planned interventions (including value added over and above the *Supporting People* contract) and progress in aggregate scores?

#### Performance Management/Training

- Do the scores either tend to show more 'distance travelled' amongst clients of some support workers than others, or within some projects compared with others? Is there best practice which can be shared? Or are there areas of training need identified?

#### Benchmarking

- May service providers wish to 'benchmark' with others working in the same sectors?

#### Follow-up after Move-on

- If service users have engaged successfully with the Outcomes Star, might the Star be a good way of gathering data about their progress 6 or 12 months after move-on?

The benefits of the Outcomes Star as a management information tool include:

1. the scores lend themselves to numerical analysis and averaging
2. the Star uses common fields analysis, which allows comparison between projects and between different service providers.

More importantly, if the general view of support workers is that the Outcomes Star is intuitively appropriate (ie the tool seems to produce scores which 'feel right'), then it will have credibility as a management tool.



The findings from the Pilot need to be treated with caution, given the short timescale and relatively narrow sample base. Nonetheless they can be taken as illustrative of the potential applications as a measure of value added:

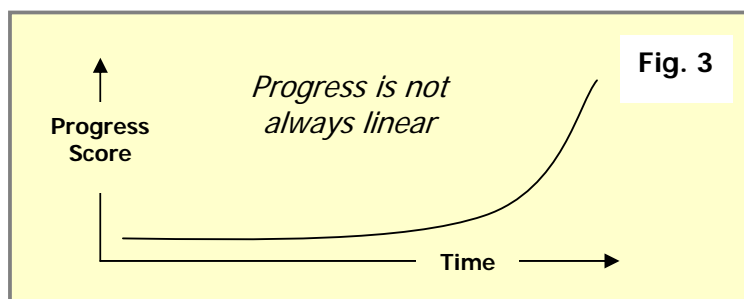
	SAIL	Kairos	Elizabeth House
Mean Score	5.5	6.4	7.8
Best Scores	Drugs/Alcohol Offending	Motivation Offending	Drugs/Alcohol
Lowest Scores	Mental Health Use of Time	Drugs/Alcohol Use of Time	Motivation Use of Time Managing Tenancy
Mean Improvement		0.6	1.9
Biggest Improvement Areas		Motivation Social Networks	Motivation Parenting – physical & emotional care
Least Improvement Areas		Self Care Managing Tenancy	Physical Health Managing Tenancy

The Elizabeth House Pilot group also identified from the support plan targeted areas for improvement and were able to add a brief narrative comment about the service user's progress since the previous reading. This offers the potential to correlate identified areas of support intervention with distance travelled (as measured on the Star)

#### Feedback Workshop – 22<sup>nd</sup> June

The potential of the Outcomes Star to provide meaningful management data was also discussed at the Feedback Workshop. Key points from group discussions are set out below:

Key Points from Feedback Workshop – 12 <sup>th</sup> June	
Challenges	
<i>Need to make sure that data is relevant (and contextualised)</i>	<i>There are other factors affecting progress of service users (not necessarily noted in support plan)</i>
<i>Outcomes Star needs more intelligent use than some other 'hard outcomes' data</i>	<i>You don't always get immediate results – sometimes the impact is further down the line – see Fig 3 below</i>
<i>Should remain client focused – pressure should not be applied to achieve specified results</i>	<i>Don't want to duplicate work – paper record then computer record. Can it be computerised (safely)?</i>
<i>Need to accept differences between projects within an organisation</i>	<i>How to benchmark results against other SP providers?</i>



<b>Key Points from Feedback Workshop – 12<sup>th</sup> June</b>	
<b>Possible Solutions</b>	
<i>Outcomes Star needs to be integrated with the Support Plan but not detached from narrative data</i>	<i>Open-minded approach by management – space for narrative comments within recording methods</i>
<i>Should be viewed as a support tool which provides MIS info not an MIS tool which <u>has</u> to be incorporated into support sessions (ie it must remain service user focused)</i>	<i>Management need to be aware of scheme differences when setting targets – avoid inappropriate comparisons</i>
<i>Need to build up a history (say 12 months) before valid to interpret aggregated data</i>	<i>Relationships with SP commissioners need to be handled with care – so that the results are not used 'against' the project</i>
<i>Evidence of value added from Stars can be collated with other data returns</i>	<i>Mobile (computerised) means of recording</i>
<i>Creates potential for Norcare/Aquila Way to become sector leaders – training other organisations in the process</i>	

#### Dissemination Event – 3<sup>rd</sup> July

At the Dissemination Workshop on 3<sup>rd</sup> July discussion focused upon two aspects:

- the importance of staff training and quality assurance in maintaining consistency of recording and reporting by different support workers and across projects.
- the opportunity for the findings from the Star to identify staff training needs.

■ of those attending the Dissemination Event on 3<sup>rd</sup> July expressed interest in the possibility of a best practice and training network for users of the Outcomes Star in the North East.

The general conclusion from both consultations was that the Outcomes Star offers significant potential provided that it is used intelligently and as part of a total information package – ie provided that the results are not divorced from their context.

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## Findings - Evidencing Outcomes for Service Commissioners

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The final aim of the Pilot was: ***enable all partners to better identify the links between service outcomes and the government's policy targets***

At present service providers are accountable for achieving *Supporting People* outcomes. These are evidenced in a quarterly return in respect of each *Supporting People* project.

### Supporting People Outcomes Framework

The *Supporting People* Outcomes Framework developed by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is based upon 5 high level outcomes:

- Achieve economic wellbeing
- Enjoy and achieve
- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Make a positive contribution.

These outcomes mirror those adopted by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) for the Every *Child Matters: Change for Children* programme, and will also contribute to the DCLG's Creating *Sustainable Communities Strategy*, as well as linking to a range of wider government objectives. Most, if not all, of the 10 arms of the Outcomes Star can be related to one or more of these high level outcomes. It is possible, therefore, for service providers to make a direct link between evidence of distance travelled for service users along one of the arms, and a measured improvement with reference to the *Supporting People* Outcomes Framework.

### Local Area Agreements

Future contract delivery will be linked the new national LAA framework. Each local authority will agree and report to central government 35 'improvement targets' (chosen from a master list of 198 indicators). Service providers will be expected to demonstrate how their activities are contributing towards the achievement of the chosen improvement targets of each local authority with whom they are tendering for supported housing provision. The 198 indicators include two indicators with specific reference to *Supporting People*:

- NI 141 – *number of vulnerable people achieving independent living*
- NI 142 - *number of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain achieving independent living.*

A policy research paper by Sarah Burns and Joy Mackeith <sup>6</sup> reviews the national improvement indicators to which *Supporting People* programmes may be contributing, and suggests three levels at which supported housing providers may choose to evidence their contribution:

- Direct contribution to a specified national indicators with a particular client group (*eg living in settled in suitable accommodation for young care leavers or offenders under probation supervision, or reduced hospital admissions for alcohol abusers*)





- Working with groups of people who could have a significant impact upon one (or more) of the seven umbrella community indicators (*eg working with young single parents as a contributor to the generic targets for children and young people or working with mental health sufferers as a contributor to adult health and well-being*)
- Working with clients as part of the whole population to deliver outcomes in respect of the one of the target indicators (*eg demonstrating how work with service users is contributing towards smoking cessation or increase in adult participation in sport, museums and galleries*)

### LAA Improvement Targets in the North East

Information from Government Office for the North East (GONE)<sup>7</sup> suggests that only three local authorities in the Region have selected Supporting People outcomes (141 or 142) as one of their 35 improvement targets.

However 11 local authorities have chosen Smoking Cessation and the number of Young People not in Education, Employment and Training, and 8 local authorities have chosen Rate of Hospital Admission for Alcohol Related Harm and the Proportion of Children in Poverty.

Following the guidelines of the Burns/Mackeith research, service providers may be able to identify improvement areas selected by the local authorities which commission their work to which their project is making an identifiable contribution.

### Relevance of the Outcomes Star

The Outcomes Star offers evidence of distance travelled across a range of factors relevant to independent living. The Outcomes Star can be used to evidence distance travelled for individual service users and in aggregate across a cadre of service users. Results from the Outcomes Star can be used alongside 'hard indicators' about move-ons, employment and training, and in support of anecdotal data and case studies to build a portfolio of evidence of contribution a supported housing project is making towards the achievement of the funder's target improvement indicators.

Indeed, it may be appropriate in some instances to suggest to the local authority that it uses evidence from the Outcomes Star in its own performance reporting. However, noting the cautionary observations from the Pilot Feedback Workshop, it is not recommended that target scores derived from the Outcomes Star are included in the service contract between funder and provider for two reasons. First, there may be good reasons why for some service users, the Outcomes Star is not a helpful tool and a management decision is made not to use it. Secondly, if it were to be used as a contractual target, there would be the risk of 'cherry picking' referrals and/or pressure to improve scores in order guarantee favourable results.

In some cases the Outcomes Star may provide evidence about the range of needs of service users upon referral, and thus enable the service provider better to make their case for the range of interventions and delivery cost of their planned programme.

These observations were generally supported in the syndicate group discussions at the Dissemination Event on 3<sup>rd</sup> July.



## Other Research

New Philanthropy Capital<sup>8</sup> actively encourages debate about charities' performance is measured. It has recently completed a comparative study (as yet unpublished) amongst charities working in the homelessness sector.

In autumn 2008, the New Economics Foundation (NEF) plans to publish a simple guide to the 'sustainable commissioning' model that local charities can use to persuade other public service commissioners of its benefits.

The Foundation is hoping to improve the contracts between commissioners of services and their third sector clients, based on the findings of its recent report, *Unintended Consequences*<sup>9</sup>

The report argues that an efficiency drive instigated by the 2004 Gershon Report has actually eroded public services instead of delivering public value as intended.



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## Methodology

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### Choice of Pilot Projects

The original project brief was to work with two pilot projects. It was subsequently agreed to extend the Demonstration Pilot to three projects, each supporting service users with different needs. The three projects chosen were:

- Kairos (*Norcare*) - a supported accommodation project for men and women whose use of alcohol has affected their lives in a detrimental way
- SAIL (*Norcare*) – a service supporting single men and women who have experienced mental ill health. [Note - the SAIL project also invited participation in the Pilot by South Tyneside Tenancy Support Service – a tenancy support project working in partnership with the Probation Service]
- Elizabeth House (*Aquila Way*) - providing residential accommodation and support to young mothers and their children as a stepping stone towards independent living

### The Outcomes Star

The Outcomes Star was chosen as a result of desk research and a consultative process with the Pilot projects and Fiona Cook of SITRA.

AnyBodyCan's consultants, James Dixon and Philip Angier attended a 1 day training seminar on the use of the Outcomes Star run by Triangle Consulting.

The Outcomes Star was used unchanged in the two Norcare projects. However, for Elizabeth House (*Aquila Way*) it was important to be able to record progress in terms of parenting skills. As a result a 'hybrid' 11 point star was developed – see Appendix 1 - adding two parenting categories – '*Parenting – Play & Social Development*', '*Parenting – Physical & Emotional Care*' and dropping the '*Offending*' category.

Three meetings were held at each project: the first to establish the profile of service users and the scope of the project; the second to introduce the Outcomes Star and to provide a training briefing for each project manager; the third to review progress midway through the data collection process.

Each support worker participating in the Pilot was asked to provide:

- Feedback on the experience of using the Outcomes Star after each session with a service user
- Their overall impressions of a) the briefing they received before using the Star, and b) the usefulness of Star as a support planning and performance management tool

Feedback forms and 'scored' stars were returned to AnyBodyCan.

### Practical Constraints

All three participating projects experienced some staff 'churn' during the Pilot period. This affected both the 'start date' for first readings of the Star (originally planned for month of March – mostly achieved in late April/early May), and the scope/capacity for achieving second readings. However, the Pilot was probably more realistic for being tested in circumstances of staff change.



## Second Readings

33 first readings of the Outcomes Star were recorded across the three Pilot projects. 18 second readings were conducted by Kairos and Elizabeth House. Elizabeth House also conducted 6 'retrospective' readings.

The average time gap between the first and second readings was just over 5 weeks. As noted above, this was shorter than planned – and allowed little time for measurable progress to be achieved. [Depending upon the nature of the service users and their needs a more typical gap would be 3 – 6 months]. In this context the retrospective readings from Elizabeth House have provided useful extra primary data.

No second readings were provided by SAIL chiefly because the needs of their service users are such that progress is measured in small steps over a long time.

[For illustration – service users at SAIL typically stay with the project for up to two years, at Elizabeth House move-ons will normally occur within 6 months]

## Feedback Workshop

A half-day feedback workshop was arranged on 12<sup>th</sup> June for all project staff who had been involved with the Pilot and management staff from Aquila Way and Norcare. 18 staff attended. The event was facilitated by the AnyBodyCan consultants.

The event provided a valuable opportunity to share experiences and insights regarding the use of the tool and its possible applications in any MIS system, and for project staff to 'de-brief' on their experience of using the Star. Feedback was recorded and has been informed the findings and recommendations of this report.

## Dissemination Event

A dissemination event was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July to which staff members from other Supporting People providers and local authority service commissioners were invited. 48 people attended representing 18 different support providers or local authority Supporting People teams. Service users and their support workers shared their experience of the Outcomes Star. AnyBodyCan also presented its preliminary findings from the Pilot.

Feedback and comments were invited from participants to inform the recommendations of this report



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## Acknowledgements

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### AnyBodyCan

AnyBodyCan acknowledges with thanks:

- support from Norcare for hosting the Demonstration Pilot, and in particular for championing the project and negotiating the funding
- funding from the Northern Rock Foundation
- Aquila Way for their participation as project partners in the Pilot
- all of the project staff and management staff at Norcare and Aquila Way who participated in the Demonstration Pilot
- the service users from Elizabeth House who attended the final dissemination event
- the members of the Steering Group for their advice and support
- SITRA for its advice with regarding outcome measurement tools
- Triangle Consulting for their training and advice re: the Outcomes Star

### Norcare

I am confident that the learning which has resulted from this demonstration project will help us evidence to others the value of our services. It would not have been possible without the expertise of AnybodyCan, who brought a fresh approach to a difficult subject nor without the funding from Northern Rock Foundation which has enabled us to explore the matter in far more detail than would otherwise have the case.

Susan Bickerton, Norcare

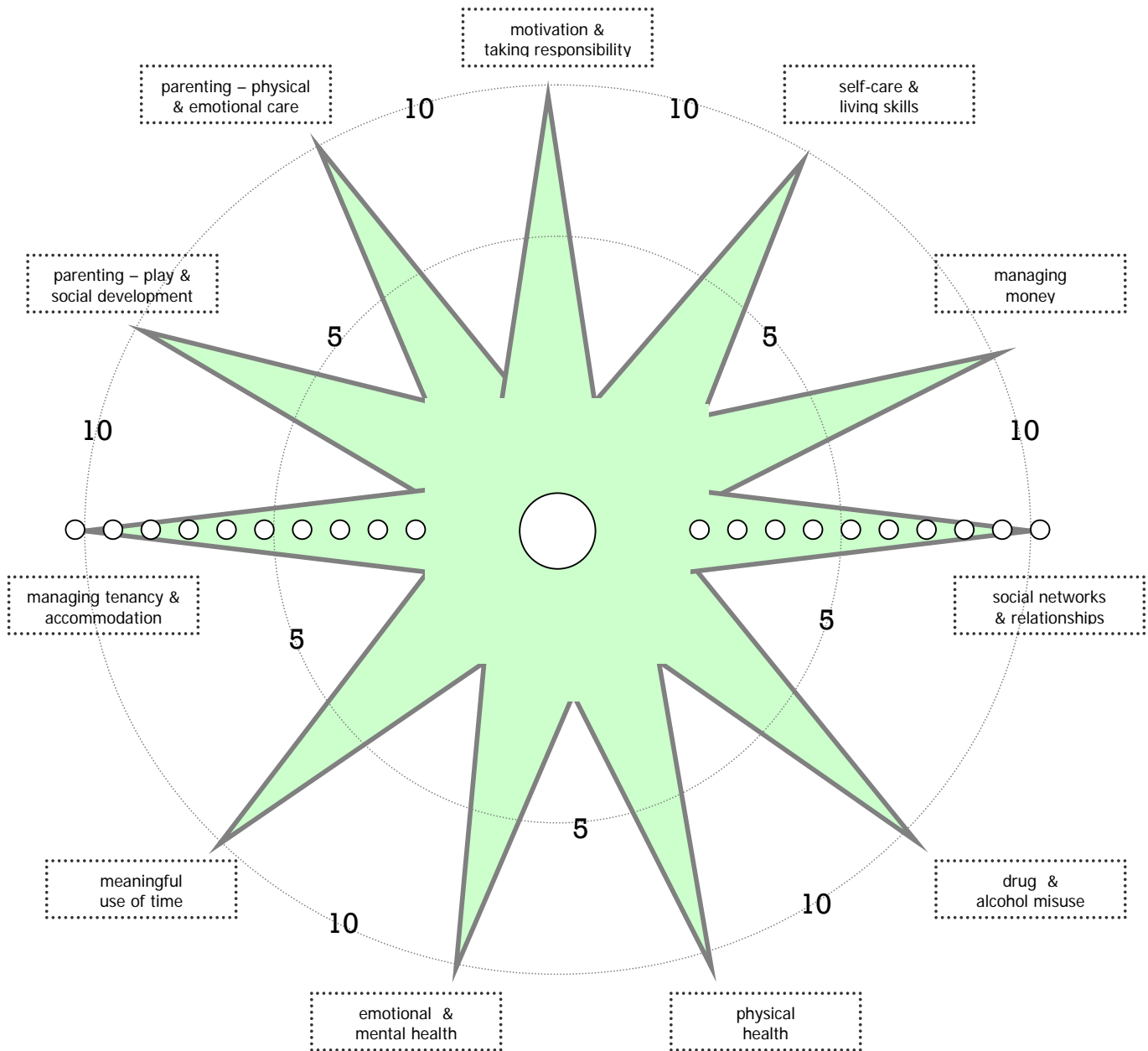
### Aquila Way

I would like to thank Norcare for the invitation to partner with them in the pilot and Northern Rock Foundation for funding the work. Thanks also to AnybodyCan for assisting project staff to implement the tool and for the staff team being enthusiastic in its use. Finally my grateful thanks to the service users who were willing to be guinea pigs and also to share their experiences of the pilot.

Phil Dobson, Aquila Way



Quality & Impact Reporting – Demonstration Pilot  
11 Point Outcomes Star for Elizabeth House



Support Worker: \_\_\_\_\_ Service User: \_\_\_\_\_

1<sup>st</sup> Reading Date \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading Date \_\_\_\_\_



Adapted by AnyBodyCan from the Outcomes Star developed by & copyright to London Housing Foundation & Triangle Consulting



<b>Experience of Outcomes Star from Demonstration Pilot as noted at Feedback Workshop – 12<sup>th</sup> June 2008</b>	
<b>Positives</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
<i>Potential for evidencing distance travelled</i>	<i>How to capture data in this way without 'overloading' Support Workers</i>
<i>Template which facilitates structured conversations</i>	<i>Abstract concept – not always easy to explain to Service Users</i>
<i>Well received by Service Users &amp; Support Workers</i>	<i>Time factor with Service User (esp floating support)</i>
<i>Realistic content</i>	<i>How to aggregate data as a management information tool?</i>
<i>Adds value – identifies issues &amp; opportunities</i>	<i>How to relate Star to Supporting People outcomes?</i>
<i>Builds on earlier work by Norcare –eg Quality of Life questionnaire</i>	<i>Star needs to fit with MIS systems for host organisations – how well will it fit</i>
<i>Improvement on Quality of Life questionnaire</i>	<i>Problem engaging with some Service Users – too many other distractions in their lives</i>
<i>Helps give Service Users a sense of direction and evidence of progress</i>	<i>Creation of anxiety for some Service Users – problem if issues cannot be resolved during support session</i>
<i>Good visual aid</i>	<i>Self perception of Service Users – some have unrealistic views about themselves/their lives</i>
<i>Uses accessible language</i>	<i>Demonstrating validity/consistency across a range of users</i>
<i>A means of charting progress</i>	<i>Are we collecting the right data – different needs of different users?</i>
<i>Encouraging to Service Users because evidences progress</i>	<i>How to address/report change in circumstances for Service User which may affect score (adversely)?</i>
<i>Relevant to Support Plans</i>	<i>How to convince funders that the results are objective?</i>
<i>Allows 'retrospective' assessment</i>	<i>Can this be transferable? – eg from other referral agencies, to next agency at move-on?</i>
<i>Client centred</i>	<i>Timescale of pilot was too short</i>
<i>Realistic (objective) measurement</i>	
<i>Supports 'gut feel' of what's right</i>	

## Notes from Syndicate Group Discussions 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2008

<b>Service User &amp; Support Planning</b>	
<i>Outcomes Star may help to provide evidence for and strengthen support planning</i>	<i>Star can be helpful with support planning – identifying needs, setting achievable goals</i>
	<i>Not may not be suitable for use with 'short-stay' service users</i>
<b>Consistency &amp; Training</b>	
<i>Importance of Star being used consistently within a project and between projects – need for consistency to be supported by training</i>	<i>Experience from Pilot was that training required was not a heavy burden – the tool is quite intuitive. Guidance notes are helpful &amp; clear [It helps is support workers learn by doing a Star for themselves]</i>
<i>How to build quality monitoring into the use of the Star</i>	<i>Flexible (client-centred) use of the tool - needs to be balanced with consistency.</i>
	<i>The danger of massaging data to show positive outcomes</i>
<i>Every service is different – can't compare across the board – needs to be client led</i>	<i>Should the parameters of the Star be the same for each service?</i>
<b>Staff Development</b>	
<i>Outcomes Star may help to identify staff performance &amp; training needs</i>	
<b>Links with other Service Provider</b>	
<i>What is the potential for the Star following the service user from one provider to another</i>	<i>How should the Star be used when a client is working with more than service provider at a time? Might the Star show that when more than one service provider is involved, the client progresses more rapidly?</i>
<b>Evidencing Results to Commissioners</b>	
<i>Aggregated results (at service provider level) need to be handled with caution – and used alongside other performance data</i>	<i>Useful as supporting evidence – does what is being delivered match what is being commissioned – evidencing level of need</i>
<i>If Star is more widely adopted within the Region it would present the opportunity to catch broader spectrum of information about Outcomes across the Region</i>	<i>Outcomes Star offers a better way of recording outcomes. Helpful to identify trends and changes</i>
<b>Showing Reduction in Risk</b>	
<i>The Outcomes Star measures improvement but does not show reduction in risk [Variant of the Star used by Byker Bridge Housing does incorporate risk]</i>	



## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Norcare Limited is a charity and company limited by guarantee providing a range of support services and accommodation for people aged 16 and over who are currently socially and economically excluded. Norcare operates across the North East region providing supported housing bed spaces and floating support services to 250 service users at any one time – [www.norcare.co.uk](http://www.norcare.co.uk)
- <sup>2</sup> AnyBodyCan Limited is a Tyneside-based social enterprise offering a range of project incubation, consultancy and research services. AnyBodyCan is the host organisation of the Valuing the Difference project and the Social Appraisal Toolkit – [www.anybodycan.org.uk](http://www.anybodycan.org.uk)
- <sup>3</sup> Aquila Way is a Christian based charity providing accommodation based services and community projects both within the Gateshead region – [www.aquilaway.org](http://www.aquilaway.org)
- <sup>4</sup> Sitra is an umbrella organisation and leading provider of training, consultancy and information to the supported housing sector – [www.sitra.org.uk](http://www.sitra.org.uk)
- <sup>5</sup> For full information about the Outcomes Star, including a downloadable training manual visit - [www.homelessoutcomes.org.uk](http://www.homelessoutcomes.org.uk)
- <sup>6</sup> *Demonstrate your contribution – Homelessness and the new national indicators* (February 2008) - [www.homelessoutcomes.org.uk/policyandinfo](http://www.homelessoutcomes.org.uk/policyandinfo)
- <sup>7</sup> *LAA Indicators by Popularity – North East Localities* (Government Office for the North East)
- <sup>8</sup> New Philanthropy Capital is a charity which advises donors and funders on how to give more effectively. – [www.philanthropycapital.org](http://www.philanthropycapital.org)
- <sup>9</sup> New Economics briefing paper, *Unintended Consequences* (October 2007) argues that the efficiency agenda far from delivering 'public value' actually erodes public services, and suggests out a public benefit model to restore them - [www.neweconomics.org/gen/unintendedconsequences](http://www.neweconomics.org/gen/unintendedconsequences)



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