



STAR Approach

A Systemic, Trauma informed and Anti-Racist way of working for Children and Education Directorate

STAR - A bit of context

This is a living document.

It will evolve as we as in Children and Education (C&E) evolve. This document is designed to be universal and to be modified to suit the different needs and expertise of teams/services across the directorate.

The STAR approach is not intended to replace existing practice standards and/or national professional frameworks in service delivery (e.g. Children's Social Care National Framework). It is intended to complement great practice and create a shared understanding of the values we in C&E will prioritise.

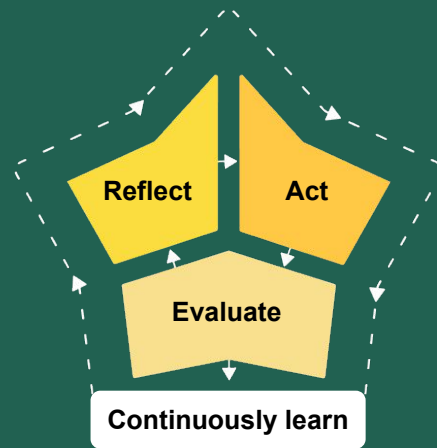
The STAR approach has been co-created in partnership with 380+ colleagues across C&E, with input from 25+ teams who participated in over 37 workshops and 57 interviews.

Why the **STAR** approach?

The STAR approach is a non-pathologising way to understand people we work with. It champions and encourages us to be self-reflexive, collaborative and act in the best interests of children, families and colleagues we work with.

This begins with learning about who we are, and how we impact the people and world around us. It further builds on this foundation to help us understand, support and work in partnership with our children, families, communities and colleagues.

What does it look like in practice?



Applying the STAR approach means to reflect and act in a systemic, trauma informed and anti-racist way.

Underpinned by a cycle of evaluation and continuous learning, STAR supports us to understand and improve what we do and how we do it.

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1. Systemic
 - a. Definition
 - b. Guiding values
2. Trauma informed
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3. Anti-Racist
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For more on what STAR looks like in practice, check this [document](#).

Systemic | Definition

Systemic approach is a way of working that creates space for us to be curious about people and their lives, relationships, contexts and experiences. It is focusing on the importance of environmental factors, personal characteristics, and contextual factors in shaping an individual's development.

It involves understanding that we are all a part of a wider set of interacting and constantly evolving systems. These systems shape and in turn are shaped by who we are, who others are, and how we interact with each other. These systems can be made up of socially constructed systems, such as laws, policies and procedures.

At a micro-level, this means considering the immediate environment surrounding those you work with (i.e. daily engagements with their family, peers, colleagues etc.) and learning how these influence and/ or shape how they present (e.g. temperament, values, beliefs, behaviour and priorities etc.)

At a macro-level, this is understanding the cultural, societal and ideological forces that shape an individual's development. The impact of institutional racism, cultural beliefs, values, customs, and social norms on development. Understanding how these can shape the way a child or parent perceive and interpret their experiences and how that can influence their behaviour and developmental outcomes.

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Systemic | Guiding values

1. **Starting with ourselves:**

Systemic practice starts with reflecting on who you are and the impact of self upon others and the need to be both reflective and reflexive in order to effectively create change and understanding power, privilege and how this has an impact on our interactions. This also involves us being mindful about what we are drawn to and what we are not drawn to and why.

2. **Being curious:**

This means seeking to understand people and situations within their individual context. It involves a mindset shift to start with focusing on what has happened instead of trying to locate blame on the 'other'. Taking a holistic approach to working in partnership with children and families that considers the intricate interplay between individual, environmental, and cultural factors to better understand the complexities of development in diverse cultural contexts.

3. **Working *with*, not *on*:**

This involves treating people as experts on their own lives and experiences. Working *with* people is about building relationships and coming up with solutions together.

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Systemic | Guiding values

4. Hearing multiple truths and connecting multiple perspectives:

There is often no 'single truth' or 'right way' of doing things. It's important to apply curiosity to hear and understand all perspectives to open up opportunities for growth. That being said, hearing multiple truths cannot be prioritised over honouring the dignity and safety of those with relatively less power or privilege. Creating a space to hear multiple truths enables you to create a space for multiple perspectives.

5. Understanding the power of our words:

The words we chose to describe people and situations hold enormous power. Whether intentional or not, they create narratives, can cause hurt and lead to the 'labelling' of individuals that can have harmful consequences and impact on life chances.

6. Understanding the bigger picture:

This involves identifying and understanding the other people, teams and actors who work with the same people as us. It means to actively break silos, build networks to work collaboratively and share knowledge to ensure best outcomes for individuals.

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Trauma informed | Definition

Being trauma-informed is seeking to recognise, understand and appropriately respond to the impact of trauma on an individual's life. It requires us to understand that people's experiences have a deep impact on their reactions, perceptions and, physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. It also recognises the pervasive impact of institutional and systemic racism.

A trauma-informed lens prioritises people's psychological and physical safety, fosters resilience and seeks to minimise re-traumatisation. This approach requires us to focus on people's strengths instead of their deficits. It helps us to ensure that children, families and colleagues feel safe, understood and validated.

Thinking about trauma and its impact on people pushes us to think about system-wide solutions. It encourages us to work collectively to create opportunities for meaningful change and empower people to re-establish control of their lives. It requires us to understand the importance of treating each other with kindness and compassion.

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Trauma informed | Guiding values

1. **Prioritising safety:**

A trauma-informed lens requires us to ensure colleagues and the people we serve feel physically and psychologically safe. This requires us to seek to do no harm and/or minimise the harm we do. The physical spaces, interpersonal interactions and language we use should make people feel safe, listened to and valued.

2. **Building trust-based relationships:**

Trust is built and maintained through transparent, honest and respectful two-way communication. It is important that wherever possible, we are transparent about our rationale, decision-making and processes.

3. **Treating each other with kindness, compassion and humility:**

To be trauma-informed is to think about what has happened to someone, (whether a child or colleague), and not what is wrong with them. It requires us to reflect and acknowledge when we fail to do so and be prepared to apologise and re-adjust accordingly.

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Trauma informed | Guiding values

4. Working together to create an environment of support and care:

A trauma-informed lens requires us to strengthen connections, and collaborate meaningfully with children, families, colleagues and partners.

5. Empowering each other through power sharing:

Healing happens in the meaningful sharing of power and decision making. A trauma-informed lens focuses on creating space for people to make choices and inform the solutions that they need to heal and move forward. Colleagues also need to be empowered to work to the best of their abilities, with support which enables them to do so.

6. Prioritising intersectional approaches:

Responses to trauma experienced by individuals should consider intersectionality. This means they should leverage the healing value of traditional cultural connections; incorporate policies, protocols, and processes that are responsive to the racial, ethnic and cultural needs of individuals; as well as recognise and address historical trauma.

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Anti-Racist | Definition

Racism is a complex issue that has become deeply ingrained in our society.

Institutional and systemic racism is the way that systems discriminate through covert and unchecked prejudices, assumptions, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping of people from different ethnicities and religions.

Systemic racism refers to the ways in which policies, practices and norms within these systems perpetuate racial inequalities and disadvantage certain racial, ethnic and religious groups.

Being anti-racist is about actively combating prejudices and discriminatory behaviours. It's understanding whether and how, your prejudice or behaviour or those displayed by others, causes serious harm to people and should be addressed to prevent racially retraumatizing.

It is understanding structural and racial inequality and the impact of institutional and systemic racism for children, young people, families, colleagues and our partners.

Being anti-racist involves being self-reflective, proactive, and continuously challenging oneself, others, and racist systems, policies, behaviours, practice and culture.

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Anti-Racist | Guiding values

1. **Accepting that being anti-racist is an ongoing journey:**

The onus of learning about racism, understanding how to be proactively anti-racist and culturally conscious is on each of us. This requires us to apply curiosity about different cultures, lived experiences and beliefs, and treat people as experts on their own lives and experiences.

2. **Challenging and unlearning racist ideas and language:**

It's important that we examine the words we use to describe people and situations and encourage others to do the same. We should be describing patterns of behaviour instead of using labels like 'aggressive' or 'emotionally unavailable' which create narratives and trigger preconceived ideas rooted in racism. We must also proactively consider whether our expectations and experiences are rooted in prejudices or discriminatory views, rather than recognising and respecting differences. We must examine how this may inform decisions, both in terms of risk and celebrating strengths.

3. **Supporting those impacted by racism and cultural inappropriateness:**

We must create an environment of trust and support for those who have experienced racism or culturally inappropriate behaviour. This also involves prioritising the safety and consent of those who have experienced such incidents while challenging racism.

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Anti-Racist | Guiding values

4. Placing the onus on the self:

The onus of learning about racism, understanding how to be proactively anti-racist and culturally conscious is on each of us. This requires us to apply curiosity about different cultures, lived experiences and beliefs, and treat people as experts on their own lives and experiences.

5. Being actively anti-racist can be uncomfortable, but it is important that we do this:

We must challenge racism and cultural inappropriateness in every form regardless of whether it's convenient or noticed by others. This involves being open to receiving disclosure of experienced racism, microaggressions and/or discrimination from individuals we work with. When we observe such incidents - overt or covert - showing a willingness to name this as racism, offering advice and support to those impacted. It's also important that we actively initiate and create space for conversations about racial inequity and injustice.

6. Understanding that power and powerlessness are not fixed:

It is imperative that in being anti-racist we understand that there is an individual responsibility to reflect and challenge our own social and cultural prejudices, values and beliefs in regards to power and the negative role it can play in our interactions with children, families and colleagues. It is important to recognise and understand the fluidity of power dynamics when working towards being actively anti-racist.