



Family Star™

The Outcomes Star for parents

“ People really open up and sometimes it leads to whole new conversations

“ Service users really enjoyed the interaction – and there were statistical results!

“ I could feed back to my head office some really impressive results

as made the support plans more imaginative and more individual

“ The Outcomes Star is an invaluable tool for our sector

“ Support is more systematic and structured

to
l, even
is
needed

“ We have incorporated it into assessment and three monthly reviews

“ It helps identify training needs for staff and volunteers

or

“ We can now assist clients better - we love the Star!

“ Some people can't understand written reports, but can understand this

“ The Star is collaborative, rather than something that is done to people

“ It enables a clear direction for collaborating with a client

holistic approach
direction to the
port

“ The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and in some cases life changing

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Please contact info@triangleconsulting.co.uk to enquire about buying a licence and training.

Licences are also available for those wishing to translate the document into other languages.

The Outcomes Star™

This Star is part of a family of Outcomes Star tools. Each tool includes a Star Chart, User Guide or Quiz and guidance on implementation and some have visual and other resources. For other versions of the Outcomes Star, good practice and further information see www.outcomesstar.org.uk.

Acknowledgements

Many people have contributed to the development of the Outcomes Star over its long evolution and we would like to thank all the clients, workers, managers, funders, academics and commissioners who have generously given their time and expertise.

The original commission for an outcome measurement system came from St Mungo's, with financial support from the London Housing Foundation, and Triangle recognises their vital roles in the development of the Outcomes Star. We would also like to acknowledge Kate Graham's important contribution to the development of the suite of Stars, both as a founding partner of Triangle and as co-author of the original Outcomes Star (now called the Outcomes Star for Homelessness).

We would particularly like to thank the following people and organisations for their contribution to this version of the Star:

- Camden Council Children's Schools and Families (CSF) Directorate for making this version of the Outcomes Star possible
- The Camden family services and consultant-parents that formed the working group with whom we developed the Family Star: Camden consultant-parents; managers and workers from Elfrida Rathbone, Euston Children's Centre, Hopscotch, Coram and the Youth Offending Service; Family Action
- Hampshire local authority parenting services and Family Action for piloting and feedback.

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Introduction

Introduction to the Family Star™

The Family Star is a version of the Outcomes Star, a set of tools for supporting and measuring change when working directly with people.

It is an outcomes tool that enables organisations to measure and summarise change across a range of services, and support families with different levels of needs. It is also a keywork tool that can help parents make changes by providing them with a map of the journey they need to take to be more effective parents, and a way of plotting their progress.

The original version of the Outcomes Star was developed for the homelessness sector, and tailored versions are now available for a wide range of client groups including young people, people with mental health conditions, people receiving work and learning support, and people with alcohol or drug misuse issues. These versions can all be viewed and downloaded at the Outcomes Star website – www.outcomesstar.org.uk.

This Organisation Guide also covers the Family Star Plus, a version of the Family Star designed to better meet the needs of organisations working within the UK government's Troubled Families Initiative, with the emphasis on tackling long-term unemployment, anti-social behaviour, crime, and school attendance.

The Family Star focuses on eight core areas that have been found critical in enabling children to thrive:

1. Physical health
2. Emotional well-being
3. Keeping your children safe
4. Social networks
5. Education and learning
6. Boundaries and behaviour
7. Family routine
8. Home and money.

The Family Star Plus has two new scales with a greater emphasis on the parent themselves:

- Your Well-being and Meeting Emotional Needs replace the Family Star's Emotional Well-being
- Progress to Work is a new scale.

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For each area there is a ten-point scale measuring where the parent is on their journey towards addressing each one, and identifying the amount of support they need. These scales are all based on the Journey of Change, which is an understanding of the steps people go through in the move towards enabling their children to thrive. This Journey of Change comprises five stages, referred to in the User Guide as the Steps to Effective Parenting:

- At the beginning people are **stuck**. They don't feel able to face the problem or accept help.
- From **stuck** they move to **accepting help**. At this stage people are aware they want to get away from the problem. They look to a worker or someone else to sort things out for them, and go along with some of the things they suggest.
- A key turning point is when people start **trying** to make a difference themselves in their life. At this stage, they start to look ahead towards how they want to live, rather than being caught up entirely in their current problems and in the past. They start to take the initiative and try new things for themselves. This is a tough place to be and it can help to have plenty of support.
- The next step is **finding what works**, learning how to make what they want a reality, building on what works for them, and increasing their confidence in their ability to look after their family more effectively. People will find this stage hard at times and need support through the process.
- As they learn, people gradually move towards **effective parenting** until they get to the point when they can manage without help from a service.

The Steps to Effective Parenting are described in detail in the Family Star User Guide.

The Family Star¹ focuses clearly on the steps parents can take so their children can grow up healthy and resilient. It assumes parents can do a lot to enable their children to thrive, even whilst tackling difficult issues themselves, such as alcohol or mental health problems. There is also a version of the Outcomes Star for children and young people that can be used alongside the Family Star, called My Star. This covers similar areas to the Family Star and enables organisations working with both parents and children to capture the child's perspective and outcomes. For information please visit the Outcomes Star website: www.outcomesstar.org.uk.

I like the way that parents can track their own way forward, instead of it being negative, focusing on what they haven't done. Added to that it's visual and it's a star — it's perfect!

**Aberlour Trust,
Scotland**

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¹ All references to the Family Star also refer to the Family Star Plus unless stated otherwise.

Theoretical foundations

Values and assumptions underpinning the Outcomes Star™

New approach

The approach underpinning the Outcomes Star family of tools is, we believe, an original approach to assessment and outcomes measurement. The Star approach can be described as Participatory Assessment and Measurement because it draws on and extends Action Research and Participatory Action Research, both of which place empowerment, collaboration and integration at the core of research methods². In the same way, the Outcomes Star seeks to empower people within a collaborative process of assessment and measurement that is integrated with support work, rather than a separate activity.

Empowerment

Underpinning the Outcomes Star is an understanding that, in order for change to take place in people's lives, service providers need to build the motivation, beliefs and skills of the person themselves to create that change in their lives.

While practical changes in a person's circumstances, like suitable housing, may be important, these things do not bring about lasting change. It is the change that takes place within the individual that is the key active ingredient in achieving a more permanent, self-sustained independence and happiness. This is why the primary focus in most versions of the Outcomes Star, including the Family Star, is the relationship of the individual to the challenges that they face.

This contrasts with other assessment and outcomes measurement tools that focus on the severity of a defined problem, such as the number of units of alcohol consumed, or on external circumstances, such as whether a person has a job or a home or not. The Outcomes Star approach assumes that these things are important and should be measured but that the picture they give on their own is limited.

Service users and front-line workers report that the Outcomes Star provides a much more empowering context for their keywork where service users are able to be active participants in the process rather than having assessment done to them. Being involved in their own process of change – and in the validation of their experience and perceptions – is often critical to helping them make the changes they seek³.

Collaboration

When using the Outcomes Star, the worker and service user assess the service user's needs together. Service users base their assessment on their knowledge and understanding of themselves and workers utilise their experience of working with other people generally and their observations and reflections on this person's behaviour in particular. The intention is that the assessment emerges through a dialogue between service user and worker and this may include both people shifting their views.

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² O' Brien, R (2001) "An Overview of the Methodological Approach of Action Research" in Roberto Richardson (ed.) Theory and Practice of Action Research, Joao Pessoa, Brazil: Universidade Federal da Paraiba (English version)

³ Burns, S., MacKeith, J. and Graham, K. (2008) Using the Outcomes Star: Impact and Good Practice, London: Homeless Link

The Outcomes Star makes the model of change explicit and the information that is collected (the Star reading) is immediately presented back to the service user in the form of a completed Star. This makes it possible for the service user and worker to take an overview together and to reflect on the completed Star as a basis for deciding what action to take.

This contrasts with extractive approaches to assessment and measurement in which the worker, in the role of expert, collects data from the service user and takes that data away to make an assessment on their own. The expert may then decide what course of action is most appropriate and try to persuade the service user that this is the best way forward for them.

Integration

The process of completing the Outcomes Star is an integral part of working with the service user and it is intended to support as well as measure change. The process of completing the Star, engaging with the model of change and reflecting on the data as presented in the Star can, in and of itself, result in a change of attitude within the service user. It can have a similar impact on the staff and carers working with the person. As a result, the assessment is a part of the intervention. In addition, discussion of where a service user is on the Outcomes Star scales and Journey of Change naturally leads to discussions about next steps and action planning. This is why it is recommended that the Outcomes Star is used as an integral part of keywork.

This contrasts with traditional approaches in which the collection of data is seen as a separate process to the intervention and may be regarded as intrusive by workers and service users.

How the Outcomes Stars™ are developed

The methodology for developing versions of the Outcomes Star is based on Action Research⁴ and the Existential Phenomenological research method⁵. Action Research is a collaborative process of identifying issues, trying out solutions and assessing what works. This phenomenological method places a strong emphasis on understanding the subjective experience of the person or people being researched and the meaning of the experience for them.

The development usually consists of three main stages, in collaboration with a working group of keyworkers, managers and service users (where it is impractical to involve service users directly in the working group they are consulted separately).

1) Data gathering

An initial one-day workshop of the working group explores the following key questions that are common to all versions of the Outcomes Star:

- What are the main areas in which services and service users are seeking to create change? These areas become the points of the Star
- What is the desired end point of the change process? This becomes the end point on the model of change that underpins all the scales

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4 O' Brien, R (2001) "An Overview of the Methodological Approach of Action Research" in Roberto Richardson (ed.) *Theory and Practice of Action Research*, Joao Pessoa, Brazil: Universidade Federal da Paraiba (English version)

5 McCall, R. (1983), "Phenomenological Psychology", *Madison*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin

- What model of change describes the steps that service users take on the journey towards that end point? This is described in a series of steps showing a clearly discernible, qualitative difference between each step of the journey.

A range of techniques are used to draw out participants' experience and knowledge including:

- Using an Outcome Triangle tool to identify the overall aim of services, the specific changes they are trying to bring about and the activities they carry out to achieve these changes
- Bringing to mind an individual who has undergone a substantial change and identifying the key areas of change for that person
- Structured questioning exercises to draw out the steps, one by one, in each outcome area. The focus with this session is on concreteness, drawing out information about the signs of change in detail.

2) Data analysis and the development of the draft Outcomes Star™

Triangle compiles all the material gathered at the workshop and reviews it to allow meaning and common strands to emerge. Existing material and other versions of the Outcomes Star are borne in mind, but the intention is always to allow the raw data to speak for itself rather than to organise it according to existing models or frameworks. On the basis of this material, a draft version of the Star is developed.

3) Consultation and piloting

Through an iterative process of sharing, listening, refining and sharing again, the outcome areas, the Journey of Change and descriptions of the steps towards change in each outcome area are honed until they resonate with the service users, support workers and managers participating in the development process. This process varies depending on the complexity of the version of the Star but generally has at least the following four main steps:

- A second workshop of the working group where the first draft of the Star is presented to workshop participants and feedback is gathered. In the light of this feedback, improvements are made to the Star
- Workers and service users test the Star during a minimum four-month pilot and gather feedback on the process and tool itself
- A final workshop where the results of the pilot are reviewed and the experience of participants is shared
- Further revisions to the Star followed by editing and design to ensure the tool is clear, accessible and user-friendly in advance of the first edition being published.

History of development of the Family Star™ and Family Star Plus™

The first edition of the Family Star was originally developed by Triangle from 2009 to 2010, working with Camden local authority in the UK. The working group comprised:

- Managers and workers from five Camden-based services, including both targeted and universal services, and a service working with Asian families
- Six parent-consultants from Camden (ex-service users in training to run consultations)
- Two staff from Family Action.

The development process followed the stages described above. Additional testing was carried out by family services in Hampshire that took part in the Family Star pilot, and further input was gathered through the Alcohol Concern Embrace project for families with alcohol misuse problems.

In 2012 Triangle was approached by a number of local authorities that wanted to use the Outcomes Stars to capture the additional outcomes of the UK government's new Troubled Families Initiative. In 2013 Leicestershire County Council collaborated with Triangle on the development of the Family Star Plus, providing a working group of managers and workers, and testing successive drafts. Within this process, Triangle also consulted other local authorities, and Family Action provided additional input.

Triangle took the opportunity to develop the second edition of the Family Star alongside the Family Star Plus, responding to comments over the years and also building on learning from substantial Star development since the publication of the first edition.

The second edition of the Family Star has the same eight core areas and underlying Journey of Change as the first edition, so organisations can switch to this version without any loss of continuity or the need for further training.

The second edition should enhance ease, consistency, and accuracy of use, as it makes the difference between the two steps within each of the five stages on the scales clearer, and has the addition of key points in each of the eight scales, which highlight significant indicators of progress. Some new examples have also been added to represent children within a wider range of ages.

Seven of the scales are identical in the Family Star and Family Star Plus. The only differences occur in Emotional Well-being, which is expanded into two scales in the Family Star Plus, and the addition of a new scale on parental Progress to Work in the Family Star Plus.

How it fits with other tools

My Star™ for children and young people

This is a version of the Outcomes Star developed by Triangle for use directly with children, either as a standalone tool or where the Family Star is already being used with their parents or carers. It is holistic and works equally well for children in vulnerable families, looked-after children, and those moving between their family and care. It can be used with children aged 4 to 18. However, it can only be meaningfully completed as a collaborative tool with children aged about seven plus. Depending on the issues faced, for those aged 14 and over, one of the versions of the Outcomes Star for young people may be more appropriate. Please visit the Outcomes Star website – www.outcomesstar.org.uk – for more information.

The table on the next page shows the eight areas of My Star and how they fit with those of the Family Star. Where services work with both children and parents or carers, My Star can be used to investigate the child's view and the extent to which their parents' or carers' progress is having a positive effect on them. My Star has five-point scales so a reading of five on My Star will be equivalent to a reading of ten on the Family Star. There is a range of resources to stimulate discussion.

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The Family Star	Family Star Plus	My Star
Physical Health	Physical Health	Physical Health
Emotional Well-being	Your Well-being Meeting Emotional Needs	Confidence and Self-esteem Relationships
Keeping Your Children Safe	Keeping Your Children Safe	Being Safe
Social Networks	Social Networks	Friends
Education and Learning	Education and Learning	Education and Learning
Boundaries and Behaviour	Boundaries and Behaviour	Feelings and Behaviour Being Safe (for older children)
Family Routine	Family Routine	Physical Health
Home and Money	Home and Money	Where You Live
	Progress to Work	

The CAF

The Family Star does not replace a risk assessment for children. In the UK the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) form or e-CAF is widely used by both local authorities and the services they commission. The CAF is completed for the needs and risks of each child. It covers 18 areas, six within each of:

- Parents and carers
- Developmental needs
- Family and environmental factors.

There is an almost complete overlap between the areas in the Star, and the Parent and Carer outcomes in the CAF. The Star also covers most of the CAF outcome areas in relation to Developmental Needs, and can open discussion about most of the Family and Environmental Factors. The fit between the Star and the CAF is summarised below.

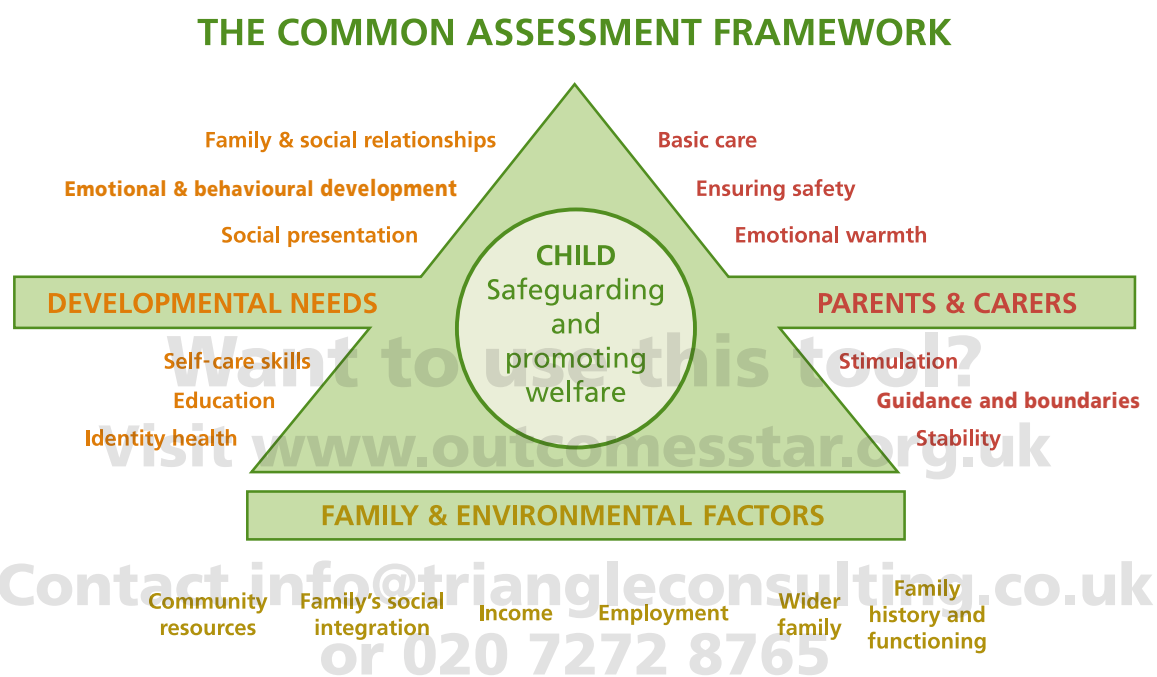


Figure 1: Common Assessment Framework developed by the Department for children, Schools and Families (DCSF)

Star outcomes	CAF Parents and Carers	CAF Developmental Needs	CAF Family and Environmental Factors
Physical Health	Basic Care	Health Self-care Skills	
Emotional Well-being (Meeting Emotional Needs and Your Well-being in the Family Star Plus)	Emotional Warmth	Emotional and Behavioural Development	
Keeping Your Children Safe	Ensuring Safety		
Social Networks		Family and Social Relationships Social Presentation	Community Resources Social Integration Wider Family
Education and Learning	Stimulation	Education	
Boundaries and Behaviour	Guidance and Boundaries		
Family Routine	Basic Care		
Home and Money (and Progress to Work in Family Star Plus)	Stability		Income Employment

The only areas not covered in the Star are Identity Health (under CAF Developmental Needs) and Family History and Functioning (under CAF Family and Environmental Factors), although CAF Family Functioning may be partially covered by the Family Star's Family Routine.

The Family Star does not provide much information on key facts about the family, and does not cover family history and connections. The Family Star Plus includes whether a parent is employed or has issues affecting their well-being, though not specifically whether that is a mental health, substance misuse or other problem. This and other information will also need to be recorded, either on the Star Notes pages or elsewhere.

Guidance for using the Family Star alongside the CAF is in section four, part one below (Integration with Existing Systems).

Other tools and programmes

There are also a number of tools that are used to assess parenting or child behaviour. The most widely used are:

- The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire⁶: this is a behavioural screening questionnaire that asks questions about 25 attributes of a child's behaviour, some positive and some negative. There are different versions for different age bands.
- The Kansas Parental Satisfaction Scale⁷: this is a three-item instrument designed to measure satisfaction with oneself as a parent, satisfaction with the behaviour of one's children and satisfaction with one's relationship with one's children.

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6 Goodman, R (1997) "The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire: A Research Note". Journal of Child Psychology, Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines, 38 (5), pp 581-586

7 James, D. E. et al (1985) "Characteristics of the Kansas Parental Satisfaction Scale amongst two samples of married parents". Psychological Reports, 57, pp 163-169

- The Parenting Scale⁸: this measures parental behaviour, particularly relating to boundary setting and discipline.

Whilst useful in assessment and screening, these tools are not designed to positively support the parent in recognising parenting issues and making changes, or to measure change over time.

There are also a number of programmes that are designed to support parents in making positive changes, most notably:

- The Triple P⁹ – an evidence-based programme focusing on enhancing knowledge, skills and confidence
- Parent Effectiveness Training¹⁰, which focuses on the parent's communication skills.

These programmes do have evaluation tools but do not include a means of measuring where the parent starts from when they begin the course or the change that takes place through the course of the programme. As a result, some organisations use the Family Star within these programmes.

The Family Star is, as far as we are aware, the only tool that is designed to both support and measure positive changes in parenting.

It's motivating and informative for parents to see the whole journey. It gives a visual summary of progress so you can see the improvement made at a review session. It also has a therapeutic value and can help a parent reflect.

Family Action

Family Star™ resources

There is a range of resources available to help organisations use the Family Star effectively.

The Family Star is available as part of tailored packages to support implementation, including training for family support workers, Train the Trainer for licensed trainers, the Family Star Online and support for implementation. Please visit www.outcomesstar.org.uk for details and to submit an enquiry or contact info@triangleconsulting.co.uk to explore your organisation's needs.

Family Star™ Chart and Action Plan

The Star Chart and Action Plan is a four-page document that includes the Star Chart, on which the reading is marked, a summary of the Steps to Effective Parenting for quick reference, space for notes, and a simple action plan. There is a separate Star Chart and Action Plan for the Family Star Plus.

Family Star™ User Guide

The Family Star User Guide contains brief, user-friendly scales and detailed descriptions for each of the steps on the journey to **effective parenting**. There is also a brief introduction to the Family Star for parents. The User Guide is essential for all workers using the Family Star and is designed so that it can also be given to parents when appropriate. There is a separate User Guide for the Family Star Plus.

8 Arnold, D. S. et al "The Parenting Scale: A Measure of Dysfunctional Parenting in Discipline Situations". Psychological Assessment, Vol 5, No 2, pp 137-144

9 www.tripplep.net

10 www.gorgontraining.com

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The Star Online

The Family Star is available online via an intuitive web application called the Star Online. This application allows users to complete the Star Chart with parents on screen, incorporating the scales from the User Guide and guidance for workers and parents. The Star Online can be used in conjunction with a paper-based system, if preferred. Workers and parents can complete the Star on paper and then input the reading online at a later date.

The Star Online is secure and provides a wide range of features allowing users to analyse and report on the outcomes data that staff have added to the system, and to compare their outcomes with averages for similar services and client groups. It is available to organisations using the Family Star for an annual licence fee, which is based on the number of keyworkers and managers using the Star

For more information on the Family Star Online, go to www.staronline.org.uk. You can sign up for an account or the 30-day free trial.

This Organisation Guide

The guidance that follows is intended to support the implementation and use of the Family Star or Family Star Plus. Part one is for service managers and provides guidance and good practice examples in implementing the Family Star across a service or organisation. Part two presents guidance for family support workers in using the Family Star with parents.

The Outcomes Star™ website

The Outcomes Star website – www.outcomesstar.org.uk – contains all versions of the Stars and supporting information. Specific areas covered by the website include:

- Information about all versions of the Outcomes Star, including those for children and young people
- 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 keywork tool
- Information for commissioners on using the Star.

Training and support

It is essential that workers receive training in how to use the Family Star. This will ensure parents are effectively supported to make changes, and accurate and consistent outcomes data is captured.

The Family Star is only available to organisations that have received training, and these organisations can also access support with the process of implementing the Star. Triangle provides a range of support and in-house training courses for all versions of the Star, and runs a Licensed Trainer scheme for those opting to cascade training internally. For further details and to enquire visit the Outcomes Star website: www.outcomesstar.org.uk, email training@triangleconsulting.co.uk, or call Triangle on **020 7272 8765**.

Part 1: Implementing the Family Star™ in your service or organisation

Implementing the Family Star can affect the way a service is delivered and managed in a number of ways. For instance, it can:

- Provide greater clarity about what the service is trying to achieve and the process of change for parents and family support workers¹¹ resulting in more focused support
- Change the way that family support work is carried out, documented and supervised, depending on your existing systems
- Introduce 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
- Demonstrate effectiveness and highlight areas for improvement with which workers and managers need to engage
- Provide a focus for discussion with commissioners about the role and contribution of the service in the wider local strategic context
- Help to change the culture of service delivery from one in which parents are passive recipients of services to one that endeavours to empower parents and maximise their independence.

Implementing the Star effectively and achieving the full benefits of this new tool can therefore take time, continuous 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 coordinated across an organisation.

The remainder of this section covers a checklist of eight steps to introducing the Star into your organisation. Many organisations find it helpful to have support with the implementation process. Triangle can help with specific aspects of this process and provide background support or mentoring to those leading the implementation. We also provide implementation packages that include Family Star training and a licence to use the Star Online web application.

My advice is to see the implementation of the Outcomes Star as a change management process. It is vital to communicate to keyworkers how it will help them to do their job and that it will help the organisation as a whole to make its case to the outside world. It is also vital to integrate the Star fully into keywork processes and training.

St Mungo's

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¹¹ This term is used throughout this guide to refer to the person working directly with a whole family or parent. This may also be a children's centre worker, outreach worker or other role.

1 Review your reasons for introducing the Star™

There are a number of reasons why organisations decide to introduce the Star.

Internal reasons:

- They want to take an outcomes approach to their work in order to measure success for individual families, for services and for the organisation as a whole and to use this information to inform their service delivery
- They feel it will improve the support they provide to families.

External reasons:

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

Triangle's experience and research indicates that implementation is smoother and satisfaction is higher when organisations are motivated primarily by internal reasons. Even if you are introducing the Star for external reasons, we recommend that you adopt it in the spirit of learning and service improvement and capitalise on the internal benefits, too.

2 Check that the Family Star™ is suitable for you

Firstly, you will need to be confident that the Outcomes Star is the right tool for your service. There are three key questions that will help you do this.

i) Do you work directly with parents?

The Family Star focuses on the parents and the steps they need to take to enable the whole family to thrive. If your main focus is the children, you may find that My Star for children and young people works for you. Visit the Outcomes Star website – www.outcomesstar.org.uk – or email info@triangleconsulting.co.uk for more information.

ii) Do you provide ongoing support for parents?

The Family Star is designed to be used in situations where a parent and worker are engaged in a one-to-one support relationship over a period of time. We would suggest at least six weeks. It may also be possible to use with parents in a closed support group or course, particularly where this is preceded by a one-to-one assessment. If you only see a parent 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.

I wanted something that was intrinsic to the process and rooted in what we were doing with families. I also wanted a body of evidence of what we achieved with families. Measuring outcomes has always been difficult but now we need to demonstrate our success in a way we never have before.

**Manager,
Family Action**

From a commissioner perspective, I see how the Star can improve the information we receive from providers. It allows us to see outcomes data for individual service users, an overall picture of positive change for all service users as well as helping us identify which outcomes are more difficult to shift and where there are gaps in service provision – all of which can inform service development.

**Commissioner,
Camden**

iii) Do you work holistically with parents?

If your service focuses on only one or two aspects of family life, for example, access to work for parents, or school issues, the Star will not be suitable. The Star is designed to help you and the parents you work with assess changes they are making in their attitudes, behaviour and skills across core areas of family life. However, it should work well if you are aiming to support families in most but not all of the Star areas. If your service focuses on areas that are not covered by the Family Star, you can assess their progress towards these goals in another way alongside the Star.

If you have answered yes to these three questions, it is likely that the Family Star will be appropriate for your service. If not, you may wish to contact Triangle to discuss how to proceed. You may find that the Family Star is the right tool for some of your services and not for others. If, for example, you have one universal, drop-in service in addition to more focused family support, it is recommended you introduce the Star in the best-suited services and create a simple, outcomes-focused feedback questionnaire, structured around the same outcome areas as the Star, for the drop-in service. This will ensure more meaningful organisation-wide information gathering.

Organisations are not permitted to make changes to the Star under the terms of copyright for the tool. For more information, please refer to the copyright statement on page two of this guide or the Outcomes Star website – www.outcomesstar.org.uk.

If you are not sure that the Family Star is the best version for your service, check out the Outcomes Star website – www.outcomesstar.org.uk – to explore the full range of available versions. If there is currently no version that fits your service adequately, please contact Triangle to enquire about versions in development, or the possibility of working with us to create a new version to meet your needs.

Steps three, four and five below should be considered at the same time.

3 Run a pilot – try it out

It is advisable to pilot the Outcomes Star in one or more services before rolling it out across your whole organisation. The benefits of running a pilot are that:

- It enables you to test how the tool works for you in practice
- It helps you to answer the practical questions set out under point four 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 Star who can reassure, motivate and train others
- If there are problems, these can be addressed before the Star is rolled out across the organisation.

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

Research on the implementation of the Outcomes Star found that there was resistance from workers within over half of the 25 organisations interviewed. However, in nearly all cases this was quickly overcome. The following are examples of tried and tested options for addressing worker resistance effectively:

- Taking time to allow people to realise the benefits so that family support workers see the Star as making their job easier and better, rather than simply adding 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 represents a significantly new way of working and staff may need to have their concerns and questions heard and addressed
- A flexible approach at first. Allowing the more willing and enthusiastic workers to give it a try can work well. If these workers come back to the team with positive experiences, this can enthuse others. In addition, feedback from their families can provide invaluable concrete evidence of the benefits and popularity of the Star and off-set fears that service users will find it lengthy or intrusive
- Involving families in the process. This not only means that parents understand and have a say in what is happening but their support also adds credibility and legitimacy to the use of the Star within the service.

4 Integrate the Family Star™ into your ways of working, paperwork and IT

The Family Star works best as an integral part of the process of working with a family, with Star readings taking place at the point when support planning and reviews would normally occur in your service. It is important that the Star is fully incorporated into this process so that it does not unnecessarily duplicate other discussions, paperwork or IT. This probably means you will need to amend existing ways of working.

How will the information be recorded and summarised?

The Star Online is a web application, run by Triangle, and all versions of the Star, including the Family Star, are available for an annual licence fee. The Star Online enables you to record Star readings, notes and action plans on screen, and to analyse your outcomes data at individual, caseload and service level. It also enables you to summarise outcomes across a number of services and to make comparisons within your organisation, and nationally. You can access the Star Online at www.staronline.org.uk.

If you use paper-based files, it is advisable to keep a copy of each completed Star Chart and Action Plan on the family's file. The parent may also like to have a copy.

It is sometimes also possible to integrate the Star Online with other software using the Star Online's integration system. If you are considering integration, please visit www.outcomesstar.org.uk to find out more about the process and set-up costs or email info@triangleconsulting.co.uk.

When to use the Family Star™

It is up to your organisation to set a policy specifying when service users should complete the Star and how that fits with other processes. This policy may depend on the length and intensity of a service. For most types of service we recommend an initial reading at the point of developing a support plan, ideally within the first four weeks. It is not usually appropriate to complete the Star at the first meeting with new families. This is

often too soon for something as in-depth as the completion of the Star, and the worker may be solely reliant on the testimony of the parent for the accuracy of the reading. It works better once there is some relationship, and the worker already has some knowledge of the family.

There is a balance between getting to know a family, and the need to record an accurate start point before too much change happens. If a parent is not willing or able to engage in meaningful discussion of the Star areas in their first month, workers can complete a 'worker-only' initial reading to provide a baseline. This can be recorded as such on the Star Chart and when entering the data on the Star Online.

It usually works best to repeat the Star every three to six months, linking it to reviews of support or action plans. For short-term services of 6 to 12 weeks it is recommended to complete Stars at the start and end of the service. It is not recommended to use the Star in services of less than six weeks in length. Comparing the first and last Star will give a clear picture of the outcomes for that person.

The Star™ can be used alongside the CAF

The introduction to this guide outlines the overlap between the CAF and the Family Star. UK local authorities have taken different approaches to using the Family Star alongside or instead of the CAF form or e-CAF, so your approach may depend on local policy and practice. The main ones are:

- Some local authorities use both the Family Star and CAF with families where a CAF is needed, but it is the Star that is used collaboratively with the parents to support discussion. The completed Star and notes are then used to complete a CAF back at the office. Where this approach is taken, supplementary questions are asked alongside the Star to ensure that the key CAF areas are adequately covered.
- Other local authorities no longer use the CAF and their assessment and review paperwork is centred on the Family Star. In this case, it is essential that key information is gathered alongside the Star to ensure risks are properly assessed, and that decisions related to child safety are not made solely on the basis of a completed Family Star.
- Other local authorities use the CAF where there are child-protection concerns and a multi-agency intervention, the Family Star where there are support needs and a single-agency intervention, and neither in universal services.
- Many family-support services in the voluntary sector find that one or more CAF forms have already been completed on a family when they are referred to them. This does not need to be repeated, leaving them free to use the Star without duplication.

It is possible for organisations to incorporate the Family Star within their own paperwork rather than use the Star Chart, Action Plan and scales as

Families we are working with are really responding to the Family Star. They love it. This is so much easier for them to understand. They just get it.

Head of Children's Assessment and Early Help and Families First Programme Lead, Buckinghamshire County Council

Professionals are now understanding the benefits of working in this way. Once they get how well it works with families, we see some real transformations.

Head of Children's Assessment and Early Help and Families First Programme Lead, Buckinghamshire County Council

they are presented within the Star template. However, organisations need a licence from Triangle to do this and the paperwork needs to clearly state that the Family Star is being reproduced under licence from Triangle. Visit www.outcomesstar.org.uk to find out more and to submit an enquiry.

Using the Family Star™ with parents and My Star™ with their children

Organisations working directly with parents and their children, using both the Family Star and My Star, will need to develop a policy for when and how these are completed. Ideally the Family Star reviews with parents and My Star reviews with children would be coordinated, so that the two Stars relate to each other making it possible to track the outcomes for parents and children together. Using both versions of the Outcomes Star also opens opportunities for parents to understand the effect their behaviour can have on their children.

Triangle is exploring ways to automatically link the results for children and their parents on the Star Online. However, this is currently only possible by drawing out the outcomes for both separately and comparing them manually.

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 families receive training. This is provided by Triangle – see the resources section of this guide for details.

You might find it helpful to set up a steering group made up of managers, workers and, in some cases, service users, to oversee the introduction of the Star.

It is important to make clear how the Star fits with other initiatives and training that staff have received. For example, if your organisation uses Motivational Interviewing, it will help workers if you can integrate the Star into this approach. Triangle's two-day Outcomes Star and Keyworking course contains a focus on Motivational Interviewing, for example.

Effective use of the Star requires that those using it are skilled in working with families and confident to challenge appropriately and support parents to change. Introducing the Star may be an opportunity to review the training needs of your staff in this area and address any outstanding concerns. Email training@triangleconsulting.co.uk for details.

I use the first visit to start discussing issues and getting a picture of the family, but I have the Star areas in mind during that discussion so that, when I come back to do the Star next time, I already have some idea of where the family is on the scales and what the issues are.

**Worker,
West Sussex**

The Star is really good for highlighting the positive when everything around seems so negative. Parents like the instant visual and you can have a huge discussion about where to go from here. They like it and I like it.

**Family support
worker,
Hampshire**

Want to use this tool?
Visit www.outcomesstar.org.uk

Contact info@triangleconsulting.co.uk
or 020 7272 8765

6 Ensure quality and consistency in the use of the Star™

Star data will only provide an accurate picture of the progress of families if those using it have a good understanding of the tool and apply the scales consistently, according to the Steps to Effective Parenting. This is particularly important for service level data; it is only possible to meaningfully collate the data across a service if workers understand and have used the defined Steps. We recommend that you ensure this happens in the following ways.

Staff supervision

When discussing a worker's caseload, draw on their families' completed Stars – either using all or a sample, depending on the caseload. This will help managers to ensure that the Star is being used as planned and completed accurately, with an understanding of the Steps to Effective Parenting. 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, accurate and stored confidentially.

Co-worker feedback

One way to ensure staff use the Star consistently is to use a system of co-worker feedback. Pairs of co-workers review a number of each other's cases and complete their own Star Charts for each of the service users. They do this without any knowledge of the scale points their colleague has already chosen and without sight of any completed Star Charts. They then compare their readings to discuss and learn from each other's approach. Where appropriate, workers may want to go back to the family's file and moderate the scale points recorded at that time. If so, this should be discussed with the parent or recorded as a worker-only reading.

Team meetings

When discussing families in team meetings, look at their Stars and explore where they are on the Steps to Effective Parenting. This kind of discussion enables the team to develop a shared understanding of how to use the scales and become familiar with the framework.

Data quality

Users of the Star Online will soon need to confirm that the quality of the data being entered is ensured through the measures described above, or that plans are in place to do this. You can also talk to Triangle about Star Quality tools.

The detailed scales are a lot to absorb, but the information in them is what family support workers need to know and focus on, so it is a really good basis for good practice.

**Manager,
Family Action**

Not for use
for information only

Want to use this tool?
Visit www.outcomesstar.org.uk

or 020 7272 8765