

# Development of the Family Star Plus™ and Family Star™

## Introduction

The Outcomes Stars are a suite of collaborative, person-centred tools that both support and measure change. There are now over 50 versions of the Outcomes Star, all of which have a series of outcome areas arranged in a star shape, with a five step ‘Journey of Change’ underpinning the scales of each outcome area.

The original version of the Outcomes Star for parents – the Family Star, was developed in 2010. A variant, the Family Star Plus was developed and published in 2012-2013, to better match the UK Supporting Families initiative (then called the Troubled Families initiative). Edition 2 of the original Family Star was published at the same time. In April 2023, Triangle launched improved and updated new editions of the Family Star Plus (Edition 2) and Family Star (Edition 2.2).

Since the previous editions of these Stars were published, much has changed – in the sector, in the level and type of need experienced by clients accessing services, increased economic pressures and housing challenges – and Triangle has learned a lot about use of language and accessibility, including being more trauma-informed and even more client-centred. The new editions of the Family Star and Family Star Plus were developed in response to these changes and were grounded in extensive feedback and consultation. This document describes the process of arriving at these editions and how they differ from the previous versions.

Given the significant improvements in the new editions, they will replace the previous editions on the Star Online system, and we encourage clients using them in other systems to do the same.

The Family Star and Family Star Plus include a wide range of resources to support engagement of clients and to be accessible for a broad range of people:

- A Star Chart, Notes and Action Plan
- A User Guide, with brief and detailed scales for each of the ten outcome areas and a detailed description of the Journey of Change
- Short illustrated scales
- Flashcards - a visual resource useful for people with limited English or literacy
- A leaflet for parents
- Guidance for Workers
- A web application for online completion and reporting at [www.staronline.org.uk](http://www.staronline.org.uk).

The Family Star is also accompanied by guidance and resources for use within the Scottish ‘SHANARRI’ well-being indicators framework.

Background and further information about the Outcomes Star suite of tools can be found at [www.outcomesstar.org.uk](http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk).

## The first edition of the Family Star

The Family Star was the first version of the Outcomes Star for families. It covers eight areas of parenting essential to enabling children to thrive, and in the first edition these were named:

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 was developed in by Triangle with Family Action, Camden Council and Camden service providers including Hopscotch, Coram, Elfrida Rathbone, Families in Focus, Agar Grove Children's Centre and the Youth Offending Service. Further input was provided by family services in Hampshire Council and the Alcohol Concern Embrace project. Managers, practitioners and parent consultants who had previously used family services were included in the core working group who took part in a series of three focus group-based workshops, with drafting and refinement after each of these, and a piloting phase.

## The first edition of the Family Star Plus

In 2012, Triangle was approached by a number of UK local authorities that wanted to use the Outcomes Star to capture the additional outcomes of the Government's Troubled Families Initiative (now renamed Supporting Families). In 2013, managers and practitioners at Leicestershire County Council collaborated with Triangle to create the Family Star Plus. Triangle also consulted other local authorities and Family Action. The Family Star Plus followed a similar development process of drafting, piloting and refinement as used for the Family Star.

The Family Star Plus was an improved variant of the Family Star with two additional scales ('Your well-being' and 'Progress to work') to give greater focus on the parent themselves. The outcome area names in the first edition were as follows:

1. Physical health
2. Your well-being
3. Meeting emotional needs
4. Keeping your children safe
5. Social networks
6. Education and learning
7. Boundaries and behaviour
8. Family routine
9. Home and money
10. Progress to work

In 2020, data from the first edition was used in an article entitled 'Assessing Family Functioning: Psychometric Evaluation of the Family Star Plus', published in Family Relations. This peer-reviewed journal article, authored by Triangle's Research Analyst, Dr Anna Good and Strategic Director, Joy

MacKeith, supported the validity of the Family Star Plus, including associations between Star readings and hard outcomes.

## The second edition of the Family Star

At the same time as developing the Family Star Plus, Triangle took the opportunity to develop the second edition of the Family Star, responding to feedback received over the years and substantial Star development since the publication of the first edition. The second edition had the same eight core outcome areas and Journey of Change, but key points were added, and the wording was revised to clarify the scale definitions and the differences between the two steps within each Journey of Change stage. Additional examples were also added to represent a wider range of ages.

## Family Star (Edition 2.2) and Family Star Plus (Edition 2)

The Family Star Plus was formally reviewed in 2021-2022 in response to feedback and changes in the sector, client needs, the wider environment and learning from more recent Star developments. The review began in Spring 2021 with Triangle asking all clients using the Family Star Plus for feedback via direct emails, and through our newsletter and a blog.

We are grateful for the feedback received from keyworkers and managers from 11 UK local authorities (Hampshire, Doncaster, Hull, Hertfordshire, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Vale of Glamorgan, Nottinghamshire, Enfield, Islington and Havering) as well as Belfast Central Mission, Barnardo's, Tushinde Children's Trust in Kenya and Unique Outcomes and Family Life in Australia.

Based on the in-depth feedback, which focused primarily on making the language more person-centred and trauma-informed, we produced a draft new edition in June 2022. This draft was sent to people from a range of organisations in the UK, Kenya and Australia who had expressed an interest and willingness to read, test and provide feedback on drafts. Successive versions were drafted, reviewed, and refined with the input of this additional feedback as well as a series of internal working group sessions. The learning from the Family Star Plus review was used to make similar changes to the Family Star.

The key improvements made in the final versions were around the language in the scales and accompanying guidance, which have been carefully worded to be more sensitive, strengths based, and client-centred. These changes are most noticeable in the following areas:

- The descriptors for the Stuck and Accepting Help stages omit references to negative experiences that might be a trigger or language that may appear blaming such as "I don't want to". They also explicitly acknowledge that parents may not be ready to engage with support, may not feel they have the help they need and are likely to be struggling or not knowing what to do despite good intentions.
- Most outcome area names were changed to be more person-centred. The final Journey of Change stage was renamed from 'Effective parenting' to 'Managing well'.
- There is greater recognition of external factors that may be beyond the person's control (e.g., in the introduction to the User Guide and the overall outcome area descriptions).

The new editions also more clearly distinguish between 7 and 8. At 7 the person is starting to find what works and at 8 the outcome is achieved with ongoing support to maintain it.

In addition to these improvements to the language, there were some changes to the content of the outcome areas that are worth being aware of. These changes, described in the tables below, are not expected to influence the data produced for the practical reasons outlined, as well as on the basis of evidence from the research literature summarised below.

Table 1: Outcome areas where either nothing has changed or only the name has changed:

Old outcome area – Family Star Plus	New outcome area – Family Star Plus
Physical health	My children’s health
Meeting emotional needs	My children’s emotions
Keeping your children safe	Keeping my children safe
Social networks	Friends and community
Family routine	Our family routine
Home and money	Home and money

Table 2: Outcome areas where the name and content has changed:

Old outcome area (Family Star Plus)	New outcome area (Family Star Plus)	More information about the changes
Your well-being	How I feel	<p>The new edition includes more explicit references to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The interaction between physical health and well-being (managing conditions or feeling ill)</li> <li>• Drugs not being used to cope in a way that risks the person’s health and well-being</li> <li>• The impact of family conflict and harassment.</li> </ul> <p>As discussed below, since these factors are intrinsic to well-being, they will have always impacted on readings in this scale, meaning the data across editions should be comparable.</p>
Education and learning	My children’s learning	<p>The new edition includes a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children engaging with school, as well as good attendance</li> <li>• Children meeting their own potential, rather than meeting specific milestones that may not be appropriate for all.</li> </ul> <p>These changes mirror how practitioners use the tool in practice already and should not affect data across editions.</p>
Boundaries and behaviour	My children’s behaviour	<p>The new edition has a less explicit reference to parents being involved in antisocial or criminal behaviour. It has a more strengths-based focus on parents being good role models.</p> <p>The scale will still capture the impact of any criminal behaviour and so should not affect data across editions.</p>
Progress to work	Work	<p>The new edition provides more clarity on the behaviour expected at stages 5 and 6. This should help ensure data</p>

		recorded with the new edition is more consistent with the Journey of Change, whilst not having a significant impact on comparability with previously collected data.
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### Explaining the changes to the outcome areas for Family Star

Table 1: Outcome areas where either nothing has changed or only the name has changed:

Old outcome area – Family Star Plus	New outcome area – Family Star Plus
Physical health	My children’s health
Keeping your children safe	Keeping my children safe
Social networks	Friends and community
Family routine	Our family routine
Home and money	Home and money

Table 2: Outcome areas where the name and content has changed:

Old outcome area (Family Star Plus)	New outcome area (Family Star Plus)	More information about the changes
Emotional well-being	Emotional well-being	<p>The new edition includes more explicit references to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The interaction between physical health and well-being (managing conditions or feeling ill)</li> <li>• Drugs not being used to cope in a way that risks the person’s health and well-being</li> <li>• The impact of family conflict and harassment.</li> </ul> <p>Again, these factors are intrinsic to well-being, so will have always impacted on readings in this scale.</p>
Education and learning	My children’s learning	<p>The new edition includes a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children engaging with school, as well as good attendance</li> <li>• Children meeting their own potential, rather than meeting specific milestones that may not be appropriate for all.</li> </ul> <p>These changes mirror how practitioners use the tool in practice already and should not affect data across editions.</p>
Boundaries and behaviour	My children’s behaviour	<p>The new edition has a less explicit reference to parents being involved in antisocial or criminal behaviour. It has a more strengths-based focus on parents being good role models.</p> <p>The scale will still capture the impact of any criminal behaviour and so should not affect data across editions.</p>

## **Research evidence supporting expectations that Star data will be unaffected by the changes**

### *Physical health is intrinsic to well-being*

The bi-directional relationship between physical and emotional/mental health has long been established (Howell, Kern & Lyubomirsky, 2007; Salovey, Rothman, Detweiler & Steward, 2020), with researchers often defining well-being broadly to include both physical and emotional components (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020). Health problems have been shown to increase the risk of parental stress, depression and anxiety (Abidin, 1990; Waldfogel, Craigie & Brooks-Gunn, 2010), and conversely, parenthood both generates and increases existing stressors, with subsequent effects on physical health (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020; Pollmann-Schult, 2014).

### *Harassment and family conflict impact on well-being*

Parenthood can also exacerbate conflicts with partners, and there is strong evidence that conflict within the family has detrimental effects on the well-being of both parents and children (e.g. Brock & Kochanska, 2016; Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020; Shek, 2000). Inter-parental conflict leads to negative emotions in parents, which in turn worsens parent–child interactions (Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000). Conflict between parents and children can also impact on parental well-being – leading to stress, exhaustion and overwhelm, which can be relieved by support directed at improving the relationship and any challenging behaviours (Kohlhoff et al., 2020).

### *Attendance is central to good engagement with education*

The new edition refers to attendance at the Stuck stage ‘not regularly attending school, training, work or alternative education’, but there is a greater focus on engagement with education rather than explicitly on attendance in the rest of the scale. Researchers have defined school engagement as including affective, cognitive and behavioural components, finding interrelations between the behaviour of attendance and other aspects of engagement (e.g. Fredricks, Bohnert & Burdette, 2014; Miranda-Zapata, Lara, Navarro, Saracostti & de-Toro, 2018). It is clear that while attendance is important, wider conceptualisations of engagement are warranted (Fredricks et al., 2014).

### *Not engaging in antisocial or criminal behaviour is part of being a good role model*

A role model is defined as ‘a person looked to by others as an example to be imitated’ (Soanes, 2001). In terms of being a positive role model for children, not being involved in crime or antisocial behaviour is a basic requirement - with children more at risk of offending and problematic behaviour if they have a parent who is engaged in these behaviours (Billings, 2018). For example, research has shown that children living with antisocial fathers were more likely to have conduct problems, and these behaviour problems were directly related to the amount of time they lived with their fathers (Jaffee, Moffitt, Caspi, & Taylor, 2003).

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