How to use Outcomes Stars™ with Early Help Assessments (EHA)

Top tips for practitioners in early help settings

1   Introduction

Services supporting children and families use Early Help Assessments to understand the strengths and needs of the people they support. In 2012 the UK Government's Department of Children and Families created the Common Assessment Framework, creating a consistent form and approach for assessment. The CAF is no longer statutory and Local Authorities have developed their own Early Help Assessments in its place.

This document explains how services can use the Outcomes Stars to support their Early Help Assessment process. As each local authorities EHA is different, not all of the guidance here will be relevant for everyone. For advice and support about this or any aspect of the Outcomes Star, please contact Triangle on info@triangleconsulting.co.uk or 0207 272 8765. More information about the Outcomes Stars can be found on our website www.outcomesstar.org.uk.

2   How the Outcomes Stars support early help

There are a number of different versions of the Star that can be useful in early help settings. The most popular Stars for early help are Family Star Plus for use with parents, Family Star (Early Years) for use with parents with younger families and in lighter-touch support settings, and My Star for use with children and young people.

All versions of the Star can bring the following benefits to frontline services:

- Person centred – allows the parent or child to take the lead and be an active participant in their own support, capturing what is important to them

- Holistic and outcomes focused – providing a consistent framework for exploring and reflecting on someone's life today and their goals for the future

- Collaborative and empowering – data is collected through collaboratively completing scales and agreeing readings together

- One lead practitioner – tools are designed to be integral to a keyworking relationship, supporting meaningful conversations and collaborative working

- Recognising readiness to change – the scales in the Stars are built on a five-stage model called the 'Journey of Change' measuring people's attitudes and behaviour

- Simple and clear – accessible design and language means the Stars are ideally suited for information sharing across people from different professional disciplines and crucially, with parents and children themselves

3   How to use the Stars with an EHA

An EHA and the Stars perform a similar role, but it is important to understand that they are different tools that start from different places.

For example, the Family Star Plus starts with the parent – it looks at the areas of someone's life, trying to understand how each area impacts on the well-being of their children and their role as an effective parent.

The CAF starts with the child – it looks at the different areas of need a child has and tries to understand the impact of parents/carers and environmental factors. My Star also starts with the child, but instead of looking at different categories or types of needs, it takes a child's view of the different areas of their life and tries to understand how each aspect is supporting or taking away from their well-being, and therefore where there are needs that need to be addressed.

Although the tools are different, there is significant overlap in terms of the areas covered by an EHA and by a Star. Completing the Star can help you identify:

- What's important to the parent or child – for example, by allowing them to choose where to start and which area to talk about first, and by working with them to identify priorities for the action plan

- A sense of what is going on in their life, using the holistic person-centred framework of the Star as a base for conversation

- A sense of what is going well and where they don't need help, by someone recording a reading at a high stage of the Journey of Change)

- Where they do need help and what help they would like(, by someone recording a reading a lower stage of the Journey of Change).

Any service using both the Stars and an EHA should work to avoid duplication for practitioners, to ensure that assessment processes are as meaningful and child-focused as possible. Services should look at their own EHA alongside the Stars and work out where there could be a crossover, in terms of what the conversation is likely to cover in each area (more information on potential overlaps in the next section.)

When you have identified any crossovers, the options for services are:

- To incorporate the Star within your EHA. This can be useful if the Stars can directly replace some sections of the EHA but not all of them. This could be done by completing both an EHA and the Star and storing completed Star Charts alongside EHA paperwork / electronic records. Alternatively, licensed Star users are permitted to incorporate Star Charts and Star materials into their own paperwork (contact Triangle for more information.)

- Use the Star alongside an EHA, to capture views and engage with a service user, following on by then using the completed Star and Star notes as a basis to fill in EHA and complete an action plan within the EHA. The Star becomes a user-friendly way to reflect and talk about someone's life, and to measure outcomes over time. In this option, it is important that you help practitioners to understand how Star areas/conversations link to areas within EHA.

4 How Family Star Plus fits with an EHA (if based on the old CAF)

The table below is taken from the Family Star Plus Organisation Guide. Our research shows that many EHA's are based on the structure of the CAF based around the three domains of Development, Parents & Carers, and Family and environmental factors. For more information about areas not covered by the Star see section 6.

Family Star Plus outcome areas	Fit with assessment areas from EHA		
	Development	Parents & Carers	Family and environmental factors
Physical health	• Health • Self-care skills	• Basic care	
Meeting emotional needs	• Emotional and behavioural development • Identity	• Emotional warmth	
Your-well being			
Keeping your children safe		• Ensuring safety	
Social networks		• Family and social relationships • Social presentation	• Family's social integration • Community resources • Wider family
Education and learning	• Education	• Stimulation	
Boundaries and behaviour		• Guidance and boundaries	
Family routine		• Stability	
Home and money			• Income
Progress to work		• Employment	

"Family history and functioning" is not directly covered, although family functioning may be covered by "Family routine."

5 How My Star fits with an EHA

My Star outcome areas	Fit with assessment areas from EHA		
	Development	Parents & Carers	Family and environmental factors
Physical health	• Health • Self-care skills	• Basic care	
Feelings and behaviour	• Emotional and behavioural development • Identity	• Emotional warmth	
Confidence and self-esteem		• Guidance and boundaries	
Being safe		• Ensuring safety	
Relationships Friends		• Family and social relationships • Social presentation	• Family's social integration • Community resources • Wider family
Education and learning	• Education	• Stimulation	
Where you live		• Stability	

"Income", "Employment" and "Family history and functioning" are not covered.

6 Information not captured by the Stars

A) Family information and history

Although the Stars and the Star Online system can capture basic service user information, they are not designed to capture all of the 'case management' information that a service could need.

What can work well is an opportunity for the parent or child to draw out an informal 'genogram' explaining the key people in their family and their relationships to each other. Good examples of an EHA or any other assessment also often include an opportunity for people to specify the names that people like to be called by, and to capture any accessibility or language needs that are relevant to participating in the assessment or ongoing support.

B) Detailed presenting needs

Services may need to capture specific safeguarding or other concerns. These aren't captured directly by the Star, although using the Star can help to frame questions about these concerns within a conversation about a relevant outcome area/point on the Star if appropriate. Not all presenting needs can be linked to Star areas, and some may be better captured when talking about family history (for example, if a parent is in prison or has recently been released.)

A breakdown of how presenting needs could be framed within Star areas is included in the appendix.

7 Case studies and further information and support

Triangle are keen to learn from services using the Stars alongside EHA's and to share best practice with others in the sector. If you have an example to share with us, or if you would like more support and advice on this area or with any aspect of the Outcomes Star, please get in touch via the Implementation Lead supporting your organisation, or on info@triangleconsulting.co.uk or 0207 272 8765.

Family Star Plus area	My Star area	Presenting need (child)	Presenting need (adult)
Physical health	Physical health	• Not registered with GP • Not registered with dentist • Missing appointments • Missing immunisations • Overweight / obesity • Underweight • Other health conditions present • Teenage pregnancy	
Meeting emotional needs	Feelings and behaviour Confidence and self-esteem	• Concern for mental or emotional health • Young carer • Concern for self-harm	
Your well-being			• Disability or learning need • Other health conditions present • Concern for mental or emotional health • Concern for domestic abuse • Prevent / radicalisation concerns
Keeping your children safe	Being safe	• Concern for CSE • Concern for child abuse – physical, sexual, emotional, neglect • Concern for domestic abuse • History of going missing/absent from home • Prevent / radicalisation concerns • Gang concerns	
Social networks	Friends	• Victim of bullying	• At risk of social isolation
Education and learning	Education and learning	• In PRU or alternative education provision • Not in work, education or training • Not on school roll • Elective home education • Not taking up Early Years Provision • School attendance issues	
Boundaries and behaviour		• Anti-social behaviour • Demonstrating sexualised behaviour Challenging behaviour	
Home and money	Where you live		• Debt issues • Housing/rent issues • Homelessness concerns
Progress to employment			• Frequently out of work