

Practical examples of how the Outcomes Star can support learning and development at the place and person level

The Outcomes Star is suite of over 40 widely used keywork and outcomes measurement tools that both support and measure progress. Collaboratively completing the tool creates a shared understanding between the practitioner and the person they are supporting about strengths, needs and what is needed going forward. It empowers people to understand their situation and how to change what matters to them.

This document presents examples of how the Star can support learning and improvement at the place and the person level (section 1) as well as feedback from managers and practitioners about how it empowers people by being person-centred, developmental and motivational (section 2).

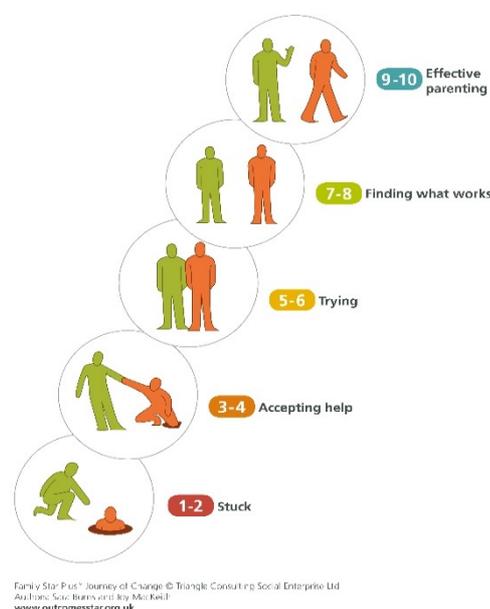
1.1 Supporting learning and improvement at the place level

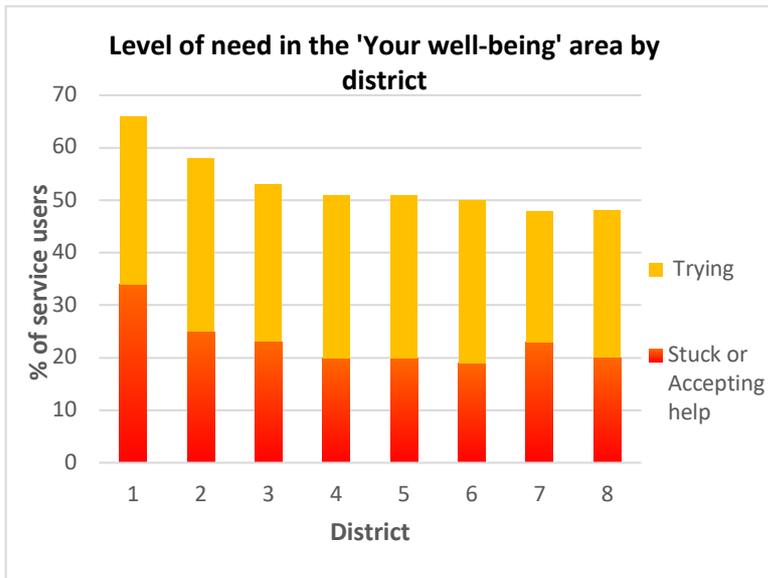
Example 1: Staffordshire County Council

The Family Star Plus is a collaborative completion tool which supports and measures progress towards parents being able to provide their children with what they need to thrive. It comprises ten outcome scales arranged in a star shape with definitions of each 1-10 scale point set out in a user guide. These scales are underpinned by a Journey of Change which describes the steps parents typically take as they face and overcome the challenges of parenting in difficult circumstances (see figure).

Staffordshire County Council have been using the Family Star Plus since 2012, when the UK Government and Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government's Supporting Families Programme began. The programme was developed to improve multi-agency responses to the needs of families affected by poor school attendance, youth crime, anti-social behaviour and unemployment. As part of Staffordshire's Supporting Families work: 'Building Resilient Families and Communities' (BRFC), the Family Star Plus is used in a wide range of family support services.

Comparing starting points and progress as measured by the Star across the eight districts helped the team to learn and make improvements to the services provided. For example, they found that in some districts they: *"had a high number of families in which adult emotional health and well-being were poor, with a high percentage of people starting with low Star readings and relatively little positive change. Practitioners were struggling to access the resources these parents needed, so the BRFC team got together all the partners to look at what services already existed, where the gaps were and identified ways that the emotional health support could be improved"*





In addition, the BRFC team was not sure if there was enough clarity about the role of different services in the system. They used the Journey of Change to help define how the services complemented each other:

- Voluntary and community service providers (least intensive) – steps 5 or 6 ('Trying')
- In-house social care providers – steps 4-6 ('Accepting help' / 'Trying')
- Family intervention teams, with partners such as the police, housing and domestic violence teams (most intensive) – steps 1- 4 ('Stuck' / 'Accepting help')

This resulted in helpful conversations about how the services worked together and greater clarity about the role of different services. They then looked at Family Star Plus readings to learn about how things were working in practice. For example, they found that some families in the Family Intervention Service had readings of 5 or over which indicated that they were receiving more intensive help than was appropriate. They also created greater clarity with services about when it was appropriate to stop offering support.

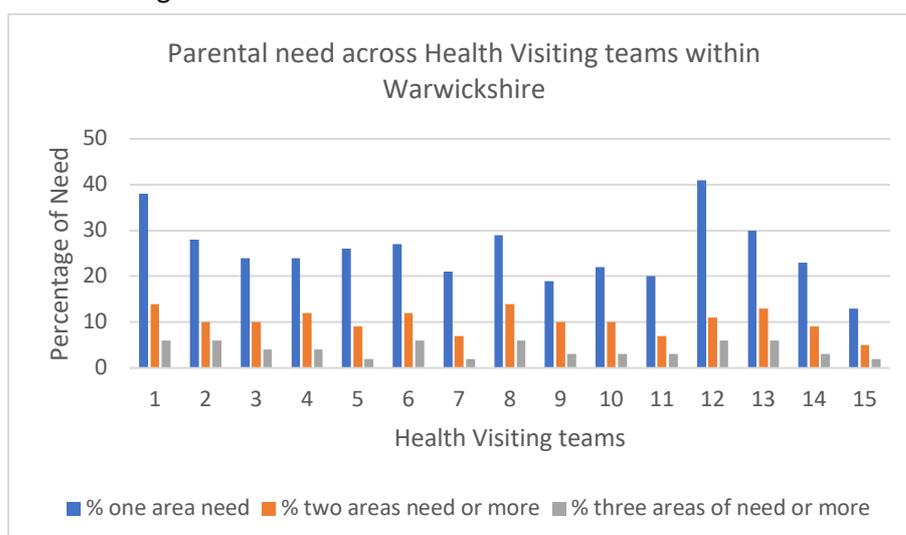
The BRFC coordinator reported that these conversations helped to promote whole family work and that re-referrals have reduced from 38% to 19% in some critical parts of early help services

Example 2: South Warwickshire NHS Trust¹

South Warwickshire NHS trust use the Parent and Baby Star in their 15 health visiting teams. The Outcome Star and Parenting Lead for Warwickshire sent out reports to the teams looking at the needs profiles of families and the impact they had had through interventions. Part of the analysis compared the level of need before and after the lockdowns due to Covid-19.

One of the teams noticed a significant increase in needs around social support from 5% to 13%, so the clinical lead discussed this with the team and the Outcome Star & Parenting lead. The health visitors were unable to take on extra support, so they decided to pilot a project with Homestart, a charity working locally supporting families. They are going to use the Star to decide which parents are offered entry into the pilot project as well as repeating it at the end to assess change.

They have also noticed that the Parent and Baby Star data shows that there are pockets of greater need in certain geographical areas (as shown in the graph), and they plan to use this data to inform decisions about the allocation of health visitors.



¹ We haven't had final sign off for this example so please don't share it with anyone else at this stage. We don't anticipate any issue – just not had a reply to our email yet

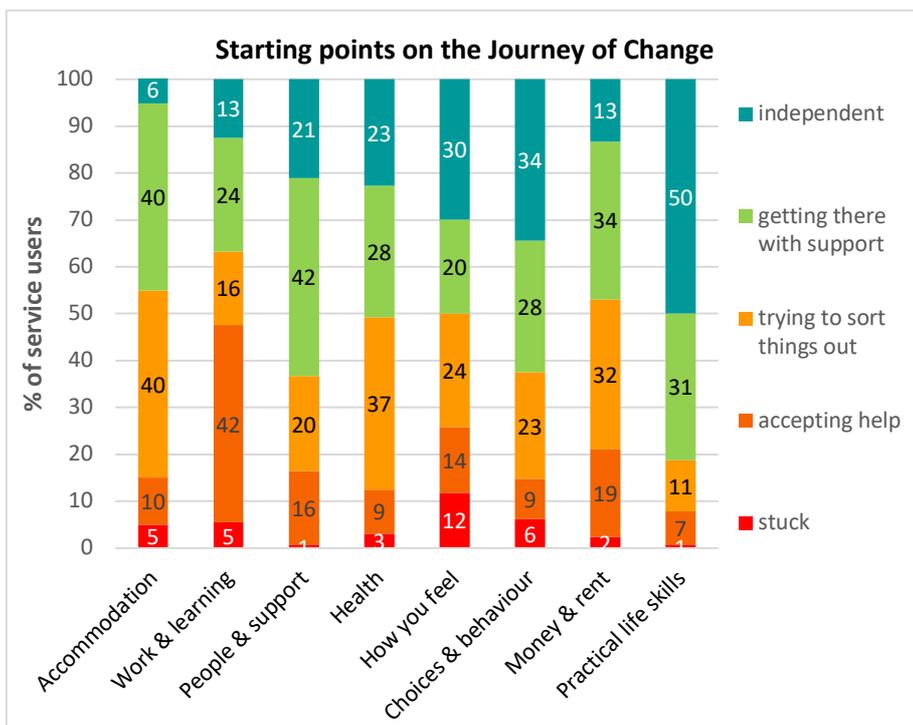
Example 3: Youth mentoring²

A charity that offers a youth mentoring service to young people use the Youth Star with young people in the county, to support their mentors to empower young people to identify their own goals and take ownership of their action plans.

One of their programmes was funded by the Local Authority and was targeted at very vulnerable young people. The service manager wanted to check that the referral criteria they were using for the programme matched this targeted group.

They created a bar chart of initial readings, which showed that in most outcomes areas, at least half of the young people were already 'getting there with support' or 'independent'. Few service users had significant needs in terms of Practical life skills, People & support or Money & rent.

Sharing this data with the programme team allowed them to work with the referral agencies and clarify the remit of the programme. The service manager will do the same exercise in two months and expects to see more young people joining the service with higher levels of need.



² This is a fictional example based on a real service but with some aspects changed

1.2 Supporting learning and progress at the practitioner/person level

Service user case study³:

Paula, 25, is a single parent of three children – Chloe (7), Robbie (5) and Tabatha (3). A year ago, a domestic abuse service helped her move out of the home she has been living in with her ex-husband. This service referred her to a local children's centre where Paula and a family support worker completed the Family Star Plus together when she arrived and again, six months later.

The first Star reading was helpful in identifying the range of challenges that the family were facing, and Paula's support worker noted that without the Star, it would have been hard to see the wood for the trees, to unpick how the issues interrelated, and to work out what to work on first.

Talking through each of the ten outcome areas helped them both to understand how much Paula's anxiety disorder and agoraphobia impacted on other areas of the family's life including her ability to meet the children's emotional needs, form social networks and consider work.

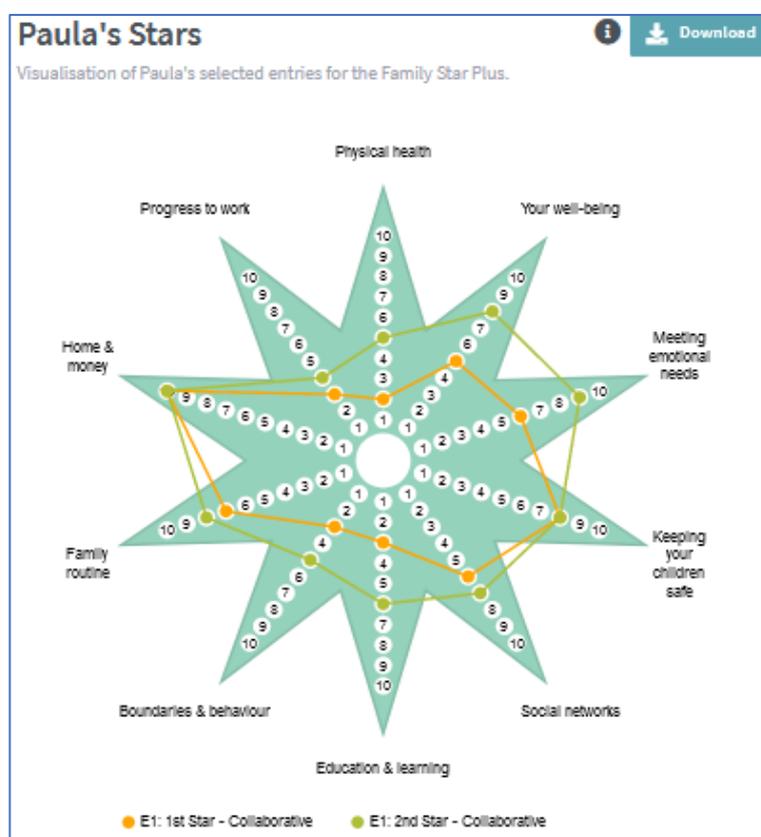
Paula also found it really helpful to see the completed Star Chart found it reassuring that she was already doing well in the Home and money and Family Routine areas. She also liked that it clarified the areas in which support was available and that she could take away a printout.

The family worker valued that the Journey of Change helped her think through the type of support that was needed. For example, Paula was reluctant to acknowledge that her children needed health appointments because she found it stressful making appointments and taking her children to attend them. With this knowledge, the family support worker agreed that she would help Paula make an appointment for her son's asthma to be assessed and attend it with her. In the Family routine area, on the other hand, Paula just needed a bit of extra support as she already had regular mealtimes and bedtimes in place. In this

area, the family support worker provided advice around a new routine for when Robbie started school as well as around finding alternatives to television, and they agreed to check on this each month.

Given the central role of Paula's mental health problems, action planning focused quite heavily on the Your well-being area. Paula said that she was finding the new medication her GP had prescribed helpful, but she didn't feel it was enough. They agreed it would be helpful for a local community mental health worker to visit every month to help her find effective strategies for managing her anxiety. They also agreed that Paula would try attending the domestic abuse support group each week.

When completing the second Star six months later, they both found it really encouraging to visually see the progress that had been made. Paula had been attending the domestic abuse support group each week and found it helpful to share experiences with other women. Both the medication and



³ This example is an amalgamation of a number of real-life people who have worked with the Family Star Plus

the conversations with her mental health worker were helping a lot with her anxiety. She still needed support and encouragement to keep things going but felt that she was starting to get into a routine so would soon be able to manage on her own – the family support worker suggested they reduce the check-ins and see how it went.

The progress with Paula's well-being had had knock-on effects in other areas – she was beginning to make friends within the support group and felt more able to take her children out to the park and to their friends' houses. She also felt more able to talk to her daughter about things that were bothering her at school.

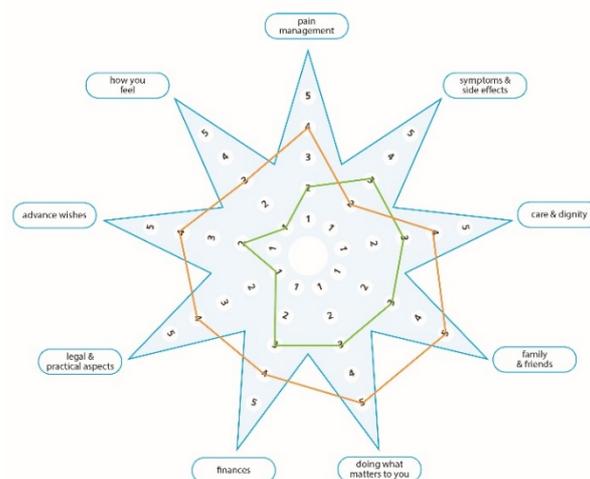
The review reading revealed that there were still quite a few issues with the children's diet and Paula shared for the first time that she was concerned that Robbie was overweight. She had recently started buying more fruit and vegetables and keeping snacks out of his reach but said she found it hard as the children objected and it seemed to create more stress. She said she needed help to find ways to improve things in this area, so the support worker gave her some tips and the number for a healthy eating course. Paula also shared that she was feeling anxious after receiving a letter about returning to work from the benefits service. Paula didn't feel ready to take that step and they agreed they talked through what support she needed around this over the coming months.

2. How the Outcomes Star empowers people to gain a better understanding of their lives and how to change what matters to them

Example 1: Using the Preparation Star in end-of-life care

The Preparation Star is ‘the Outcomes Star for living well right to the end’. It is a visual tool to support conversations about what is important to people when they consider their final years or months. This version of the Star was developed by Triangle with an expert working group, comprising commissioners, consultants, managers and practitioners from North London Hospice, Jewish Care, St. Joseph’s Hospice, MacMillan Cancer Support and the London ADASS end of life network. A patient group at North London Hospice also provided feedback.

Feedback from the workshops and end-of-pilot feedback questionnaires indicated that the Preparation Star was empowering because it is person-centred, developmental and motivational:



Preparation Star™ © Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Ltd
 Authors: Sara Burns and Joy MacKeith
www.outcomesstar.org.uk

Person-centred – the Star gives service users a central role in deciding their priorities, which areas to work on and what type of support is needed:

- "The carer visibly looked like a weight had lifted and stated that she had never given herself so much time to think about herself". (Practitioner/Service user feedback)
- "It really helped the service user to open up and have daunting conversations with his family around" (Practitioner/Service user feedback)

Developmental – The Star gives service users a clear understanding of the way forward, what each actor will do and what to do if they need further support:

- The vast majority of service users (92%) who completed the feedback questionnaire said that "the scales helped me to understand what I can do and how others can support me".
- "It really helped her focus on how we could help– she came in a muddle, and it helped us prioritise". (Practitioner)
- "I found it helpful - helped with who to go to with a holistic view". (Service user)

Motivational – the Star clearly highlights strengths and progress:

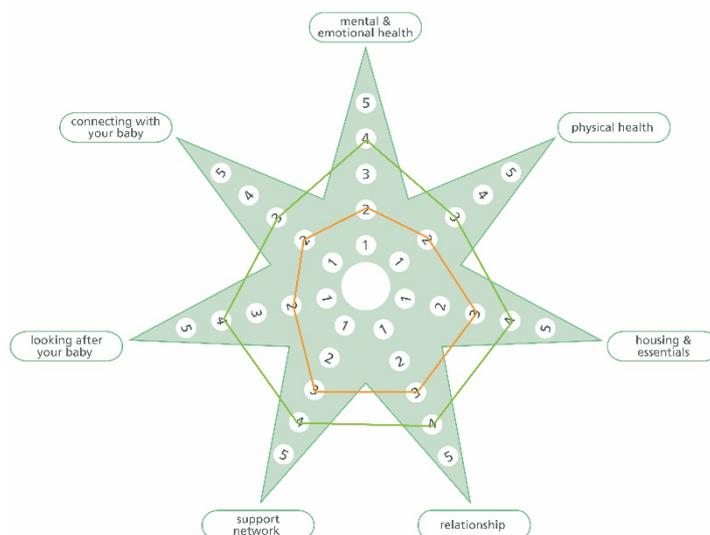
- "Easy to see improvement since last review". (Service user)
- "He spoke about it giving him a focus and to stay motivated". (Practitioner/Service user feedback)
- In the feedback questionnaire, all practitioners who completed review Stars agreed with the statement: "I found it encouraging to see how things had improved between Star readings".

Example 2: Using the Parent and Baby Star in health visiting

The Parent and Baby Star has been adopted enthusiastically within Warwickshire's health visiting service. Both the health visitors and the parents they are working with really value how the process of completing the Star creates an understanding of the parents' lives as systems including how actors and factors interrelate.

Direct feedback from parents and health visitors as well as from the Outcome Star & Parenting lead for Warwickshire, strongly supports the Outcomes Star as a way of both exploring and changing crucial aspects of a person's 'life as system'.

The research indicated that the Parent and Baby Star was empowering by virtue of it being person-centred, developmental and motivational:



Parent and Baby Star™ © Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Ltd
 Authors: Sara Burns and Joy MacKeth
www.outcomesstar.org.uk

Person-centred – the Star gives service users a central role in deciding their priorities, which areas to work and the type of support that is needed:

- “The Star is empowering - a done with, not done to model. It enables parents to make decisions and decide on change”. (Outcome Star & Parenting lead for Warwickshire)
- “It enables health visitors to work with parents to identify which issues to deal with first. Giving them that choice and autonomy (unless it's a safeguarding issue) is really powerful. You get that partnership feel much more when using the Star. It's easier to be inclusive when using the Outcomes Star”. (Outcome Star & Parenting lead for Warwickshire)
- “It's very easy as a health visitor to say you need support in x, y and z and parents can think ‘I must be a rubbish parent because I've got all these referrals’. The Star creates more agenda matching. I certainly think taking parents on that journey is helpful otherwise they just feel bombarded and might not want to do it”. (Outcome Star & Parenting lead for Warwickshire)
- “It helped me feel I mattered, as it wasn't all about the baby”. (Service user)

Developmental – The Star gives service users a clear understanding of the way forward, what each actor will do and what to do if they need further support:

- “For health visitors, the Star has really enabled them to know that parents understand what's been said, and to leave them with action plans. We didn't make the guidance too specific because every family is different but I think there's something really valuable about how the Star makes it really clear so parents know what they need to do and what the health visitor will do”. (Outcome Star & Parenting lead for Warwickshire)
- “I was isolated from my family and desperate to connect with other mums locally and the Star highlighted this. The health visitor then signposted me to local groups which I found invaluable”. (Service user)

Motivational – the Star clearly highlights strengths and progress:

- “The Star encourages parents that they’ve got strengths because when someone has a small baby they worry if they’re doing it right...so the Star helps parents to know where they are doing well”. (Outcome Star & Parenting lead for Warwickshire)
- “We really like the pictorial element of the Star. I think that’s really powerful because otherwise parents can get lost in the words used by professionals. They can see progress on the Star diagram and realise they’re doing ok and that’s quite reassuring”. (Outcome Star & Parenting lead for Warwickshire)
- “I was struggling with my mental health, and it showed on the Star. The health visitor and I agreed on the help I felt I needed. After a few weeks she used the Star again and we could both see the difference the support I had received had made”. (Service user)