



Media Release

Family Star helps track progress

Independent evaluation recommends practice innovation tool to commissioners of family services

- Local authorities urged to consider a new practice tool for scoring parental effectiveness and measuring improvements in outcomes for families with multiple complex needs
- Evaluation finds Family Star tool enables local authorities to performance manage services and meet the challenge of charting distance travelled to Payment-by- Results outcomes under the Troubled Families Programme (TFP)
- Tool could help commissioners demonstrate the total value for money their local TFP is delivering beyond the hard outcomes of tackling worklessness, children's problems with school and anti-social behaviour.

Local authorities are urged today to consider a new practice tool to score parental effectiveness and improvements in outcomes for Troubled Families and other families with multiple complex needs. Family Action, the leading charity provider of intensive support to families with multiple complex needs, publishes an independent evaluation of its use of the Family Star, its innovative practice tool to benchmark and performance manage its work with these families.

The evaluation offers important insights to commissioners about how they could demonstrate the interim progress towards the key payment-by-results outcomes for Troubled Families, which can in the cases of some families take long periods to achieve. This will also enable local authorities to demonstrate the total value they are delivering under the £448 million TFP beyond the PBR outcomes.

Family Action, which is now a provider for the Programme in a number of areas of the country, has pioneered the use of the Star practice tool in its family support services since 2010. The evaluation by York Consulting provides important insights into the use of the Star and responding to the various challenges of managing home-based family support services for families with multiple complex needs.

The evaluation finds that:

- The Family Star produces evidence of outcomes for families with multiple needs and their children which is valued by commissioners;
- The Star provides important interim data on the progress to payment-by-results outcomes for the Troubled Families Programme;
- Local authorities should consider using the Star to benchmark their services for families with multiple complex needs; and identify and support improvement in their services.

Family Action Chief Executive David Holmes said:

“Working to improve outcomes for Troubled Families is inevitably about so much more than tackling worklessness or truancy. It is about making vulnerable families and children positively stronger and more resilient in a host of different ways to help them overcome their difficulties and improve their life chances.

“The Star is a tool that captures all the richness and complexity of Family Action's holistic work towards improving outcomes for families and children. At the same time it enables commissioners to demonstrate the real value for money that their Troubled Families Programmes, and other programmes for families with multiple complex needs, are delivering.

“Most importantly it is a tool which enables commissioners and providers to meet the challenge of managing consistency, quality and improvements in services which are highly tailored to families in need.”

The Family Star was developed by Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise in collaboration with Family Action and others. Family Action's frontline workers use the Star to assess the needs of families across up to eight different areas of parenting: promoting good health; meeting emotional needs; keeping your child safe; building community; supporting learning; setting boundaries; encouraging work aspirations; and providing home and money

Workers use the Star, a highly visual tool, to engage parents and children in the work they need to do to change family life, and measure and record the progress of families. Family Action managers use the Star to benchmark and performance manage the family support services. The evaluation finds that the charity is market-leading in using the Star in this way and embedding it across its whole organisation.

The evaluation which drew on data from 3,200 Family Stars, as well as interviews with Family Action's commissioners, practitioners and families, also finds that the Star:

- provides a clear and effective structure for delivering the elements of family support that are shown by research to improve family and children's outcomes
- is an effective measurement and management tool for family support work
- and engages practitioners, service users manager and commissioners in understanding the journey of change that families make

The evaluation highlights that:

- the Star can be used to work with families with a range of multiple complex needs, including mental health difficulties
- and the importance of using professional workers to deliver intensive family support, given the need to have challenging conversations with families and measure progress.

Overall commissioners, workers and families made positive comments about the Star including:

“Ofsted want to see the journey travelled so anything we can provide to Ofsted is very welcome.....the outputs you get from the Family Star are very good.” (Commissioner).

“It’s much more structured now than before....Now I’m going for a reason and they know I’m coming...it also makes me feel accountable, it makes sure I’m doing what I’m meant to be doing.” (Worker)

“I thought I had an issue with everything and everything was going wrong but doing the Family Star points out stuff you are good at and not so good at. So it’s a lot better than saying “I need help with everything” (Parent)

Ends.

Notes to Editors

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Andy Tate at Family Action on 020 7241 7632, 07867 504051, or at andy.tate@family-action.org.uk.

- Please find the summary of the evaluation of the Family Star’s use by Family Action at www.family-action.org.uk. For copies of the full report please e-mail rhina.beynon@family-action.org.uk or phone 020 7 41 7457.
- The Family Star tool was developed by Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise in partnership with Family Action, Camden Council and its services provider and Hampshire Family services.
- The funding for the Troubled Families Programme is £448 million with up to £4000 is available to work with each family. In 2012-13 split between the upfront attachment fee paid and the PBR was 80/20; in 2013/4 60/40 and in 2014/15 40/60. PBR is available for outcomes delivered on anti social behaviour, attendance and exclusions and family worklessness. See the Financial Framework for the Programme at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/11469/2117840.pdf

About Family Action

Family Action has been a leading provider and services to disadvantaged and socially isolated families since 1869. We work with over 45,000 children and families a year by providing practical, emotional and financial support through over 100 services based in communities across England. A further 150,000 people benefit from our educational grants and information service.