

Family Action
Family Star Evaluation

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Aims of the Evaluation

- 1. Evaluate how the Family Star has been used and recommend how it could be used in the future**
- 2. Evaluate the effectiveness of Family Action's services that use the Family Star**
- 3. Evaluate the implementation process of the Family Star within Family Action**

Methodology

Mixed methods approach:

- **Interviews with Family Action staff and commissioners**
- **Case studies of three Family Action services, including interviews with service users**
- **Analysis of Family Star data (3,224 Stars)**
- **Small scale literature review**

Findings

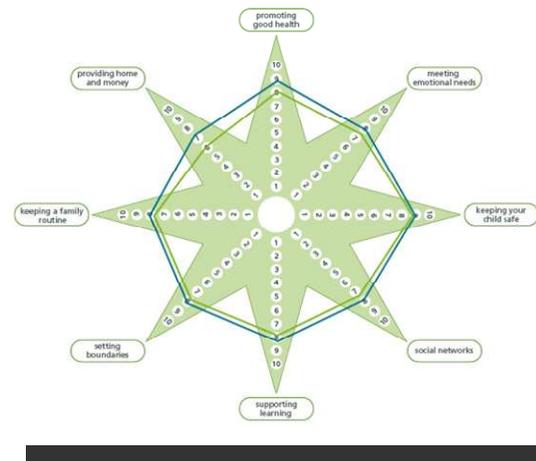
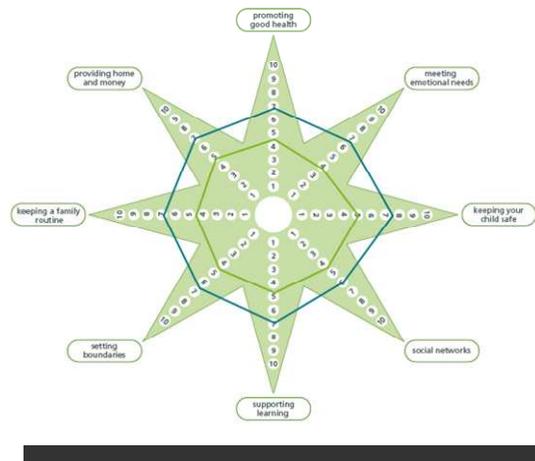
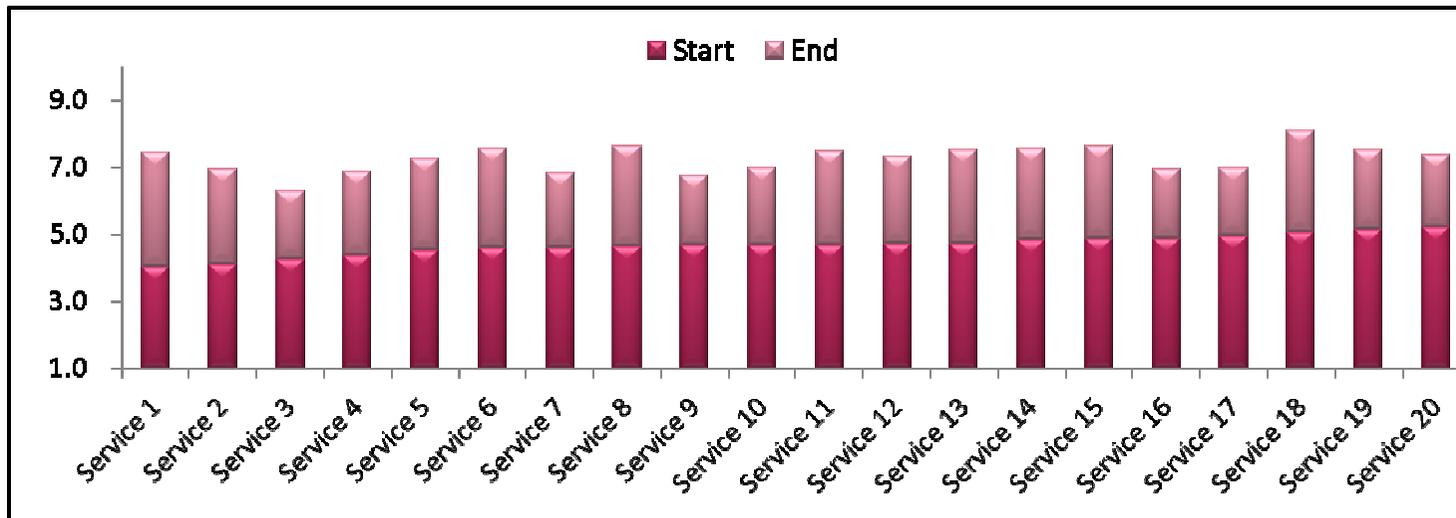
- Effective management and measurement tool for family support
- Engages all stakeholders (families, staff, managers and commissioners) in the journey of change
- Provides timely management information to benchmark performance at an aggregated level
- Is effective for measuring intermediate outcomes and showing progress made towards ultimate targets, for example the payments-by-results outcomes for the Troubled Families Programme

“It gives us information we never had before at that contract management level.” (Commissioner)

“Before we just used to use case studies to evidence outcomes, now case studies are a complement to the tool. A case study can only show one client at a time, we couldn’t review all the families together. Whereas now ... we have more consistent information across all families.” (Commissioner)

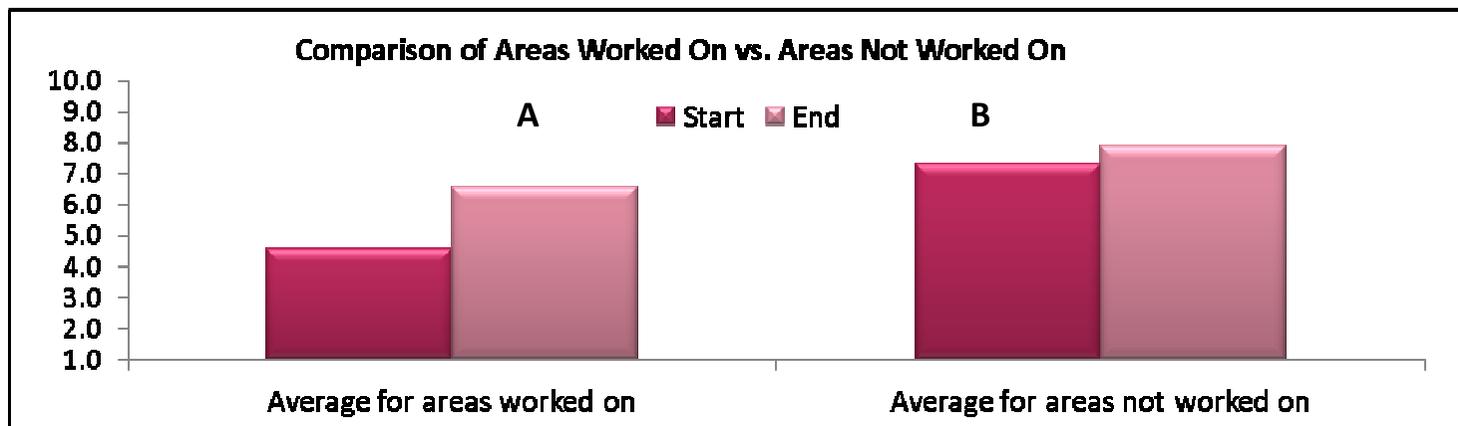
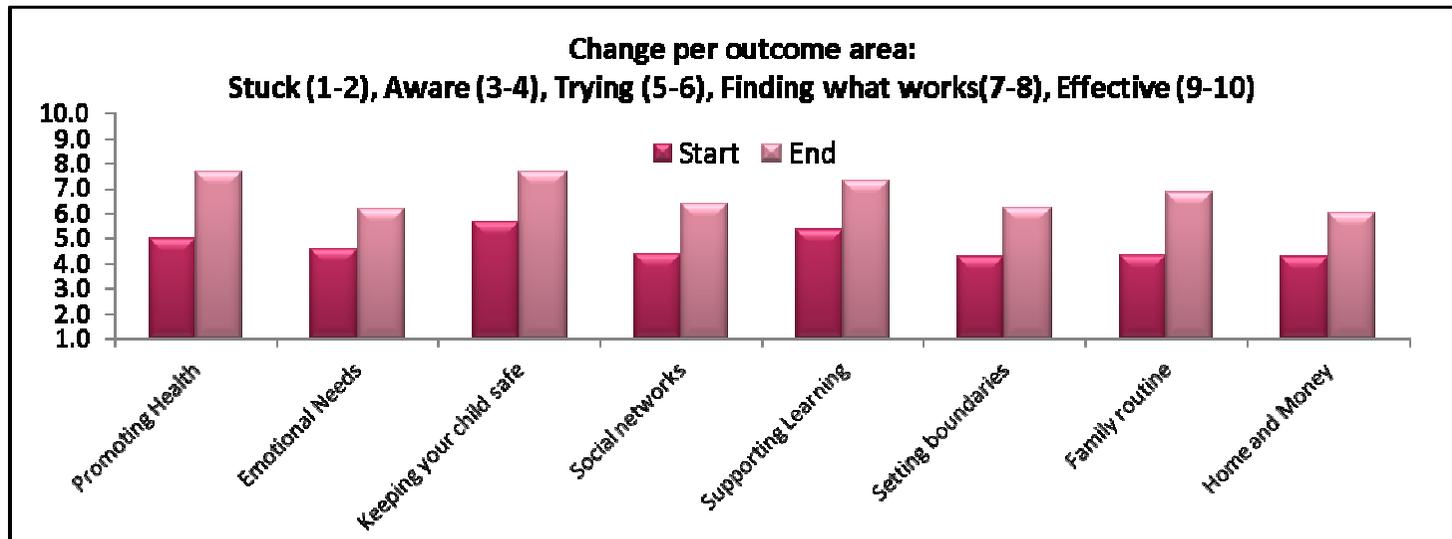
Benchmarking

The Family Star can be used to generate data that can be used to evidence progress and benchmark change at both an organisational and service level



Service and Organisational Level Insights

The Family Star can be used to provide insights into the extent and nature of change, as well as highlighting areas for further investigation



Evidence of Impact

Service Users

The Family Star helped service users (including those with mental health needs) understand the changes they needed to make to improve outcomes for their children:

“I was a 2 to 3 stuck with getting out of the house. It wasn't a problem for me, as I don't mind being in the house all the time, but it made me realise it was a problem for [name of son]. So then I went up to a 3 or 4, because I was aware of it, and hopefully I will get higher and higher. It made me feel I wasn't so alone and I did have people helping me and it's helped me make improvements – now I'm leaving the house more.” (Service User)

“It helps you highlight why you are having a backlash and gets you to think about it. Maybe one thing is affected by another thing, and unless you think in those terms you're lost.” (Service User)

Evidence of Impact cont.

Managers

Managers found the Family Star effective as a performance management tool and a more reflective approach to delivery:

“As a manager, I have a better understanding of what the service is doing and what it's there for.” (Manager)

“Before we went in and delivered a service. Now service users and practitioners come together to think what's needed. We never allowed that to happen before.” (Manager)

Practitioners

It helps practitioners monitor progress, ensure accountability and helps them challenge families:

“It's much more structured now than before ... Now I'm going for a reason and they know why I'm coming ... It also makes me feel accountable, [it] makes sure I'm doing what I'm meant to be doing and if have to escalate up, it provides evidence of what I've done.” (Worker)

“With my debts, I said higher, and she said: ‘Are you sure? I'm seeing ten bills with red writing on them and you're hiding these bills in the drawer, you're lower than what you think’. They challenge you, and when they pull it [Family Star] out, you acknowledge that: ‘Yes, I am in a bit of trouble’.” (Service User)

Implementation

- Effective use of the Family Star requires commitment and the development of key skills (e.g. having difficult conversations) at an organisational, service and individual level
- At the service level staff need to be engaged in data analysis and the Star needs to be embedded through regular training, peer review and supervision
- Quality assurance processes play an important role in effective implementation (training, data reviews and audits)
- The need to be aware of differences in what families, referrers and workers want the support to focus on
- Ensure that the focus on the child is not lost

Conclusions

The research highlighted:

- The Family Star provides a clear, structured and measurable framework for delivering effective family support
- The importance of taking a whole organisational approach to implementation and ensuring effective quality assurance mechanisms. Due to the unique characteristics of the Family Star, local authorities should consider using the Star to benchmark their services to identify and support improvement and enable the engagement of families, staff and managers
- Family Action's commitment to working in partnership with service users and the value of co-production. The Family Star gives service users ownership of the change process, and also helps them develop the skills and resilience to manage the issues they face
- Family Star data could be strengthened further by linking it (where appropriate) to more objective, quantifiable outcome indicators and other outcome indicators that the Star might not focus on directly, such as domestic violence and the outcomes of the Troubled Families Programme such as anti-social behaviour and school exclusions