The need for an outcomes measurement system

St Mungo’s has long had systems that measure core client outcomes, such as planned move-on. The need arose for an outcomes measurement system to reflect all the other changes that clients make - the gradual increases in confidence, improved sociable behaviour, reduced self harm etc., which are all part of the journey from street life to finding stability and lasting homes.

St Mungo’s works with some of the most vulnerable people in society - 47% of our clients have four or more critical needs - so being able to describe their needs, and subsequent changes in them, is essential to understanding which services are most effective, and which are most needed.

We wanted a system that would describe our progress and achievements in a way that would be meaningful to clients, staff and funders, such as Supporting People and Local Authorities. We also wanted a system that would put the client at its centre, one which would be consistent throughout the organisation and show that we provide value for money, whilst still reflecting our core values.

Although there are many models of outcome measurement systems, St Mungo’s identified a gap for a workable system in the social housing sector. In response, we decided to develop and pilot the Star system throughout the organisation.

This briefing describes the Star system, the pilot results and how we plan to use them to improve the measurements system.
Developing the system

The St Mungo’s Star has been developed by acknowledged experts in the field in close consultation with St Mungo’s staff, and using resident feedback.

We wanted a tool that would reflect the aims of each service as well as St Mungo’s as a whole. Our advisors, Triangle Consulting, led a series of consultation meetings involving staff from each of St Mungo’s services. From this, they identified seven areas that reflect a client’s progress through the organisation. The tool was recently piloted in four projects for three months.

Conclusions from the pilot, focusing on one hostel

Endsleigh Gardens is a first-stage generalist hostel that was newly open at the time of the pilot. Thirty-three residents were assessed during registration for a variety of factors affecting their housing and personal skills e.g., personal responsibility, use of time, substance misuse, responsibility for health, independent living skills and social networks.

They were then scored on these aspects again some months later in order to see how they had developed.

The results demonstrated that 86% of residents showed improvement over the course of the three months. Substance misuse improved most (by 19%), clients became aware of the triggers that cause them to misuse alcohol or drugs. They became motivated to change and substantially reduce their use and actively avoid trigger situations.

There was less of a change in independent living skills and in developing social networks, reflecting partly the facilities then available at the hostel and the time it takes for people to make long-term social changes. The positive results reflect the hard work that goes into moving someone off the streets for good, and they give everyone immediate goals to work towards.

How will results from the system be used?

• Individual clients will be able to see their own growth and progress
• Key workers will see progress with their clients
• Project managers will be able to see where progress is made, and where changes are needed
• Managers will be able to make comparisons across the group and focus on what works
• Directors will be able to review progress throughout the organisation and make comparisons internally and externally
• Funders will have reports for their areas of specific interest, as well as an overall picture

**“It is a really quick and useful way to identify how our clients have progressed - I was really impressed and am keen to start implementing it.”**

Emma Humphrey, Manager of Endell Street hostel

How does it work?

When each new client takes up our services, a staff member assesses him/her for a series of “soft” outcomes, using a scale of one to 10. This shows where each client is starting from and it identifies any areas of special needs. The client is then assessed at regular intervals. Improvements in certain areas, such as social networks and personal responsibility, become documented as successful outcomes. It is apparent that as improvements are made in one area, they impact on all the rest – change one thing and others change too, for better or worse.

Scales for meaningful use of time/employability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No motivation to any form of meaningful activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Able to focus for brief periods of time, but no sustained focus or motivation. Unreliable</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Does want to change how they spend their time but feel helpless or powerless to do so. May accept but then miss appointments and/or make excuses. Unreliable</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Begins to request some help and may attend appointments or go along with the help offered or provided. Don’t know what they want. Passive. May have low personal hygiene</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Want to change their situation. Start to have an idea of where they might want to head. May have a job but be unhappy or limited by it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Clearer sense of what they would like to do and some of the steps needed to get there. Participate actively. More reliable in attending appointments. Able to set and meet short-term goals. Needs a lot of support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Active in getting closer to where they want to be. Aware of how they are seen by others. May dress appropriately for interviews, write CV, committed to voluntary work, training, placement, job search or other steps along the way to their longer-term goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Noticeable change in behaviour. Can evaluate different options and make choices. Actively engaged in some meaningful activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>More comfortable with new lifestyle or ways of being. May run into occasional difficulties or need some low-level support</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Feel that in the right situation/place for the foreseeable future - whether paid work, voluntary work (if benefit entitlements allow long term) or in education or training. Confident in atmosphere</td>
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Key points drawn from the pilot scheme

- The Star system was written more for staff than clients. We are considering developing it further so that clients are clearer about the assessment process.
- Using the Star to its full potential as a keyworking and planning tool requires skills; so there is a need for staff training and support.
- Clients will be measured at different times, depending on how much support they need.
- Some wording needs to be clarified and improved.

What happens now?

- St Mungo’s is leading the social housing sector in outcomes measurement, developing a system that reflects both client needs and achievements, and its staff’s work.
- Several other major agencies are exploring the use of similar tools, creating the potential for benchmarking.
- As part of the strategy to implement the Star system across the organisation, St Mungo’s will integrate it into Joint Action and Care Planning with clients.
- St Mungo’s will record the Stars on its in-house database, so that managers at all levels can access the reports they need. Alongside this they are running an intensive research project to track hostel residents so that the tool can be tested against existing systems (e.g. risk assessment and progress notes) and so more can be learned about people’s paths through hostels.

For further information, or a full copy of the report, please contact Maxine Jordan on 020 8600 3002 or via email: maxine@mungos.org

St Mungo’s would like to thank the London Housing Foundation, who funded the development of the Outcomes Measurement Star.

St Mungo’s – Leading London’s services for people who are homeless and vulnerable

We are best known for our outreach work and hostels for rough sleepers. But hostels are just a handful of over 60 housing projects we run, and we do much more than simply provide shelter!

Each night over 1000 people sleep in safety under a St Mungo’s roof in our care homes & specialist hostels, supported housing or our short-stay hostels. Our 60 specialist workers meet a variety of needs, from help with mental health problems to drug abuse to support in setting up in a new home. We run two day centres, and also provide London’s largest directly delivered activity, training and employment programme - giving 2000 homeless people a year a chance to improve their lives.

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