

East Renfrewshire Council

Title

The Family Wellbeing Scale: the development of a scale to measure Family Wellbeing (Phase 1)

Eddie McGee East Renfrewshire Psychological Service

What did we ask? (Research Questions)

Can a valid, reliable and robust scale be developed to measure wellbeing in families in Scotland?

What is the evidence base?

Research on Families

The evidence base for developing a Family Wellbeing Scale is well established and extensive. Researchers have identified the characteristics of strong families, which have resulted in a range of different assessment models of the family being developed, such as The *Family Circumplex Model*, (Olson, McCubbin, et al. 1989; Olson, Russell & Sprenkle 1989). Other models of family functioning also focused on these core concepts of cohesion and adaptability, and the identification of the qualities of strong family units (Trivette, Dunst, Deal & Propst, 1990).

The Family Strengths Model proposes six clusters of qualities that describe strong families (Stinnett and DeFrain 1985; DeFrain 1999): commitment; appreciation and affection; positive communication; time together; spiritual wellbeing; and the ability to cope with stress and crisis. Stinnett and DeFrain went on to create the *American Family Strengths Inventory (2008)*, which has been validated via research with 21000 families in the USA and 26 other countries around the world since 1974 (DeFrain, 2002).

Research on Scales

Research has led to a variety of scales being developed to assess families, such as the *Family Assessment Measure (FAM)* (Skinner, Steinhauer & Santa Barbara, 1995), the *Family Assessment Device (FAD)*, (Epstein, Baldwin & Bishop, 1983 and the *Family Functioning Style Scale* (Trivette, Dunst, Deal & Propst, 1990). The

East Renfrewshire Council

Stirling Children's Well-being Scale (SCWBS) (2015) was developed by Stirling Council Educational Psychology Service (UK) as a holistic, positively worded measure of emotional and psychological well-being in children aged eight to 15 years.

Developing a Family Well-being Scale

The development of a Family Well-being Scale focused on adapting the American Family Strengths Inventory (2008), which was based on the proposition that strong families are critical to the development of strong communities, and strong communities promote and nurture strong families (DeFrain & Asay, 2007). Consequently, it aligns with the aim of closing the attainment gap in families, which fall into categories of poverty as identified by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). The proposed scale will also draw on aspects of the Stirling Children's Well-being Scale (Liddle and Carter, 2015) to ensure well-being and a Scottish perspective is recognised.

What did we do?

PHASE 1

The objective of Phase one was to construct the scale, assess its internal reliability and make any necessary adjustments.

Research

The research focused on *Strong Families* and identified the American Family Strengths Inventory (DeFrain & Stinnet, 2008). Correspondence with Emeritus Professors, John DeFrain, University of Nebraska and Nick Stinnet, University of Alabama, resulted in permission to adapt the inventory into a scale. Professor DeFrain confirmed that the inventory had not been validated on a population in Scotland.

Adaptation of the American Family Strengths Inventory (AFSI)

The AFSI was adapted because of its strong evidence base. Also, developing a scale from first principles is an extremely difficult task; hence, adaptation of an existing one was the next best option (Robson, 2002; Brace, Kemp & Snelgar, 2009). The AFSI was cross referenced with the National Practice Model wellbeing indicators (Scottish Government, 2008), Family Wellbeing Domains (Natcen, 2012) and OECD Quality of Life well-being framework (2013) to consolidate the link

East Renfrewshire Council

between the concepts of family strengths and family wellbeing. The format of the Family Wellbeing Scale reflected the principles and some of the elements of the Stirling Children's Well-being Scale, for example the same 5 point scale and qualitative descriptions.

Construction of the Family Wellbeing Scale (FWBS)

Construction of the FWBS was based on a summated rating (Likert) scale (Robson, 2002). The mapping exercise resulted in the selection of statements from the AFSI, which reflected wellbeing concepts. Comparison with other scales such as *Connor's Rating Scale* and *Stirling Children's Well-being Scale* influenced its design. The scale was split into two halves: Scale A and Scale B in order to check for reliability and internal consistency (Brace, Kemp & Snelgar, 2009).

Piloting of Family Wellbeing Scale

Scales A and B were piloted with psychologists from Services across Scotland: Glasgow, Edinburgh, East Renfrewshire, North Ayrshire, Dundee, South Lanarkshire, Argyle and Bute, Perth & Kinross, Fife, Moray, Midlothian and Angus.

Growing Up in Scotland project

Preliminary discussion with Paul Bradshaw, Group Head at ScotCen Social Research and Project Director of the Growing Up in Scotland study, took place to explore potential interest in use of the scale when completed. The scale might be relevant for future data collection, possibly in 2018.

What have we found so far?

Pilot results of Scale A and Scale B have been entered on a database for statistical analysis. Initial reaction to the scales by respondents has been favourable with suggestions regarding changes to the wording of a few statements. The statements appear to measure traits associated with family well-being and the length of time taken to complete the scales was not reported as being onerous.

East Renfrewshire Council

What do we plan to do next?

Expansion of piloting

The Scales will be piloted in other educational establishments in East Renfrewshire.

Statistical analysis

47 questionnaires (Scale A and Scale B) have been completed and will be analysed using SPSS to assess reliability and validity and other relevant aspects of the data.

Refinement of the scale

The ultimate aim will be to refine the scale by amending or deleting statements and then merge both scales into a single scale.

Development of Norms and scoring system

A long term aim might be the development of normed data and a scoring system.

Growing Up in Scotland project

Possibly follow up and explore interest in use of the scale by this project.

References

Brace, N., Kemp, R. & Snelgar R. (2009). SPSS for Psychologists (4th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan

Conners, C. (2009). Conners (3rd ed.). Multi-Health Systems Inc.

DeFrain, J. (2002). Creating a Strong Family: American Family Strengths Inventory, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension

DeFrain, J., & Stinnett, N. (2008). American Family Strengths Inventory: A teaching tool for generating discussion on the qualities that make a family strong, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension

DeFrain, J., & Stinnett, N. (2002). Family strengths. In J.J. Ponzetti et al. (Eds.), International encyclopedia of marriage and family (2nd Ed.). New York: Macmillan Reference Group.

Defrain, J. (1999). "Strong families around the world." Family Matters 53 (winter):8-13.

DeFrain, J., & Asay, S.M. (2007). Strong Families Around the World: An Introduction to the Family Strengths Perspective (ed: John DeFrain, and Sylvia M. Asay) The Haworth Press, Inc., pp. 1-10.

Liddle, I, & Carter, G. F.A. (2015). Emotional and psychological wellbeing in children: the development and validation of the Stirling Children's Well-being Scale, Educational Psychology in Practice, 31:2, 174-185, DOI: 10.1080/02667363.2015.1008409

East Renfrewshire Council

OECD (2013). How's Life? 2013 Measuring Well-being. OECD 2013

Olson, D.H., McCubbin, H.I., Barnes, H., Larsen, A., Muxen, M. & Wilson, M. (1989). (Second Edition). Families: what makes them work. Los Angeles: SAGE Publishing.

Olson, D.H., Russell, C.S. & Sprenkle, D.H. (1989). Circumplex Model: Systemic assessment and treatment of families. New York: Haworth Press.

Robson, C. (2002) Real World Research 2nd Edition. Blackwell Publishing
Scottish Government (2008). A guide to Getting it right for every child. Scottish Government

Skinner, H., Steinhauer, P. & Sitarenios, G. (2000). Family Assessment Measure (FAM) and Process Model of Family Functioning, Journal of Family Therapy (2000) 22: 190–210

Stinnett, N., & DeFrain, J. (1985). Secrets of strong families. Boston: Little, Brown

Trivette, C.; Dunst, C.J.; Deal, A.G. and Propst, S. (1990). Assessing Family Strengths and Family Functioning Style *in* Topics in Early Childhood Special Education 10(1):16-35 · April 1990 DOI: 10.1177/027112149001000103

Yaxley, V., Gill, V. and McManus, S. (2012) NatCen Social Research Family wellbeing: measuring what matters. NatCen Social Research

For further information and materials

Eddie McGee at eddie.mcgee@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk