MyPower App

By Coco Operative, a Community Interest Company

MyPower is an app developed by Coco Operative **to enhance communication and collaboration between children's social workers, families, and multi-agency professionals**. Designed with input from end-users and grounded in co-production principles, MyPower addresses key challenges within children's social care, including difficulties in engaging families in case planning and the administrative burden faced by social workers. The app was evaluated through focus groups and interviews conducted by researchers at the University of Manchester, funded by the UKRI Participatory Research Fund.

Children's social care in the UK faces increasing pressures, including rising referrals, limited preventative services, and a focus on risk management over family strengths. Social workers often struggle to balance administrative tasks with meaningful time spent with families, with estimates suggesting only 20% of their time is spent on direct family engagement. MyPower aims to address these issues by streamlining case planning and communication, promoting family ownership of plans, and reducing time spent on bureaucratic, administrative tasks.

Key features include:

- **Collaborative case planning**: Families can access, update, and track progress on their plans through the app, fostering ownership and motivation.
- **Goal-setting tools**: Interactive prompts encourage collaboration between families and social workers, enabling personalised and achievable plans.
- **Streamlined updates**: Families and professionals can directly update plans within the app, reducing the need for social workers to manually gather and record information.
- **Engaging design**: The app uses vibrant colors and interactive graphics to make it intuitive and appealing for families and children.

The University of Manchester's evaluation found several key insights:

- **Improved accessibility**: MyPower offers families a central, private hub to access plans and updates at their convenience. However, concerns were raised about the reliance on text-based communication, with participants suggesting the inclusion of voice notes and visual tools to enhance usability.
- **Enhanced collaboration**: Social workers and parents saw potential for the app to improve accountability and communication. Families appreciated the transparency and ability to track progress, while practitioners highlighted the importance of integrating the app into relationship-building activities.
- **Time burden and usability**: While practitioners were concerned about the potential duplication of work if the app didn't integrate with existing systems, they recognised the app's potential to save time if appropriately streamlined. Simplicity and minimal text on the interface were identified as critical factors for usability.
- **Safety considerations**: Participants emphasised the need for clear guidelines on data security and managing sensitive family dynamics. Features such as restricted access for certain users and automated risk flags were recommended.

MyPower's design encourages intrinsic motivation by allowing families to visualise progress and take ownership of their goals. This aligns with evidence that personal goal-setting fosters competence and autonomy. Additionally, the app's automation features, such as reminders and notifications, can alleviate the burden on social workers, enabling them to focus more on direct family support.

The evaluation highlighted key areas for further development:

- **System integration**: Ensuring seamless compatibility with existing case management systems to avoid duplication of tasks.
- **Safety protocols**: Conducting risk assessments and incorporating safety features, such as managed access and content monitoring.
- **Implementation support**: Providing technical assistance through app champions and tailored training for practitioners and families.

MyPower demonstrates significant potential to transform children's social care by fostering collaboration, enhancing communication, and reducing administrative burdens. While further refinement and integration with existing systems are needed, the app represents a promising step toward more efficient and family-centred social work practices.

See more: MyPower accessibility evaluation study