

Q1 ARE YOU IN AGREEMENT WITH THE ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES AND SERVICE MODEL COMPONENTS THAT UNDERPIN FDAC?

“The [FDAC] model of really intensive support for parents to think about themselves and why they behave as they do is really important. For many parents it is the first experience of someone getting them to think about themselves in this way.”

[Children’s Services service manager]

“It’s very important for parents to have the same judge. They are good at recalling all the details. That helps cut down the animosity that is created by constantly revisiting past events in court. And messages to parents about their having to ‘shape up’ come more easily if they are from the same judge.”

[family lawyer]

“I have never heard parents speak so openly in court as they do in FDAC. I think it’s really healthy. Their confidence develops. They move from rigidity to feeling more relaxed and you see them build a relationship with the judge.”

[social worker]

“Parents say they don’t feel pushed around, patronised and intimidated like they do in ordinary care proceedings.”

[social worker]

“It’s crucial to prioritise attending the FDAC Intervention Planning Meeting because that’s where you have your say.”

[children’s guardian]

“She [the parent mentor] was brilliant. Please keep trying to get this part of the service in place.”

[family lawyer]

The independent evaluation concluded that the improved outcomes in FDAC cases as opposed to comparison cases, in relation to cessation of substance misuse and reunification of children with parents, was clearly linked to the experience of being in FDAC.

There are some essential elements in the FDAC service model which we describe as critical success factors. The table below sets these out and lists alongside them the activity needed to achieve them.

The critical success factors are underpinned by the principles of FDAC that were developed for the original service specification for the London FDAC.

Diagrams of the FDAC model are at the back of this leaflet.

The principles underpinning FDAC

- ▶ FDAC uses a problem-solving court approach to care proceedings, where the court plays a proactive role in addressing parental problems, assisted by a specialist, multi-disciplinary team.
- ▶ FDAC ensures that parents receive effective, timely and co-ordinated services for their substance misuse and related problems whilst maintaining a clear focus on the welfare of the child.
- ▶ The approach to addressing parental substance misuse is positive and proactive, with a presumption that parents can change and should be encouraged to do so. There is a presumption that parents acknowledge that they have a problem and are prepared to address it.
- ▶ The same judge reviews the parents' progress throughout their engagement with services and the court. The judge plays an important role in conveying to parents that people believe in their ability to change and in motivating parents to maintain their progress throughout the proceedings.
- ▶ The model has a clear focus on the impact on the child of their parents' substance misuse. It is expected that parents will aim for abstinence from street drugs and alcohol. The treatment and support plan for parents is grounded in what we know from research about effective interventions.
- ▶ Parents receive support and encouragement as they address their substance misuse and other problems, with the team and judges being honest with parents about the problems they need to address and how, and with strong support and information available for wider family members, such as through Family Group Conferences and direct work with father figures and other adults close to the children.
- ▶ Poor prognosis does not necessarily mean that a case should not be referred to FDAC. In cases where the specialist team considers that prognosis for change is poor, the timescale for showing engagement and commitment to the programme will be monitored closely, and timely parallel planning of alternative options for the child's future placement will be particularly important.

The essential service components (or Critical Success Factors) of FDAC

	Essential service components (Critical Success Factors)	What is needed to achieve this (the key issues to consider from an early stage)
1	Judicial continuity (the same judge deals with the case throughout)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Court capacity (scheduling) • Pool of judges committed to this approach • Training for judges: about the FDAC problem-solving approach and other relevant techniques, including Motivational Interviewing
2	Specialist, independent, multi-disciplinary team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based in neutral location • Includes child and family social workers, substance misuse workers, clinical nurse specialist, adult and child psychiatrists, parent mentors and parent mentor co-ordinator • Works independently of the LA, with the LA as commissioner not service provider • Robust clinical governance and supervision, to ensure excellence in practice, strong safeguarding principles, and ability to cope with demanding work • Trained in relevant techniques: Motivational Interviewing, relapse prevention, drug testing, parenting risk assessment, mental health and trauma screening
3	Problem-solving court approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular court reviews for parents, without lawyers present • Specialist team attend court and work flexibly with the judge

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular communication between specialist team and FDAC judges
4	Support to parents from parent mentors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable volunteers available, to be mentors • Arrangements in place for training, co-ordination and supervision
5	Timely decision making (early assessment, plan of action, and intervention)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely referral of case by LA • Team initial assessment and plan of action within 10 days • Immediate connection of parent with treatment and other services • Assessment combined with direct work and co-ordination of other services by team key worker • Account taken of timescales for the child • Cases concluded within 26 weeks unless child is returning home, in which case extension to the timetable applied for
6	Support and encouragement for parents, with transparency about problems and a clear focus on the welfare of the child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong team ethos of working alongside parents, building on glimmers of hope, and providing both assessment and direct work • Sufficient number of guardians, knowledgeable about FDAC • Clear timescales, linked to crossroads in child development • Regular court reviews
7	Evidence-informed approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team and court use evidence-informed approaches to engagement with parents

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective practice and robust clinical supervision
8	Good communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Particular attention to developing an ongoing relationship between the specialist team and adult services • Awareness-raising information and training for social workers, lawyers, guardians and adult services, prior to implementation • Regular meetings (termly or quarterly) to allow judges, lawyers, social workers and guardians to give feedback, raise issues of concern, and be updated about progress and developments
9	Commitment from the start to deliver in partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Team around the child’ approach to delivery of the parent’s intervention plan • The intervention team co-ordinate the work of other treatment and support agencies and fill in any gaps in services that could delay overall time scales • Clear funding and governance arrangements for the specialist team • Strategic management group, to provide overall steer and scrutiny, including ensuring that FDAC meets its objectives and operates in line with national policy and legal frameworks • Operational management group, to engage local services and identify and resolve problems. This is a sub-group of the strategic management group, with members from operational staff only.

10	Commitment to evaluation and outcome monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarity about problems to be addressed, and how they will be tackled• Continuous attention to progress being made, with a mechanism for taking account of feedback from families and professionals• Mechanism for monitoring key outcome variables for children and parents on case-by-case basis, in order to evaluate FDAC performance at both individual and aggregate level
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