

Q3 WHAT GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES MIGHT BE HELPFUL, TO STEER THE THINKING AND SUPPORT SET UP?

Most new areas have moved quite quickly to establish a steering group, followed at a later date by an operational group.

Steering Group (SG)

Having a Steering Group is a good way of marking your intention to explore the FDAC option seriously and an essential part of successfully embedding FDAC in your area. The initial, informal purpose can be to provide a structure for the exploratory work: a place and time to meet, and a chair who will liaise with interested people, set agendas for discussion and circulate and follow up agreed actions.

Further down the line in your planning, the purpose of the SG will be to provide:

- general oversight of the service and of its strategic direction
- the development of the service specification
- the commissioning and appointment of the specialist team and of the staff who will manage the service, and
- agreement about the judicial and administrative locations where the specialist court and team will be based.

Members of the SG will be drawn from the key agencies integral to the success of FDAC. They are likely to include:

- senior local authority managers (social care and legal)
- judges, court staff (administrators and legal advisers) and Cafcass
- health, public health and substance misuse commissioners, possibly a representative from the local CCG/s, and
- the manager of the specialist team (if an existing team will be used for FDAC).

Once the FDAC is up and running the role of the SG will be to ensure adequate monitoring of activity against baseline data, consider the impact of the service on family members and professional practice, and have responsibility for determining and ensuring long-term viability of successful aspects of the service.

The Group might need to meet at least once a month in the early planning stages, moving to every 2 months once the detailed project planning is underway, and then quarterly once the service opens.

Operational Group (OG)

This will be a sub-group of the Steering Group, with membership drawn from operational staff in the partner agencies – social work managers, lawyers and court staff, Cafcass, adult treatment services, and other relevant service providers.

Its main role will be the early identification and problem solving of practical difficulties encountered by the new service, and the development of processes for the smooth running of a multi-disciplinary service with a broad range of partners.

It is likely to meet monthly during the set-up stage and then every 6 to 8 weeks once the service opens. Regular reporting to the Steering Group will provide the SG with the information it needs to give the project strategic direction.

Project Manager

Once you have key players on board and a shared intention to progress towards setting up an FDAC, having a project manager in place to carry out or coordinate the tasks set out in sections 4 and 5 below can be helpful. This will be a time-limited post and can be part time. The project manager can help ensure that actions from Steering Group meetings are followed through. They can also speed up the process of establishing whether there is a need for FDAC, developing the business case for investing in FDAC, and identifying ways of commissioning the service.