

## **Q4 SCOPING DEMAND – ARE YOU CLEAR ABOUT THE SIZE OF THE PROBLEM YOU WANT FDAC TO ADDRESS?**

Your scoping of suitable cases for FDAC will indicate how many cases are likely to be referred to FDAC during a year.

Scoping means collating information on the number of care proceedings issued in the most recent 12-month period that had parental substance misuse as a key feature. You will probably need to combine case information from the children's services legal department and social work teams with that held by your local court administrators. In Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire, for example, an audit of cases by the local court proved particularly helpful in pinpointing both the number of potential FDAC cases and their geographical distribution, the latter being invaluable for helping determine where to locate the FDAC office and court hearing centre.

The evaluation of the London FDAC established that many cases also include parental mental health and domestic abuse issues. This is why scoping of case numbers should include those cases where substance misuse is part of a range of overlapping and complex problem.

Given the renewed emphasis on pre-proceedings work with families, it will be useful to establish how many of cases in the PLO pre-proceedings phase would be suitable for FDAC, in the event of the case being escalated to court.

Disseminating information about your proposal for a local FDAC service is another likely way of identifying possible cases. Interested professionals (social workers, CP chairs, local authority and family lawyers and IROs) can be invited to alert you to cases where parental substance misuse is causing or likely to cause significant harm to the child or children. IROs are relevant here because children of parents with substance misusing difficulties might be in section 20 accommodation.

Another way of approaching this task is to develop a profile of all the cases where - from the child's perspective - you should be seriously considering care proceedings, and then identify which of those cases involve parental substance misuse as a factor contributing to your concerns.

Whilst carrying out this exercise, it will be helpful to note what happened with the cases identified: the final orders made, how long the case took, whether the children were looked after during the course of the proceedings, and what was spent on expert assessments obtained pre proceedings and/or during proceedings.

So, the information you need is:

- the number of care proceedings issued last year
- at what rate per month or week
- the proportion involving parental substance misuse
- from which local areas/post codes
- the number of cases in PLO pre-proceedings with parental substance misuse, and
- some information on case outcomes and costs.