



FDAC is tough but fair towards all the families it supervises. Parents are given a chance to work hard and overcome their drug and alcohol problems in order to show that they're 'good enough parents' for their children. This is the best possible justice for vulnerable families often living in the hardest circumstances.

**Nicolas Crichton**  
Judge



It's encouraging that problem-solving in the Family Courts not only delivers better justice, an important achievement in itself, but that it also offers a cost-effective way to improve the lives of vulnerable children and families. Applying a similar judge-led specialist approach in our Criminal Courts would take this development to the next important step. Problem-solving Courts are innovative, effective and fit the system here in the UK.

**Phil Bowen**  
Director, Centre for Justice Innovation



Imagine a child about to be born to a mother misusing substances. The mother could have treatment costing about 12K, with a 40% chance of the child then able to stay with her mother. If you were being child centred you would say 'yes' to that, because it would improve the likelihood of the child staying in her family.

**Assistant Director**  
Children's services



## FDAC Facts

### ► FDAC is child-focussed

FDAC focuses on helping parents so that their children have the best possible chance of staying within their families. A core part of the FDAC intervention is helping parents understand the impact of their behaviour on their child(ren)'s lives.

All FDACs decision making is guided by the needs of the child(ren). The intervention by the FDAC team includes child and parent observations and meetings with the child(ren)'s network.

### ► FDAC is time-efficient

A significant proportion of FDAC cases complete within a comparable timescale to ordinary care proceedings.

The intensive FDAC review process can result in shorter care proceedings where there is clear evidence early in proceedings that parents(s) are unable to safely care for their child(ren). FDACs transparent 'trial for change' process results in fewer contested hearings than ordinary care proceedings.

An extension to proceedings can be made when there is evidence of positive progress that needs further testing or where FDAC has concerns about other parties' recommendations for reunification prematurely.

### ► FDAC achieves better, lasting outcomes

Despite improvements in pre-proceedings practices there will always be the need for Court intervention to resolve complex cases. Qualitative evidence indicates that parents, Judges, lawyers and social workers all consider that the problem solving approach of FDAC is a better model for care proceedings.

In the last year FDAC has been piloting a pre-proceedings model. There have been several examples so far of families' poor engagement in the pre-proceedings process but engagement improves when their case is moved into in-court proceedings. Evidence is showing that the authority of the Court and the FDAC problem-solving approach has a greater impact on parent's motivation to change and mandates the professional network to problem solve around the family more effectively.

### ► FDAC is cost-effective

An FDAC specialist multidisciplinary team does not cost more than other specialist multidisciplinary teams. The FDAC team saves money for the local authority by minimising the need for costly expert assessments and by providing treatment as well as assessment.

## The National Unit

The National Unit is a partnership of five organisations working to extend the FDAC service across England and Wales and to change the way children and families experience care proceedings.

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Visit [www.fdac.org.uk](http://www.fdac.org.uk) to find out more

Visit [www.justiceinnovation.org](http://www.justiceinnovation.org) to read the Centre for Justice Innovation's report

**BETTER  
OUTCOMES  
FOR CHILDREN  
AND PARENTS**

**DELIVERING  
BETTER JUSTICE**

**PROVIDING  
VALUE FOR  
MONEY**



## Family Drug & Alcohol Court

A Problem-solving Court approach to care proceedings.  
Transforming life chances for families and communities.

NATIONAL UNIT  
**FDAC**   
The problem-solving court

# Family Drug & Alcohol Court (FDAC)

It offers an alternative, and more successful, form of care proceedings for children put at risk of significant harm by parental substance misuse and other entrenched difficulties. It uses a problem-solving approach, with the Court – assisted by a specialist, multi-disciplinary team – using its authority to provide a comprehensive response to the problems that have led to care proceedings. FDAC aims to give parents the motivation and support to overcome their problems and parent their children safely.

## How does FDAC deliver better results than ordinary proceedings?

### 1 The approach

FDAC provides a problem-solving therapeutic approach that aims to address parents' substance misuse and related problems as well as to adjudicate.

Its key features are judicial continuity, fortnightly judge-led review hearings without lawyers and an independent specialist multi-disciplinary team that advises the Court and provides intensive treatment and support to parents and closely monitors their progress within the child's and Court's timescales. The non-lawyer review hearings are the court-based forum for the problem-solving component of FDAC.

*"This Court is different. We don't do conflict. We minimise hostility. This is about solving problems."*

**FDAC Judge to a parent**

### 2 The model

FDAC provides regular Court reviews with and without lawyers where parents meet their allocated Judge to discuss their progress, together with the FDAC keyworker and the child's social worker, and where possible, the child's guardian. In this way parents feel they have a voice, and are able to make their views heard.

Parents are positive about these review hearings. They like their informality and regularity and feel they 'stop problems from escalating' and 'keep everybody up to date'. They enable problems to be aired in a 'truthful and honest' way and they boost parents' confidence.

*"It is positive for us to see how we are progressing and have progressed and we like everyone else to see how well we are doing too."*

**Parent**

### 3 The team

The specialist team is an essential part of the problem solving FDAC approach working closely with the Judge. The team is multi-disciplinary, with the skills and expertise to work together with and to coordinate a wide range of services in order to provide an intensive assessment and intervention that is tailored to meet the needs of each parent and the children.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their comments about the specialist team. They describe them in terms such as 'helpful', 'supportive', 'life-changing' and 'fantastic'. Parents like 'being talked to as normal' and 'not being judged straight away'. FDAC 'listens' and 'are always explaining things'.

*"The intensity of the relationship FDAC builds with parents is good. Parents see them as a team that really is trying to help them keep their child. FDAC can establish that relationship very quickly."*

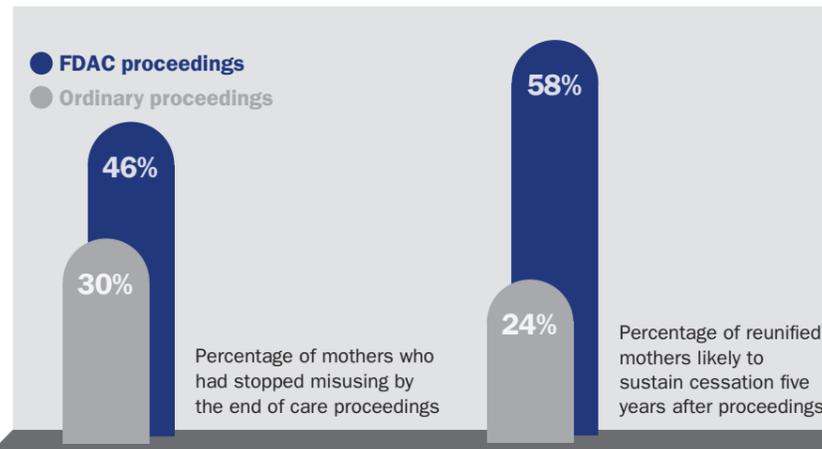
**Social work manager**

Visit [www.fdac.org.uk](http://www.fdac.org.uk) to find out more

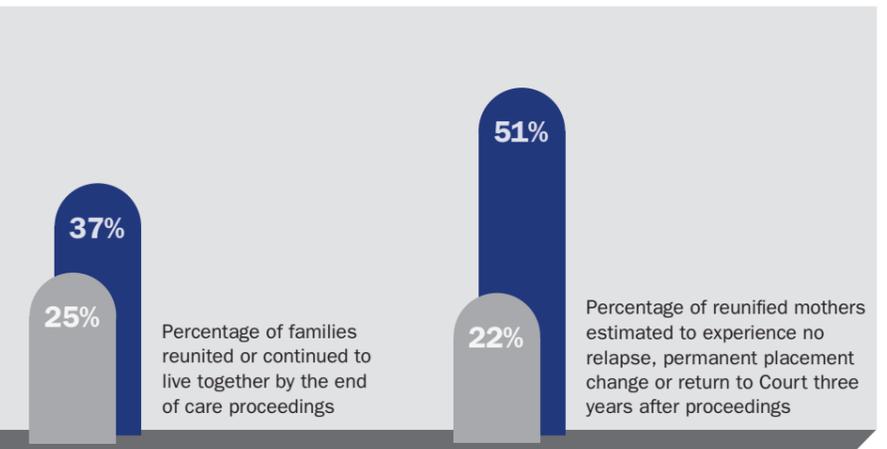
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## Better outcomes for children and parents

### FDAC results in a reduction in substance misuse



### FDAC results in an increase in family reunification



## Delivering better justice

The opportunity for direct discussion with the Judge was described by professionals as boosting parents' confidence and encouraging them to take more responsibility for their behaviour.

Professionals were unanimous in their view that FDAC as a whole (the specialist team and the Court process) supported parents in an intensive way that is markedly different from what happens in ordinary care proceedings.

*"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**

*"I think the process in FDAC, although it is very tough, is actually much kinder than the standard social work process, which is often quite hostile. FDAC is much more supportive. But it is not easier – parents say it is very tough."*

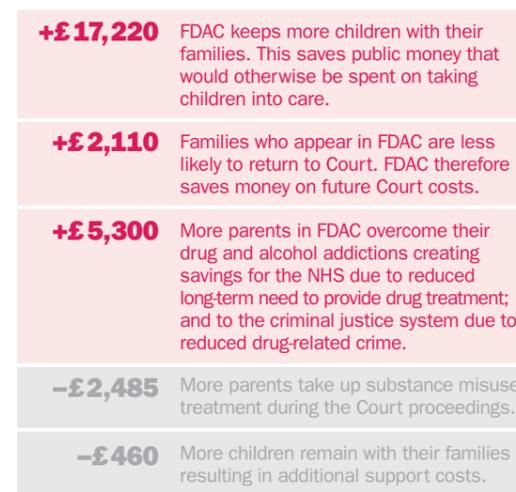
**Lawyer**

## Providing value for money

### Immediate savings



### Longer-term savings on average/case



### Value for money of FDAC

Across the 2014/15 caseload, the London FDAC worked with 46 families at a cost of £560,000 (in respect of specialist staff salaries, office costs etc.) and generated estimated gross savings of £1.29m to public sector bodies over five years.

**FOR EVERY £1 INVESTED IN FDAC**

**£2.30 IS SAVED TO THE PUBLIC PURSE**