

SECTION 2 – STARTER QUESTIONS AND TIPS FOR GETTING GOING

As a potential FDAC site, we recommend contacting the FDAC National Unit at info.FDACnu@tavi-port.nhs.uk (currently from September 2018 – April 2019 operating in a very reduced capacity) or an [FDAC advocate](#) for additional information about the FDAC model. This will include information about the training available, advice on how to problem solve as your service becomes embedded, and ways of tracking and comparing child and family outcomes with those from the evaluated London service.

This leaflet contains information about key issues to discuss with local colleagues in order to help you decide whether, when and how to establish a local FDAC. It draws on:

- tips from supporting the development of new FDACs in thirteen sites
- the experience of the London FDAC specialist team, court and local authorities since 2008
- the frequently-asked questions from existing sites
- regional meetings and other direct contact with interested local authorities and courts, and the five-year evaluation of FDAC (2014), funded by the Nuffield Foundation and the five-year follow-up study of the FDAC roll-out (2016)^v.

The leaflet explores the main starter questions from around the country, which are about:

1. The critical success factors and FDAC Service Standards
2. Who to involve from the start, to give you the best chance of a good start
3. The governance structures that can be helpful
4. Scoping demand - understanding the size of the problem you want to address
5. Mapping provision - identifying relevant services and gaps
6. What the courts need to be thinking about
7. Thinking about the specialist team
8. Costs and funding
9. Evaluating the difference you will be making
10. Keeping up to date with developments.

Q1 WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERPIN FDAC AND WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE SERVICE ?

“It isn't just about money it's about fairness, it's about making family proceedings less adversarial, more compassionate, empathetic allowing people to retain their dignity because in that way you have an opportunity to change people's lives. FDAC is demonstrating time and again in the research completed to date that FDAC produces sustainable change in very difficult complex lives.”

[Family Judge]

“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]

“Clients in FDAC feel, not exactly relaxed, but they seem to take on board things a little bit more. They seem to understand a bit better why they are doing something and they are happier with the process, even if it is not something they want.”

[Adult Treatment 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. Parents say they don't feel pushed around, patronised and intimidated like they do in ordinary care proceedings.”

[Social Worker]

“FDACs approach is much more collaborative, transparent, open and honest, and much less antagonistic than ordinary care proceedings. You can sit in a meeting and say what concerns you really have, and FDAC will build their assessment and intervention around that. FDAC has services that parents can access straightaway - which makes the process much more hopeful. Outcomes are better in lots of ways – whether or not the children go home.”

[Children's Guardian]

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

[Family Lawyer]

There are some essential elements in the FDAC service model which we describe as critical success factors. The critical success factors are underpinned by the FDAC Service Standards.

THE FDAC SERVICE STANDARDS

The FDAC National Unit uses the term Service Standards to describe the key elements of an FDAC service that has fidelity to the FDAC model, as evaluated.^{vi} Taken together, they summarise the National Unit's expectations about (a) the provision and ethos of an FDAC service and (b) what a service in development will be working towards. Alongside these there are a set of **FDAC Practice Indicators** against which FDACs can be audited after a year of operation to measure their progress towards a fidelity FDAC. There is an **FDAC audit pack** for established sites which can be accessed on the members' only section of the FDAC website, which FDAC sites and the FDAC advocates can access.

- Standard 1** FDAC is a therapeutic problem-solving family court with specially-trained judges and an independent, multidisciplinary assessment and intervention team.
- Standard 2** There is a clear referral pathway into FDAC.
- Standard 3** Parents are able to make an informed choice about whether to accept the offer of FDAC. All parents who choose to work with FDAC will be offered a 'trial for change'.
- Standard 4** The assessment and intervention work of the FDAC specialist team starts promptly and proceeds without delay and follows the FDAC reporting and court hearing timeline [see *FDAC report timeline below*]
- Standard 5** The plans for children are revised as necessary, whilst remaining mindful of the timescales required by (a) the law and Public Law Outline, and (b) the importance of responding to children's needs in a timely fashion.
- Standard 6** Once the FDAC Intervention Plan has the authority of the court the 'trial for change' begins, and parents and professionals have clear tasks to perform and a timescale to adhere to.
- Standard 7** FDAC work is collaborative – there is regular communication between the judge and the specialist team, and both work closely with parents, the local authority and others involved with the children and their families.
- Standard 8** Parents have the opportunity of support from a parent mentor.

- Standard 9 The procedure in court, including the use of non-lawyer hearings, acknowledges the role of the judge as a catalyst for change, nurturing a positive relationship with parents and giving families a voice in the proceedings.
- Standard 10 The FDAC specialist team uses the National Unit data collection tools to measure the health and well-being of each child and parent during their time in FDAC, with a view to understanding the impact of FDAC on families and highlighting potential areas for improvement and service development. [See Q9 of this manual for more information about the FDAC data tools]

FDAC REPORT TIMELINE

