



WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT FDAC AND WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW?

**CENTRE FOR CHILD AND FAMILY JUSTICE RESEARCH
SUMMER WEBINAR**

26 June, 2024



WHAT IS FDAC?

- A problem-solving approach to care proceedings when parental substance misuse is a main or contributing factor
- The court both adjudicates and provides intensive support during proceedings
- Key features
 - Judge-led regular review hearings with parents, but no lawyers present
 - Multidisciplinary team advises court and supports parents
- Aims to reunite but, if not appropriate, to make timely decision about alternative care
- FDAC started in 2008. Today there are 13 FDAC specialist teams, working in 21 courts and in 37 local authorities.



WHAT WE KNOW

Reunification and parental substance misuse cessation rates are significantly higher at the end of FDAC than non-FDAC care proceedings in English and international studies


Sources:

[After FDAC: outcomes 5 years later](#) (Lancaster University, 2016)

[Child and Parent Outcomes in the London Family Drug and Alcohol Court Five Years On: Building on National Evidence](#)

[Evaluation of Family Drug and Alcohol Courts](#) (National Centre for Social Research, 2023)

International evidence ([meta-analysis](#)), 2019



**WHERE
WE NEED
MORE
EVIDENCE**

We need more evidence of FDAC outcomes compared to cases heard in non-FDAC care proceedings on:

- sustainability of reunification and substance misuse cessation
- domestic abuse
- mental health problems
- parental offending

CONVICTION RATES IN CARE PROCEEDINGS*

ANY TIME PRIOR TO PROCEEDINGS

- **Over two-thirds of mothers and fathers in each sample had a conviction**
- Significantly more FDAC mothers (53%) than comparison mothers (36%) had convictions for **drug offences**
- Significantly fewer FDAC fathers (57%) than comparison fathers (76%) had convictions for **drug offences**

YEAR FOLLOWING PROCEEDINGS

- **25% of the FDAC and around 20% of the comparison mothers and fathers had convictions recorded**
- **No significant differences** between FDAC and comparison mothers in the types of convictions
- Significantly more FDAC fathers (38%) than comparison fathers (0%) had convictions for drug offences

* Findings based on 188 FDAC and 177 comparison parents in 3 FDAC London local authorities and 3 non-FDAC London authorities
Source: [Changing Lifestyles, Keeping Children Safe: an evaluation of the first Family Drug and Alcohol Court \(FDAC\) in care proceedings](#)

INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF FAMILY DRUG AND ALCOHOL COURTS ON PARENTAL OFFENDING: A DATA LINKAGE STUDY

Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council

Under way

ESRC STUDY AIMS

The overarching research question is whether receipt of FDAC is associated with changes in maternal and paternal offending and reoffending



AIM 1

Is parental involvement in FDAC care proceedings associated with changes in offending and reoffending when compared to cases heard in non-FDAC care proceedings?



AIM 2

Do FDAC parents continue to have higher rates of sustainable family reunification, after taking into account offending profiles, than those who went through non-FDAC care proceedings and services



AIM 3

Demonstrate the potential and feasibility of carrying out research that links and analyses sensitive administrative data, particularly data from courts on vulnerable populations, that uses person-level data, to create a new longitudinal cohort study

ESRC STUDY (2)

FDAC

- 545 cases
- 1109 parents
- 928 children

COMPARISON

- 2180 cases
- 4270 parents
- 4102 children

- 7 participating FDAC sites
- 2 year follow up
- Report in 2025

**PARENTAL SUBSTANCE MISUSE, DOMESTIC ABUSE
AND OFFENDING: PERSPECTIVES ON THE INTERFACE
BETWEEN CARE PROCEEDINGS AND THE CRIMINAL
JUSTICE SYSTEM**

Joy Welch Grants Fund, Lancaster University

Under way

STUDY AIMS

A 12-month qualitative study: interviews with judges, parents and focus groups with professionals



AIM 1

Describe and compare how FDAC and non-FDAC care proceedings seek to address parental substance misuse, domestic abuse and parental offending holistically and cross-jurisdictionally, and to identify processes, pathways, opportunities, barriers and gaps



AIM 2

Explore parental and professional perspectives on (a) the contribution of FDAC compared to non-FDAC care proceedings (b) how well the family and criminal court work together to address the needs of families affected by these three issues



AIM 3

Make recommendations regarding the possibilities of strengthening co-ordinated planning across family and criminal justice sectors informed by national (England) evidence and findings from the fieldwork.

WHERE NEXT?

OPPORTUNITIES

- High policy interest in problem-solving courts
- The FDAC approach can be replicated
- Its holistic approach lends itself well to addressing co-occurring problems
- FDAC has a strong theoretical underpinning – potential to explain outcomes
- New cross jurisdictional guidance
- Domestic abuse and interpersonal violence now logged on care applications

CHALLENGES

- Sustainability of FDACs due to resource pressures
- Programme evaluation is complex –
 - random control trials not possible
 - descriptions of service inputs are often missing
- FDAC cases haven't been consistently flagged on Cafcass and MoJ databases – makes it difficult to routinely track them
- Ongoing study at Lancaster with CJI to evaluate the availability of FDAC data and its quality to see if it can be used for future research

ESRC STUDY - RESEARCH TEAM

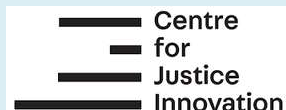
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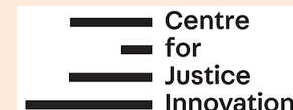
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THANK YOU

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