

## FDAC Quarterly report April to June, 2025

This report presents compiled data shared by the 14 FDACs in England for the period 1 April to 30 June 2025, to offer a live picture of the circumstances facing families in FDAC, the work that is done to support them and the outcomes that have been achieved.

Family Drug and Alcohol Courts (FDACs) were established to support families where parental substance use is a contributing factor for local authorities issuing care proceedings. Over time, the model has developed to also support some families where other issues such as domestic abuse or mental health are the key concerns.

FDAC offers an alternative, trauma-informed route through care proceedings. Families are supported by a multi-disciplinary team which provides an intensive and tailored package of interventions that help parents overcome their presenting issues and gives them the best possible chance of reuniting with their children. The FDAC team complete a dynamic assessment of change; reviewing and evidencing whether parents are able to make the changes required to meet their children's needs within their children's timescales, and if they are able to sustain them. Families are also provided with regular in-court reviews, without the presence of lawyers, where they meet with a dedicated specially trained judge. The court process and their judge become an agent for change; discussing progress openly, motivating families, encouraging families to have a voice and be engaged with the process, and encouraging problem solving.

### Caseload

On 1 April 2025 there were 198 open cases in FDAC, a decrease of 20% on the same point last year but an increase of 102% since 1 January 2021 when we started collecting this data.

Over the quarter, 60 new cases were admitted to FDAC and 57 cases concluded.

The 60 families entering FDAC included 63 mothers or female parents, 27 fathers or male parents and 119 children. The average age of parents was 36 and the average age of children was 6.5 years.



**198** Open cases in FDAC

▼ a decrease of 20% on  
the same point last year

**57** Cases were concluded

### Challenges facing FDAC parents



#### Substance use

Substance use is very common among FDAC parents with 76% of parents having ongoing substance use issues. 8% of parents had issues with alcohol, 8% with drugs, and 78% both. The most commonly used drugs by FDAC parents were cocaine (58%), cannabis (38%) and codeine (9%).

#### Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is widespread amongst FDAC parents. 92% of parents report experiencing domestic abuse, either as victim or perpetrators at some point in their lives and 31% report ongoing abuse at the time they enter FDAC. However, as a self-reported data this is likely a significant underestimate.

## Mental health

Parents in FDAC commonly have undiagnosed mental health needs. Although only 32% had a formal diagnosis, screening suggests that 90% of parents screened show evidence of depression, 90% anxiety and 71% trauma.

## Experiences of care

Parents in FDAC families commonly have experience of the child protection system, either during their own childhoods or as parents. 14% of FDAC parents were in care themselves at some point in their childhoods. 35% of the parents entering FDAC had had previous children removed with those parents having had an average of 2.2 children removed.

## FDAC Outcomes

### Child reunification

Of the 100 children for whom outcomes data was available this quarter, 37% were returned to their parents. A further 33% went to live with another parent or other family member. Notably only 13% of children went into foster care. 4% of children were placed in local authority residential care, which is unusually high and likely reflective of the national shortage of foster care placements.

**37%** of children were returned to live with their parents

**33%** of children were placed with another parent or family members



## Substance use cessation

FDAC has a significant impact on parental substance use. This quarter, 44% of parents completely stopped using substances while a further 10% reduced their alcohol use and 14% reduced their drug use. Men were more likely to stop using substances than women (50% vs 41%).

**44%** of parents completely stopped using substances



## FDACs and legal processes

FDAC seeks to provide parents with a better court experience where they are able to share their experience in an open, supportive space and provided with a clear sense of what changes they would need to make to be able to be safely reunified with their children. This means that, whatever decisions courts take, parents tend to understand and accept the reasoning behind it, reporting the FDAC process to feel fairer and more transparent. As a result, this quarter only 19% of FDAC cases ended with a contested hearing where the parent challenged the court's decision.

FDAC teams work closely and intensively with parents, formulating and tailoring the interventions enabling them to provide an ongoing dynamic assessment of change. They provide regular reports to the court, detailing the progress of the interventions and the assessment with updates and information from the whole system around the family and the children. This consistently reduces the need for external experts to provide assessments. This quarter only 11% of cases required an external expert assessment.

### FDAC News – the value of HOPE in FDAC and the Family Justice System

In June the Centre was delighted to hold an [Expert Voices event](#) looking at the value of hope in the family justice system, with a specific focus on the [Hope Boxes initiative](#) and opportunities for embedding these within FDACs. Hope Boxes are in intervention underpinned by the findings from Born into Care: Developing new national guidelines when the state intervenes at birth and were co-produced with mothers with lived-experience of separation at birth (HOPE Mothers), midwives, charities, recurrent care services, and perinatal loss services. FDAC teams across the country including Birmingham, Gloucestershire and Liverpool, are looking to develop this partnership. We are pleased to be able to share that the Hope Box digital core training is now available. Please contact [Info@GivingHOPE.org.uk](mailto:Info@GivingHOPE.org.uk) for further information.