

FDAC Quarterly report April to June, 2026

This report presents compiled data shared by the 13 FDACs in England for the period 1 April to 30 June 2026, 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 30 June 2026 there were 251 open cases in FDAC, an increase of 10% on the same point last year but an increase of 150% since 1 January 2021 when we started collecting this data.

Over the quarter, 57 new cases were admitted to FDAC and 44 cases concluded.

The 57 families entering FDAC included 51 mothers or female parents, 28 fathers or male parents and 68 children. The average age of parents was 36 and the average age of children was 7 years.

Challenges facing FDAC parents



Substance use

Substance use is very common among FDAC parents with 82% of parents having ongoing substance use issues. 4% of parents had ongoing or historic alcohol use issues only, 13% drugs only, and 75% both. The most commonly used drugs by FDAC parents were cocaine (62%), cannabis (51%) and opiates (23%).

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is widespread amongst FDAC parents. 92% of parents report experiencing domestic abuse at some point in their lives, either as victim or perpetrators, and 51% report ongoing abuse at the time they enter FDAC. However, as a self-reported data this is likely a significant underestimate.



251 Open cases in FDAC

▲ an increase of 10% on the same point last year

44 Cases were concluded

Mental health

Parents in FDAC commonly have undiagnosed mental health needs. Although only 27% had a formal diagnosis, screening suggests that 61% of parents screened show evidence of depression, 61% anxiety and 25% trauma.

Experiences of care

A significant minority of parents in FDAC families had experience of the child protection system, either during their own childhoods or as parents. 18% of FDAC parents were in care themselves at some point in their childhoods. 28% of the parents entering FDAC had had previous children removed with those parents having had an average of 2.6 children removed.

FDAC Outcomes

Child reunification

Of the 34 children for whom outcomes data was available this quarter, 32% were returned to the parents they were living with before proceedings began. A further 38% went to live with another parent or other family member. Notably only 18% of children went into foster care and only 3% into residential care.

32% of children were returned to live with the parents they were living with before proceedings began



38% of children were placed with another parent or family members

Substance use cessation

FDAC has a significant impact on parental substance use. This quarter, 46% of parents completely stopped using substances while a further 9% reduced their alcohol use and 18% reduced their drug use. Women were more likely to stop using substances than men (50% vs 40%).

46% 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 3% 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 14% of cases required an external expert assessment.

FDAC News – Award nominations

This last quarter has seen FDAC and the fantastic work being achieved recognised across a number of platforms. Both the Birmingham and Solihull FDAC, and the Liverpool FDAC Team have been shortlisted as finalists for the Social Work Team of the Year 2026 awards. The winners will be announced in October 2026. Alongside this, the Coventry and Warwickshire Graduates Group has been shortlisted for the Outstanding Citizens Award. We wish everyone the best of luck.

This report is produced as part of the Centre for Justice Innovation's work to provide national leadership to strengthen, expand and champion the FDAC approach. To discuss any aspects of our work around FDAC please contact Sophie Carter at scarter@justiceinnovation.org