

FDAC Quarterly report January to March, 2026

This report presents compiled data shared by the 14 FDACs in England for the period 1 January to 31 March 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 31 March 2026 there were 231 open cases in FDAC, an increase of 4% on the same point last year but an increase of 112% since 1 January 2021 when we started collecting this data.

Over the quarter, 47 new cases were admitted to FDAC and 43 cases concluded.

The 43 families entering FDAC included 39 mothers or female parents, 21 fathers or male parents and 86 children. The average age of parents was 36 and the average age of children was 7 years.



231 Open cases in FDAC

▲ an increase of 4% on the same point last year

43 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. 14% of parents had ongoing or historic alcohol use issues only, 24% drugs only, and 57% both. The most commonly used drugs by FDAC parents were cocaine (57%), cannabis (47%) and opiates (10%).

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is widespread amongst FDAC parents. 90% of parents report experiencing domestic abuse, either as victim or perpetrators at some point in their lives and 34% 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 22% had a formal diagnosis, screening suggests that 82% of parents screened show evidence of depression, 84% anxiety and 63% trauma.

Experiences of care

Parents in FDAC families commonly have experience of the child protection system, either during their own childhoods or as parents. 16% of FDAC parents were in care themselves at some point in their childhoods. 22% of the parents entering FDAC had had previous children removed with those parents having had an average of 2.1 children removed.

FDAC Outcomes

Child reunification

Of the 62 children for whom outcomes data was available this quarter, 44% were returned to their parents. A further 33% went to live with another parent or other family member. Notably only 14% of children went into foster care and no children went into residential care.

39% of children were returned to live with their parents

26% of children were placed with another parent or family members



Substance use cessation

FDAC has a significant impact on parental substance use. This quarter, 50% of parents completely stopped using substances while a further 16% reduced their alcohol use and 16% reduced their drug use. Women were more likely to stop using substances than men (54% vs 42%).

50% 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 5% 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 – celebrating Birmingham and Solihull FDAC and skydive for FDAC Support

On 17th April 2026 Birmingham and Solihull FDAC celebrated five years of service delivery. Despite the challenging financial climate at the time of implementation, and additional pressures brought by the Covid pandemic, FDAC was recognised as an opportunity to work with families in a different way. Over the last five years the service has gone from strength to strength, supporting families across Birmingham and Solihull. At the showcase event, one parent movingly reflected on their experience of the service, sharing: "FDAC saved my life. It gave me a life to live."

This quarter also saw FDAC Judge Patrick Peruško CBE and former FDAC parent and Centre for Justice Innovation Associate Nickii Webster take part in a charity skydive to raise funds for FDAC Support. The charity, established by the Lord Lieutenants of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire, raises money to support families who have made significant progress in FDAC proceedings. FDAC currently supports around 60 families annually across Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, helping parents and children facing domestic abuse, substance use and mental health difficulties. The skydive was a fantastic achievement in support of an important cause.