

FDAC Quarterly report October to December, 2025

This report presents compiled data shared by the 14 FDACs in England for the period 1 October to 31 December 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 October 2025 there were 232 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 55 cases concluded.

The 47 families entering FDAC included 45 mothers or female parents, 37 fathers or male parents and 73 children. The average age of parents was 35 and the average age of children was 5.3 years.

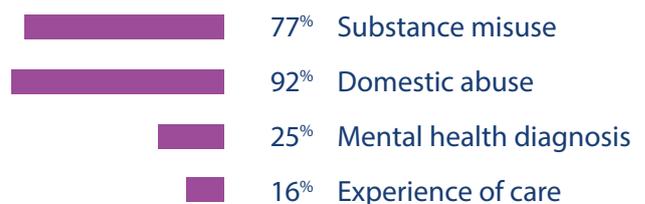


232 Open cases in FDAC

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

55 Cases were concluded

Challenges facing FDAC parents



Substance use

Substance use is very common among FDAC parents with 77% of parents having ongoing substance use issues. 12% of parents had ongoing or historic alcohol use issues only, 23% drugs only, and 58% both. The most commonly used drugs by FDAC parents were cocaine (59%), cannabis (39%) and opiates (12%).

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 25% had a formal diagnosis, screening suggests that 90% of parents screened show evidence of depression, 90% anxiety and 81% 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 99 children for whom outcomes data was available this quarter, 39% were returned to their parents. A further 26% went to live with another parent or other family member. Notably only 13% of children went into foster care. 5% of children were placed in local authority residential care, which is unusually high and likely reflective of the national shortage of foster care placements.

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, 40% of parents completely stopped using substances while a further 17% reduced their alcohol use and 19% reduced their drug use. Men were more likely to stop using substances than women (44% vs 39%).

40% 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 11% 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 9% of cases required an external expert assessment.

FDAC News – celebrating the Community of Practice.

Over the last year the Centre hosted and delivered multiple practice development sessions to support the FDAC Community of Practice. Alongside sessions delivered by experts from within the FDAC community, such as those on Vicarious Trauma and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, the Centre was delighted to partner with ATD Fourth World to deliver an anti-poverty practice workshop. Diane Skelton, Head of Giving Poverty a Voice Program at ATD, shares her views on the value of this work, and the opportunities to partner with communities of practice, in [her blog post](#).

The work of FDAC has also continue to be celebrated and noted through a recent article in the Yorkshire Post, [“It gave me and my children a proper life” - The life-changing impact of Leeds Family Drug and Alcohol Court](#) and in discussion on a [recent episode of the Relational Social Work Podcast](#) looking at innovate practice in West Midlands Children's Services.

This year we hope to see more established FDAC Teams celebrate their milestones and are excited to announce that on 17th April 2026, the Birmingham and Solihul FDAC will be hosting a showcase event reflecting on the success of their last five years.