

Family Drug and Alcohol Court

Leaflet for
families



What is the Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC)?

The aim of the Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) is to help parents stabilise/ stop using drugs/alcohol and, where possible, to keep families together.

Instead of a normal care proceedings court process, a family chosen for the FDAC process will go through a slightly different process.

The process has been set up specifically to help tackle any drug or alcohol problems.

It involves co-ordinating a range of services so that your family's needs, concerns and strengths are all taken into account.

The aim is for everyone to work towards the best possible outcome for your children - a stable and safe family that is able to stay together.

Why have we been chosen?

The FDAC is a pilot scheme and there are only a limited number of places available.

All cases that go through the normal court are looked at to see if they are suitable for the process.

Of all the potential cases, only 1 or 2 are selected each week.

Your case is one that might benefit from going through the FDAC process.

Do I get a choice?

Yes, you can choose not to go through the FDAC process.

If you choose not to, your case will go through the normal care proceedings route. Your Solicitor will be able to give you more information about this.

You do not have to make your decision now. You will be asked at the 1st Hearing on Monday (for more about this turn to page 4) if you want to commit to the process.

If you do it will begin immediately.

If you feel you need more time to think about it, you can ask the Court for another week.

If you have any doubts, talk to your Social Worker as they will be able to answer your questions, or you will be able to talk to the FDAC team at Court.



What support can I expect?

Support from the FDAC team who will coordinate the process and intervention plan. This is a multi-disciplinary team which includes: Service Manager, a Clinical Nurse Specialist, a Specialist Substance Misuse Worker, Senior Social Worker and Social Worker. There is also a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, an Adult Psychiatrist and Family Therapist attached to the team. There are also named links in the Housing and Domestic Violence Teams within the Local Authority.

A comprehensive assessment will take place which will include looking at your family strengths as well as concerns. The assessment will take into account any existing assessments/information and look at your current needs.

The FDAC team can help tackle issues around your drug and/or alcohol use, your physical and mental health, your relationships with your children and other family members, your parenting, and issues with housing and domestic violence. The team will put in place a range of services in your Borough of residence to meet your needs.

Depending on what the assessment results recommend, the Court will be able to monitor what the FDAC team identifies, and refer you quickly to an appropriate treatment provider for counseling, community prescribing or inpatient detoxification and rehabilitation

There may be access to Family Therapy including play therapy for children and appropriate assessment and work to be undertaken by a psychologist / psychotherapist or psychiatrist

A Parent Mentor will be present during the court and assessment period to provide support, encouragement and reassurance. Following the assessment phase a Parent Mentor may be assigned to your family. This person will have had similar experiences to yours and will be able to offer you encouragement and advice

Support will be offered for any current or previous issues of domestic violence

Help with accessing employment and training will be offered

What is the Court Process?

The FDAC is based in the Inner London Family Proceedings Court at Wells Street.

Once the process has started, there will be frequent Court hearings, either fortnightly or monthly until the Final Hearing. The whole process could take up to a

year, but may be shorter, depending on your progress.

The same District Judge, or one of a small team of District Judges, will oversee the whole process and will be able to review progress at the hearings and offer support and encouragement.

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| <p>TUESDAY 1: Case selected for FDAC</p> | <p>When you were notified that proceedings were underway, your case was sent to the Listings Office. On Tuesday the Clerk of the Court selected your case for FDAC. The letter to notify you that your case had been selected was then sent immediately.</p> |
| <p>MONDAY 2: 1st hearing</p> | <p>Next Monday will be your 1st hearing. You will need to tell the Court if you are willing to commit to the FDAC process. If you are unsure, you might be allowed more time. If you are sure, then an FDAC team assessment will begin.</p> |
| <p>Next 3 weeks: Assessment by FDAC team</p> | <p>Within the next 3 weeks, the FDAC Team will conduct the full assessment with your family. This will include assessment of your needs, problems, situation and interaction with your child/ren so that the FDAC team can understand the full range of issues.</p> |
| <p>MONDAY 4: Intervention Plan put forward</p> | <p>At the next hearing, the FDAC team will present the Court with their proposed Intervention Plan that they will have devised with you. This will outline their recommendations about treatments, services required and any other support for you and your child/ren. Once accepted by the Court, you and the Local Authority, and your Social Worker will then update their Care Plan.</p> |
| <p>MONDAY 6 and then fortnightly/monthly: Review hearings</p> | <p>The Court will conduct Review Hearings with the same Judge, either fortnightly or monthly. These will be a chance for everyone to make sure that the process is going well, to review your family's progress, to encourage you, and to make changes if there are problems. Your Solicitor and the Children's Guardian are not expected to attend all these hearings, although they are welcome to attend if you want them to or they want to.</p> |

What is expected of me?

The most important thing is that you engage with this process. This is a real opportunity to turn things round, get clean or stable and keep your family together.

But it will be difficult and ultimately it will be up to you. The FDAC team and other service providers will give you support, encouragement, services and tools to help, but you must commit and do this for yourself and your family.

You will also be expected to attend the appointments that are made for you and to turn up to the Court for the hearings and **to be honest** with the Court and the professionals working with you.

The consequences of not committing to the process are the same as if you were going through the normal proceedings route – you might lose your child/ren.

But remember that everyone wants the same outcome – for your family to stay together in a supportive and safe environment.

The FDAC is a good opportunity for you to take the support being offered and work with the professionals who are there to help you.

How will Parent Mentors help?

Parent Mentors are there to give you support, help and encouragement. They are not trained counsellors as there is a professional team that will also be there to support you for that, but they can offer invaluable informal and practical support.



All the Mentors are parents actively involved in their children's lives and have a history of substance misuse. They may not have been through exactly the same set of circumstances as you, but they will understand the issues you are facing and have a good knowledge of the treatment services, the Court and the Social Services.

Parent Mentors will be there to help you through the assessment process and some Court hearings. You may also be matched to a Parent Mentor as part of your Intervention Plan that the FDAC team devise. This person will then spend between one and four hours a week with you, they can come to appointments with you, and offer you telephone support.

What happens next?

Next you must decide whether you are happy to proceed with the FDAC process or whether you wish to go through standard care proceedings.

Either way, you must attend the first hearing, which will be next Monday.



Who else can give me advice?

Your Lawyer will be able to give you advice of the legal side of care proceedings.

You will be introduced to a member of the FDAC team who will be able to answer any questions that you have about FDAC, and your case going through the process.

Your Social Worker will also be able to answer questions that you might have about what FDAC means for you and your family.

Contact details for further information

Sophie Kershaw
 Service Manager,
 Family Drug and Alcohol Court Team
 Coram Campus,
 Gregory House
 49 Mecklenburgh Square
 London WC1N 2QA
 Tel: 0207 278 5708
 Fax: 0207 278 4763
 Email: info.FDACteam@coram.org.uk