

The Family Drug and Alcohol Court





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The Family Drug and Alcohol Court is an innovative approach to the problem of parental substance misuse and its impact on children in the family.

Drug or alcohol abuse is a significant feature in a high percentage of cases taken to court for care proceedings and services and interventions are often disjointed or un-coordinated with a lack of focus on the family's individual and joint needs. As a result there are often poor outcomes for the children.

The FDAC is based on a model now being widely used across the USA, which is an exciting way of trying to break the destructive cycle of substance misuse.

Early findings suggest that this model is successful in getting parents to engage with and stay in substance misuse services leading to more children being able to return home. Parents will have to demonstrate that they want to stop misusing drugs and/or alcohol and that they are motivated to start treatment.

The model is of a specialist court (The Inner London Family Proceedings Court in Wells Street) operating within the framework of care proceedings. Parents randomly selected to enter into the programme can decide whether or not they wish to take part and specialist judges play an important role in encouraging and motivating the parents to engage with services and in reviewing their progress.

A specialist team, provided by the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust in partnership with children's charity, Coram, will consist of highly experienced substance misuse practitioners, social workers, and parent mentors. The team advises the court, assesses, supports and encourages the family and links the family into relevant local services. The emphasis is on working with the parent and child, not just assessing them.

This is a positive, proactive approach to addressing parental substance misuse.

- It will ensure that effective services are provided in a timely and co-ordinated way for parents and at the same time there will be a clear focus on the welfare of the child, and the needs and wishes of children and young people will be identified and responded to.
- This is a three year pilot project initially, and will work with a total of 60 families each year from the 3 London Boroughs of Westminster, Camden and Islington.
- This will be a model that is focused clearly on the impact of substance misuse on the child.
- The plan for the parent and the services provided will be grounded in what we know from research about effective interventions.
- The wider family will be involved from the earliest possible stage, and will be provided with support and information, unless it is assessed that it would be unsafe to involve some members of the family, for example in domestic violence cases.
- Parents will receive support and encouragement as they address their substance misuse.



Desired Outcomes

1. A higher proportion of children will be successfully reunited with their parents compared to traditional service delivery
2. Parents are able to access and maintain treatment for their substance misuse
3. Parents are successful in achieving and maintaining controlled substance use or complete abstinence
4. Parents are successful in addressing related psychosocial difficulties (mental health, domestic violence, housing, family planning)
5. Children are able to achieve positive outcomes as defined in the Every Child Matters agenda – safety, health, education, achievement and enjoyment and economic well-being
6. In situations where children cannot be returned home safely, their futures will be decided more quickly

To find out more information please call:

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