

Welsh national Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) and problem-solving workshops: Learning and recommendations

Introduction

The FDAC National Working Group was established following the publication of the [2024 CAS-CADE evaluation of the Family Drug and Alcohol Court \(FDAC\) pilot](#) in South-East Wales and a recommendation from the Family Justice Network that Welsh Government consider next steps. The Group's overarching purpose has been to explore how problem-solving approaches within public law proceedings could contribute to reducing the number of children looked after in Wales. It was convened to examine the scalability, sustainability and future direction of FDAC in Wales, bringing together representatives from children's services, Cafcass Cymru, Welsh Government, health, policing, and substance use policy, alongside expert contributors such as the Centre for Justice Innovation and the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory.

Through a series of meetings, the Working Group has reviewed the evidence base for FDAC, including its impact on reunification outcomes and cost-effectiveness, and considered the practical implications of a potential national roll-out. Discussions have highlighted key challenges, including regional variation in service availability, court accessibility, sustainable funding, and the need for strong, coordinated multi-agency commitment. The Group has also emphasised the importance of understanding how FDAC complements existing Welsh provision, including Integrated Family Support Services (IFSS) and other early intervention and edge-of-care models, underlining the need to strengthen current services alongside any future development.

Building on the successful national implementation of the Child Focused Courts model in private family law proceedings, the Working Group has drawn on this learning, alongside experience from FDAC, to explore how a problem-solving, therapeutic approach could be embedded within public law proceedings. This includes consideration of how the core elements of the FDAC model might be more widely applied. There has been early recognition that any model across Wales cannot be 'one size fits all'. The flexibility of both FDAC and wider problem-solving approaches to respond to local infrastructure, service capacity, and demographic need- while maintaining principles of procedural fairness and trauma-informed practice- will be critical. Further detail is available in the FDAC Working Group's discussion paper, available on request, with FDAC Service Standards set out in appendix 4.

In line with the Working Group's aim to promote a sustainable, trauma-informed, multi-agency model that delivers tailored support to families, improves long-term outcomes for children, and reduces reliance on care proceedings, two task and finish groups will be established to progress this work:

1. Exploring how a problem-solving approach can be implemented within public law and existing systems.
2. A comprehensive mapping of services; recognising variations in service models, any gaps and challenges in practice and identifying where existing provision would be unable to deliver the core elements of an FDAC problem-solving model.

The [Centre for Justice Innovation](#), an independent third sector organisation and recognised centre of expertise in problem-solving court approaches, was commissioned to provide support in delivering three workshops across Wales. These workshops were designed to facilitate early stakeholder consultation and to bring together professionals from across the family justice system alongside key community partners.

Aim of the Workshops

The three workshops, aligned to the three Local Family Justice Board (LFJB) regions, aimed to:

- Demonstrate continued commitment to progressing the work of the FDAC National Working Group, including the two task and finish groups.
- Bring together a wide range of family justice and community partners to support early collaboration and engagement.
- Provide an update on the rationale for problem-solving approaches in public law and identify gaps in knowledge and awareness.
- Explore current perspectives, levels of support, and any reservations.
- Set the context for the two task and finish workstreams.
- Identify participants to support progression of these workstreams.
- Contribute to a National Learning Event completed in Spring 2026.

The workshops were completed online in January 2026 with over 60 professionals attending. Participants were provided in advance with key background materials, these included an FDAC Working Group's discussion paper, a summary of the Cascade evaluation of the Welsh FDAC pilot, a summary of the [ICPR Improving Care Proceedings report](#) published in January 2026, and the Centre for Justice Innovation's '[Problem-solving Courts: a guide to practice in the United Kingdom](#)'.

Each workshop included breakout group discussions facilitated by the Centre for Justice Innovation, Nuffield Family Justice Observatory and practitioners with experience of problem-solving approaches in the family justice system. We are grateful to those who contributed their time and expertise.

Overall Themes

Discussions across the three LFJB regions reflected local context and variation in practice. However, a consistent set of national themes emerged in relation to embedding a problem-solving approach within public law proceedings:

1. There is **growing confidence in a whole system shift** supported by experience of implementing Child Focused Courts. However, familiarity with problem-solving approaches in public law proceedings remains limited. Increased awareness and shared learning would support broader understanding.
2. There is **strong appetite to learn from established FDAC models**, the Welsh pilot (including its closure) as well as the implementation of Child Focused Courts.
3. Embedding a **problem-solving approach in public law proceedings aligns with wider practice**, including trauma informed practice, improved communication and experiences for families and efforts to reduce recurrent care proceedings.
4. Current **court processes are often experienced as adversarial and inaccessible**, with inconsistent professional relationships, limited continuity, and potential for additional trauma.
5. **A problem-solving approach would directly address causes for concern within the family justice system** by promoting relational working, improving communication (including Welsh language provision), strengthening trust, ensuring judicial continuity, and providing tailored support to families.

6. There are existing examples of **good practice across Wales** particularly linked to Born into Care work, pre-proceedings support, and advocacy services, which reflect the principles underpinning problem-solving approaches. There is value in building on and integrating this practice within court processes.
7. **Early help and community-based provision is variable** across regions, with less consistency in support for some families, particularly those with older children.
8. There was a **concern about the sustainability** of delivering intensive support, as well as how positive changes are maintained once the support ends.
9. There is the **need to have a greater understanding of local services, pathways, infrastructure and gaps**. A flexible approach is needed as opposed to a “one size fits all” approach.
10. **Questions remain regarding timeframes, allocation of resources and referral pathways**. This includes how a model could operate at scale without contributing to delay whilst complementing existing provision.
11. **Workforce capacity, system pressures and regional variation in funding and geography present significant challenge**. The role of digital delivery and community partnerships was also raised.
12. Strong cross-sector commitment is pivotal. Effective multiagency working, particularly alongside health and housing will be key to success. Reducing siloed working and promoting shared outcomes and shared accountability is vital.

Regional focus

A detailed regional summary of discussions from each LFJB region can be found at Appendices 1 to 3. Whilst experiences and priorities varied, each region explored the potential advantages and disadvantages of adopting a problem-solving approach including any practical considerations for implementation.

A consistent finding was the absence of a single uniform model of regional practice. Practice was found to vary not only from region to region but also across Local Authorities in the same region. This reinforces the need for a flexible, locally responsive approach.

In North Wales, discussions highlighted existing strengths including IFSS, motivational interviewing, Family Group Conferencing and a focus on compassionate, relational practice. Previous transformation work gave confidence in, and offered potential frameworks, for implementing an FDAC problem solving approach. However, concerns were raised around sustainability of existing services, capacity constraints and the availability of wider support.

Mid and West Wales reflected on the recent adoption of Child Focused Courts in their area and the opportunity to build on this to promote greater consistency whilst being mindful that this region was already adapting to other changes locally. There was a strong focus on the positive Born into Care work taking place in this region and how this would interact to ensure that pre-proceedings work aligns with any problem-solving approach to avoid delay. There was interest in extending this practice to families with older children. Challenges identified were around sustainable funding, workforce capacity and service availability in more rural areas.

In South East Wales, discussions reflected the region’s experience of the FDAC pilot, with a strong emphasis on collaboration, culture change, and improving families’ experiences of court. Participants also highlighted existing strengths in their Parental Advocacy work, Family Group Conferences and Born into Care projects. Priorities included ensuring alignment with pre-proceedings work, avoiding duplication and recognising workforce pressures. The importance of incorporating the voice of parents, children and wider family networks was also highlighted.

Overall recommendations and next steps

Across all three regions, there is clear appetite to further explore and develop an FDAC problem-solving, trauma-informed approach within public law proceedings in Wales. While recognising regional variation, system pressures and the need to build on existing good practice, the workshops identified a shared set of recommendations to guide next steps.

1. Progress the two task and finish groups:

- Establish clear oversight and coordination of the groups.
- Build on workshop learning and connect key stakeholders to support this progression.

2. Undertake comprehensive mapping:

- Identify existing services, their availability and pathways, including universal, targeted or specialist support.
- Establish what gaps there are in services at local and regional levels.
- Learn about established and effective multi-agency partnerships.
- Increase understanding of local infrastructure, and geographical barriers.
- Explore opportunities to align or repurpose existing resources including opportunities for co-location where appropriate.

3. Strengthen multi-agency commitment

- Ensure active involvement of health, education, housing, adult services, police, and community partners in this work.
- Create a shared vision supported by senior leadership and judicial engagement.
- Recognise workforce pressures and capacity limitations impacting agencies.
- Identify and start work with regions interested and ready to support realistic, manageable development and scalability.

4. Learn from previous initiatives

- Draw on learning from FDAC models, IFSS, the Welsh FDAC pilot and Child Focused Courts.
- Support opportunities for shared learning, shadowing and engagement with established services and families who have experienced the model.
- Increase awareness and understanding of the impact of the short term and long-term benefits for families and practitioners, and every contact seen as an opportunity for support, intervention and change.
- Provide further guidance on how the benefits of a problem-solving approach can be felt by all families; the impact of a compassionate, trauma-responsive, transparent and accessible approach with opportunities for review.

5. Voices of lived experience

- Engage meaningfully with parents, children and family members with lived experience to inform design and delivery.
- Ensure that Welsh language needs are fully considered.

- Alongside familial experience, ensure that the voice of practitioners also shapes the work.

6. Funding and Sustainability

- Develop a clear approach to long-term sustainable funding, recognising multi-year funding supports stability and engagement.
- Consider the cost implications across different models recognising 'one size does not fit all' and infrastructure and service provision differs across local authorities.

7. Strengthen data collection and use

- Identify service and regional level data in mapping exercise.
- Build on Wales's strengths in collecting and using data to monitor impact and progress, alongside supporting implementation and future development and review.

8. Align Pre-Proceedings and Timescales

- Ensure that any problem-solving approach complements existing pre-proceedings work.
- Address any inequity in delivery of early support and address gaps in service to avoid delay.
- Identify areas where there is less confidence, or less available support, in pre-proceedings.

9. Workforce Development and Cultural Change

- Develop a system-wide training and development programme.
- Provide opportunities for cross-agency working including shadowing, reflective conversations and ongoing practice development embedding values around patience and compassion.
- Promote a culture of continuous improvement, flexibility, review and change.

10. Address Misconceptions - Myths to Bust

- Provide clear communication to address any concerns relating to safety, sustainability, scope and alignment within existing practice.
- Reinforce that a problem-solving approach is child-centred, multi-agency and trauma-informed with scope to support families beyond simply those where parental drug and alcohol use is a factor.

Conclusion

The workshops have demonstrated strong cross-sector appetite to explore how an FDAC problem-solving, trauma-informed approach could be embedded within public law proceedings in Wales. While important challenges remain such as resources, timescales, consistency and sustainability, there is clear alignment with existing Welsh values of collaboration, early intervention and relational practice.

Discussions highlighted both the strength of current provision and the opportunity to bring greater coherence, continuity and multi-agency partnership into the court arena. Moving forward progress will depend on robust mapping, shared leadership, meaningful engagement with families and practitioners, and a commitment to learning from previous initiatives. With careful development and a flexible, locally responsive model, Wales has the opportunity to build on its existing foundations and take a significant step towards a more compassionate, effective family justice system with improved outcomes for families.

Appendix 1: North Wales Focus

Areas of identified good practice to connect with and build upon

Discussions highlighted a range of effective practice across North Wales, including:

- Good use of **Family Group Conferences/Meetings**, supporting positive outcomes at both the pre-proceedings stage and within Care and Support Plan arrangements.
- Learning from the **Transformation Programme** and **Regional Partnership Board**, with potential to embed consistent practice across the region.
- Opportunities to strengthen **partnership working with IFSS teams**, including closer alignment with therapeutic provision.
- Specialist support currently in **Wrexham** where the physical separation of the service from the Local Authority was noted as beneficial in building trust and engagement.
- Ongoing work to embed **collaborative conversations** and relationship based practice.
- Established use of **Motivational Interviewing (MI) training**, with a trained workforce.
- Regional collaboration on **violence against women and girls and providing domestic abuse support**.
- **Born into Care research and work** was noted, including learning on repeat removals, reinforcing the importance of early intervention.
- Benefits of **post-proceedings support** were recognised as needed to sustain positive outcomes.
- Examples of established **in-house therapeutic teams** providing integrated specialist support within existing service structures.

The value of taking a problem-solving approach and how it can support current practice locally:

Practitioners identified several benefits of implementing a problem-solving approach:

- **Reducing the adversarial aspect of proceedings:** To shift the tone of proceedings away from confrontation and towards constructive and a more strength-based dialogue.
- **Improving language and family engagement in court:** Promotes clearer, more accessible communication and increasing family participation.
- **Breaking down barriers between services and families:** Helping to move away from an “us and them” culture and fostering trust, particularly important when working with families with previous negative experiences of service involvement.
- **Establishing a ‘listening court’ ethos:** Supporting a more empathetic, trauma-informed approach which ensures court users feel heard and work is child-centred and family-focused.
- **Addressing recurrent care concerns:** Responding proactively, in a more trauma-responsive way to reduce repeat removals and recurrent care proceedings.
- **Strengthening multi-agency collaboration:** Encouraging more integrated working across organisations and teams, ensuring coordinated planning and interventions.
- **Supporting holistic practice:** Moving beyond single-issue responses to look at the wider family context.
- **Promoting consistency:** Using a structured approach to ensure improved consistency when working with families.
- **Responding to complex needs:** Strengthening support to families with multiple and complex needs through improved joint working.
- **Enhancing reunification practice:** Supporting more robust, connected care planning to improve long-term outcomes.
- **Addressing chronic neglect:** Supporting more effective engagement and long-term change.

Important considerations and questions:

Key concerns and areas requiring further clarity:

- **Equity of access:** A need for clear referral pathways and consistently applied eligibility criteria to avoid any perceptions of inequality.
- **Statutory 26-week timescales:** Concerns around achieving meaningful change within statutory timeframes, a need for flexibility was noted.
- **Resource allocation and funding pressures:** Any new approach should complement existing approaches and services rather than compete with them.
- **Service accessibility:** Travel issues and geographical barriers could impact engagement with support services.
- **Availability of specialist support:** Particularly around access to healthcare and domestic abuse services.
- **Timeliness of support:** Delays in accessing support including post-proceedings may impact outcomes and undermine progress.
- **Workforce capacity:** Recruitment and retention challenges within social care and overall capacity to ensure consistent practice delivery.
- **Managing change:** The need for time, training and support to embed new approaches.
- **System pressures:** Risk of additional expectation and pressure on already stretched services.
- **Complexity of cases:** The need for greater clarity on how a problem-solving approach can support families with complex needs.

What would support implementation:

Participants recommended the following to support next steps:

- **Service mapping:** A clear overview of existing services, pathways and gaps across the region to avoid duplication and inform planning.
- **A flexible model:** A model that can be adapted to local context, capacity and need as opposed to a “one size fits all” approach.
- **Targeted engagement:** Working with areas that are open to early adoption of the model.
- **Safe spaces for learning:** Opportunities for reflection, testing and practice development.
- **Workforce development:** A clear workforce development strategy and training plan across the region.
- **Multi-agency involvement:** Sustained engagement from health, adult services and other key partner agencies.
- **Lived experience:** Meaningful involvement from families in the design and delivery process.
- **Leadership support:** Senior-level endorsement needed to enable change.
- **Recognition of system pressures:** Realistic expectations within existing resourcing constraints.
- **Shared commitment:** Establishing a cross-sector commitment or pledge, fostering shared ownership, collective accountability and consistency across the system.
- **Building on momentum:** Capitalising on existing regional partnerships and collaboration.

Appendix 2: Mid and West Wales Focus

Areas of identified good practice to connect with and build upon

Discussions highlighted a range of established strengths and areas of good practice that should inform future service development:

- Effective front loading of services and early intervention resulting in **fewer cases progressing to Court**.
- Earlier assessment of **alternative carers** increasing opportunities for children to remain within their wider family network if proceedings are required.
- Practice models supporting **therapeutic conversations** with families.
- Increasing use of family owned plans and plans written in the **child's words** resulting in improved engagement and a shared sense of ownership.
- Strong and effective **Born into Care** work through services in Swansea, Neath and Port Talbot such as Jig-so, co-location and partnership working with health are considered pivotal to the success.
- Continued development of **Parental Advocacy**.

The value of taking a problem-solving approach and how it can support current practice locally

Practitioners identified the following potential benefits:

- **Embedding whole-family practice:** Strengthening a systematic approach to focussing on the wider family context.
- **Improving multi-agency information sharing:** Enhancing communication and reducing siloed working.
- **Increasing awareness of available services:** Supporting better alignment between Court proceedings and service provision.
- **Improving court experience and language:** Addressing the disconnect between strengths-based practice and the formal, legal processes which can be overwhelming for families.
- **Clarifying expectations for parents:** Supporting a greater understanding of PLO processes.
- **Extending effective Born into Care practice:** Building on the existing good work in this space with services like Jig-so and Reflect to reduce repeat removals, consider the possibility of extending this learning and support to families with older children.
- **Improving responses to substance use:** Enhanced understanding of the interaction between substance misuse, domestic abuse and mental health.
- **Promoting psychologically informed practice:** Supporting a deeper assessment of underlying issues and moving beyond a coordination role.
- **Supporting workforce wellbeing:** Lessening the adversarial nature of proceedings would improve the court user experience for professionals, improving professional experience and retention of staff.
- **Strengthening judicial engagement:** Greater consistency in relational engagement across the judiciary to reduce perceptions of an “us and them” dynamic in the care proceedings process.
- **Reframing the role of the Local Authority:** Supporting a shift from “doing to” families to “working with” them.
- **Strengthening partnerships:** Building on improved multiagency working, including with the Police and a shared understanding of roles.
- **Supporting personalised engagement:** Enabling a tailored, strengths-based approach for families.

- **Providing intensive stabilisation:** Ensuring access to structured, intensive support to promote meaningful change.

Important considerations and questions

Key concerns and areas requiring further clarity:

- **Timing of proceedings:** Tensions around the balancing of cases where extensive pre-proceedings work has been undertaken and the LA has felt criticised for a delay in applying to Court.
- **Added value:** The need to understand how a problem-solving court may enhance or differ from existing practice. Some participants (not all) felt that the Courts were already operating in an empathetic, problem-solving manner.
- **Impact on pre-proceedings:** Questions around what additional benefit the model would have with cases that had already had extensive pre-proceedings support.
- **Thresholds:** Strong emphasis on only issuing when absolutely necessary, how will a problem-solving approach align with this.
- **26-week timetable:** Does the 26 week statutory timeframe provide sufficient opportunity for sustainable change.
- **Inconsistency in pre-proceedings:** Variability in practice may impact how a problem-solving model operates and the extent to which it adds value.
- **Risk of delay:** Clarity around how additional review hearings could inadvertently cause delay in cases.
- **Resource implications:** Funding, workforce capacity, judicial availability (particularly in rural areas), and demand on advocacy and support services.
- **Referral criteria:** The importance of having a clear eligibility criteria.
- **Geographical barriers:** Travel and access challenges in rural areas, particularly when more intensive engagement is required.

What would support implementation

Participants identified the following priorities:

- **Inclusion of housing:** Early and sustained involvement of housing was cited as necessary to support longer term outcomes.
- **Cafcass Cymru capacity:** Recognition of existing pressures alongside a commitment to improving outcomes.
- **Addressing geographical variation:** Exploring how services could co-locate similarly to Jig-so in less densely populated areas.
- **Use of data:** Wales was recognised as being strong in its use of data, building on this to inform design, implementation and monitoring.
- **Building on Born into Care:** As referenced above, using the learning from Jig-so to inform wider work in the region.
- **Extending effective IFSS practice:** Addressing consistency issues in the delivery and availability of IFSS through improving integrated working, particularly in more rural areas.
- **Strengthening partnerships:** Building on the partnership working with other agencies such as the Police and community services
- **Sharing practice:** Increasing opportunities to learn from established FDAC models and understand wider benefits beyond judicial continuity.

Appendix 3: South East Wales Focus

Areas of identified good practice to connect with and build upon

Discussions identified a strong foundation of good practice taking place across South East Wales:

- **Established parental advocacy and participatory practice** with a clear focus on incorporating families' voices in decision making.
- **Growing culture of collaboration** including working alongside families to focus on risk mitigation.
- **Alignment with wider culture change** to improve the experiences of both families and professionals.
- **Significant investment in early help and prevention** including strong pre-proceedings and early intervention work and initiatives like Baby and Me and Reflect.
- **Judicial awareness of adversarial practice** allows space for reflection and an openness to new approaches.
- Progress in **embedding trauma-responsive and inclusive practice**.
- **Increased confidence and empowerment** following the embedding of **Child Focused Courts**, supporting family engagement and empowerment.
- **Early use and development of Family Group Conferences (FGCs)**: The proactive use of FGCs is recognised as effective practice. Ongoing learning about what enhances FGC effectiveness for different families could offer valuable insight to inform a problem-solving approach.

The value of taking a problem-solving approach and how it can support current practice locally

Practitioners identified the following potential benefits:

- **Aligning court and local practice models**: Creating greater parity with relational practice and strengths-based approaches in court proceedings to align with local practice.
- **Improved transparency and understanding**: Supporting clearer communication around expectations, choices and consequences.
- **Maximising support within proceedings**: Providing enhanced support at a critical stage, particularly for families who may not have engaged fully in pre-proceedings support.
- **Strengthening continuity of support**: By ensuring that support is available post-proceedings, families can continue to be supported at every stage.
- **Delivering long-term impact**: Supporting a reduction in recurrent proceedings and repeat removals, which will in turn deliver longer term positive outcomes.
- **Strengthened multiagency collaboration and shared accountability**: Improved partnership working, joint responsibility and a real collaborative approach to supporting families.
- **Whole-system change**: Moving from pockets of good practice to coordinated cross-system reform to consistently deliver best practice.
- **Reducing recurrent removals/ removals at birth**: Building on the Born into Care projects, Reflect, Project Unity and Baby and Me to break the cycle of removals at birth.
- **Responding to long-term complexity**: Supporting earlier, psychologically informed intervention for children and families with complex needs.
- **Supporting trauma-informed judicial processes**: Improving understanding and making the process less adversarial and more empathetic for families and practitioners.
- **Improving participation and voice**: Ensuring that families' voices are heard throughout the process, that proceedings are child centred and parents and carers feel empowered.
- **Reducing adversarial culture**: Promoting more constructive conversations and solutions-focused engagement.

- **Improving workforce experience and retention:** Supporting the retention and wellbeing of practitioners through a more empathetic approach.
- **Providing a critical opportunity for change at the final stage:** Creating space for progress where families have not managed to make the change during pre-proceedings.
- **Setting out pathways to change:** Families can feel locked into a trajectory when care proceedings are issued, setting out the clear link between making progress and improving outcomes.
- **Building on existing strengths:** The approach aligns with current strengths-based practice used in pre-proceedings, expanding to court proceedings seeks parity in the way that families are supported pre, during and post proceedings.
- **Creating ripple effects across wider practice:** Learning from problem-solving approaches (including judicial practice and communication styles) could extend beyond individual courts, influencing broader family justice and safeguarding practice across the region.
- **Learning from Child Practice Reviews:** Reviews frequently identify limited professional understanding of court processes, contributing to tension and a blame culture. Through a shared understanding misunderstandings and blame-culture can be reduced.

Important considerations and questions

Key concerns and areas requiring further clarity:

- **Rising complexity and system pressures:** There are increasing levels of need currently being balanced with resource constraints. Cases reaching care proceedings are often the most complex and how would change impact an already stretched system. Noted pressures on health, education, housing and third sector services raise concerns about whether multi-agency capacity can be maintained. Some consideration was had as to whether cultural change can occur without additional funding and how there may be opportunities to repurpose existing resources, but this requires planning and commitment from all involved across the sectors.
- **Early Intervention and Prevention:** The importance of early support was raised, with it being noted that this is pivotal in reducing the numbers of families who enter into pre-proceedings and proceedings. Further investment in this support was suggested along with work around improving the pre-proceedings process for families.
- **Timescales and Delay:** Ensuring that any new approach complements existing systems and structures and does not incur undue delay for families. Understanding how FDAC interlinks with existing timescales would be useful. Some feedback received indicated that LAs felt critiqued for spending too long in pre-proceedings whereas others felt pressure for not working with families in greater depth outside of proceedings.
- **Multi-Agency Working and Continuity:** Challenges in sustaining good multi-agency working across all stages of supporting a family. Current feedback is that the good multi-agency working during child protection procedures can fall away during pre-proceedings and lessen again during care proceedings.
- **Consistency of Implementation:** Achieving consistent implementation across courts and local authorities was felt to be a challenge and coordinated leadership and guidance on any changes would be needed. Whilst a “one size fits all” approach was not considered to be appropriate, there were some concerns around the differences in local authority risk management processes and judicial approaches.
- **Court Culture and Professional Practice:** The scale of cultural change that would be required to move away from adversarial processes.
- **Suitability and Scope of a Problem-Solving Approach:** Clarity on which families would benefit the most whilst recognising the wider applicability of this approach.
- **Family Networks and Participation:** Expanding the use of family network meetings/ Family Group Conferencing to promote wider family participation and supporting positive social support networks.

- **Training and Workforce Development:** The scale of cross-system training and development, including judicial involvement.

What would support implementation

Participants identified the following priorities:

- **Learning from Previous Initiatives and Existing Practice:** Building on the implementation of Child Focused Courts in Wales and the learning from the FDAC pilot to understand the challenges and explore local solutions.
- **Increasing awareness of FDAC:** Strengthening understanding of this model, including its adaptability and child-centred nature.
- **Financial Planning and Sustainability:** Develop a clear, long-term, where possible multi-year, funding approach including how we use existing resources.
- **Workforce development:** Establish a structured training plan that provides opportunities for reflection, shadowing and observation.
- **Using lived-experience:** Embedding the voice of families throughout the design, delivery and evaluation and providing clear opportunities for feedback from court users.
- **Service mapping:** Better understanding of existing provision, infrastructure and where there may be gaps in service provision.
- **Flexible delivery model:** Accepting that a one size fits all approach is not the answer and that flexibility and understanding the local context is needed for a successful delivery model.
- **Secure strong multi-agency commitment:** Ensuring active involvement from health, education, housing and community partners. With consistent opportunities for multi-agency conversation and review.
- **Strategic leadership:** Develop a shared vision to influence top-down change, supported by strong leadership and accountability.
- **Aligning justice systems:** Considering the interaction between family justice and criminal justice and understanding differing timescales and how this can impact proceedings.

Appendix 4: Family drug and alcohol court (FDAC) Service Standards

These Service Standards seek to describe the key elements of an FDAC service that has fidelity to the evaluated FDAC model. FDAC follows the key principles of problem solving; actively enabling the court to become an agent of change, procedural fairness, underpinned by trauma informed practice and awareness, tailored to the needs of those accessing it, a multi-disciplinary team or network and recognising families are experts in their own lives.

Standard 1	FDAC is a therapeutic problem-solving family court with specially-trained judges and an independent, multidisciplinary assessment and intervention team. All staff are expected to undertake the FDAC Induction Training which should also be open to partner organisations and key stakeholders in the region to ensure a cohesive approach and the development of a shared vision.
Standard 2	There is a clear referral pathway into FDAC.
Standard 3	Parents are able to make an informed choice about whether to accept the offer of FDAC. All parents who choose to work with FDAC will be offered a ‘trial for change’
Standard 4	The assessment and intervention work of the FDAC specialist team starts promptly and proceeds without delay and follows the FDAC reporting and court hearing timeline. This timeline adheres to the Public Law Outline.
Standard 5	The plans for children are revised as necessary, whilst remaining mindful of the timescales required by (a) the law and Public Law Outline, and (b) the importance of responding to children’s needs in a timely fashion.
Standard 6	Once the FDAC Intervention Plan has the authority of the court the ‘trial for change’ begins, and parents and professionals have clear tasks to perform and a timescale to adhere to.
Standard 7	FDAC work is collaborative – there is regular communication between the judge and the specialist team, and both work closely with parents, the local authority and others involved with the children and their families.
Standard 8	Parents have the opportunity of support from a parent mentor where available. It is recognised that not all services are able to offer this provision. It is currently recommended that wherever possible, that access to mutual aid/lived experience recovery support is included within the intervention plan.
Standard 9	The procedure in court, including the use of non-lawyer hearings, acknowledges the role of the judge as a catalyst for change, nurturing a positive relationship with parents and giving families a voice in the proceedings. (It is also important to note that this includes ensuring that children’s experiences remain central to decision making whilst making sure the proceedings provide greater transparency, coordination and understanding of the processes).
Standard 10	FDAC specialist team uses national data collection tools to measure the health and well-being of each child and parent during their time in FDAC, with a view to understanding the impact of FDAC on families and highlighting potential areas for improvement and service development.

We call these the *FDAC Service Standards* because, taken together, they summarise our expectations about (a) the provision and ethos of an FDAC service and (b) what a service in development will be working towards. To adhere to this, all FDAC Teams and members of staff are expected to have completed the multidisciplinary FDAC Induction Training, remain committed to ongoing practice development and learning, support data collection and ensure open feedback loops and dialogue continue with families, community partners and stakeholders.



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About the Centre for Justice Innovation

The Centre for Justice Innovation seek to build a justice system which all of its citizens believe is fair and effective. We champion practice innovation and evidence-led policy reform in the UK's justice systems. We are a registered UK charity.

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