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Family Drug and Alcohol Court to be nationwide

DfE investment funds roll-out of the court

The Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) which helps families blighted by drug and alcohol misuse get back on track and stay together is to be extended nationwide as a result of government backing worth £2.5 million.

The FDAC was described by the Centre for Justice Innovation as 'one of the most successful examples of problem-solving court innovation in England and Wales in recent years.' It works with parents, social workers and substance misuse professionals to combat addictions in families and, where possible, keep them together. Where this isn't possible, the Court aims to make swift decisions in order to find children a permanent loving, stable home with minimal disruption.

The Court also ensures parents see the same judge throughout the course of the proceedings, establishing a relationship built on trust, and offers fast access substance misuse services as well as help with housing issues, domestic violence and financial hardship.

Currently operating across London as well as Gloucestershire, Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire, the money will be used to launch Family and Drug Alcohol Courts in new areas of the country including Coventry, Kent and Medway, Plymouth, Torbay and Exeter, and West Yorkshire – extending this vital service to vulnerable families across the country.

Children and Family Minister, Edward Timpson, who spent ten years as a family barrister, said:

"I know from my years at the Bar that when it comes to supporting our most vulnerable and troubled families, there isn't a one-size-fits all approach. Families need tailored and personalised support to help them stay together and thrive.

"Since 2008, the Family Drug and Alcohol Court has thrown an invaluable lifeline to hundreds upon hundreds of families, helping parents shut the door on destructive behaviour and making sure everyone is working towards the best possible outcome for the child – a safe and stable family.

"Extending the Court's work further will deliver real, life-changing results for families across the country and I look forward to seeing how the scheme develops over the coming months."

District Judge Nick Crichton said:

"FDAC is a problem solving court. In the FDAC, we have seen some parents demonstrate a remarkable capacity to change in response to our more constructive, empathetic approach. Harnessing the fairness and authority of the court has shown that it is possible to break the cycle of drug and alcohol misuse. Importantly, FDAC has the support of parents themselves, which is crucial to its success. Thanks to the DfE and government's investment, more parents and their children will be able to access FDAC across the country."

An independent evaluation by Brunel University found that FDAC families had a higher rate of stopping substance abuse than people who had been through normal care proceedings, with 40% of mothers stopping, compared to 25%.

In 35% of cases, FDAC mothers stopped misusing and were reunited with their mothers, compared to 19% who had been through ordinary care proceedings.

To read a recent article about the Court, written by Esther Lieu and Sarah Jennings, with a contribution by District Judge Julie Exton of the Gloucestershire FDAC, please click [here](#).

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