



Leeds 10 Year Anniversary Celebration

Post-event pack



LEEDS FDAC 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Led by Her Honour Judge Hillier

Lord Justice Peter Jackson



Criminal courts are adversarial, but FDAC shows how a bit of respect and some kindness begins to dissolve feelings of suspicion towards the court.

In FDAC, Social workers and psychologist's skills are turned towards formulating a plan to help individual families. It is a much better use of our resources, a much better use of our time, and it's much more human. It is seriously unique and precious.

"One of the things that is so good about FDAC is that it doesn't just see the inevitable at the beginning. It starts with hope, and that hope is so important, as it gets results."

"We really needed that hand holding approach; not being told what to do, but being empowered to do it."

Parent Voices



Leeds has always been a city with outstanding partnerships, committed to best practice and trialling new ways of working.

FDAC continues to be one of the most well-researched and evidence-based practices in Family Justice, and is having an increasingly broad impact across all justice practices nationally and internationally.

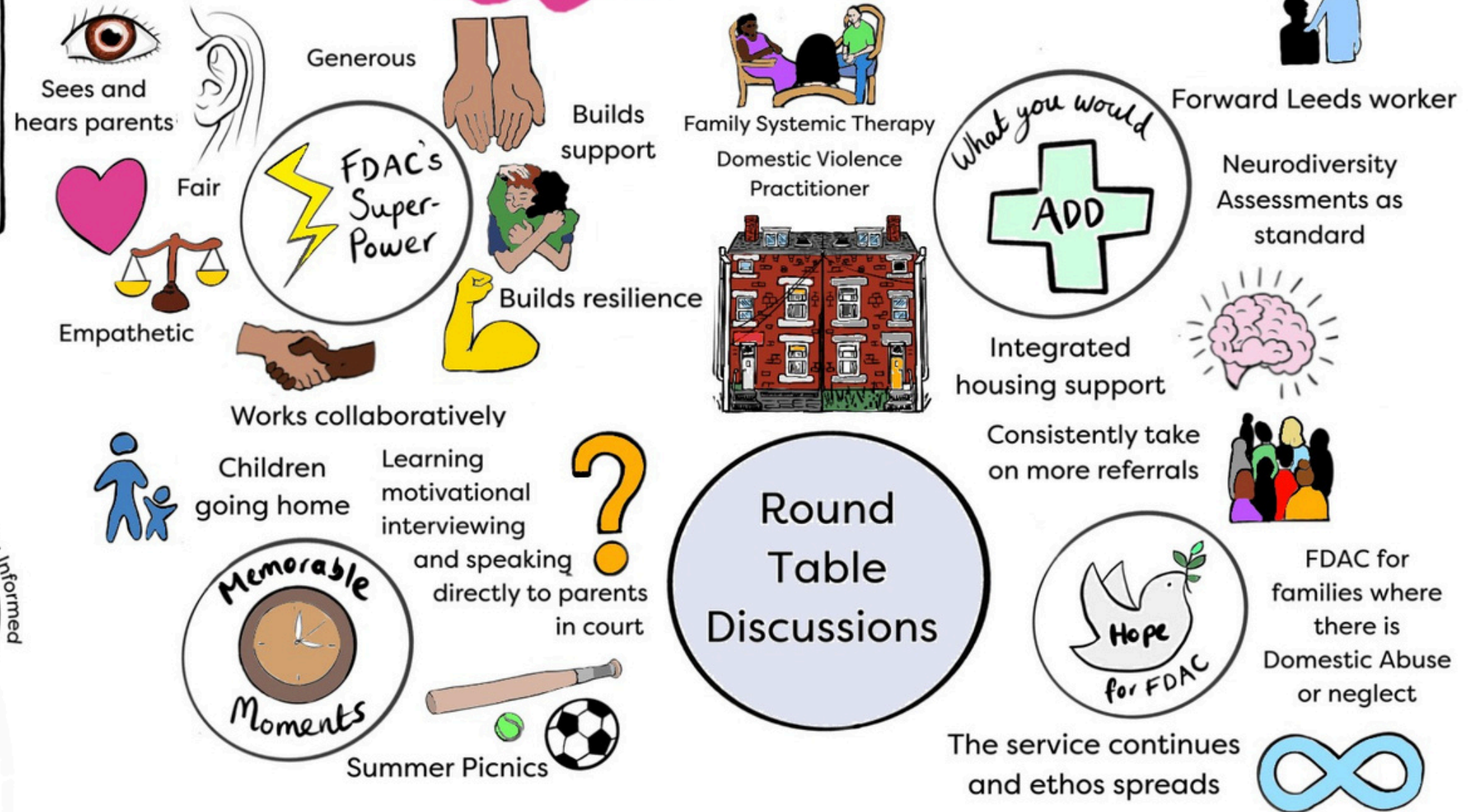
Sophie Carter, Centre for Justice Innovation



Farah Kenyon - CSWS



Leeds FDAC is a brilliant example of how the Local Authority can partner with a multidisciplinary third-sector team to support our communities. Both Leeds Social Care and FDAC ultimately aim to build trusting, nurturing and restorative relationships with families.



Saorsia - Team Manager



Parent Voices

Many FDAC parents continue to maintain a relationship with the service, attending family picnics, Christmas parties, and other events where they can celebrate and support each other's achievements.

The following two letters were written by FDAC parents to give us an insight into their journey, in the hope that it would empower those entering Care Proceedings and Pre-Proceedings to work with FDAC to support their children to be safe.

A letter from one FDAC parent to another

My FDAC Journey.

When I was first told about FDAC, I honestly thought it was all a lie — something said just to ease the pain of losing my son. I didn't trust anyone. I was deep in denial about my whole situation until my little boy was born. My mind, my body, and my heart went numb. I couldn't believe what had happened until the moment he was taken away from me.

From that day on, I made a decision: to leave behind everything I once knew and to move forward with my life. I decided to fight — for myself, for my health, for my mental wellbeing, and most importantly, for my son.

When I joined FDAC, I was welcomed with open arms by the team and the other professionals involved. There was no judgment, no one pointing fingers, and no one making me feel less than a person. Instead, they saw me as a woman who needed support, understanding, and a chance.

Through the process, I made peace with my past. I listened to what people said to me, I accepted the help I was offered, and I began to apply healthy techniques into my daily life. Little by little, I started to change — and because of that, I got my son back.

Ten months later, I still can't quite believe how far I've come. It's been the hardest journey of my life, but also the best decision I ever made. I will forever be grateful to FDAC and all the professionals who stood by me and gave me the opportunity to rebuild my life and my family.

If I could give any advice to someone starting FDAC, it would be this: take each day as it comes.

No one expects miracles — just honesty, effort, and belief in yourself. Trust the team and the process. It will feel scary, uncomfortable, and you'll probably question everything at times — but all of that is part of the journey. Listen, engage, and never be afraid to ask questions. FDAC is there to help and support you, not to work against you.

A letter from one FDAC parent to another

My FDAC Experience.

When I first came into FDAC I felt nervous and scared, because I was worried about my children being away from me. Compared to other Care Proceedings, FDAC was different as I felt informed and knew everything that what was going on, and wasn't kept in the dark. I felt I had help and the opportunity to change rather than just give up. For a new parent coming in, I get that its hard to trust as we've never trusted anyone, but with time those barriers come down, they did for me. I feel I knew I was working on me to get better with the help and reassurance from FDAC.

What helped me through my journey was that someone was listening to me and helping me through how I felt. I could be crying and hysterics, but when we went through this together it wasn't as bad as it first seemed, and I got through this with help from FDAC. It helped me deal with my emotions and I now feel a lot stronger in myself. I feel we are now doing amazing and I am so proud of myself. I feel healthier and I can tell myself we are fine. I can still get bits of anxiety, but I can tell myself I am alright.

The Judge really listened to me and I felt I get to know her, which you don't do normally and that on itself was really different. The Progress Reviews could be mixed emotions, but that was part of learning; dealing with these emotions in a healthy way.

I was so lucky, I maybe felt ready to change, but I also needed to change – seeing the children smile these days makes me so happy. I can see they don't have the big worries or worry about me. I now help my children to not overthink too negatively and be able to deal with their worries and take a breath as this does work!

I want to say thank you for everyone who helped me, without I would have gone down the other route and to new parents don't give up, you have to work hard, it does seem a lot at first with all the appointments, but in the end I did enjoy them. FDAC listening to me, helped me feel important which was good in my hour of need.

Leeds Cost Benefit Highlights

Financial Year 23/24 12 new cases open in year	Per Case	Yearly
Legal Cost (hearings) including repeat case savings	£1,976	£26,893
Barrister Costs	£9,102	£130, 812
Legal Aid	£3,900	£56,935
Expert Advice	£7,754	£108,175
Drug Testing	Omitted as Leeds charged by the courts	Omitted as Leeds charged by the courts
Placement	£80,675 (median estimate)	£946,641 (median estimate)
Total System Savings	£75,890 (median Net)	£936,456 (median Net)

**FDAC saves £4.71 for
every £1 spent in 23/24**

“10 years of amazing work carried out by FDAC. We are really lucky to have such a dedicated team in Leeds, really making a difference to the lives of women and their children.” - Project Worker, Women’s Health Matters

Compared to National Figures for Standard Care Proceedings*, In Leeds FDAC:

Children are more likely to be reunified with their primary caregiver:

34.2% vs **12.5%***

Children in Care Proceedings are less likely to be placed in Local Authority Care:

29.1% vs **54.7%***

Final Hearings are less likely to be contested:

2.97% vs **23.8%***

*National Figures taken from the 2023 Foundations Evaluation of Family Drug and Alcohol Report

FDAC support parents to follow their own hopes and goals by linking them into broader, holistic sources of health and community support.

At the end of FDAC:

88% of parents had improved access to children’s services.

73% of parents demonstrated and shared improved physical wellbeing.

68% of parents reduced their risk of crime and reoffending.

63% of parents had reduced housing issues.

23% of parents accessed support to get into employment, volunteering or training.

Success and Achievements

Families and Children

34% of children have been able to remain/return home to parent

91% of children had improved attendance at school/nursery

70% of families experienced a reduction in domestic abuse

94% of parents have engaged with recovery services around addiction

86% of parents accessed support for mental health and emotional wellbeing

62 children have been supported to reside with a kinship carer and **97%** of these children have been supported to maintain their relationship with a parent

70% of parents have made improvements in recovery, including reduced substance use and abstinence

Families shared ...



“I didn’t get my boys back and I know things did not work out in FDAC, but to me they did. I remember dearly the moment I realised what needed to happen in the Proceedings, this would not have happened without Diane [Family Therapist], our sessions and the support. I don’t feel lost anymore, I’m more complete than I have been from before many of the problems started.”

“Talk to me like I am a human being and not just a job. I am a person I wasn’t born wanting to be a mental degenerate it is not my fault I learnt to cope and deal with my parents. I wasn’t asked how I was treated.

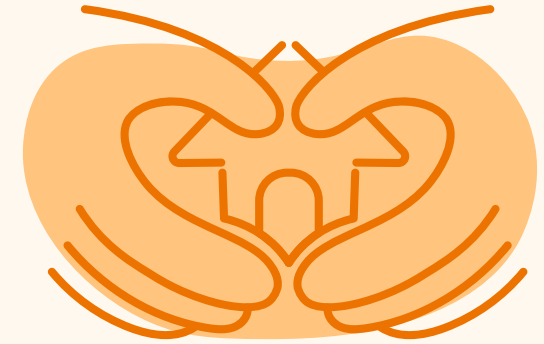
Take time to see things going on, helps to communicate, we are people not problems, people with mental health want people to see them for the person they are and not the out of control degenerate I became.

FDAC helps to be a lot more in control. We may have don’t wrong but not all do it coz choice to, some can’t help decisions made coz of what they have been through. Don’t judge a book by its cover until you have read a few pages. Be aware of what I have been through and show a willingness to listen – sometimes feels like people love to force you to say it and then don’t like it – don’t just look at the pictures read the pages look at what’s underneath.

With FDAC feel happier in self. Before I felt like I couldn’t be me and ‘he’ would get out and drink took over but now keep him at bay.

Been in front of some judges and they don’t even listen, it feels nice that they (FDAC judges) listen, feels like they care. Fair enough they may make the same decision but you know you have been able to get your point across and they have listened.”

The voice of the Social Worker



“FDAC are open and transparent about their expectations from the start, this happens before FDAC take clients on knowing that families truly understand what is expected of them”

“The FDAC process is incredible and that the detailed work and support provided has enabled a significant positive and sustained change which has allowed a family to be reunified due to the support offered, and how the FDAC court hearing are run provided the mother with the confidence which further enabled change.”

“Parents feel fully engaged and heard within the proceedings through regular reviews with the judge and professionals. Professionals are around both the child and the parents rather than seeing them as separate entities”

“Parents are provided with a bespoke package of support that has been considered dependent on their needs and ability to engage. Parents are not simply told to engage with a particular service but part of discussions about what support they actually need and can engage in. Parents are supported to succeed rather than being set up to fail”

“I feel this process gave the mother a better chance to evidence and sustain change due to the high level of support that was provided by professionals who were consistent and familiar to her”



Acknowledgements

Her Honour Judge Hillier – Host

Her Honour Judge Greenan – Closing Statement

Lord Justice Peter Jackson – Keynote Speaker

Sophie Carter (Centre for Justice Innovation) – Speaker

Farah Kenyon (Leeds City Council Children's Social Work Service) – Speaker

FDAC families

DJ Troy/ DJ Shepherd/ DJ Bell – Co-facilitators for roundtable talks with FDAC practitioners

Park Plaza Leeds

Barca-Leeds

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