

Frequently asked questions

Supporting Families: Investing in Practice

FGC at 'pre-proceedings stage'

Q: Could you please clarify eligibility for Family Group Conferencing (FGC) and what is meant by 'at the pre-proceedings stage'?

The Family Group Conferencing project is testing a particular model of FGC, trialled by the charity Daybreak. Within this model, the offer of a FGC will be made at the time of sending families the pre-proceedings letter of intent.

Applying to take part in the programme would simply mean that in addition to your current practice, a proportion of families receiving a letter of intent, would be invited to also receive a pre-proceedings FGC.

If you do not currently offer FGCs as standard in the pre-proceedings letter of intent you are eligible to apply. If you currently offer FGCs at other stages in the process (e.g. Early Help, CiN, family reunification) this does not exclude you from applying.

LA eligibility

Q: Are small local authorities with few care proceedings and looked-after children eligible to apply?

A: Yes, you can still apply regardless of the local authority's size. It might be worth considering submitting a joint expression of interest with another neighbouring local authority to strengthen your application, but this is not a requirement.

Q: Would you be accepting an EOI from Local Authorities who have received an Inadequate Ofsted rating?

A: The applications are open to all local authorities regardless of their Ofsted rating, so we would definitely encourage you to apply. We would encourage you to ensure that in your application you clearly demonstrate the local authority's ability to support the delivery of the project, and that its leaders are similarly committed.

Q: Please can you advise whether you are anticipating receiving bids from single local authorities or whether you would be open to receiving joint bids from neighbouring local authorities.

A: We are happy to receive joint bids

Timeline of project

Q: Is there any further information regarding the timeline for decision on the EOI and when the programme is looking to commence the work with successful local authorities?

A: The timelines for the development of the programmes are still being clarified, so the following are only indicative:

Following the closing of the EOI submission deadline on June 19th, where necessary, we will be requesting estimated budgets and other clarifying information in early July. We hope to be able to inform successful applicants of a decision by mid-July.

The implementation timeline will vary depending on whether the LAs participate in FGC or FDAC. We expect implementation to begin shortly after successful applicants are notified, and for implementation to be underway by September for FGC (although implementation will vary according to what FGC arrangements LAs already have in place).

For FDAC, we also expect implementation to vary according to your current set-up. For those with existing FDAC arrangements, there will be a delay prior to the evaluation beginning while the variations on FDAC to be tested are finalised (up to 6 months). For those without an FDAC arrangement, we would expect local authorities to begin this process of setting-up the FDAC in parallel to the variations being developed, so that it is established by January 2020 at the latest. We envisage the evaluations then running for up to two years post-implementation, with final reports produced by evaluators in early 2022.

Partnership working for FDAC

Q: What should LAs consider when outlining their partnership working.

A: Areas are encouraged to detail the extent of the partnerships they have with the local court service and the judiciary, as well as other agencies who they will work with to deliver interventions.

Funding

Q: Please could you confirm whether the funding for this programme is for two years?

A: The funding for the programme will be paid within this financial year (until end of March 2020). However it would be up to the local authority to decide how to best allocate the funds to support this project going forward.

Q: Is the funding stream only to support FDAC and pre-proceedings FGCs, or would you be open to using it to support other ideas?

A: No. This stream of funding is only available for FGC at the pre-proceedings stage and FDAC.

Q: How will the funding be allocated and in what amounts. How will requests for specific amounts be made?

A: After local authorities have been shortlisted to take part in the programme they will then be asked to provide us with an estimated budget to support their chosen project. If successful, the Department will request a more detailed budget for review and approval.

Sustainability

Q: Would you clarify what period the allocated funding would cover, and whether you require information about sustainability from the project start date or from March 2020?

A: As mentioned above, after local authorities are shortlisted, they will be invited to submit an estimated budget to support costs for the LA's implementation of one or both of the two projects (FGC or FDAC). If successful, LAs will be required to provide a more detailed budget breakdown to the Department. The funds agreed upon will be paid out to the LA before the end of this financial year (by March 2020). However, we expect this project to run and be evaluated for up to two years (from the point of implementation).

Sustainability is a key feature of the application process and local authorities will be expected to demonstrate commitment to continuing these interventions once government funding has ended. We are therefore asking LAs to describe how they anticipate to ensure sustainability of this model over the evaluation period given that we cannot guarantee renewed support and funding beyond March of next year.

On-going support

Q: The form asks what project support we have available to implement a sustainable programme. Is there an expectation that we would be seeking specialised support from an agency or would this type of support be available through consultation with the delivery partners?

A: Daybreak and FDAC national partnership at the Centre for Justice Innovation will provide implementation support throughout the programme.

FDAC Support

The FDAC national partnership, hosted at the Centre for Justice Innovation, will:

- Provide practical support throughout all phases of set-up and implementation of FDACs. This will include induction training for new FDAC sites, refresher training for

FDAC practitioners and judges, support to sites to enable ongoing peer to peer and self-audit system between FDACs, and general clinical advice.

- Enable sharing of information, practice, and guidance between FDACs, and connecting FDAC sites to one another via networking days and forums.
- Provide on-going reporting, monitoring and feedback on patterns and trends between and within FDAC sites. (This may be subject to additional funding)
- Advocate for and promote the greater use of FDACs.

FGC Support

Daybreak will:

- Provide all materials, practical support and consultation throughout set-up and implementation of the FGC model offered in the pre-proceedings letter.
- Provide training for the operational management team, Children and Families teams, and FGC coordinators (both existing, and help with recruitment and training of additional staff).
- Facilitate regional and/or national learning and practice sharing forums for participating LAs.
- Provide on-going monitoring reports and audits as feedback to participating sites, and collaborate with evaluators to identify FGC outcomes. (This may be subject to additional funding)
- Present and promote the use of this Daybreak FGC model to improve the positive outcomes for children and families as well as making savings for LA budgets.

General

Q: The 'Spring Consortium' link on the Department for Education's Innovation Programme website is not working. Where can I find more information?

A: This issue has been flagged. This webpage provides information about the DfE's innovation programme more generally, and gives details on projects funded (including the Phase 1 evaluations of [FGC](#) and [FDAC](#)). Another link to their website is: <https://innovationcsc.co.uk/innovation-programme/>. To get to their 'Projects and Insights' page, do not follow the link further down in the text, but rather follow the tab (same name) at the top of the page.

Ethics

Q: What ethical approval will be sought for these projects?

A: We are only able to seek ethical approval once the LAs and the evaluator have been appointed. At this point the What Works Centre, the delivery partners and the evaluator will work together to develop an evaluation protocol, outlining our plans for the research. Evaluators will be required to submit for approval by a recognised ethics committee (either

one run by the evaluator, or the What Works Centre's ethics committee, which is currently being established).

Q: Why are you using randomised controlled trials to evaluate this programme? Is this ethical?

A: It is important for us to conduct the best possible evaluations of programmes so we can be confident whether they really work - and to allow services to choose models which are going to deliver the greatest impact on children and family outcomes. So, for this programme, we have chosen to conduct a randomised controlled trial, which is generally considered to provide the highest standard of evaluation.

We appreciate that there are ethical considerations when applying this method, particularly in children's social care, and this is something that the WWC and the Department have carefully considered.

For FDAC, where there is a good evidence base to support its effectiveness, we are proposing to randomly assign eligible families to either receive the 'standard' FDAC model, or a variation of this - so all eligible families will be offered a version of the service (capacity allowing). For FGCs, on the other hand, we don't currently have strong evidence which tells us whether FGCs work, or not. The RCT, which compares 'business as usual' with the offer of a pre-proceedings FGC, will help provide an answer to this.

Further information

Q: Would you be able to signpost to further information about FDAC, specifically regarding some statistics on the cost/benefits of the programme for local authorities.

A: The FDAC national partnership, hosted at the Centre for Justice Innovation, hosts a range of information about FDAC

(<https://www.justiceinnovation.org/areas-of-focus/family-drug-and-alcohol-courts>), including:

- A [handbook for sites](#) creating a new FDAC;
- [FDAC service standards](#);
- A [financial impact study on FDAC](#);
- A [summary](#) of the outcome and process evaluations conducted on FDAC to date

Please contact the FDAC national partnership at fdac@justiceinnovation.org for everything FDAC related.

The Department of Education's Innovation Programme's website also provides a project overview of the [Round 1 work on FDAC](#):. Similarly, on the What Works for Children's Social Care's website, the [Evidence Store](#) page has some information and overview of FDAC and current evidence (however none on cost/benefit).