



**Lord Nash**

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Lord Listowel  
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*Dear Francis,*

I am writing further to the commitment I made during the second day of Report stage for the Children and Social Work Bill to clarify the government's position on funding for the Family Drug and Alcohol Courts (FDACs).

Firstly, I would like to recognise the work that those involved with FDAC are delivering and all that has been achieved over the last eight years. As my colleague, the Minister for Vulnerable Children and Families said in support of a recent FDAC research event, since its launch the FDACs and the FDAC National Unit have supported vulnerable children and families across the country and everyone involved in the programme should be thanked for the inspiring work they have done and continue to do. That is why the Department for Education and Ministry of Justice are funding the FDAC National Unit in 2016-17, and is why DfE has previously funded the FDAC approach.

FDACs have been supported under our Children's Social Care Innovation Programme. This Programme was launched in October 2013 to act as a catalyst for developing more effective ways for delivering children's social care so that we achieve better life chances for children receiving help from the social care system and better value for money across children's social care. We are testing approaches like FDAC in order to develop and spread new and more effective ways of supporting vulnerable children.

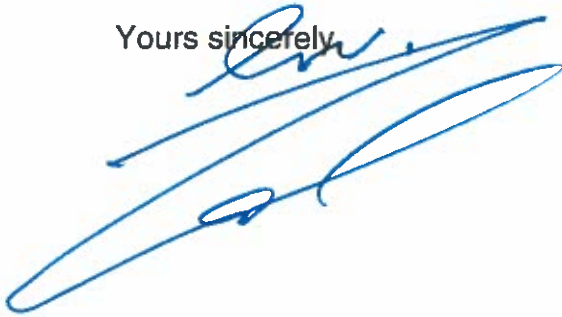
Government funding provided through the Innovation Programme is time limited. All of our Innovation Programme funded projects are expected to have robust business models incorporating clear sustainability plans to ensure DfE's funding is an investment in sustainable and affordable changes to local services.

That said, I am aware from correspondence from members of the public and from leading figures of the judiciary, including the President of the Family Division, that

some people believe that the Government should continue to fund FDACs beyond our current agreement. This is something that the Minister of State for Vulnerable Children and Families and the Secretary of State are considering in the context of wider calls on government funding for children's services.

Thank you for raising this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'John Nash', written over the 'Yours sincerely,' text.

JOHN NASH

## **Background note**

### **What are FDACs and what is the FDAC National Unit**

1. FDACs are the Family Drug and Alcohol Courts. These are essentially courts with judges to which specialist teams, often but not exclusively staffed by local authority (LA) personnel, are attached. The courts take cases involving children being taken into care are referred to LAs, with the judges receiving advice from the specialist team who will also be working the relevant LA on matters around the care application. FDACs, therefore, provide a judge led model of engagement with parents during care proceedings. The first FDAC was founded in London under District Judge Nick Crichton in 2008.

2. FDACs are currently based in the following LA areas: London (Camden, Islington, Lambeth, Southwark); Milton Keynes & Bucks; East Sussex, Coventry; West Yorkshire (Leeds, Bradford, Kirklees, Calderdale, Wakefield); Plymouth, Torbay and parts of Devon; Kent and Medway; Gloucestershire; and Southampton.

3. Alongside FDAC sites, there is the FDAC National Unit which operates out of the Tavistock NHS Trust. The FDAC National Unit was formerly established in April 2015 with the aim of extending ‘...the benefits of the FDAC approach to more children and families, by supporting the growth of new FDACs that reflect the intervention model that research has found to be promising...’.

### **How have FDACs and the FDAC National Unit been funded**

4. DfE has funded the development of FDAC sites from 2008, when it funded development of the London FDAC. However, this has grown over time and the most recent funding for was provided under the Children’s Social Care Innovation Programme in 2015-16. This was for £3.28m and was intended to cover the continued operation of existing FDACs and to secure further sites. In addition, this funding was intended to enable the creation of the FDAC National Unit to support FDAC sites – building formerly on support which the London FDAC had been providing to new sites.

5. As with all Innovation Programme grants (see below), the funding in 2015-16 was provided on the basis that no further funding would be provided and that both sites and the FDAC National Unit should have moved on to sustainable models by the end of that financial year. However, with the risk of staff redundancies at the FDAC National Unit and the threat that FDAC sites would close through lack of support from the National Unit, Ministers agreed to fund the National Unit in 2016-17 at £320k – with further funding from the Ministry of Justice of £200k. No funding was agreed or has been provided to support FDAC sites in 2016-17, meaning that participating LAs are funding these themselves.

### **What is the Children’s Social Care Innovation Programme**

6. The Children’s Social Care Innovation Programme was launched in October 2013 to act as a catalyst for developing more effective ways for delivering children’s social care. It’s aim to achieve better life chances for children receiving help from

the social care system and better value for money across children's social care. The programme tests innovative approaches like FDAC in order to develop and spread new and more effective ways of supporting vulnerable children.

7. Government funding provided through the Innovation Programme is time limited. All Innovation Programme funded projects are expected to have robust business models incorporating clear sustainability plans to ensure DfE's funding is an investment in sustainable and affordable changes to local services.

8. All Innovation Programme grant holders are provided with grant managers in DfE and external coaches from the Spring Consortium to manage and support them with their grants.

#### Current position and next steps for FDACs and the FDAC National Unit

9. The FDAC National Unit grant for 2016-17 is now in place and, in keeping with the advice agreed by ministers, contains provisions that FDAC develop both strong sustainability plans but also a robust exit plan should they not be able to secure adequate funding going forward. However, it has emerged in recent months that despite much work by FDAC National Unit and support from their Spring coach, there is a real likelihood that the Unit will not be able to raise the funding itself in order to be able to operate beyond 2016-17.

10. Officials are working with the FDAC National Unit to support their attempts to find funding from other sources. In addition, the Chief Social Worker (at the request of the President of the Family Division – Sir James Munby) is holding a roundtable on 10 November with representatives of the FDAC National Unit, LA representatives, the research team for the recent FDAC research, and DfE officials.

11. The roundtable will seek to understand challenges that the FDAC National Unit faces and its options going forward, and consider why more LAs do not seem to be attracted to the FDAC model. The roundtable follows a recent meeting that the Minister for Vulnerable Children and Families had with DJ Nick Crichton and FDAC National Unit representatives recently.

12. Officials are already planning to put further advice to Ministers, including the Secretary of State, on the future of the FDAC National (and FDAC sites) and future funding options in late November. This advice will also pull together the research evidence base that exists for FDAC site and the National Unit. We are also working with colleagues at the Ministry of Justice to understand their Ministers' positions in relation to FDAC and possible further funding from MoJ.

#### **Adoption and Family Law Team**