



Ministry
of Justice

The Right Honourable
Lord Keen of Elie QC

The Earl of Listowel
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

9 July 2018

Dear Francis,

FAMILY DRUG AND ALCOHOL COURT NATIONAL UNIT

During the debate on 20 June on the Courts and Tribunals (Judiciary and Functions of Staff) Bill I undertook to write to you about the potential closure of the Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) National Unit.

FDACs have made a real and positive difference to many families since their launch in 2008 and the Government is fully supportive of their work in various parts of the country to help families turn their lives around. The FDAC National Unit, run by Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust (the Trust), has played an important role in supporting existing FDACs and promoting the expansion of the model. The Government has provided substantial funding in this area over the years, initially to help pilot the first FDAC court in London and, since 2015-16, to establish the FDAC National Unit (the National Unit). Funding for the National Unit was originally provided on the basis that it would expand the FDAC model to new areas with a view to it ultimately becoming self-sustaining. Unfortunately, this has proved a challenge despite considerable effort and investment by both the Government and the Trust.

Most recently, the Trust were successful in their bid, alongside a number of local authority commissioners, to the Life Chances Fund (LCF) to support its work within the family court system by developing a social impact bond (SIB) model of funding. A SIB is a form of payments by results contract under which service providers receive up-front funding from social investors to set up and run their service. The investors are paid when the service is successful in meeting agreed outcomes. An 'in principle' award of £6.2 million (over 7 years) was made in autumn 2017 so that the Trust and its partners could develop a SIB model in a number of local authority areas, subject to a final application process. As well as providing an innovative funding model for local commissioners, it was hoped that the SIB model would help the National Unit to become self-sufficient. The Department for Education worked with the Trust to help facilitate the LCF bid and sought to ensure that any application had the best chance of success, including by continuing to fund the National Unit into 2018-19, in order to support the LCF application. The Government is, therefore, disappointed that the Trust has recently taken the decision to withdraw from the LCF, and will no longer receive the funding it had provisionally been allocated.

Going forward, it is important that existing FDACs are able to continue to work with vulnerable families to help them tackle issues with alcohol and substance misuse. In the absence of the LCF award, local FDAC services will continue to be funded, as they and models similar to FDAC currently are, by those local areas who choose to establish or commission these services. We do not expect the potential closure of the FDAC National Unit to impact directly on the provision of these important services.

Officials from the Department for Education are continuing to work closely with the National Unit during the remaining months of the current grant agreement to ensure that the impact of the potential closure of the Unit on local sites is minimised and that any resources developed by the National Unit remain accessible to them and others interested in the FDAC model.

My colleague, Lucy Frazer QC MP, as minister responsible for family justice policy, also intends to visit an FDAC shortly, further to her recent visit to see a settlement conference, to witness at first hand its excellent work.

Thank you for raising this important matter with me.

I will arrange for a copy of this letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Keen', written over the typed name.

RT HON LORD KEEN OF ELIE QC