

Pilot implementation  
evaluation report

# **FAMILY DRUG AND ALCOHOL COURTS (FDAC) PARENT MENTORING SERVICE**



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Foundations – What Works Centre for Children & Families, believes all children should have the foundational relationships they need to thrive in life. By researching and evaluating the effectiveness of family support services and interventions, we're generating the actionable evidence needed to improve them, so more vulnerable children can live safely and happily at home with the foundations they need to reach their full potential.

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# CONTENTS

Authors .....	2
Acknowledgements .....	2
Funding and competing interests .....	2
About Foundations – What Works Centre for Children & Families.....	2
Contents .....	3
Glossary of Abbreviations & Acronyms.....	5
Executive Summary .....	6
Introduction.....	6
Objectives.....	6
Methods.....	6
Key findings .....	7
Recommendations and next steps.....	7
Introduction.....	8
Project background.....	8
FDAC parent mentoring .....	8
Previous parent mentoring evaluation .....	9
Evaluation context.....	10
Objectives.....	14
Research objectives.....	14
Research questions .....	14
Methods.....	16
Protocol registration and ethical review.....	16
Research design.....	16
Key findings .....	20
Implementation and delivery .....	20
Positive features of the parent mentoring service .....	20
Challenging features of the parent mentoring service .....	26
The perceived impact of the parent mentoring service.....	32
Perceived impact of parent mentoring on FDAC parents.....	32
Perceived impact on mentors .....	34



Perceived impact on the FDAC programme.....	36
Discussion.....	37
Implementation and delivery .....	37
Perceived impact of the parent mentoring service.....	39
Limitations .....	39
Recommendations and next steps.....	39
Practice recommendations .....	39
Policy recommendations .....	41
Research recommendations.....	41
Conclusion .....	42
Bibliography .....	43
Appendix A: Timeline of events impacting service implementation .....	45
Appendix B: Initial logic model.....	47
Appendix C: Data collection by method .....	50
Appendix D: Interview schedule.....	52
Appendix E: Feasibility survey.....	55
Appendix F: Revised logic model .....	68



# GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

Abbreviations & acronyms	Description
AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
CJI	Centre for Justice Innovation
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DfE	Department for Education
FDAC	Family Drug and Alcohol Courts
NHS	National Health Service
WWCSC	What Works for Children's Social Care



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

Parent mentoring is increasingly recognised as an influential factor in the generation of positive outcomes for families in receipt of professional interventions, including Family Drug and Alcohol Courts (FDACs). Although parent mentoring is an integral part of the FDAC service model, it has not been widely implemented across FDAC sites and understanding is limited of how these services are delivered and their impact. This pilot evaluation explores the implementation and delivery of parent mentoring in two FDAC sites.

## Objectives

The aim of the pilot evaluation was to understand how parent mentoring services were being developed and implemented in two FDAC sites and, where possible, to identify short- or medium-term outcomes resulting from early service delivery, as well as the feasibility and scalability of parent mentoring nationally. Four primary research questions are addressed:

1. How has parent mentoring been implemented locally?
2. How do the FDAC stakeholders (FDAC parents, parent mentors, FDAC team members, FDAC judges) understand and experience the role and process of parent mentoring?
3. What is the perceived impact of FDAC parent mentoring on FDAC families, parent mentors and the FDAC service?
4. What do FDAC sites need in order to establish, develop and sustain parent mentoring nationally?

## Methods

Two FDAC sites were selected before the evaluation. The initial mixed-methods evaluation was adapted to a qualitative design due to the impact of the pandemic and discovery of the early-stage implementation of the service in both sites. Data collection methods included semi-structured individual interviews, focus groups and ethnographic observation, plus a limited amount of administrative data analysis. Study participants across both sites included FDAC parents, parent mentors, parent mentor co-ordinators, FDAC professionals and FDAC judges. An online feasibility survey was also administered to all FDAC sites. Qualitative data analysis was undertaken as an iterative process, with analysis conducted alongside data collection to inform the specific areas of enquiry, in addition to identifying overarching themes.

Study limitations arising from the pandemic and early implementation, most notably a small sample size, necessitate caution in the transferability of findings to other FDAC sites or parent mentoring contexts.



## Key findings

Study findings suggest the positive features of these parent mentoring programmes are their accessible, flexible and user-led approach to service delivery, offering mentees a range of practical and emotional supports when they are most needed. In addition to positive features related to direct service delivery, sustained mentor training and support was also identified as important and valuable. Informal reflective and developmental spaces where mentors connect previous life experiences with current mentoring practices can provide a valuable mechanism for developing mentor confidence and identity.

The implementation challenges identified include incompatible system-level policies and procedures and insufficient or inaccessible resources that contribute to delays or barriers in recruitment and service delivery. Mentor recruitment and retention is a challenge, with transitional pathways from after-care to mentor development and adequate compensation identified as important issues to address when establishing such a service. Other challenges include the complexity and subjectivity of the delineation of personal and professional boundaries for mentors, with a lack of clear guidance for mentors. Opportunities exist for greater role clarity, recognition of the liminal space held by mentors and greater awareness of the emotional labours associated with mentoring.

Perceived positive impact for both FDAC parents and mentors was consistently identified. Findings suggest parents receiving the mentor service perceive enhanced parental wellbeing and resilience, heightened understanding of and engagement with FDAC processes and professionals, and improved family functioning. Impact on mentors included improved self-confidence and enhanced life aspirations, alongside an increased capacity to maintain a successful recovery. Mentors also experienced reciprocity in their mentor–mentee relationship, with this study highlighting the mutual, bi-directional support of mentor–mentee relationships.

## Recommendations and next steps

Recommendations for practice include strengthening initial parent mentor training, the establishment of ongoing parent mentor supervision, and enhancement of FDAC professional and parent mentor relations and service integration. The development of, and supports available to, parent mentor coordinators to promote effective implementation and establishing realistic and sustainable service goals should also be a key focus.

Recommendations for policy-level improvements to strengthen FDAC parent mentor provision include consideration of remuneration for mentors and dedicated funds to support parent mentor implementation across FDAC sites. Further development of national parent mentor guidance, systems and processes is needed to address gaps and establish consistency in approach.

Recommendations for further research include understanding the mutual benefits and supports associated with parent–mentor relationships and the longer-term impacts of mentoring, including those on children.



# INTRODUCTION

“The fact that [the mentor] has been in my shoes, it made it a lot more personal to me than receiving mentorship from a sponsor in AA [Alcoholics Anonymous]. Everybody has a story in AA but for me [parent mentor’s name] has been in my shoes, and she’s out the other side. She’s gone through it, so I think that’s only going to be more and more interesting, the more and more we talk.” (FDAC parent)

## Project background

Parent mentoring is increasingly recognised as an influential factor in the generation of positive outcomes for families in receipt of professional interventions (Chambers et al., 2019; Huebner et al., 2018; Lalayants, 2020). This includes during Family Drug and Alcohol Courts (FDACs), where the provision of parent mentoring for families is an integral component of the service, though parent mentoring has not been implemented in all FDACs. FDACs offer an alternative to standard care proceedings involving parental drug or alcohol misuse, using a “problem-solving” approach to justice to support parents to reduce their misuse issues. The primary aim is to improve outcomes for children and families, ensuring that children can either live safely with parents at the end of care proceedings or, where reunification (defined as the legal order given for the child to return to live with the primary carer) is not possible, have the best chance for permanency and stability outside the family home. FDACs also aim to reduce the risk of families re-entering care proceedings at a later date. In early FDAC evaluation reports (Harwin et al., 2011; 2014) parent mentoring was recognised as having potential and requiring further evaluation.

This pilot evaluation is part of the Department for Education’s (DfE) Supporting Families: Investing in Practice Programme, funded by What Works for Children’s Social Care (WWCSC), which in December 2022 merged with the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) to become Foundations – the What Works Centre for Children and Families (Foundations). This report sits alongside three other related FDAC evaluation projects funded under this programme: a larger impact evaluation involving 14 FDAC sites, a pilot evaluation of post-proceedings support in one FDAC site and a project trialling new ways to engage parents with the FDAC system.

## FDAC parent mentoring

The FDAC parent mentoring service is an integral component of the wider FDAC service design, with the overall aim as set out in the independent research study of the first FDAC in the UK:

“The parent mentor role is to offer FDAC parents support from another adult who has experienced similar difficulties to themselves in relation to substance misuse and concerns about children’s safety. Parent mentors help parents to engage with FDAC, understand the court process, and access services specified in their intervention plan.” (Harwin et al., 2014)





The intention of the service is to offer all parents engaged with FDAC services the opportunity to be partnered with a volunteer parent mentor, namely someone who has had experience of receiving FDAC services and understands the lived experiences of parents who struggle with drug and alcohol misuse. The parent mentor handbook (National Unit FDAC, 2016b) distinguishes between two types of mentoring:

- Phase 1 – General mentoring support: this is when informal support is offered to several parents at their first court hearing and then during their assessment and planning work with the specialist team
- Phase 2 – Matched mentoring support: this is when mentors are mainly linked (or matched) to a particular parent. Mentors spend time helping parents work towards some of the specific goals in their Intervention Plan.

The exact content and duration of a parent mentor relationship with an FDAC parent, however, varies according to the needs and wishes of each parent. In some instances, the parent mentor will attend the court appointments and non-lawyer meetings. Other parents appreciate having a parent mentor who accompanies them to substance misuse support services outside FDAC.

The recognised source for recruitment of parent mentors is from FDAC graduates. These are parents who have successfully completed the FDAC service and been reunified with their children. Since the service's inception, the recruitment process for parent mentors has been adapted and in some sites it has become an accepted practice to recruit as parent mentors parents who have not been involved with FDAC but rather with statutory Children's Services, and who have succeeded in having their children returned to their care.

## Previous parent mentoring evaluation

Since its inception in 2008 the FDAC service has been extensively evaluated in England. In comparison, the parent mentoring component of the intervention has received less attention. In the early FDAC evaluation reports (Harwin, et al., 2011; 2014) parent mentoring was briefly examined as a component of standard FDAC provision and recognised as an under-developed service with potential benefits for both parents and mentors.

More widely, there is an emerging evidence base on the implementation and impact of parent mentoring across the child welfare system, including child maltreatment prevention services, child protection services and family court. Although peer support approaches have a long-standing history in substance abuse recovery, their application to child welfare contexts is more recent.

First established in the US, these programmes were developed in response to the child welfare system's limited engagement with birth parents and were intended to improve child and family outcomes through enhanced parent involvement (Williams & Grey, 2011). In the UK, there is growing interest, but parent mentoring remains in an early stage of development. Research on parent mentoring is largely US-based, though some small-scale research is emerging in England (Baginsky, 2020; Diaz et al., 2023). Studies from the US suggest mentoring services are largely delivered by and to parents with histories of substance misuse (MCWIC, 2014), so have relevance to FDAC-based mentoring services.



Early parent mentor research consistently highlights implementation challenges related to adopting more inclusive practices with parents with prior child welfare involvement in direct service delivery. These include challenges with policies preventing recruitment due to prior criminal convictions or substantiated child maltreatment (Berrick, et al., 2011b; Leake, et al., 2012) and challenges establishing effective mentor training, support and supervision (Baginsky, 2020; Frame, Berrick & Knittell, 2010).

Research also identifies the organisational culture change needed to achieve effective mentoring services (Leake et al., 2012; MCWIC, 2014) and the role mentors play in influencing wider organisational practices and policies (Damman, 2018; Lalayants, 2015).

Research consistently identifies both proximal and distal outcomes related to parent mentoring, with increased levels of engagement with services and with case plan goals, including those related to substance misuse (Bohannon, Gonzalez & Summers, 2016; Green et al., 2015; Lalayants, 2013) and higher reunification rates (Berrick, Cohen & Anthony, 2011a; Bohannon, Gonzalez & Summers, 2016; Chambers & Cooper, 2017; Chambers et al., 2019; Enano et al., 2017; Huebner et al., 2018; Lalayants, 2020; MCWIC, 2014; Trescher, 2020). Overall, these findings suggest parent mentoring may be a valuable approach to engaging parents with child welfare involvement, and particularly those with substance misuse histories, in service delivery to make positive life changes and to promote good outcomes.

## Evaluation context

In 2015 national FDAC parent mentor guidance based on an earlier parent mentoring service in the first site was developed to provide other FDAC sites with resources to establish their own service. The key documents included in this guidance are:

- *FDAC Parent Mentor Scheme Manual* (National Unit FDAC, 2016a) – this provides an overview of the recruitment, selection, training, supervision and retention of parent mentor volunteers and includes 22 appendices related to recruitment, induction and service delivery
- *Handbook for FDAC Parent Mentors* (National Unit FDAC, 2016b) – based on the London FDAC site, this presents an overview of the FDAC process, and the role of mentors and key policies related to FDAC volunteering procedures and information
- *Parent Mentor Volunteer Programme Overview: Information for Sites* (National Unit FDAC, 2016c) – this one-page information sheet provides a brief overview of parent mentoring.

The FDAC national guidance sets out parent mentoring in specific terms; the expectation is that sites implementing a parent mentoring service will adhere to this approach. This standardised approach involves sites offering parent mentoring from the point of the Public Law Outline being instigated, throughout the FDAC process and up until two years after proceedings conclude, with the intention of improving both parents' experiences of the FDAC process and longer-term recovery outcomes. Despite the existence of national guidance for parent mentoring, a survey conducted by the Centre for Justice Innovation (CJI), which is responsible for "national leadership to strengthen, expand and champion the



FDAC approach”<sup>1</sup>, concluded that parent mentoring was not being uniformly offered across FDAC sites (WWCSC, no date). These findings became one of the key drivers for the inclusion of the parent mentoring service in the wider FDAC evaluation programme, which this study is part of.

The two FDAC sites in this pilot study were selected before the start of the evaluation, via a process overseen by WWCSC and the CJI. Initially, three sites were identified from the pool of FDAC sites selected to participate in the Supporting Families: Investing in Practice Programme. This selection was based on the understanding that these sites were operating parent mentoring services. Of these, one site declined to participate, leaving two sites involved in the evaluation. Further details of the challenges arising from the site selection process can be found in the “Methods” section of this report.

The unexpected and unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic severely affected the implementation of the pre-pandemic service development plans and timescales, and subsequently adversely impacted virtually every aspect of service implementation. Appendix A details the chronology of key events impacting service implementation across the two sites and underlines the disruptive context in which both sites were seeking to operate. Features of this context included:

- Recruitment of volunteers being significantly disrupted as fewer people were willing to take on new volunteer roles in a time of great uncertainty
- Scheduled training for prospective mentors being cancelled and repeatedly rescheduled as a result of the government’s pandemic restrictions
- Mentor retention difficulties, meaning not all mentors who participated in some/all of the parent mentor training stages were interviewed, because they either had left or were taking a break from the service
- Reduced engagement of parent mentors and other staff in FDAC activities due to them experiencing poor physical and emotional health and isolation on account of the pandemic lockdown
- FDAC teams and professional staff across systems experiencing higher levels of need that required a response
- Parent mentors facing challenges with access to reliable technology as FDAC service delivery transitioned to virtual formats
- Mentoring delivery methods transitioning to telephone calls, messaging and virtual platforms (primarily FaceTime or WhatsApp), thereby limiting opportunities to observe parents and parent mentors meeting and engaging in person, either in court or in individual sessions
- The shift from in-person to remote service delivery, meaning consent had to be revised to be obtained verbally, as opposed to in a written format.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://justiceinnovation.org/areas-of-focus/family-drug-and-alcohol-courts>



## Site 1

Site 1 is a large, long-standing and well-established FDAC site that is delivered by an NHS trust and commissioned to take a quota of 69 families per annum. The site covers 13 local authorities in a large metropolitan area. The site has had a commitment to parent mentoring since it began, but resourcing it has proved problematic. In late autumn 2019 the site began to re-establish the parent mentoring service that had ceased operating in early 2018 following the previous parent mentor co-ordinator moving to a different role within the FDAC team. When the evaluation started, a new part-time parent mentor co-ordinator (0.5 full-time equivalent; FTE) was in the process of being appointed. This process, however, proved to be a protracted one and led to the site being without an active parent mentoring service for longer than expected.

In spring 2020 the service implementation process was severely impacted by the global pandemic and did not actively resume until early 2021. In February 2021 the recruitment of prospective parent mentors commenced, with an introductory session attended by seven FDAC graduates and one non-FDAC parent who was involved with statutory Children's Services. Following the induction session parents interested in becoming parent mentors undertook a number of generic mandatory NHS induction sessions (e.g. on confidentiality, health and safety etc) before they were formally engaged as parent mentors. In March 2021 the new parent mentor co-ordinator was appointed but administrative complexities prevented them from being able to actively take up the role until June 2021. During this time period, two of the original eight parents who had attended the introductory session completed the required training and progressed to become parent mentors; one was an FDAC graduate and one a non-FDAC graduate.

In autumn 2021, a further unanticipated delay arose. Despite having received ethical approval from the University of Sussex (see below), further NHS ethics approval was required, delaying the commencement of data gathering in this site until May 2022, when approval was granted. The combination of this delay and the disruption arising from the pandemic significantly impacted the scale of data collection achieved in this site, as within the timescales of the evaluation process there was only a relatively modest amount of parent mentoring activity and associated data to evaluate.

Over the timeframe of the evaluation, the two approved mentors became actively engaged in the parent mentoring service and undertook both types of mentoring as outlined in the parent mentor handbook – general mentoring support and matched mentoring support. General mentoring has included being present in the FDAC offices on testing and assessment days and in the courts. In this capacity the mentors are available to parents on an informal basis, as a friendly, non-professional face who can help parents understand the FDAC model and its requirements, make clear the expectations of the professionals and the benefits of honest engagement with the FDAC process, and help to translate FDAC practice and language into terms that are comprehensible to parents. Both parent mentors have been matched with parents and established positive relationships with them. To date, parent mentor 1 has mentored eight parents. Parent mentor 2 has engaged with five.

Although no bespoke FDAC training was available to the newly appointed mentors during the evaluation, individual support has been provided by the parent mentor co-ordinator. Alongside the existing, inherited parent mentoring practices that were informed by the national FDAC parent mentoring manual and handbook, the current parent mentor co-ordinator has brought their personal experiences as an FDAC parent and parent mentor to the role and these experiences are influencing



how they envisage the service developing. Of particular importance, they believe, is the informal presence of parent mentors within the FDAC office space, as it allows parents to become more familiar with the role of mentors and increases the likelihood of parents engaging with them. Alongside this approach is the intention to increase the presence of parent mentors in the court arena as a source of support, particularly at first hearings.

## Site 2

Site 2 is a county-wide FDAC, which has been operating since February 2016 but without a parent mentoring service. Shortly before the start of the evaluation a newly developed FDAC parent mentoring service was introduced in the site, with plans for this to expand to become a county-wide parent mentoring service, offering FDAC-style court-based and outreach support to parents from the start of their FDAC case and continuing after case closure.

At the start of the evaluation, a parent mentor co-ordinator was in post and a small number of individuals, both with and without FDAC experience, with an interest in mentoring, were waiting to be trained. At this point no parents were receiving a parent mentor service. The day-to-day delivery of the service was the responsibility of a full-time FDAC parent mentor co-ordinator. During the period of the evaluation, there were several staff changes, with the parent mentor co-ordinator post being held initially by one staff member until February 2021, followed by two 0.5 FTE members of staff. At the time of completing the evaluation (October 2022) one of the 0.5 FTE posts was vacant but the recruitment process had been completed and the successful candidate was a former FDAC graduate and parent mentor.

The primary task of the parent mentor service involved the delivery of parent mentor support to current FDAC parents and the recruitment, training, development and supervision of parent mentors, most of whom had FDAC lived experience. Although the mentoring recruitment strategy was not limited to those with FDAC experience, in the course of the evaluation it became apparent that retention was higher in this group. The emergent service delivery design included individual practical and emotional support to FDAC parents in both court and community settings, the latter of which included phone, text, video or in-person contact. Referrals were accepted at any point in the FDAC process, including the final weeks. Towards the end of the evaluation period, mentors were attending court in order to be available to parents more generally and to share information about the service. Mentors could also be involved in other opportunities, including co-facilitating groups or training and contributing to professional recruitment activity.

The development of the parent mentoring service was informed by the national FDAC parent mentoring manual and handbook, and this was complemented by the individual knowledge base of the parent mentor co-ordinators, two of whom had BA-level qualifications in counselling, coaching and mentoring. This has ensured a strong focus on effective mentoring skills and how these might be applied to the FDAC context. The training and support of parent mentors was understood to be fundamental to the service design, recognising the specific needs of mentors with lived experience and in the context of their post-FDAC journeys. Initial (one day, online) and core (three days, in person) training was delivered using a curriculum developed by the co-ordinators and informed by the



European Mentoring & Coaching Council (EMCC) Competence Framework<sup>2</sup>, with a focus on self-awareness, stress management and mindfulness. Coffee mornings – a fortnightly open space for mentors to share, reflect and connect – were established from the outset and were highly valued by mentors, with scope to develop further into a critical and reflective space to enhance skill development. In the course of the evaluation, an invitation to the coffee mornings was extended to Site 1, providing an opportunity for cross-site learning. Mentors were further supported through six-weekly one-to-one supervision and had the opportunity to access clinical supervision if they wished to.

During the period of the evaluation, the number of potential or actual parent mentors was fluid, with some stepping out of the role to pursue other paths at various stages in the process (e.g. pending training, volunteer paperwork approval or parent matching). At the evaluation conclusion, four mentors had completed all of the training/induction requirements. Of these, only two mentors were available for matching, due to health reasons and an internal job promotion affecting the other two mentors' availability.

This newly developed service was at the earliest implementation stage at the start of the evaluation period and although some key components had been in place from the outset, others were continuing to develop. The pandemic had a substantial impact on the speed and nature of the implementation process and development of the service, with some service elements, such as mentoring modes of delivery, evolving in unexpected ways in response to this context.

## Objectives

### Research objectives

The purpose of the pilot evaluation as set out in the research protocol<sup>3</sup> was to understand how parent mentoring services were being developed and implemented in two FDAC sites and, where possible, to identify short- or medium-term outcomes resulting from early service delivery. Due to the early stage of service development, with neither site yet actively offering a parent mentoring service at the start of the pilot, attention focused on early implementation activities and processes and any early indication of service impact.

### Research questions

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. How has parent mentoring been implemented locally?
  - a. How, if at all, does the approach differ from the core FDAC parent mentor model?<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [https://emccuk.org/Public/Accreditation/Competence\\_Framework.aspx](https://emccuk.org/Public/Accreditation/Competence_Framework.aspx)

<sup>3</sup> <https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/research-project/family-drug-and-alcohol-court-parent-mentoring-pilot>

<sup>4</sup> *The Handbook for FDAC Parent Mentors* (National Unit FDAC, 2016b).



- b. What is the rationale for implementing this approach?
  - c. What are the challenges and benefits of this approach?
  - d. What are the core components and characteristics of the approach?
  - e. What are the anticipated outputs and outcomes?
  - f. To what extent is the approach detailed and documented to enable further expansion or scaling up?
  - g. Who is eligible for the service and what are the characteristics of those taking up the service offer?
- 2.** How do the FDAC stakeholders (FDAC parents, parent mentors, FDAC team members, FDAC judges) understand and experience the role and process of parent mentoring?
- a. What parent mentor characteristics and qualities are most and least useful when supporting parents to change?
  - b. What elements of the role are most helpful and most challenging in mentoring parents to support change?
  - c. What factors determine whether mentors and FDAC parents develop effective relationships to achieve positive change?
  - d. What is most helpful and most challenging in working with parent mentors as a member of the FDAC team?
  - e. How, if at all, does the parent mentor practice differ from the site-specific parent mentor model?
- 3.** What is the perceived impact of FDAC parent mentoring on FDAC families, parent mentors and the FDAC service?
- a. What is the perceived contribution of parent mentoring to FDAC child and family outcomes?
  - b. What are the perceived unintended consequences (if any) of parent mentoring?
- 4.** What do FDAC sites need in order to establish, develop and sustain parent mentoring nationally?
- a. What is needed to develop an established group of skilled parent mentors across FDACs?
  - b. To what extent can/should parent mentoring be designed and delivered across FDAC sites nationally?

In February 2020 the research team met with key informants from both sites and with evaluation staff from WWCS and the CJI to develop an initial logic model (see Appendix B). Underpinning this logic model was a programme theory hypothesis: *Parent mentor services provide FDAC parents with unique and relational support that helps to create the conditions for positive life changes, including sustained individual recovery, improved family functioning and improved child wellbeing.* The logic model identified: (i) a number of professional and organisational conditions with the potential to create the



necessary changes to realise the parent mentoring service overarching aim and (ii) a range of potential outcomes of the service for FDAC parents and children, for parent mentors and for the parent mentoring service.

## Methods

### Protocol registration and ethical review

A research protocol was compiled in collaboration with WWCS.<sup>5</sup>

Ethical approval for both sites was obtained from the University of Sussex Ethics Committee (ER/GR87/8). After the evaluation had begun it was determined that, as an NHS Foundation Trust-managed FDAC site, the evaluation activity in Site 1 required NHS Ethics Committee approval. This led to a lengthy delay in the activity in this site being able to progress, adversely impacting the data collection schedule. This ethical approval was sought and obtained from the Health Research Authority (HRA) and Health and Care Research Wales (HCRW) Ethics Committee (22/LO/0014).

### Research design

The pilot evaluation, informed by the principles of realist evaluation, was originally designed as a mixed-method study, as outlined in the study protocol. This approach to evaluation emphasises the importance of context for evaluating service impact and focuses on exploring “why, when and for whom something works, and whether there are any unintended side-effects that need to be taken into account” (Nutley et al., 2013).

An overarching challenge throughout the evaluation was the early stage of development of the parent mentoring services in both sites (see the “Evaluation context” section above). This led to a reconfiguring of the evaluation aims and research design to enable it to focus on the *implementation and process* aspects of the parent mentoring service and, where possible, its short- to medium-term outcomes. In light of the challenges encountered in the early stages of the study, a modified qualitative research design was adopted. In the course of the evaluation, a number of significant challenges were encountered that resulted in adjustments to the scope and design of the study.

### Recruitment and data collection

As previously noted, the two FDAC sites in this pilot study were selected before the start of the evaluation based on the understanding that these sites were operating parent mentoring services.

The evaluation methods were selected to capture the responses of FDAC stakeholders (FDAC parents, parent mentors, parent mentor co-ordinators, FDAC team members, FDAC judges and FDAC leadership from the other national sites) to the research questions listed above. An overview of the details of the data collection process can be found in Appendix C.

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<sup>5</sup> [https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/FDAC-Parent-Mentoring-Pilot-Protocol\\_Sussex\\_Final.pdf](https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/FDAC-Parent-Mentoring-Pilot-Protocol_Sussex_Final.pdf)





### *Semi-structured individual interviews*

All existing parent mentors, FDAC parent mentees and co-ordinators in both sites were invited to participate in the study. Semi-structured interviews informed by an approved interview schedule (see Appendix D) were conducted with parent mentors, FDAC parents receiving the mentoring service and parent mentor co-ordinators (see Appendix C for a breakdown). The mentors invited to participate in the study comprised all the individuals who had completed the pre-requisite training and documentation to become a mentor and those who were in the process of formalising their mentoring role (pre-training, pre-documentation, pre-shadowing). Due to the pandemic context, the interviews were held online using either MS Teams or Zoom, as determined by participant preference.

The early stage of service development and the life circumstances of the FDAC parents presented major recruitment challenges. As the evaluation began, service intake processes were just being established and the sites experienced some difficulty in finding the “right” time to introduce the study to FDAC parents. At the point of matching mentors with FDAC parents, the FDAC parents were provided with information about the evaluation by the parent mentor co-ordinator. The sites were sensitive, however, to the needs of the parents and the insecurities of the mentors taking on this new role, understandably prioritising the establishment of good mentor-mentee relationships over the evaluation requirements. This resulted in discussions about the study often occurring after the work had started and initial relationships had been established. Consequently, it was almost impossible for us to adhere to our plans to interview parents and mentors at different time points across the mentoring relationship. A small amount of our data has a longitudinal component, but the scale of this aspect of our data collection strategy was far less than originally anticipated.

In total 18 individual interviews were conducted, eliciting the views of six parent mentors and four FDAC parents across the two sites. Repeat interviews were offered to mentors and parents with ongoing mentoring arrangements to explore the role over the duration of service provision. For other mentors, matches were more time-limited and included matches with parents nearing the end of their FDAC case. In these instances, the interviews explored the parents’ and mentors’ experience at the service conclusion. One mentor had not yet been matched but had some experience with providing court-based support to parents.

In addition to the above individual semi-structured interviews, three FDAC judges were also engaged in online interviews, following a semi-structured format.

### *Focus groups*

Two focus groups (one in each site) were convened with the FDAC teams in the final data collection phase. All FDAC team members with responsibilities other than parent mentoring-related responsibilities were invited to participate (referred to in this report as “FDAC professionals”). These groups were facilitated by the lead researcher for each site and followed a semi-structured interview schedule. In Site 1 the group was conducted in person and audio recorded. In Site 2 the planned in-person focus group was cancelled following government advice prohibiting unnecessary travel. The online focus group was video recorded.



### ***Ethnographic observation***

It was intended for in-person ethnographic observation to provide an important source of data but the disruption arising from the pandemic made this impossible. Instead, opportunities were created for the research team to engage in more limited, but nonetheless worthwhile, virtual ethnographic observation. Research staff observed, and as required participated in, coffee mornings (n=13) in Site 2, with some meetings also attended by Site 1 mentors. Three virtual mentoring sessions involving one parent mentor and two parents were also observed. In addition, regular online meetings with the parent mentor co-ordinators in both sites (separately and together) were convened and generated valuable data. Ethnographic field notes were recorded following each meeting and observation.

### ***Feasibility survey***

An online Qualtrics survey exploring the feasibility of implementing the mentoring service locally and nationally and the resources/inputs required was administered to all FDAC sites (n=14) with the support of the CJI (see Appendix E). FDAC leadership from six sites responded, representing a 43% response rate.

### ***Administrative data and documentation analysis***

The re-ignition status of the service in Site 1 and the early stage of service implementation in Site 2 adversely impacted the data available for collection. The administrative data systems were in the early stages of development and implementation during the study period, with almost no existing service user datasets being available to draw on in either site. As a result of these circumstances, and exacerbated by the pandemic's impact, we were unable to use these sources of data as part of our data collection.

In both sites this resulted in firstly, minimal *administrative data* or *case documentation* being available for analysis, and secondly, only a small number of mentors and parents being actively engaged in the service, making analysis using *standardised measures* inappropriate.

Some documentation relating to the parent mentoring service was available, primarily related to training activities. This was reviewed and discussed with the parent mentor co-ordinators in both sites.

## **Data management and processing**

All of the interviews were transcribed by an approved transcription service. Field notes from the observation of activities and meetings attended were recorded in Word documents. To protect anonymity and confidentiality in light of the small number of participants involved from each of the stakeholder groups, it was decided to restrict identification by using gender-neutral language; referring to respondents by role, not pseudonym; and not differentiating respondents by the site they were located in.

## **Analysis**

Core data sources from each site included:

- Field notes from regular site-specific meetings with the parent mentor co-ordinators



- Field notes from regular cross-site-specific meetings with the parent mentor co-ordinators
- Field notes from virtual ethnographic observations, including coffee mornings and mentoring session observations
- Semi-structured, video-recorded interviews with the parent mentor co-ordinators, parent mentors, FDAC parents and FDAC judges
- Semi-structured focus group interviews with the FDAC team in each site
- FDAC parent mentor programme documentation.

Qualitative data analysis was undertaken as an iterative process, with analysis taking place alongside data collection and informing the specific areas of enquiry and depth of focus. Participant interviews and regular site meeting discussions throughout the data collection phase provided the opportunity to test early hypotheses and to check developing emergent findings to establish credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Interviews were recorded, transcribed and read to identify new information and insights from the data. Data analysis sought to identify overarching themes in the data and a method of constant comparison guided the coding phase of the analysis, which involved *within* and *between* category comparisons of the codes to generate insights and identify relationships in the data. Throughout the data analysis phase, the project team worked closely together to ensure a consistent approach (dependability) and to reflect on emergent findings from the data (confirmability).



# KEY FINDINGS

This section reports on the *positive* and *challenging* aspects of the parent mentoring service implementation and delivery process in both sites and highlights the extent to which our research findings align with the mechanisms/conditions for change identified in the logic model. Following these two service-focused findings sections, the subsequent two sections report on the experiences and perceived impact of the service on parents, mentors and the FDAC programme. In Appendix F we outline a revised logic model, which incorporates the findings from the evaluation and identifies more precise mechanisms for change within the same theoretical framework.

## Implementation and delivery

### Positive features of the parent mentoring service

#### An accessible, flexible and user-led service

A key strength of the role of parent mentors across the two sites referred to by all the stakeholders (the mentors from their own experience as FDAC parents, FDAC parents, FDAC professionals and judges) was its accessible, flexible and informal nature. This accessibility and flexibility was evident in the unique approach of each mentor, their availability and their methods of communication. Being available to parents when they needed the support of a mentor, including during the period immediately following completion of their FDAC case, was an important component of the mentoring service:

“And that’s a gift for me, though, to be able to offer myself with my experience to do that in those dark hours, in that...when you’re not at court and you’re not ticking boxes and you’re not getting on tubes and going to contact. When you’re sitting at home on your own and you’re thinking my heart is broken or I want to have a drink, this has happened at court and I don’t really understand it and I’m frightened.”  
(Parent mentor)

Mentors were also guided by the preferences of parents in terms of the frequency and method of communication they used, which included phone calls, messaging and in-person contact:

“Like for me, meeting strangers, I get very nervous meeting strangers. It would probably work better for me on the phone because I can speak more, if that makes sense. But like I said to her, if she wants to meet up after, we can meet up. Now I know her, then I would be okay but at first, I am better on the phone.” (FDAC parent)

Some parents preferred daily contact while others found less frequent – weekly, monthly – engagement better suited to their busy schedule of FDAC commitments. Mentors were willing to respect the preferences of the parents and work with more remote forms of contact, but perceived in-person contact as more effective in promoting mutual trust and openness and struggled with not feeling able to negotiate this with parents:



“If you’re going to take on a mentee it would be quite nice to actually meet face to face with them. Maybe a professional could say that to them because it’s all very well we keep saying, do you want to meet up but then no, no, but if there was a professional saying it, it’s different, they will meet up. But they will make that time.”  
(Parent mentor)

Mentors consistently described a user-led approach to support provision, including offering both practical and emotional support, depending on the needs of the parent:

“So even if it’s a case of me holding their handbag so they can go and have a cigarette without getting searched on the way in and out, without dragging all their stuff downstairs, or getting them a glass of water because they’re crying or they’re talking to the FDAC workers, it’s just support. It’s just support. Anything I can do.” (Parent mentor)

This often meant that the mentoring support was not typically informed by mentoring-specific goals, although the focus of the work did attend to the overarching FDAC case goals. The user-led goal was summed up movingly by one mentor: “But I want her to win. I want her to have her life back and I want her to maintain it. My goal is her.”

## **Comprehensible and straight-talking mentoring practices**

Parent mentors were recognised by different stakeholders to have a vital role as translators for parents, by making difficult professional language comprehensible and confusing bureaucratic systems accessible. In an interview with one FDAC parent it was clear that it was all about “straight talking”:

“Yeah, and they could just do it straight down the line, and it’s...it’s not about, you know, it’s telling you straight to your face, ‘Look, this is what is going to happen’...It’s not supposed to go around the houses, and with long words, and it’s supposed to be put to you just straight and bluntly.” (FDAC parent)

The judges who were interviewed similarly saw the value of parent mentors as translators of professional processes and language:

“I mean, I think a parent mentor serves so many different purposes, but it’s someone who helps them understand the language of the process, as it were...to explain individual things that were, that were said during the hearing and to give them an insight of what, how professionals view them, what the professionals are expecting from them and how to talk the language that the professionals expect them to talk.”  
(FDAC judge)

One mentor shared her experience of translating the FDAC professionals’ expectations to a frustrated parent in order to promote her continued engagement:

“She got a little bit sick and tired of it, frustrated, and I said to her at the meeting with other FDAC professionals there, I said hold on a minute, they’ve helped you and now you’re getting silly. There is no need for it. It’s a meeting to say that you’re doing well and where we’re going next.” (Parent mentor)



Importantly, the mentors and FDAC team in Site 1 acknowledged the importance of mentors being available to be alongside parents when outcomes were not positive. Despite their own individual successes as FDAC graduates, mentors demonstrated advanced empathic responses to parents receiving negative outcomes, and were recognised by FDAC professionals as playing an important and unique role at that point in the FDAC process:

“I knew she will have recommendations, the negative, but I didn’t get the chance to speak to her, so I just told her, like, ‘Look, you’re going to hear something that you don’t want to hear. Just stay and listen what they have to say till the end.’ So, she stayed for five, 10 minutes, but she couldn’t hold it. She just ran out of the office, and we thought that this is it, that she’s not coming back...but she came back after 15/20 minutes. I was still around there and she just wanted to talk to me, we didn’t go upstairs, we sat on the stairs.” (Parent mentor)

### **The “lived experience” of parent mentors**

All of the stakeholders understood the parent mentor role as one that complemented the work of FDAC professionals *and* simultaneously occupied a unique position in the overall FDAC service. Parent mentors described the importance for parents of mentors having “walked the walk”; they were recognised by parents as individuals with lived experience of both the recovery process and Children’s Services involvement, who had achieved successful outcomes. This “lived experience” perspective was shared among mentors and between mentors and parents, and was recognised by the FDAC professionals as a view that they could not offer. In occupying this space, mentors could help parents to tolerate difficult feelings and engage more openly and fully with the FDAC process:

“Openness. I think, if I hear a parent sharing something, that I have been through, I can relate with. I try to say yeah, I’ve been there, or I’ve done that, even if it’s a very shameful thing, because it helps them open up more. Yeah, it’s...I do quite a lot of meetings, so it’s not that difficult for me to share those things that I used to be ashamed of, because I know they are in the past now, so I think for me being able to speak that way with the parent and be open about those things, I don’t know, maybe helps them to open up more, yeah.” (Parent mentor)

FDAC parents spoke of how important it was to them that parent mentors understood what they were experiencing and navigating:

“...that is, they’re very, you know they’ve been through everything that I had been through. It’s not, it doesn’t have to be the exact, exactly the same. It, it’s similar, you know, and they’ve been through the process. Um, and that’s what gave me more hope. And that’s what made me open up even more.” (FDAC parent)

Based on their own experience, mentors were able to identify for parents what made a difference to FDAC outcomes and give them advice on how to engage with professionals effectively, based on openness and honesty:

“Be honest; if you need to miss an appointment, let them know, make suggestions, persevere, maintain good communication, make use of the tools/supports they offer.” (Parent mentor)



Parent mentors also felt they could more quickly identify addiction-related behaviours that were not detected by professionals, that might indicate a particular problem, in order for it to be addressed earlier and more effectively:

“They [parents] can pull the wool over your eyes...I was ready to do it when I first walked in [to FDAC]; it’s about being aware of that as well and I think when you have actually been that person you can see it when somebody’s trying to do it.” (Parent mentor)

The interviews with judges also confirmed the importance of the *peer* dimension of parent mentoring, with parent mentors providing a perspective and support that was not available from any other source:

“It is so much more powerful for anybody to hear it from somebody that has been there and done it and actually give them a bit of hope and confidence really.” (FDAC judge)

The lived experience of parent mentors was not only related to their successful outcomes. To become a mentor, parents had to have achieved success through positive life changes but, for some, this came after initially failing the FDAC process. These experiences of success and failure were used to support parents on their own journey. One mentor described how the judge in talking with a parent shared his knowledge of the mentor having had experience of both types of outcome:

“Yeah and like the judge quite enjoyed [having me attend court] as well: ‘So, have you met [the mentor], this is where you can be’ and like one of the girls had a setback and he was like ‘please talk to [this mentor] because she’s the queen of setbacks.’” (Parent mentor)

## **The empathic, non-judgemental and trustworthy stance of mentors**

All the stakeholders described parent mentors as being empathic, non-judgemental and trustworthy, which helped them to be authentic and open in their work with FDAC parents. An empathic disposition was acknowledged as an important aspect of the parent mentor role in all the interviews with mentors and was a primary motivation for them taking up the mentoring role:

“I’m just encouraging her, giving her some self-esteem and some belief in herself because when you lose your children through an addiction, you just feel so worthless and so useless and part of the fight to get them back is being encouraged and being supported and someone believing in you.” (Parent mentor)

The non-judgemental stance that parent mentors exhibited in light of their own experiences was powerfully articulated:

“I also, we also don’t judge because...because we’ve been there, so this is not like whatever this parent tell us, it’s nothing that we, it’s nothing that I haven’t had or done myself before. Like most of the things I’ve done myself, so from my side there is no, not a drop of judgement, which I think maybe, I think is important, I think is important.” (Parent mentor)



Parents powerfully expressed their experiences of not being judged by their parent mentor:

“It’s about how you’re treated, you know, as a human and not being judged. And that’s something that a parent mentor is not there to, um, because they can’t. It’s they can’t really judge you because of...They’ve been where you have been, you know, and I think it’s really special...” (FDAC parent)

Furthermore, parents currently receiving mentoring support also expressed empathy towards other parents struggling with substance misuse and cited this as a reason they hoped to move into mentoring once they had successfully graduated from the FDAC programme.

Building trust and experiencing parent mentors as trustworthy was another recurrent theme cited by all the stakeholders, especially parents:

“It’s about having trust; you know you’re walking into FDAC that you don’t know, whether my head was all over the place when I walked in. Are they connected with social services? Do they work together?...and then you’ve got your parent mentor that keeps you at ease, that reassures you.” (FDAC parent)

Professionals in the Site 1 FDAC team focus group concurred that parent mentors were an invaluable part of the FDAC team as they were positioned as a neutral, flexible, befriending source of support; people who were not professionals and did not hold cases. This was seen as important for parents because they were less guarded talking to non-professionals and this, in turn, could lead parents to be less guarded when engaging with professionals. The team members talked about parent mentors being a source of empowerment for parents, one which was de-shaming, offered hope beyond their current situation and enabled parents to feel comfortable and less “done to”. The parent mentor was described in the focus group as the person who had a “soft touch, warm friendly face” and who “set the tone for a welcoming space, where you’re going to be held in mind”. Through the creation of such trusting relationships parents were encouraged to become more honest and open in their relationships with the FDAC professionals. The parent mentors and parent mentor co-ordinators recognised that encouraging openness was a pivotal part of their role. At the same time, they acknowledged how challenging this can be for parents to achieve given the powerful feelings of guilt and shame that they carry:

“Maybe I’m the person that clients can open up a little bit more to, than to professionals, because I’ve been there and I think that...A lot of us, we carry a lot of shame and guilt, and it’s so much easier to open to the person who has done similar things, rather than to professionals who have been to universities and they’re sitting there with a laptop and noting things.” (Parent mentor)

## **Access to sustained training and support**

Despite the inevitable challenges for both sites of developing or re-establishing a complex service during a global pandemic, there have been clear successes in both implementation and service delivery resulting from the hard work and commitment of professionals and parent mentors across both sites.

In both sites parent mentors, FDAC professionals and judges spoke positively about the support offered to parents from the parent mentor co-ordinators and there was an unequivocal view that this





role was key to the effectiveness of the parent mentoring service. In response to the lengthy recruitment process, one parent mentor acknowledged how she appreciated the patience and tenacity of the parent mentor co-ordinator:

“So it was really useful ‘cos [co-ordinator’s name] would keep in touch and I would keep in touch with [co-ordinator’s name]. They’d just ring and say, we still want you to do this but this is what’s happening.” (Parent mentor)

In Site 2 mentor training and support was a clear strength of the service being developed, with the provision of high-quality training content and flexible parent-led coffee morning spaces offering opportunities for peer support and reflection:

“I think what’s been quite useful is having [the co-ordinator] on the end of the phone. Big time. She’s just so there for all of us. She’s absolutely fantastic. And as well having our coffee mornings every other week so the mentees...communication is just vital, you’ve got to keep communicating with everyone. And there’s also I feel...training, that’s obviously been really helpful and also going to...and then going to court [to shadow] with one of them.” (Parent mentor)

The Site 2 initial and core training, developed in-house and informed by training information in the national guidance, provides a robust foundation for new mentors and has been further revised and enhanced to meet the unique needs of people with lived experience, “to build that confidence that what they’re experiencing in itself is enough, just that consistency and being there can help others...[They] are a professional in this lived experience”, as one co-ordinator explained. This intention was echoed by mentors who described a process of personal affirmation in transitioning from FDAC graduate to parent mentor:

“The training was the first time we all got together and shared our FDAC success or failure stories since coming out of FDAC. But those three days training mostly consisted of us all healing together and talking about our journey through FDAC and how we’d apply that to the training that they were giving us. So we talked through our life stories and it was so amazing because we talked through our trials and tribulations with FDAC and applied it to what we were learning at that time...That was really essential because I think we still needed to heal before we could grow as mentors and them three days training did that.” (Parent mentor)

Additional online mandatory training in Site 2 has served to consolidate knowledge of the parent mentor role in the specific organisational context in which the FDAC mentoring is delivered. Once mentors are confirmed in post, they have access to a range of online training resources that are both relevant to the role and provide mentors with knowledge and skills that are relevant to future paid roles:

“At least five out of the six girls have gone straight into the domestic abuse training, straight into the unconscious bias and so they’re obviously really wanting to learn it. So like we all try and do it together and it’s not an official thing but it is just something that shows us that we’ve been trained and we’re capable.” (Parent mentor)



The coffee mornings in Site 2 have been operating since the early days of the service, continued online through the pandemic and reflect the heart of the service. This space is valued by mentors with prior FDAC experience as somewhere to share and relate to one another with regards to issues in their daily lives, their experiences as mentors and their previous life experiences. These fortnightly sessions are well attended and mentors describe it as a key element to their personal and professional growth:

“That was my own battles that I didn’t feel like I was good enough to be a mentor...That was my own confidence and...since talking to the girls more and [the co-ordinator] more and getting more involved, it’s built my confidence massively.”  
(Parent mentor)

Site 1 had not yet established a bespoke parent mentoring training programme, but the parent mentor co-ordinator saw this as a top priority. In their view the generic nature of the mandatory training associated with the NHS Foundation Trust that this site was affiliated with did not sufficiently address specific parent mentor training requirements or issues.

## Challenging features of the parent mentoring service

### “Unfit for purpose” system-level policies and procedures

A recurrent feature across the two sites was the inconsistency in policies and practice that were being developed to implement the service. While the key principles and goals of mentoring were broadly consistent with the national guidance on parent mentoring, marked differences existed across the two sites in terms of service activity and associated documentation, policies and procedures. These differences were largely attributed, firstly, to the national guidance being based on London site-specific policies and procedures not readily transferrable to another site with established policies/procedures (e.g. volunteer recruitment, lone working) and, secondly, to the early implementation stage of the services operating under pandemic conditions, which required immediate adjustments to be made to the delivery of the service (e.g. general court-based support being impossible during remote hearings). The relatively slow and incremental implementation process meant that some administrative aspects of the parent mentoring service (e.g. service delivery documentation, goal setting) had yet to be fully established by the time the evaluation ended.

A key implementation challenge facing the parent mentoring services in both sites has been the extent to which systems and processes were “innovation-friendly” – i.e. open to less conventional ways of approaching tasks. Particularly difficult system and process challenges were identified that were specifically derived from the complexities of introducing a service delivered by parents with lived experience into large bureaucratic, risk-conscious organisations. In addition, at the commencement of the evaluation process, the parent mentor co-ordinator role had only recently been filled in both sites. As a consequence of their newness in role, the co-ordinators’ knowledge of the processes and procedures was minimal and needed to be expanded in order to re-ignite/establish the service.

Both sites experienced lengthy delays related to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) processes and mandatory training requirements. In Site 1, where the parent mentor co-ordinator had a history as an FDAC graduate, a two-month delay was encountered before DBS approval for the role was received. Similar lengthy delays arose in the DBS approval process for the parent mentors. One parent mentor described her prospective peer parent mentors “dropping like flies” due to the lengthy delays in



receiving DBS approval. Confirmation of the approved status of the parent mentors was further protracted in Site 1 due to the NHS induction systems that the prospective mentors were required to complete.

The risk-assessment of mentors with lived experience also presented challenges in Site 2. Despite the general understanding that criminal convictions should not preclude a parent from becoming a mentor, there were no guidelines about when this might be considered as an obstacle to progressing into the role. This lack of clarity meant that the process of risk-assessing parents with more complex DBS histories was, at times, protracted with uncertain outcomes. For prospective mentors, this generated anxiety that they might not be accepted by FDAC as mentors, despite receiving encouragement to apply for the role.

Other system factors also contributed to delays in service implementation in Site 2. An incongruence between the co-ordinators' part-time working arrangements and automated workflow systems meant that responses to requests for support via an automated system were not always received during their part-time working hours. At times, this created a loop, with repeat tickets raised with different advisers assisting with the same complex query, resulting in unclear or inconsistent advice being offered. These challenges were exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic. Before remote working, co-ordinators would have sought out informal conversations to resolve issues, but this was no longer possible. As one co-ordinator commented:

“It was that lack of being able to just ask somebody...having somebody available that you could go to when you were unsure on particularly the system, and how you needed to do something.” (Parent mentor co-ordinator)

In both sites, the requirements to become a parent mentor and associated delays were perceived as a barrier by some parents who were deterred from completing the induction process due to the nature of these demands:

“But also, after one year, I had those, all those trainings that I had to complete online, and DBS checks, and the whole process took quite long before I could actually start volunteering, and if someone is actually trying to do it, and it takes so much time and all that formal side of it, it can make people think, actually I can't do it, I can't be bothered. Which actually, I think it did, because the first meeting that we met up, about volunteering, there was quite a lot of people willing to do that, and only two of us actually stayed.” (Parent mentor)

These experiences of system and process challenges raised questions for some about the “fit” of a flexible, parent-delivered service within a large, bureaucratic structure:

“I feel like I have a lot of knowledge and understanding of what mentoring is and the mentoring relationship, but actually for me it doesn't fit within the...structure and bureaucracy of what it actually, at the heart of what mentoring is.” (Parent mentor)

## **Insufficient and inaccessible essential system-level resources**

Once in post as a mentor, individuals encountered further bureaucratic hurdles. Parent mentors and co-ordinators described challenges and delays in accessing essential resources for their roles. In Site 1



the mentors experienced lengthy and off-putting delays in being reimbursed for the travel and subsistence costs incurred when engaged in mentoring activities, a particularly concerning issue when parent mentors are needing to budget carefully to make ends meet:

“It’s a new way of working, obviously, so this is one of the things that they’re...’cause when I worked in the [organisation] it was all changing workforce so I do understand that they’ve got...they didn’t know where it sat. And this is one of the big things with the travel expenses and expenses, that was quite a...that was a real problem, it took months and months to get anything.” (Parent mentor)

Mentors in both sites identified problems in relation to the provision of mobile phones and the expectations of how and when they were to be used. In Site 1, parent mentors were initially offered access to work phones or offered call-backs to parents trying to reach their mentor during work hours, which mentors perceived as unworkable:

“It was going on and on, this phone business. I think it was...and I said, look, this is not going to work because they didn’t want me to give my number so where do you stand? I said, these women are not going to answer a withheld number, I don’t answer withheld numbers, you talk about triggers and dealers and people...not going to answer it. Where’s the trust? Where’s the initial trust of you’re a human being, here’s my number, I’m a grown up, if you ring me up and you’re abusive...you know what I mean. Straight away it was a no-go so this was going on for weeks and weeks. I said, I didn’t come into this to get an old Nokia off you guys, I’ve got a phone...it’s true, isn’t it, it’s like, I’m a grown up, I understand about safeguarding and boundaries but these women need a number.” (Parent mentor)

In Site 2, after an extensive eight-month-long delay, parent mentors were provided with work phones but these were perceived by parent mentors as difficult to use due to high levels of security, bespoke and unfamiliar apps, and complicated authentication processes. This produced the unintended consequence of some parents relying on their personal devices.

## **Burdensome recording practices**

Despite Site 1 having previously had a parent mentoring service, there was an absence of systematic administrative data relating to the earlier parent mentoring activity and the case recording systems provided very limited information. In Site 2, challenges in mentors prioritising their mentoring tasks and having capacity to complete paperwork were an issue. For mentors, at times, this was complicated by a lack of IT due to no shared office space, with mentors using phones to complete paperwork:

“You have to log absolutely everything and where I’m doing this in my own time; my life is busy. And it’s like I want to do a simple phone call but then I have to remember this, I’ve got to write...so it’s not just a quick time, I’ve got to write all this down and log it all.” (Parent mentor)

The sharing of mentor-related documentation also required further consideration regarding how the mentor’s activity fed back into the FDAC court process. Although this could be beneficial when the mentoring relationship was supporting positive change, it had more challenging implications for the development of trusting parent–mentor relationships in circumstances when there was a lack of



progress. At the conclusion of the evaluation establishing purposeful, proportionate and ethical documentation and recording practices was an ongoing challenge and priority for both sites.

## **The voluntary nature and expectations of the mentor role**

The FDAC parent mentoring model's reliance on volunteers has been highlighted in earlier studies as a causal factor in recruitment challenges (Harwin et al., 2011; 2014) and similar dynamics have been evident across the two sites in this study. The unpaid nature of this voluntary position requires mentors to have sufficient financial security to undertake the work. For many FDAC graduates this is an insurmountable obstacle and for those who can offer themselves as mentors, it significantly limits the amount of time they can invest in the role.

In Site 1 an introductory session to parent mentoring, which coincided with the commencement of the evaluation, was attended by eight parents who had expressed an interest in becoming mentors. Over the course of the evaluation process only two of these eight parents progressed to take up the role. Towards the end of the evaluation (September 2022) a further two were expressing an active interest in the role. In Site 2, extensive recruitment activity generated minimal response from potential candidates. Of those who were interested in the opportunity, gaining experience in preparation for transitioning to paid employment was acknowledged as a common goal, indicating that their time as mentors was seen as a "stepping stone" to paid work. It was clear from interview comments that without any financial remuneration, beyond expenses, the mentoring role can be difficult for graduates to prioritise, however motivated they are to undertake it:

"I would imagine without making a blanket statement that most of the parents coming through are going to be financially challenged, maybe..." (Parent mentor)

For some volunteers, the training/induction/supervisory commitments and structure of the role (flexible support, court attendance, documentation) are more time-intensive than individuals felt able to manage, and well beyond the one to two hours per week advertised for the role. Volunteer opportunities typically prioritise the needs and availability of the volunteers, accepting their generosity in the time and willingness they have to offer support, on largely their terms. Across the two sites high expectations existed in relation to the voluntary role, with some volunteers perceiving demands as unrealistic given the role's unpaid status, particularly during the early stages of service development when processes may be less efficient. The implications of high expectations on individuals with adverse life experiences and without fair compensation are particularly important to consider in the context of potential inequalities and oppression. These predetermined voluntary conditions have the potential to reflect oppressive structures, recognising the disadvantages of vulnerable parents who have involuntarily participated in an authoritarian child protection system and who are being asked to undertake work in that system using their expertise as a person with lived experience to improve their life circumstances (e.g. potential pathway to paid employment) but without compensation.

## **Recruitment and retention practices and procedures**

Recruiting parent mentors was described by the co-ordinators as a challenging process. It often involved sensitive, repetitive overtures towards graduates who had expressed an interest in the role, but who simultaneously appeared ambivalent and difficult to fully engage. This challenge was



exacerbated by the lengthy timescales involved in the parent mentor recruitment and retention process once an FDAC graduate is engaged, as they are required to be abstinent from alcohol or substance use for 12 months and to have a closed Children's Services case for at least three months before working with parents as a mentor. Anecdotal evidence suggesting an increase in the number of 12-month Supervision Orders for FDAC graduates could create even greater difficulty in maintaining prospective mentors' interest and engagement during this period. This year-long period, post-FDAC graduation, can be a serious deterrent to graduates remaining committed to pursuing the mentoring role and, once they are in the role, their availability to mentor can be restricted by competing demands from paid work, other education/training commitments and parenting responsibilities.

As a consequence, these recruitment, appointment and retention challenges have contributed to an inconsistency in the supply of and demand for mentors and challenges in the relationship between the mentoring service and wider FDAC teams:

"We're sort of in a catch-22 because we're saying, 'Come on, you need to communicate with us and give us parents', but then they give us parents and we're like, we haven't got anyone to support them." (Parent mentor co-ordinator)

While recruiting FDAC graduates as volunteers is recognised as the preferred route, the recruitment challenges have led in both sites to an expansion of this criterion to include non-FDAC graduates, with similar direct or indirect (family, friends) lived experience. How the service develops and according to whose perspective is a source of tension. In one of the sites, the professional perspective of what parent mentoring could or should do was dominant and as a consequence there was a risk of the development of the service not being designed to meet the needs of either the mentees or mentors with lived experience.

## **Personal and professional boundaries**

The uniqueness of the parent mentoring role and its positioning in relation to the professional system presents mentors with a serious challenge as they develop mentoring relationships that are reliant on their own lived experience. Professionals in one of the FDAC focus groups emphasised the importance of mentors being able to develop their mentoring relationships slowly and informally. In another professionals' focus group, the emerging understanding of the parent mentor role, coupled with varied perspectives on the friend-mentor-professional continuum, contributed to divergent views on the parameters of the mentor role:

"We need to make sure that these are not becoming personal friendships. We need to make sure that the mentors are not stepping outside of their knowledge base as well in terms of trying to take on a professional role." (FDAC professional)

Holding the boundary of being a mentor with lived experience, positioned between being a professional and a friend, is perhaps the biggest challenge mentors must navigate and one for which there is limited guidance. Finding the balance that builds the trustworthy relationship, referred to above, while knowing their accountability to the FDAC team, requires careful thought by the mentor:

"...and not to cross it, as well, to become too much of a friend and hide the facts from, which are quite crucial, from the keyworker. So usually, there is something that I feel should, the keyworker should know, I insist on, encouraging a parent, go and share



it, go, and tell it. It's important for you to tell it. If you won't tell it, there will be consequences afterwards, and usually..." (Parent mentor)

For parents receiving mentoring support, this distinction was recognised but experienced as less problematic:

"We don't just phone up and speak to each other like, oh, you know, 'what did you do yesterday?'...on our phone calls we stick to what we should talk to as well, you know, yes, we might chat the breeze but we also talk seriously and so in that respect there is a certain, even though it is, it's a lot more relaxed, there is a certain amount of professionalism in our conversations from her side, 100%" (FDAC parent)

Another feature of the challenges of boundary management combined with the lived experience dimension of the parent mentor role is the emotional labour involved in this work and the risk for mentors of unexpected triggers in relation to their own FDAC journey. Several stakeholders acknowledged how the capacity of a mentor "to meet the parent where they are" (parent mentor co-ordinator) involves emotional labour, which requires mentors to have patience, empathy and tenacity:

"I think it's just really difficult because again...that can be one of the frustrating things of being on this side and seeing parents struggle. Just trying to get them to see that they can. They can achieve and they can do it." (Parent mentor co-ordinator)

Interwoven with this recognition of the emotional labour of the work is the risk of parent mentors' own emotional vulnerability being triggered by their close proximity to parents still struggling with substance misuse issues. One mentor described how this could affect mentors who, although they were FDAC graduates, were still emotionally vulnerable with some unresolved issues:

"You could get another parent who maybe isn't so secure in their own sobriety or recovery but some of that could be quite triggering for them. And it didn't trigger me but it hurt, I relived my stuff..." (Parent mentor)

One of the parent mentor co-ordinators, who had personal experience as an FDAC graduate and parent mentor, articulated the complexity of the parent mentor role and how mentors could struggle with their "legitimacy in this role":

"It's difficult where you've been on the other side...then, to come back in. There's something quite empowering about it, at times. Then, there's something quite, 'I shouldn't be here.'" (Parent mentor co-ordinator)

## **FDAC team and parent mentoring service relations**

Relationships between the parent mentoring services and core FDAC teams in each site were not straightforward. In both sites, there was a feeling of distance and detachment between the service and the team, with this being more evident in Site 2. The Site 2 co-ordinators described their service as being somewhat detached from the wider FDAC team, with inconsistent engagement and communication. FDAC team members in the focus groups acknowledged that they needed more clarity about the mentoring approach and role of mentors, to more accurately and consistently refer parents for mentoring support. The limited understanding of each other's remits served to reinforce barriers in



the relationship between the mentoring service and wider FDAC teams. Despite these challenges, the commitment to developing a shared understanding of parent mentoring and to working together to ensure its success was considered a priority by both parties.

## The perceived impact of the parent mentoring service

From the preceding overview of the positive and challenging features of the parent mentoring services in the two evaluation sites, it is possible to identify the potential impact of the service and the obstacles that need addressing for this potential to be realised. The following sections outline how this impact is experienced and perceived by the FDAC parents and mentors engaged in the mentoring relationship and how it impacts the delivery of the service.

### Perceived impact of parent mentoring on FDAC parents

The logic model identified a number of desirable outcomes for parents that were associated with the parent mentoring service and these were evident within three overarching themes that emerged from the analysis of the study's data. They also resonated with the hypothesis underpinning the logic model, which highlighted the "unique and relational support" provided by the parent mentoring service that "creates the conditions for positive life changes, including sustained individual recovery, improved family functioning and improved child wellbeing".

#### Enhanced parental wellbeing and resilience

The FDAC parents who were interviewed unequivocally identified the positive impact on their wellbeing of engaging with the parent mentoring process. Parent mentors consistently described the process as having a positive impact on the wellbeing of the FDAC parents with whom they were working. They described the mentoring process as helping parents feel more able to manage their circumstances and, therefore, less likely to relapse. Mentors perceived the parents they worked with as being "less stressed" and "less worried" about the FDAC process and saw their mentoring support as helping to "ease the pressure" and "put their [the mentee's] mind at rest" about their situation. Complementing these observations, FDAC parents consistently described having more hope and feeling inspired:

"I think that it's that extra bit of help that's really, really positive and it's someone to inspire you because you get those lulls..." (FDAC parent)

The increased likelihood of recovery maintenance and relapse minimisation was also attributed to the impact of having a parent mentor. In interviews, stakeholders described FDAC parents feeling more positive and motivated "to keep going" despite disappointment or frustrations related to their FDAC case, reunification timescales or unanticipated setbacks. Significantly, FDAC parents described circumstances where they might have disengaged from FDAC or relapsed had they not had the mentoring relationship:

"She's just a constant reminder of how far I have come and not to put myself down and also to be able to tell me, you know, yes, I am two years down the line but I still have my bad days but it's how you deal with it, you know, so it's good to have her experience behind it." (FDAC parent)





## Heightened understanding of and engagement with FDAC processes and professionals

In their interviews, parent mentors described experiences of FDAC parents navigating their way more effectively through the FDAC process, with improved knowledge about processes/systems and what they could do proactively to move their circumstances forward as a result of the mentoring relationship. One parent mentor encouraged a parent, after making good progress, to make requests for increased contact time with her children and for earlier reunification timescales. Another mentor provided advice on how to maintain momentum by escalating requests within Children's Services when timescales were being delayed:

“...ring the social worker's boss, the manager, and say that you need someone in court this Friday. If not, ask the social worker and the judge together. Don't undermine the social worker, be polite, but ask the judge because the judge is going to make the decisions and put it to the social worker.” (Parent mentor)

Mentors also perceived having an impact on parents' progress in the FDAC process by supporting them to present themselves and their progress more effectively in court, as acknowledged by a parent:

“If I've forgotten something, you know, you get nervous and your head gets a little bit jumbled...and so she's sort of that gentle reminder of things that maybe I've forgotten to discuss that I've discussed with her that she's said to me would be important to discuss with the judge. So yes, she really is, she's back-up and also just someone there to say how well she thinks I'm doing and maybe give that little bit of input that I wouldn't necessarily say about myself, if that makes sense.” (FDAC parent)

Another mentor noticed how their advice appeared to contribute to the parent providing better evidence to achieve case closure.

## Improved family functioning

Both FDAC parents and mentors described improved family functioning as a result of the mentoring service. In matches where there were complex family dynamics, the mentors reported supporting parents to reflect on the dynamics of their family relationships and develop a less reactive, and more reflective and strategic, approach to communication with their children. Some parents and mentors also addressed parenting difficulties associated with the changing patterns of parental behaviour post-recovery and re-establishing healthy relationships following child removal. FDAC parents spoke of benefiting from the experiences of parent mentors and their realistic accounts of reunification and parenting in recovery, in preparation for their own reunification experience. According to one parent, FDAC parents need to understand that reunification isn't always “unicorns and fairies”:

“I thought we was going to be living in a bubble, you know, with unicorns and fairies and everything, like there was going to be glitter and happy. It's not...It's hard, really hard, because we're still, [my child] still trying to find [their] feet because [they're] not used to a sober mum and [they're] pushing and pushing and [they'll] say, ‘Well,



go on, I suppose you're going to have a drink now,' and I'm like, 'No, I'm not.'" (Parent mentor)

## Perceived impact on mentors

In keeping with the outcomes for mentors identified in the logic model, parent mentors consistently described in their individual interviews the positive personal impact on their own lives of being in the mentor role. More specifically, these positive outcomes were attributed to the new skills, experience and confidence afforded by the parent mentor role.

### Improved self-confidence and enhanced life aspirations

Parent mentors described, in moving terms, the empowerment that came with being seen by those who were present in the early stages of their journey to have "come full circle" from FDAC parent to mentor. One mentor described feeling empowered in meetings involving professionals who were present during her own involvement as a parent with FDAC and who could see the transformation she had undergone to enable her to be in a parent mentoring role:

"I love it and I love walking in and telling people I'm from FDAC and then their whole attitude changes towards you. Before, I was that very scared individual there and they do still mistake me for a parent that's there needing help. I don't know if it's my presentation or the way I hold myself and when I tell them I'm from FDAC, their persona changes and it's not like...It's proving it to me that I'm there for a good reason and then seeing the old social workers that are there, some helpful, some not so helpful, and just being able to walk in and see them double take at me and think I'm sure I know you. You don't know me, you knew the old me." (Parent mentor).

Most parent mentors expressed an interest in progressing to paid roles in future and felt the mentor role provided opportunities for relevant skill and knowledge development:

"The other day I signed up to a course on motivational interviewing and it will be the first time I've been in a classroom that's not rehab since I was 13. That's all through the parent mentoring." (Parent mentor)

The life trajectory of the parent mentor co-ordinator in Site 1, who had been an FDAC parent and parent mentor before taking up the co-ordinator role, illustrates the powerful impact of having been a parent mentor on subsequent career aspirations and achievements. A similar trajectory emerged in Site 2, with the most recently appointed co-ordinator also having a history of FDAC involvement as a parent and parent mentor. In a similar vein, following her research interview, one parent mentor contacted the research team, in light of the positive experiences she has already had in her brief time as a parent mentor, to discuss career pathways in the mentoring field.

### Maintaining a successful recovery

A key driver for deciding to become a mentor was the desire, articulated by the parent mentors and identified in the logic model, to stay connected with FDAC as part of their continued recovery and personal development journey. The mentors spoke in their interviews about the need to "keep busy" to



maintain their own recovery and the need to stay connected related both to FDAC team members and to the principles of FDAC:

“Well I wanted to sort of keep my finger in FDAC because I wanted to keep myself sort of straight. So it wasn’t, not selfish reasons, but just to sort of be in with FDAC, not say goodbye to [particular FDAC staff] because they’ll still sort of be floating about and sort of keeping me on the straight and narrow and giving something back as well because they gave it to me and I thought, well hold on a minute, I can give something back. And I was so in awe of them and grateful that they had found me and I found them if that makes sense and I do believe things happen for a reason.”  
(Parent mentor)

The mentors described different ways in which the mentor role supported their recovery and made them “more determined to stay sober”. One parent mentor perceived the links with FDAC and the peer support of the other mentors as the important elements of the role that contributed to their continued recovery, a point reinforced by a judge in their interview:

“...it will help them [parent mentor] to keep on the right track really because they feel a greater responsibility as a mentor to set an example, but also the discussion they will be having with the parent will remind them of what is required and what needs to be done because they will be echoing presumably things that they have learnt and have been told during the programme.” (FDAC judge)

Overall, this sense of an ongoing belonging to FDAC provided mentors with a safe and supportive environment that facilitated their continuing personal and professional development.

## **Mentors’ continuing development needs**

The examples above, of the positive impact of the parent mentoring service on mentors, however, cannot be taken for granted. The recognised demands of the role reinforce the need for mentors to be part of a supportive team that role models relationship-based boundaries and to have access to informal and formal supervision. Mentors and co-ordinators were consistent in the view that more could be done to provide FDAC graduates with a transitional space to develop their skills in preparation for becoming a mentor, including confidence building, which could also positively impact on recruitment patterns.

FDAC professionals in one site referred to the trauma triggers that this type of work can evoke, reinforcing the importance of parent mentors being provided with appropriate ongoing support and supervision, as acknowledged by one of the mentors:

“I think one of the things I wanted to sort of mention for people going forward is I think that the parent mentors could do with some supervision. I think that’s really missing and something that I found that I’ve had to really work on with my sponsor in the fellowship. And hold that space for myself because there was lots of stuff that came up that was similar and not triggering for me to use but that PTSD of like, wow, you know.” (Parent mentor)



Parent mentor co-ordinators also noted the continued development needs of mentors beyond the core training:

“When we’ve done our training even with our mentors that went through the FDAC process but it was six months to a year ago that they left, they’re still not confident, because of what they’ve been through; it doesn’t just end when FDAC ends – there is still this ongoing consistent work that’s really needed.” (Parent mentor co-ordinator)

## **Experiencing reciprocity in the parent mentoring relationship**

An unexpected feature of the mentoring relationship was the extent to which it could be experienced as bi-directional and reciprocal. Although this was not explicitly stated as an objective of parent mentoring, it was evident in the interviews that these were important aspects of the parent mentoring experience. Parent mentors spoke of the benefits and value of this reciprocal process for their own ongoing journey of recovery:

“Yeah, I definitely want to keep this volunteering position, whether it will be just one day, which I can do or not, I think it does, it’s...it’s a privilege to be able to do that and it means a lot to me and it gives me a lot as well, it keeps me sober, so yeah, this works both ways, it’s not only me giving them my time, it’s not like that, it’s such a both way...” (Parent mentor)

This sentiment was echoed by a judge’s interview comment:

“I am sure, as with all things, the mentor thinks they are the one that is giving the support, but I am sure by giving that support the mentor actually receives it as well and gets as much out of it as they give, so yes, I think it seems to me that it is quite a key ingredient not just in FDAC but in other similar organisations such as AA.” (FDAC judge)

Parent mentors described having “come full circle” from FDAC parent to mentor. One parent mentor described attending court with a mentee and hearing the judge in her own prior case “singing her praises” about her work as a mentor.

## **Perceived impact on the FDAC programme**

Despite the acknowledged challenges associated with the relationship between the FDAC teams and parent mentoring services in each site there was also evidence of the existence of the parent mentors having a positive influence on the professionals’ perceptions of FDAC parents. This was most apparent in terms of the professionals in the focus groups expressing an enhanced understanding of parents’ lived experiences and their realisation that parents’ engagement with the mentoring service often facilitated the improved engagement of parents with them.

The gradual move to more flexible service delivery modes – for example, parent mentors having a more informal presence in the court and FDAC team spaces – indicated the potential for the FDAC culture to grow in parent friendliness. Given the stage of the service development in both sites it was not yet possible, however, to observe this being realised as a logic model outcome. Similarly, it was too



early in the implementation process for the other programme-level outcomes identified in the logic model, such as the creation of a stable parent mentor volunteer workforce and an established parent mentoring programme with expansion potential, to be evidenced.

In terms of the national perceived impact of the peer mentoring service, the feasibility survey conducted across all the FDAC sites provided unequivocal responses supporting the expansion of parent mentoring services. The caveat to this enthusiasm, however, was the recognition that for this ambition to be realised, significant financial investment will need to be forthcoming.

## Discussion

This pilot evaluation study offers useful insight into the early-stage implementation and service delivery of FDAC parent mentor services and the initial impact of these fledgling services. Some initial important findings have been generated that both align with existing knowledge regarding the impact of parent mentoring services on mentees, mentors and the programmes themselves and contribute new insights into the potential affordances of such provision.

### Implementation and delivery

#### Positive features of the parent mentoring programme

Study findings suggest the positive features of these parent mentoring programmes are their accessible, flexible and user-led approach to service delivery that enables mentors to develop their own unique approach (while adhering to expectations) and offering mentees a range of practical and emotional supports when they are most needed. These findings are consistent with prior research highlighting the value mentees place on mentors providing varied and individualised support based on the needs of those receiving the service (Berrick et al., 2011b).

This study highlights the value of comprehensible and straight-talking mentor practices delivered by mentors from an empathic, non-judgemental and trustworthy stance established through their own lived experience. This important role of translating confusing professional language and helping mentees to navigate complex processes and systems and fostering openness and trust is consistent with prior research (Baginsky, 2020; Diaz et al., 2023; Soffer-Elnekave, Haight & Jader, 2020; Summers et al., 2012). While parent empowerment is a key feature of many mentor programmes, findings from this study suggest a process of “de-shaming”, with mentees drawing on the lived experience of mentors to further contextualise their own life experiences, that requires further exploration.

The power of the lived experience in creating the conditions for success is highlighted in this study and others. As with prior studies, this lived experience provides mentees with a road map for success and mentors with a keen awareness of behavioural indicators that are warnings of potential deviations from this route (Berrick et al., 2011b; Bohannon, Gonzalez & Summers, 2016). Mentees consistently value this unique understanding of mentors as a tool for change (Leake, 2012).

In addition to positive features related to direct service delivery, sustained mentor training and support was also identified as an important and valuable aspect of the service. The importance of established training, supervision and support systems in parent mentor services is well documented, although research findings present a varied picture in practice (Baginsky, 2020; MCWIC, 2014). This



study suggests informal reflective and developmental spaces, such as the coffee mornings, where mentors can connect previous life experiences with current mentoring practices, may provide a valuable mechanism for developing the confidence and identity as mentors.

## **Challenging features of the parent mentoring service**

The implementation challenges identified in this study are consistent with early implementation research in the US, often within large public sector organisations, many of which subsequently transitioned to the voluntary sector to offer a more flexible approach to recruitment and service delivery (MCWIC, 2014). More recently, mentor research highlights the benefits of positioning programmes outside the system, particularly for minoritised parents (Soffer-Elnekave, Haight & Jader, 2020). Regardless of position, Williamson & Gray (2011) stress the importance of buy-in and capacity-building as essential preparation for implementation. In both sites, incompatible policies and procedures and insufficient or inaccessible resources, contributing to delays in criminal background checks, recruitment and onboarding, accessing mobile phones and IT, and receiving travel reimbursement, were identified as challenges consistent with those identified in early mentoring research. Record-keeping requirements that were both onerous and incompatible with the mentors' neutral stance presented a further administrative challenge.

Mentor recruitment and retention is identified as a challenge in this study. Factors identified include the voluntary status of the role, unrealistic expectations on time and mentors' interest in securing paid work. Adequate compensation for time and work would address these issues, but findings suggest that remuneration may not be the only solution to address recruitment challenges. A parent mentor study by Holzner (2017) identifies the importance of after-care supports for parents following child welfare case closure. Previous studies found prospective mentors needed time, encouragement and support when deciding to take on the mentor role and had a range of personal and professional developmental needs that required attention for them to be adequately equipped for the role (Baginsky, 2020; Damman, 2018). This suggests mentoring recruitment could be better integrated with after-care support, potentially peer-led, as a means to develop confidence for a potential mentoring role.

The complexity and subjectivity of the delineation of personal and professional boundaries for mentors and the use of effective boundaries was a consistent challenge for mentors, who lacked clear guidance. FDAC professionals placed importance on effective parent mentor boundaries, which influenced mentor-professional relationships and professional views on the value of the mentoring service. Opportunities exist for greater role clarity and recognition of the liminal space held by mentors, which is neither friend nor professional, to strengthen mutually respectful and beneficial mentor-professional relationships.

Mentors also recognised the significance of these boundaries when identifying the emotional labours associated with the mentoring role and their emotional vulnerability due to personal histories of trauma. These findings are consistent with Lalayants' (2021) identification of secondary trauma experienced by parent mentors. Further research is needed to better understand how mentors make sense of their own personal experiences through insights gained from being in this role.



## Perceived impact of the parent mentoring service

Findings suggest parents receiving the mentor service experience enhanced parental wellbeing and resilience, heightened understanding of and engagement with FDAC processes and professionals, and improved family functioning. These findings are consistent with previous research (Bohannon, Gonzalez & Summers, 2016; Green et al., 2015; Lalayants, 2013) and offer some additional insights. In this study, improved family functioning did not relate to more typical parenting skills development, but rather mentors helping mentees to communicate more strategically where complex family dynamics existed or to prepare for the realities of reunification, including parent–child relationship difficulties as children adjust to a parent in recovery.

Findings related to the impact on mentors included improved self-confidence and enhanced life aspirations, alongside an increased capacity to maintain a successful recovery. Parent mentors also experienced new developmental needs aligned with their personal and professional growth associated with their mentor role. Mentors also experienced reciprocity in their mentor–mentee relationship. Research identifies positive impacts associated with personal and professional fulfilment for mentors from their role (Lalayants, 2013) and a trajectory of personal and professional growth linked with career progression (Damman, 2018). This study further recognises the mutual, bi-directional support of the mentor–mentee relationships and the subtle dynamics of mutual support in practice which have contributed to a more integrated understanding of the mentor–mentee relationship. These valuable aspects of the service would benefit from further research.

## Limitations

The research challenges encountered, which were predominantly the result of the impact of the global pandemic and the early stage and slow pace of development in the parent mentoring services across both sites, have been acknowledged throughout this report. As a result, the overall findings are based on a small sample size. Therefore, recruitment may have been impacted by selection bias, whereby participants with particularly positive or negative views of the programme would have been more likely to engage in the evaluation interviews and focus groups and have their views represented in this report. Transferability of this report’s findings to other FDAC sites or parent mentoring contexts is thus limited.

It has also not been possible to identify direct outcomes in relation to children, as indicated in the original logic model.

## Recommendations and next steps

### Practice recommendations

*Initial parent mentoring training:* Stakeholders were keen to see the scope and scale of the parent mentor training being reviewed to establish a more consistent model across FDAC sites. Consideration needs to be given to how delivery of the training can be reconfigured to allow it to be distributed and embedded over time, to provide a sustained and supportive continuing “professional” development environment for mentors. The coffee morning model has considerable potential to offer such training



and support. In addition, it can provide a safe, transitional space for graduates to remain in contact with FDAC, where, without any expectations being placed on them, they can explore, at a slow and steady pace, their interest (or not) in the mentoring process. Regular opportunities for mentors to shadow other mentors or FDAC professionals can also help mentors to develop their skills and knowledge.

*Ongoing parent mentor supervision:* A strong case has been made by different stakeholders for parent mentors to have access to regular supervision, including clinical supervision and informal sources of support, such as the coffee morning spaces. These varied supports can help to promote and protect the wellbeing of mentors in the context of their parent mentoring work and contribute to the development of their mentoring skillset.

*The FDAC team and parent mentoring service relationship:* There is scope for further work to be undertaken within professional settings to enhance the relationships between the FDAC professionals and parent mentors. The sensitive balance of the supply–demand dynamics of parent referrals and mentor availability associated with the parent mentoring service requires careful attention for it not to adversely impact the service implementation process. FDAC (and Children’s Services) teams need to be invested in the principles and potential of mentoring and be willing to refer parents to the service, while FDAC parent mentor co-ordinators need to collaborate with FDAC team members to encourage FDAC graduates into the mentoring role. FDAC teams also need to be supported to remain receptive to potential changes to their own practice arising from the inclusion of parent mentors as part of the FDAC programme.

*Parent mentoring co-ordinator forum:* Consideration needs to be given to the creation of a national parent mentoring co-ordinator forum. The forum design needs to provide a flexible structure that supports individuals in this role, simultaneously avoiding the parent mentor co-ordinator posts developing inefficiently and idiosyncratically in local sites (see “Standardisation of parent mentor systems and processes” below), while allowing them to respond to any distinctive FDAC site-specific contextual features.

*The parent mentoring co-ordinator skillset:* The evaluation has highlighted how parent mentor co-ordinators are required to evidence both the inter-personal skills required to facilitate and nurture parent mentors *and* the project management skills needed for effective service development and delivery. These essential, but diverse, skills need to be fully assessed in the recruitment process and supported in the continuing professional development space.

*Reciprocity in the mentoring relationship:* The positive experiences and unexpected benefits of being a parent mentor are an important feature of the service that needs to be promoted to attract more parents (FDAC and non-FDAC graduates) to consider taking up the role.

*Establishing realistic and sustainable service goals:* Parent mentoring services will always be small in scale due to the voluntary nature of the FDAC mentoring posts. Recruitment of mentors needs to be a continuous process as existing mentors move on. Developing a sustainable recruitment and workforce plan is an ongoing and challenging task that parent mentor co-ordinators need to be equipped to undertake.





## Policy recommendations

*Remuneration for mentors:* Given the extent to which the voluntary nature of the mentoring role adversely affects recruitment and retention, there are strong practical and ethical grounds for the parent mentor role to be a paid position, a common practice for parent mentoring in other child welfare settings. FDAC's commitment to the service needs to be evidenced by the prioritisation of funds for mentor positions.

*Creation of national parent mentor guidance:* Comprehensive revisions are needed to the existing parent mentor guidance to: (i) respond to the contemporary societal context in which FDAC operates – e.g. attending to the equality, diversity and inclusivity agenda, diverse post-pandemic delivery modes – and, as appropriate, (ii) accommodate to site-specific contextual features.

*Standardisation of parent mentor systems and processes:* In keeping with the creation of generic guidance (above), it is imperative that systems and processes for recruiting, developing, supporting and retaining parent mentors are uniformly embedded within the wider FDAC system. This will improve ongoing administrative data collection and avoid an over-reliance on individuals in parent mentor co-ordinator roles developing individualistic approaches, which put at risk the service's survival when individuals leave their posts.

*Adequate resourcing:* All the responses in the feasibility survey highlighted that FDAC sites which do not yet have a parent mentoring service recognised it to be an important component of the FDAC programme that they are keen to develop. The survey responses highlight, however, that any expansion of parent mentoring within FDAC sites requires dedicated financial investment to make it feasible.

## Research recommendations

*Understanding the nature and processes of the mentor–mentee relationship:* Findings suggest the mentor–mentee relationship can be de-shaming and mutually beneficial. Further research is needed on how feelings of shame are processed through the empowering parent mentor–mentee relationship.

*The role of mutual support:* Research is also needed to better understand how mutual support is reflected in the mentoring role and how mentors make sense of their own personal histories of trauma through insights gained from their mentoring role.

*Measurement of mentoring impact:* Evidence of the potential longer-term outcomes associated with parent mentoring remains elusive in this early stage of development nationally. As a national FDAC approach and site-based services become more established, it is imperative that outcome evaluation research is conducted to generate this evidence. Future outcome research should aim to capture the outcomes for both mentees and mentors, recognising their different stages on the same FDAC journey. Such research must be carefully designed to respect the sensitivities involved in the parent mentoring process. Further research should also seek to capture the organisational-level impact of a parent mentoring service in recognition of the potential culture change associated with more inclusive service delivery approaches.

*Child-focused outcomes:* As mentioned above, there is scope for the outcomes of parent mentoring services for the children involved to be more explicitly identified.



## Conclusion

This study explores the early development and implementation of parent mentoring services in two FDAC sites over a 27-month period, the majority of which occurred during the peak of a global pandemic. The study was informed by a logic model that identified outcomes at the level of the parent, the parent mentor, the child and the FDAC programme. Despite the limitations of the study, valuable findings have been generated, their implications for practice, policy and research identified and a revised logic model compiled, which will be beneficial for the future planning and development of the parent mentoring service.



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# APPENDIX A: TIMELINE OF EVENTS IMPACTING SERVICE IMPLEMENTATION

	Site 1	Site 2
December 2019	Bid outcome confirmed	
February 2020	Sites introduced to evaluation team	
March 2020	First UK lockdown announced	
July 2020	University ethics approval Pilot research protocol approval	
November 2020	Second national lockdown	
		PM core training postponed
December 2020		Mentor training further postponed (Region in Tier 3 restrictions)
		First parent-mentor match interview
January 2021	Third national lockdown	
February 2021	Mentor training event	Mentor co-ordinator resigns. 2 x 0.5 FTE co-ordinators start
March 2021	Parent mentor co-ordinator appointed	
April 2021		Mentor training rescheduled to May
May 2021		Mentor intro training delivered
June 2021	Parent mentor co-ordinator officially in role	
July 2021		Mentor core training delivered
August 2021	Two parent mentors fully trained and active	
November 2021	WWCSC confirm NHS ethics approval required. Start of formal data collection delayed	



January 2022		Mentor core training cancelled (low numbers)
March 2022		Mentor co-ordinator 1:2 leaves post
May 2022	NHS ethics approval granted. Data collection commenced	Mentor core training completed
August 2022		Mentor co-ordinator 2:2 begins unplanned, extended leave
October 2022	Data collection ends	

Blue=project key events

Orange=pandemic key events

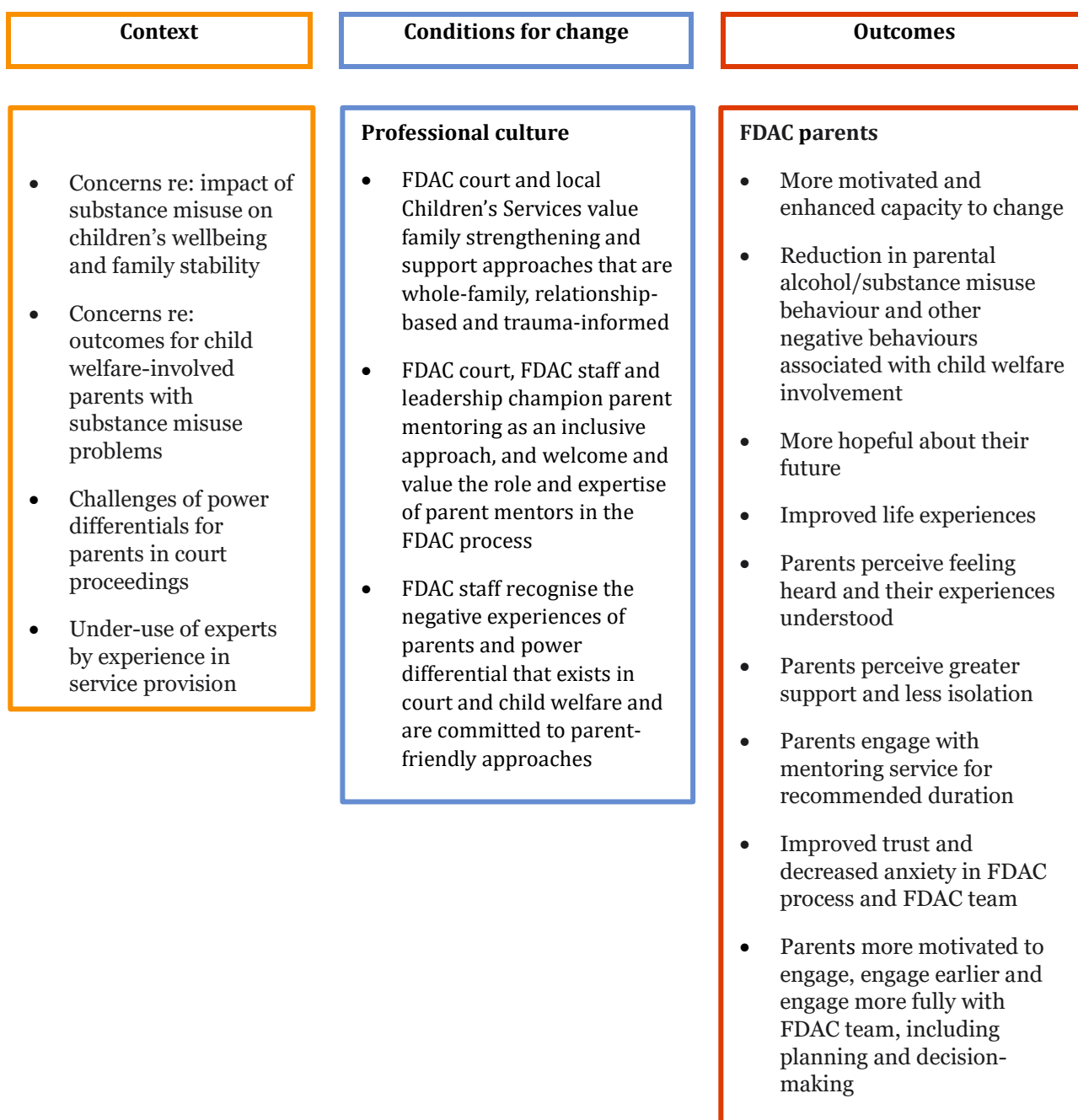
Green=service implementation events

Purple=service staffing events



# APPENDIX B: INITIAL LOGIC MODEL

**Programme theory:** Parent mentor services provide FDAC parents with unique and relational support that helps to create the conditions for positive life changes, including sustained individual recovery, improved family functioning and improved child wellbeing





### **Organisational resources, procedures and practices**

- Designated parent mentor co-ordinator post with the necessary time, skill and resources required for service delivery
- Procedures in place to identify/recruit potential parent mentors, with a focus on FDAC graduates
- Careful process for matching parent mentor and FDAC parent
- Network of professionals and parents to inform parent mentoring programme service development and delivery in view of limited available guidance
- FDAC graduates engage in new voluntary work as parent mentors with clearly defined personal and professional development goals
- Parent mentors develop effective working relationship with FDAC parents, providing trusted guidance and support
- Parent mentors with prior FDAC experience or related experience provide unique perspective and understanding of parents' experience

- Improved understanding of FDAC and child welfare system, its expectations and limits, and how to navigate the system
- Parents more able to self-advocate
- Improved and sustained engagement with treatment, specialist and universal services

### **Parent mentors**

- Improved self-confidence
- Sustained abstinence, continued recovery
- Improved parenting and family functioning
- Increased perceived empowerment
- Increased employable competence and skill
- Stable employment, voluntary or paid
- Increased life and career goals





- Parent mentor models successful FDAC outcomes, offering hope, inspiration, optimism and motivation for FDAC parents
- Parent mentor advocates and mediates between parents and professionals to improve understanding
- Parent mentor co-ordinator provides adequate supervision and oversight to support and guide parent mentors in their work

#### **Children**

- Child safeguarding concerns reduced or eliminated
- Children experience improved family functioning
- Children experience a substance-free home life and improved child health and wellbeing
- Improved placement stability, including remaining with parents long term
- Decreased likelihood of family breakdown



# APPENDIX C: DATA COLLECTION BY METHOD

SITE 1		N=	(Participant n=)
<b>Interviews</b>	FDAC parents	1	1
	Parent mentors	2	2
	PM co-ordinators	2	1
	FDAC professionals	1	11
	FDAC judges	2	2
<b>Ethnography</b>	Coffee mornings	0	
	Mentoring sessions	0	
<b>Meetings</b>	Project-site meetings	12	

SITE 2		N=	(Participant n=)
<b>Interviews</b>	FDAC parents	5	3
	Parent mentors	10	4
	PM co-ordinators	2	2
	FDAC professionals	1	7
	FDAC judges	1	1
<b>Ethnography</b>	Coffee mornings	13	



	Mentoring sessions	3	
<b>Meetings</b>	Project-site meetings	20	



# APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

## FDAC PARENT MENTORING EVALUATION SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE – MASTER

### **Interview (T1, T2, T3) – Parent**

Begin with Introductions, Review Consent, Interview Structure

#### **Initial Interview (T1):**

1. Before we talk about the Parent Mentoring Service, could you tell me a little bit about yourself and how you became involved with FDAC.
2. How did you find out about the Parent Mentoring Service?
3. Why did you decide to take up the service?
4. What has involvement with the Parent Mentoring Service involved, so far?
5. How have you found the work with your mentor, so far?
6. What has been most/least helpful, about the parent mentoring service, at this point?
7. What, in your view, could be done to make the service even more helpful or effective at this point?

#### **Midway Interview (T2):**

1. How have you found the Parent Mentoring service so far?
2. What has involvement with the Parent Mentoring Service involved, so far?
3. How have you found the work with your mentor, so far?
4. What has been most/least helpful, about the parent mentoring service, at this point?
5. Is there anything else the parent mentoring service could do to help you feel more supported and successful?

#### **Final Interview:**

1. Thinking back to when you first met your parent mentor, how has your relationship with your mentor developed over time?
2. Again, thinking back to the beginning of the service, how did your parent mentor support you from then until now?
3. How have you found the work with your mentor?



4. What has been the most and least helpful thing about the parent mentoring service?
5. What, in your view, could be done to make the Parent Mentor Service even more helpful or effective?

### **Interviews – Mentor**

Begin with Introductions, Review Consent, Interview Structure

#### **Initial Interview:**

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself and how you became a Parent Mentor?
2. What do you do as a Parent Mentor?

As you know, we are interviewing some of the parents you work with about their experiences of the service so we would like you to think about those parents when responding to the following questions.

3. When you begin working with a parent,
  - a. what helps them to:
    - i. Engage in the work?
    - ii. Develop a relationship with you?
  - b. What makes engagement and relationship building difficult?
4. What do you hope to achieve in working with parents?

#### **Interview as Work Progresses:**

1. Since we last met, can you tell me about how your mentoring work with parents has been going?
2. How would you describe your relationship with the parents at present?
3. What are you working on with parents and what do you hope to achieve?
4. How would you describe the progress being made?
5. What is helping or getting in the way of progress being made?
6. What, in your view, have the parents found most/least helpful in your mentoring work to date?
7. What have been the biggest challenges in providing a parent mentoring service and how are these being addressed?
8. Is there anything else you would like to share?



### **Interview as Work Concludes (T3)**

1. Before we start, how have you been doing in your role as Parent Mentor since we last talked?
2. Thinking about the parents you work with,
  - a. How would you describe their engagement with the service?
  - b. How would you describe your relationship?
  - c. What has been accomplished in your work with them as a Parent Mentor?
  - d. What have the successes and challenges been in the work?
3. What, in your view, could be done to make the Parent Mentor Service even more helpful or effective?

### **Interview (T1) – Judges**

1. Can you please tell me about your experience of the Parent Mentor Service?
2. How does the Parent Mentor service contribute to the wider FDAC goals?
3. What impact does the Parent Mentor Service have on FDAC families?
4. What, in your view, helps or hinders effective parent mentor service provision?
5. Is there anything that the Parent Mentor Service should do more or less of when working with families and the courts?
6. Can you give me an example of a successful parent mentoring relationship?
7. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the Parent Mentor Service?

### **Interview (T1) – Professionals** – note T2 interview will discuss preliminary findings

1. Can you please tell me about your experience of the Parent Mentor Service?
2. How does the Parent Mentor service contribute to the wider FDAC goals?
3. What impact does the Parent Mentor Service have on FDAC families?
4. What, in your view, helps or hinders effective parent mentor service provision?
5. Is there anything that the Parent Mentor Service should do more or less of when working with families and the courts?
6. Can you give me an example of a successful example of parent mentoring?
7. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the Parent Mentor Service?



# APPENDIX E: FEASIBILITY SURVEY

## FDAC Parent Mentor Feasibility Survey

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Start of Block: Introduction

Please indicate the geographical area where your FDAC is based?

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Please indicate who is completing this form (name, role)

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Does your FDAC currently have an operational parent mentoring service?

- Yes, we have an operational parent mentoring service
- No, but we have previously had a parent mentoring service
- No, we have never had a parent mentoring service

End of Block: Introduction

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Start of Block: QUESTIONS FOR SITES WITH NO MENTORING PROVISION



How would you describe your FDAC's interest and commitment to establishing a parent mentoring service in future?

- We are interested and fully committed with clear plans in place
- We are interested and committed and have taken some steps
- We are interested and generally committed but have not yet taken steps
- We are interested but have quite a bit of work to do to secure the buy-in needed to make it a reality
- We are not interested in pursuing parent mentoring as an approach

What are your implementation timescales?

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What timescales do you have for taking active steps?

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Please explain where you feel there is the most interest and the least buy-in?

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Please explain why your FDAC is not interested in a parent mentoring service

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What do you consider to be the core conditions required to implement AND deliver an effective mentoring service in your FDAC?

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What do you consider to be the main barriers to the effective implementation AND delivery of a parent mentoring service in your FDAC?

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Do you anticipate any of the following barriers or challenges impacting future implementation or delivery of a parent mentoring service? (Please select all that apply):

- FDAC staff recruitment difficulties
- FDAC staff turnover
- FDAC leadership changes
- Financial constraints
- Conflicting demands on staff time
- Insufficient knowledge about parent peer mentoring
- Insufficient knowledge about service development
- Resistance from child welfare professionals
- Resistance from legal professionals
- Resistance from parents (as mentors)
- Resistance from parents (as service users)



If your FDAC was interested in parent mentoring, would you anticipate any of the following barriers or challenges impacting implementation or delivery of a service? (Please select all that apply):

- FDAC staff recruitment difficulties
- FDAC staff turnover
- FDAC leadership changes
- Financial constraints
- Conflicting demands on staff time
- Insufficient knowledge about parent peer mentoring
- Insufficient knowledge about service development
- Resistance from child welfare professionals
- Resistance from legal professionals
- Resistance from parents (as mentors)
- Resistance from parents (as service users)

What does your FDAC need to assist you to implement AND deliver a parent mentoring service?

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If your FDAC was interested in parent mentoring, what would you need to assist you to implement AND deliver the service?

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End of Block: QUESTIONS FOR SITES WITH NO MENTORING PROVISION

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Start of Block: QUESTIONS FOR SITES WITH PREVIOUS MENTORING PROVISION

Please tell us about your parent mentoring service. *For example: When was your parent mentoring service in operation; Please briefly describe your mentoring service (who, what, how); How was your mentoring service managed and supervised?*

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Why did your parent mentoring service end?

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Reflecting on your previous experience, what do you consider to be the core conditions required to implement AND deliver an effective mentoring service in your FDAC?

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Reflecting on your previous experience, what do you consider to be the main barriers to the effective implementation AND delivery of a parent mentoring service in your FDAC?

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Did any of the following barriers or challenges impact the implementation or delivery of your parent mentoring service? (Please select all that apply):

- FDAC staff recruitment difficulties
- FDAC staff turnover
- FDAC leadership changes
- Financial constraints
- Conflicting demands on staff time
- Insufficient knowledge about parent peer mentoring
- Insufficient knowledge about service development
- Resistance from child welfare professionals
- Resistance from legal professionals
- Resistance from parents (as mentors)
- Resistance from parents (as service users)

Do you have plans to re-introduce a parent mentoring service?

- Yes
- No

If not, please explain why

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Please explain your plans to re-introduce the service.

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What does your FDAC need to assist you to implement AND deliver a parent mentoring service again in future?

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End of Block: QUESTIONS FOR SITES WITH PREVIOUS MENTORING PROVISION

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Start of Block: QUESTIONS FOR SITES WITH CURRENT MENTORING PROVISION

Please describe you parent mentoring service. *For example: What does your service look like; How long has your parent mentoring service been operational?; How many parent mentors do you typically have at any one time?; How many FDAC parents do you typically work with at any one time?; How is your service managed and supported?*

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Reflecting on your parent mentoring experience to date, what do you consider to be the core conditions required to implement AND deliver an effective mentoring service in your FDAC?

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Reflecting on your parent mentoring experience to date, what do you consider to be the main barriers to the effective implementation AND delivery of a parent mentoring service in your FDAC?

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Have any of the following barriers or challenges impacted the implementation or delivery of your parent mentoring service? (Please select all that apply):

- FDAC staff recruitment difficulties
- FDAC staff turnover
- FDAC leadership changes
- Financial constraints
- Conflicting demands on staff time
- Insufficient knowledge about parent peer mentoring
- Insufficient knowledge about service development
- Resistance from child welfare professionals
- Resistance from legal professionals
- Resistance from parents (as mentors)
- Resistance from parents (as service users)

End of Block: QUESTIONS FOR SITES WITH CURRENT MENTORING PROVISION

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Start of Block: Conclusion

What advice would you give to other FDAC sites who are interested in developing a parent mentoring service?

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Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience of providing a parent mentor service?

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Is there anything else you would like to add about parent mentoring?

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Would you be available to have a further conversation with us about parent mentoring in FDACs?

Yes

No

Please provide your email address so that we can contact you if necessary:

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End of Block: Conclusion

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# APPENDIX F: REVISED LOGIC MODEL

**Programme theory:** Parent mentor services provide FDAC parents with unique and relational support that helps to create the conditions for positive life changes, including sustained individual recovery, improved family functioning and improved child wellbeing

## Context

- Concerns re: impact of substance misuse on children's wellbeing and family stability
- Concerns re: outcomes for child welfare-involved parents with substance misuse problems
- Challenges of power differentials for parents in court proceedings
- Under-use of experts by experience in service provision

## Conditions for change

### Professional culture

- FDAC court and local Children's Services value family strengthening and support approaches that are whole-family, relationship-based and trauma-informed
- FDAC court, FDAC staff and leadership champion parent mentoring as an inclusive approach, and welcome and value the role and expertise of parent mentors in the FDAC process
- FDAC staff recognise the negative experiences of parents and power differential that exists in court and child welfare and are committed to parent-friendly approaches

## Outcomes

### FDAC parents

- More motivated and enhanced capacity to change
- Reduction in parental alcohol/substance misuse behaviour and other negative behaviours associated with child welfare involvement
- More hopeful about their future
- Improved life experiences
- Parents perceive feeling heard and their experiences understood
- Parents perceive greater support and less isolation
- Improved trust and decreased anxiety in FDAC process and FDAC team
- Parents more motivated to engage and engage more fully with FDAC team, including planning and decision-making



### **Organisational resources, procedures and practices**

- Designated parent mentor co-ordinator post with the necessary time, skill and resources required for service delivery
- Procedures in place to identify/recruit potential parent mentors, with a focus on FDAC graduates
- Careful process for matching parent mentor and FDAC parent
- Network of professionals and parents to inform parent mentoring programme service development and delivery in view of limited available guidance
- FDAC graduates engage in after-care support to develop confidence for transitioning to parent mentor development (training and support) with clearly defined personal and professional development goals
- Parent mentors develop effective working relationship with FDAC parents, providing trusted guidance and support

- Parent mentors with prior FDAC experience or related experience possess unique perspective and understanding of parents' experience
- Parent mentor co-ordinator provides adequate supervision (including access to clinical supervision) and oversight to support and guide parent mentors in their work

- Improved understanding of FDAC and child welfare system, its expectations and limits, and how to navigate the system
- Parents more able to self-advocate
- Improved and sustained engagement with treatment, specialist and universal services

### **Parent mentors**

- Improved self-confidence
- Sustained abstinence, continued recovery
- Improved parenting and family functioning
- Increased perceived empowerment
- Increased employable competence and skill
- Stable employment, voluntary or paid
- Increased life and career goals

### **Children**

- Child safeguarding concerns reduced or eliminated
- Children experience improved family functioning

- Children experience a substance-free home life and improved child health and wellbeing
- Improved placement stability, including remaining with parents long term
- Decreased likelihood of family breakdown