

Tip Sheet: Motivations for Engagement & Change

Internal and External Motivations

People who use violence are likely to enter services with a range of motivations, both conscious and unconscious, short and long-term. The strength of motivations can increase and decrease depending on internal and external interests and influences.

- **Internal Motivations:** A person's values, emotions, goals, wants, desires, skills, and capabilities to achieve outcomes (including self-efficacy).
- **External Motivations:** Police and courts, referral pathways (mandated or voluntary), physical location (e.g., prison or community), capacity to attend and engage with services, support from others, skills and capabilities of professionals offering a service.

Motivations for behaviour change rely on using internal motivators to increase a person using violence's readiness to engage with professionals and preparedness to change their behaviour. However, initial readiness to engage with services is often driven by external motivators.

External motivators may encourage the person to seek help at a time of crisis, (e.g. when they are in urgent need of housing or experiencing financial crisis, losing contact with children, experiencing a relationship breakdown, or rapidly deteriorating mental health). Whereas internal motivators allow for the professional to support the person using violence to consider about the situation beyond the initial need that brought them to the service, and to look at the factors that continue to influence their decisions and behaviour.

Practice Tip: While professionals may uncover motivation through their ongoing professional relationship with the person using violence, it is not expected that the professionals work with them to address parenting and/or violence, unless it is within the scope of their role.

Using the Intermediate Assessment Conversation Model

The person using violence's role as a parent can be a significant motivator for change. Professionals must determine whether it is safe, appropriate, and reasonable motivator. When making this consideration, the safety and wellbeing of children and adult victim survivors must be prioritised. More information on using professional judgement to determine if parenting is a safe, appropriate, and reasonable motivation can be found in the [Responsibility 4 Practice Guide](#).

It is important to recognise that while parenting can be a motivator for engagement and change, the person using violence may use their parenting responsibilities to make violence behaviours towards adult and child victim survivors. Professionals are encouraged to use Structured Professional Judgement to navigate these conversations, while not colluding with the person who may be using violence's motivations related to their parenting related to their use of coercive control and violence.

When engaging with the person using violence, professionals should listen for whether the person is identifying parent-centred or child-centred goals. For example, wanting to have more time with children (parent-centred) rather than to wanting to communicate better so that the children feel heard (child-centred).

Practice Tip: Consider the person using violence's readiness and motivations to address parenting in the context of their use of family violence and explore options for a referral to an appropriate service to respond to their specific needs.

Please see [here](#) for the full Practice Guides, including key examples. For more information on putting the Practice Guides into practice, please see the [PUV Training provided by No to Violence](#).

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (the Centre) would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the past, present, and emerging Traditional Custodians and Elders of this country on which we work.