

Handout

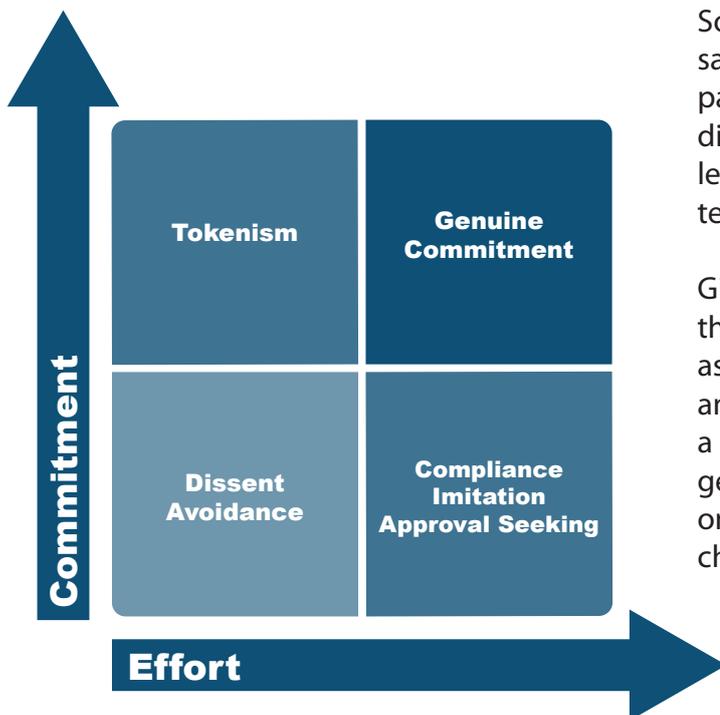
Assessment of motivation to change

In an increasingly pressured and target-driven environment, working to avoid 'drift' is seen as beneficial both in terms of effective use of resources and better outcomes for children and young people. However, chronic neglect may require long-term intensive support and the difficulties which agencies have in responding to the needs of neglected children can result in a revolving door of service provision (Tanner and Turney in Taylor and Daniel 2003) and a tendency towards a 'start again' mentality (Brandon et al 2008) where a 'clean sheet' approach is taken to every fresh referral.

If drift is to be avoided then practitioners need to be clear about what changes they are measuring, how they will be measured and what will be done as a consequence of change or a lack of change. Howarth (2007) advises that a parent's capacity to meet a child's needs is dependent on:

- opportunity
- ability
- motivation

All three aspects should therefore be considered in an assessment of neglect. Assessment of motivation and capacity for change is particularly challenging and two models can help practitioners establish a picture of these variables more clearly and accurately.



Some parents may appear to want to change or may say that they want to change but their behaviour, particularly their behaviour towards the child, is no different. Change in parenting capacity is personal level change and is unlikely to be achieved just by teaching parenting skills (Donald and Jureidini 2004).

Given that such change is of significance for both the child and the parent, it is important that the assessment of the degree of change is both accurate and thorough. Horwath and Morrison (2001) provide a model for assessing the extent to which there is genuine motivation to change. Motivation is plotted on two dimensions of effort and commitment to change:

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Adapted from Horwath, J. and Morrison, T. (2009) 'Assessment of parental motivation to change.' In Horwath, J. (Ed) (2009) *The Child's World: Assessing Children in Need*. London, Jessica Kingsley.

Assessing Motivation

[Excerpt: Howarth (2001) *The Child's World: Assessing children in need*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers (p109)]

High effort and high commitment to change is genuine commitment to change.

For example, I know it's important for Lee to go to nursery so I get everything ready in the evening so we don't have to rush in the morning.

High effort and low commitment to change is compliance imitation or approval seeking.

For example, I get her to nursery at 9.30am because that is what is written in the care plan.

Low effort and high commitment to change is tokenism.

For example, I'm happy for Lee to go to nursery as long as you fetch her and bring her back in a taxi.

Low effort and low commitment to change is dissent or avoidance.

For example, The nursery seems to be doing more harm than good; he comes back really tired so why bother?

External motivators are not nearly as effective as internally held motivators. The adage 'You can take a horse to water but you can't make it drink' aptly captures the reality that the greater the internal force for change, the better the future prognosis and vice versa. Calder (2002, p371) suggests that the following questions may be helpful for parents to consider:

- **Why is it important that I change?**
- **Do I have the ability to change?**
- **What does change really mean?**
- **What will I have to do that I can't do now?**
- **What will I not have to do that I do now?**
- **Who can help me change in what way?**
- **What (if anything) have I tried to change in the past and was it successful?**

A continuum of motivation (Calder 2002; Morrison 1991) addresses a range of motivational statements, from External motivators ('I don't have any problems') along a continuum to a series of increasingly internalised motivators, culminating in the Internal motivator which expresses a clear commitment to change ('I want to change').

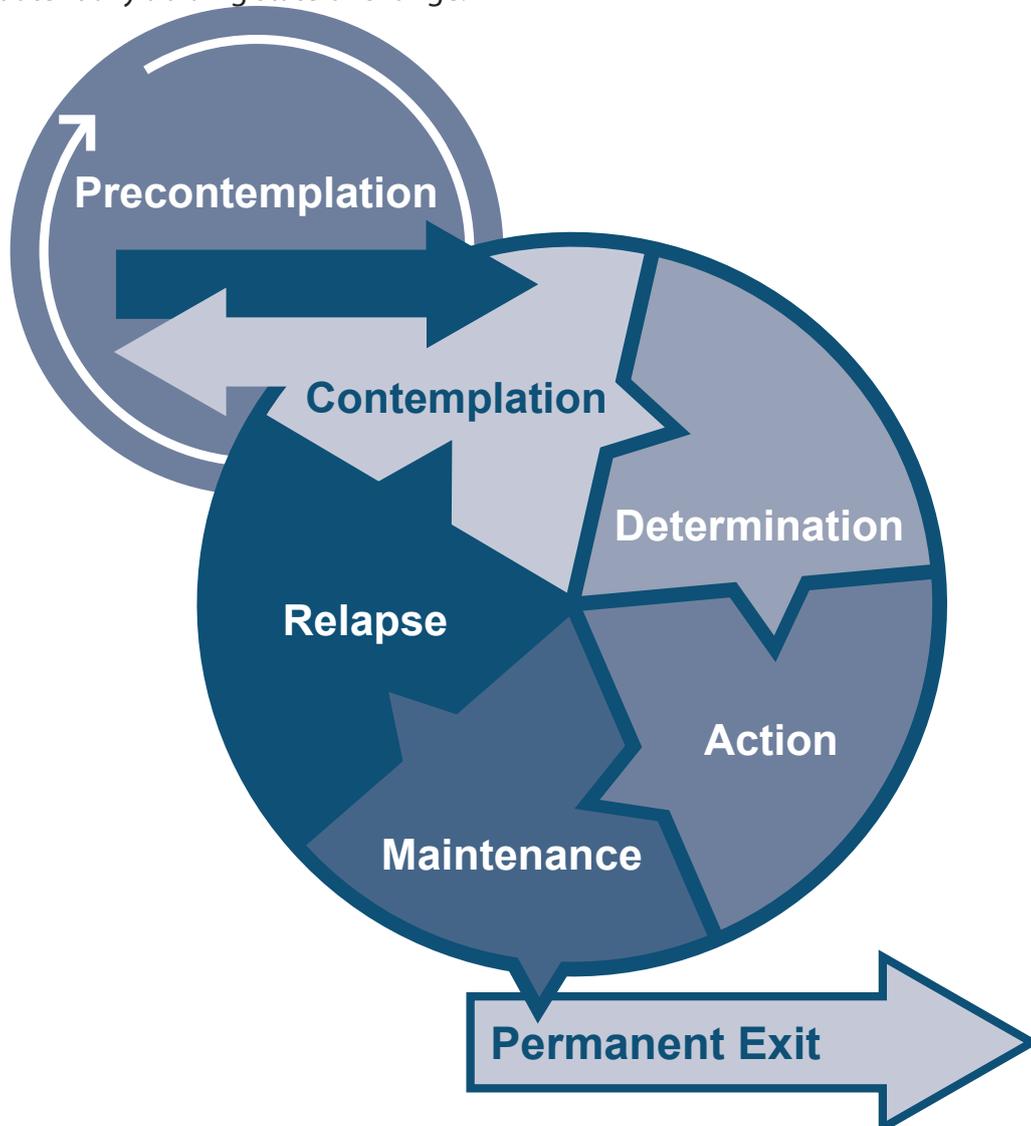
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Continuum of Motivation

One of the few really effective ways of gauging whether parents are able and willing to change within a timescale that is appropriate for the child is to monitor very closely whether the child's lived experience has improved on a day-to-day basis (Daniel and Rioch 2007). Who is in a position to provide this kind of monitoring? How can they be supported to gather and make sense of these observations so as to allow an accurate assessment of change?

A model of change is highlighted in Calder (2003), based on the Cycle of Change by Prochaska and DiClemente, (1992) reflecting the process of change and indicating stages of change and points at which the participant might exit from the change process and what their exit indicates.

A version of Prochaska and DiClemente's original model is provided below. This model is useful in providing a means of evaluating the changes an individual has made or has yet to make. It also reminds us that change is a natural cycle with clear stages which should be worked through in sequence to attain a healthy and potentially abiding state of change.



The motivation to change

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