

# Formulation Cheat Sheet

Formulation is clinical framework which helps to develop a ‘*shared understanding*’ of a person’s problems and how they developed. It builds on the initial assessment and offers a story or hypothesis unique to the person’s history.

## Why is formulation important?

- **Collaborative:** Formulations are created alongside the client.
- **Guides treatment:** It explains why problems occur and how they are maintained, providing targets for treatment.
- **Bridges the gap:** It connects evidence-based practice (what works) and the person’s situation (what will likely work for the person).
- **Improves outcomes:** Strengthens therapeutic alliance and client satisfaction.

## When and how is it used?

- Typically developed after assessment, using conversation and structured tools.
- Can be individual or team-based, supporting shared care planning.
- Helps to identify what to target, monitor progress, and adapt goals.
- They are a hypothesis, not a fixed truth. Formulations are a continuous process which are reviewed and updated regularly. They are flexible, simple, and can be used one-off or ongoing as part of treatment.

## The 5 P’s Model

A simple structured often used in formulation is the 5 P’s (Presenting, Predisposing, Precipitating, Perpetuating, and Protective factors).

Domain	What is it?	Guiding questions
<b>Presenting</b>	The problem the person is seeking help for – it is happening in the here and now causing harm.	What are the current problems related to your substance use and other life areas? What brings you into treatment now?
<b>Predisposing</b>	Long-standing or past factors that underlie the problem substance use.	What historical or background factors have made this person vulnerable to developing these problems? (Genetics, trauma, early use, mental health etc)
<b>Precipitating</b>	Triggers to substance use. Consider internal and external triggers; It can help to anchor this discussion in a specific recent episode of use.	What recent events or stressors have triggered the current episode of use?
<b>Perpetuating</b>	Stable and current factors that maintain the substance use.	What factors currently maintain use or prevent recovery?
<b>Protective</b>	Factors that can reduce substance use and resources to support change. Consider personal resources as well as social resources.	What strengths, resources, or supports can the person draw on? What has helped them cope or succeed in the past? What gives them meaning or motivation?

# ABC Model

