

Name of Tool	The AIM Project Assessment Models for Children under the age of 12 years old (3 <sup>rd</sup> edition)
Category	Youth Assessment: Sexual Violence Risk (Awaiting Validation)
Author / Publisher	Carol Carson/The AIM Project
Year	2019

### Description

- The AIM Project offers two models for children under 12 years old: one for children under 7 years (Pattern Mapping), the other for older children aged 8-12 years old, which is a dynamic risk assessment model framework not an actuarial risk assessment tool Both models are designed to be visual and easily updated at review points to highlight progress being made to facilitate communication with parents, children and professionals. (Carson, 2019)
- The AIM Under 12s model for children aged 8 – 12 years old, is a framework for professional analysis and decision making. There are five Domains, with five Factors within each Domain looking at different aspects which need to be considered to give an overall outcome for that Domain. In addition, each Factor has a number of items provided to support the professional analysis, and these can be added to by information which is unique to a particular child or their family. Within every Domain professionals are asked to consider both strengths and concerns (Carson, 2019).
- The factors are scored as follows: zero, no general concern or it is an area of strength; two, for some concern; four, where there is significant concern. The scores for all 5 Factors within each Domain are then collated to give an outcome for the Domain. Once all 5 Domains are scored, this provides a visual profile graph of the child in their context indicating areas of significant concern which would be red (scores of 14 -20); areas which indicate work is required which would be amber (scores of 6 – 12) and areas which are not a concern or are potentially strengths which would be green (scores of 0 -4) (Carson, 2019).
- Pattern Mapping is a visual framework capturing key life events and sexual behaviours.

### Age Appropriateness

0 -7 years – Pattern Mapping

8 -12 – AIM Under 12s Assessment Model

### Assessor Qualifications

There is a competency requirement for using the AIM Under 12s Model; only those approved by The AIM Project can use the Model. The rationale behind this is to provide a quality assurance for commissioners, increase the confidence of practitioners and ensure the quality of assessments undertaken. Potential assessors must undertake the relevant training run by The AIM Project and pass the competency requirement in the training in order to be approved by The AIM Project to use the models. It is expected that those attending the training should have relevant practice experience of complex assessments, ideally of sexual behaviour (Carson, 2019).

### Tool Development

- The AIM Under 12s was first published in 2007, with subsequent updates following in 2014 and 2019. The AIM Under 12s was designed so it allows for progress and change to be visually represented to the young person, their family and professionals. The checklist of 'normal,' 'appropriate,' 'inappropriate' and 'harmful' is based on Hackett's (2010) 'Continuum of Sexual Behaviours'. It recognises that children should not be assessed solely on their sexual behaviours (Carson, 2019).
  - The AIM Under 12s model is recommended for children aged 8-12 years, it shares the same AIM framework of Domains and Factors as AIM3 but is based on research and practice with children and takes into account their developmental level. This consists of Five Domains:
    - 1) Sexual Behaviour, looking at the nature and extent of the sexual behaviour including characteristics of victims;
    - 2) Non-sexual behaviour, looking at antisocial behaviour, mental health and general behaviour;
    - 3) Developmental, looking at the child's pathway into the sexual behaviour considering their own childhood issues such as possible abuse or adverse childhood experiences and their families functioning
    - 4) Environmental/family, considering the ability and willingness of the adults around the child to provide safety and security and to both support and supervise the child to help them change or cease the sexual behaviour. It also considers the other key people around the child and adults who may support or hinder any Safety Plans or interventions.;
    - 5) Self-regulation which addresses the factors the child inherently has or could develop which may help them to manage or stop their sexual behaviours (Carson, 2019).
  - Pattern mapping is advised for younger children under 7 years old. This is a visual framework inquiring about the who, what, where, why and when of sexual behaviours to facilitate professionals in understanding the following:
    - Causal factors for the sexual behaviour – how and where the child may have learnt the behaviour.
    - Patterns to the behaviour - who is at risk; when and where does the behaviour happen; what patterns are emerging as to how it happens, triggers for the behaviour and gaps when the behaviour does not happen.
    - Meaning of the behaviour to the child – do they understand their behaviour is sexual? Is it more about emotional needs; attachment; belonging etc.
    - Motivation – are they motivated to engage with adults regarding their behaviours?
- This technique allows for the tracking patterns and meanings across the life course of a young child, looking at whether life events and sexual behaviours are linked (Carson, 2019).

### General Notes

- The AIM Under 12s stages are: immediate risk management safety plan, establishing rapport with parents/carer and the child, pattern mapping with the professional group; interviewing the parent/carer and interviewing the child (Carson, 2019).
- The dynamic nature of the AIM Under 12s means that historical information is assessed in relation to how it impacts upon current concerns. The purpose of this is to avoid children being 'stuck in time' since the child may have developed, matured or changed since the time of the historical information (Carson, 2019).
- Pattern mapping and the AIM Under 12s model may be used with both boys and girls, with the language used in the book being gender-neutral. The AIM Under 12s may also be used with children

with learning disabilities and those on the autistic spectrum with caution, given the research and practice experience on which the model is based relates to mainstream children (Carson, 2019).

- For further information about the AIM Under 12s, visit <http://aimproject.org.uk/> or email [admin@aimproject.org.uk](mailto:admin@aimproject.org.uk).