

Name of Tool	AIM3
Category	Youth Assessment: Sexual Violence Risk (Awaiting Validation)
Author / Publisher	Leonard and Hackett/The AIM Project
Year	2019

Description

- AIM3 is a 25-item assessment framework designed to help practitioners consider relevant targets for intervention, in addition to quantifying risk and levels of supervision. It is not an actuarial risk assessment tool (Leonard and Hackett, 2019).
- Items are organised into five domains: sexual behaviours; non-sexual behaviours; developmental factors; environmental/family influences; self-regulation. Use of the AIM3 helps to develop an overall profile of a young person across the five domains (Leonard and Hackett, 2019).
- Foregoing the previous risk levels of low, medium or high, the scoring of factors as 0, 2 or 4 acts as a guide for the assessor. Each domain has a maximum of 20 points available, with scoring ranging from 0 to 100. Totalling up scores across domains is categorised in a colour-matrix: red, scores of 14-20, which may indicate an area of relative need or risk requiring specific or immediate intervention; amber, scores of 6-12, which may indicate the need to lower risk and meet needs requiring intervention in the medium term; green, score of 0-4, which may indicate an area of relative strength in the individual's presentation/context, something which may be utilised to support interventions with the individual. The assessor is to use their professional judgment to reach a final decision about the individual's risk level, with the use of AIM3 having the potential to act as a guide for risk management, interventions and safety planning (Leonard and Hackett, 2019).
- Whilst acknowledging the importance of historical information, AIM3 looks at the impact of historical factors on the current presentation and functioning of the individual being assessed. This allows for a more dynamic assessment, whereby historical factors are considered for their relevance to the individual at the present time (Leonard and Hackett, 2019).
- The instrument is appropriate for use with young males aged between 12 and 18 years old who are known to sexually abuse. This includes contact and technology-assisted sexual offences (e.g. downloading indecent images of children). It may also be used with young women, with a degree of caution (Leonard and Hackett, 2019).
- The unique characteristics of victims (e.g. race, gender, learning disabilities) should be considered when using the AIM3 (Leonard and Hackett, 2019).

Age Appropriateness

Young people aged 12-18

Assessor Qualifications

Potential assessors must undertake the relevant training run by The AIM Project and pass a competency requirement, in order to be approved by The AIM Project to use the Assessment Model. Training involves a competency case study and includes copies of the book. It is expected that those

attending the training should have relevant practice experience of complex assessments, ideally of sexual behaviour

The competency requirement for using the AIM3 is to provide a quality assurance for commissioners, increase the confidence of practitioners and ensure the quality of assessments undertaken.

Tool Development

- The AIM3 has been piloted successfully and has worked well in practice. A research paper is in development for this (AIM Project 2019, personal communication).
- The original AIM was published in 2000. The assessment was based on the Risk-Aetiology Model ([Beech and Ward, 2004](#)). A second version to the AIM was published in 2007, following various refinements made to the original AIM assessment. It was further refined in 2012 to make it relevant to females and those with a learning disability. This further revision in 2019, draws upon feedback from practitioners and in response to changes in practice, e.g. the increasing use of technology in everyday life as well as potentially within harmful sexual behaviour. This led to the removal of the question mark function, the rating of low, medium or high and allows practitioners to consider responsivity issues. The revision also allowed for the incorporation of new research and to allow the assessment to be more fluid and adaptable in line with an individual's progress.
- The AIM3 covers five domains:
 - (1) Sexual Behaviours (offence-specific), looking at: the nature and extent of this behaviour; the characteristics of victims; sexual aggression; the range of sexual knowledge, attitudes and interests.
 - (2) Non-Sexual Behaviours, measuring the following: general criminality that is non-sexual in nature; non-sexual aggression and antisocial behaviour; alcohol and drug uses; general behaviour as well as mental health and wellbeing;
 - (3) Developmental, looking at influences on these wide-ranging behaviours: trauma and victimisation; childhood and adolescent adversity; attachment; family functioning; health, intellectual and emotional functioning.
 - (4) Environmental/family, examining the effect of the environment and wider social and family context in which they live: stability and safety; parental or carer supervision; relationships and peer groups; education, employment and leisure.
 - (5) Self-Regulation, detailing how the individual functions in terms of their abilities to understand the impact of their behaviour and their self-regulation skills: responsibility; motivation and engagement; future perspective; problem solving; social competence (Leonard and Hackett, 2019).
- As AIM3 was just launched in July 2019, there is no current research relating to the AIM3.

General Notes

- AIM3 has superseded AIM2 in practice. Until AIM3 training is undertaken, AIM2 may be used in the interim, but it will become out of date.
- The AIM3 can be used to assess young people in custody of secure care environments; although, caution should be taken when scoring the factors taking the context of the individual's environment into account. It is also recommended that the AIM3 is reviewed prior to release (Leonard and Hackett, 2019).

- The authors of AIM3 advise that it can be used, with caution, with young women. The practitioner should give consideration to the behaviours and attitudes that a young woman may present that could differ from that of a male. Similarly, when using the AIM with Black Asian and Minority Ethnic groups (BAME), practitioners should be mindful of the cultural and religious practices relevant to the individual and consider the impact of this on the young person's sexual and non-sexual development, family structure, environment and self-regulation (Leonard and Hackett, 2019).
- The AIM3 can be used with young people with learning disabilities with strong caveats (e.g. adapting interview style and language used). The learning disability must be considered as part of the analysis. Similar conditions apply with using the AIM3 with a young person with autism (Leonard and Hackett, 2019).
- It is recommended that the AIM3 is used to review the progress a young person makes over time, with the intention to reduce the domains to ideally 'green level' but at the very least the 'amber level.' The AIM3 can be utilised in supervision to aid individualised interventions for the individual and their family, allowing the young person to visualise their progress and plan the next steps.
- The AIM Project divides its courses into Foundation and Advanced levels to allow practitioners to attend at the appropriate level for their knowledge and expertise. The AIM3 is an Advanced level course.
- Practitioners should gain as much information as possible about the harmful sexual behaviour, accessing victim statements/accounts where possible. It is essential that practitioners hold knowledge of the criteria for different sexual offences. For instance, harmful sexual behaviour involving coercive and non-consensual penetration or attempted penetration may use higher levels of psychological force or emotional manipulation against their victims.
- In addition to the UK and Ireland, AIM3 has been implemented in New Zealand and Norway, with interest from Canada, Australia, Spain and Germany (Carol Carson 2019, personal communication).
- The AIM3 can be used for technology-assisted harmful sexual behaviour (TA-HSB) internet offences where there are also instances of direct or non-contact harmful sexual behaviour. To clarify, where there is 'DUAL HSB' referring to young people engaging in harmful sexual behaviour and who also use technology to assist their HSB. In these types of assessments, thus should be used in conjunction with the TA-HSB framework, a case formulation model (Allotey and Swann, 2019). In incidences where there are only internet offences, the TA-HSB guidance should be used. It is strongly recommended that practitioners also undertake the training offered in TA-HSB (Leonard and Hackett, 2019).
- AIM3 can help guide interventions. The AIM Project has also provided guidance on interventions, setting out a framework of four stages for Interventions and Safety Plans (Guilnermino and McCarlie, 2019). These may be used for different groups: for instance, sibling abuse, intergenerational abuse (i.e. incest). It is recommended that interventions are holistic in nature, being informed by factors associated with resilience and positive outcomes.
- For publication updates, please visit www.aimproject.org.uk
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