

Name of Tool	Technology-Assisted Harmful Sexual Behaviour: Practice Guidance (2 nd edition)
Category	Youth Sexual Violence (Awaiting Validation)
Author/Publisher	Allotey and Swann/The AIM Project in partnership with NSPCC
Year	2019

Description

- The TA-HSB Practice Guidance provides a framework to structure clinical judgment and formulation around technology-assisted harmful sexual behaviours in adolescents (Allotey and Swann, 2019).
- It is not an assessment model intended to measure recidivism; rather, it is a consensus-based tool guiding practitioners' judgment (Swann 2018, personal communication).
- There are three stages to the process: information-gathering, case formulation and safety and intervention planning (Allotey and Swann, 2019).
- In the first stage, information should be gathered from across a range of sources: interviews with young person (a minimum of three is recommended); interviews with parents and/or carers; discussions/meetings with relevant professionals such as police, health, social care practitioners; access to relevant evidence, e.g. text/online chat transcripts, victim interviews where applicable; access to other relevant documentation, such as care plans and incident reports. Information should relate to four domains: TA-HSB factors that may cause harm; developmental factors; family factors; environmental factors.
- The second stage of case formulation is broken down across nine areas: childhood (online and offline); adolescence (online and offline); neuropsychology; vulnerability; why now (e.g. looking at triggers, influences, etc.); facilitation (online and offline); harmful sexual behaviour; persistence (ongoing concerns, positive consequences the individual derives from TA-HSB that could hinder them stopping); desistance (negative consequences the individual derives from TA-HSB that could facilitate them changing their behaviour; strengths) (Allotey and Swann, 2019).
- The third and final stage involves safety and intervention planning utilising the results from the case formulation. Professional hypotheses should be advanced with regards to which factors pertaining to the individual, their family and networks will *promote* and *hinder* future safety. These should inform safety planning (including supervision and monitoring) and the appropriate interventions to encourage desistance (Allotey and Swann, 2019).
- As part of the training, worksheets are provided to facilitate all three stages, with suggested questions and guidance about how to approach each item (Allotey and Swann, 2019).

Age Appropriateness

Adolescent males ages 12-18 years.

Assessor Qualifications

This guidance is to be used by experienced practitioners who have undertaken additional training in conduct HSB risk assessments (for example, AIM3, JSOAP-II, ERASOR) and have also undertaken the TA-HSB training developed to accompany this guidance (Allotey and Swann, 2019).

Tool Development

- The previous model published by the AIM Project in 2009 called the iAIM was designed to assist practitioners working with young people whose behaviour online was a cause for concern. In 2015, the AIM Project and NSPCC collaborated to examine the use of risk tools which focused on the use of technology in harmful sexual behaviour. It was agreed that the iAIM needed to be updated in line with technological advances (Allotey and Swann, 2019; The AIM Project 2019, personal communication)
- The TA-HSB Practice Guidance was developed from a wide range of research including a literature review ([Belton and Hollis, 2016](#)) and NSPCC research ([Hollis and Belton, 2017](#)). The literature review examined the role of new technologies for young people engaging in harmful sexual behaviour. This looked at the range of TA-HSB and the crossover of behaviours; the characteristics of those who engage in TA-HSB as well as those who engaged in both online and offline HSB; the impact of TA-HSB. The NSPCC research was a qualitative study of young people who had been referred to treatment because of their technology-assisted harmful sexual behaviour (Allotey and Swann, 2019; [Belton and Hollis, 2016](#); [Hollis and Belton, 2017](#); Swann 2018, personal communication).
- The definition of TA-HSB used is derived from the NSPCC research study:

“One or more children/young people engaging in sexual discussions or acts – using the internet and/or any image creating/sharing or communication device – which are considered inappropriate and/or harmful to self and/or other given their age or stage of development” (Hollis and Belton, 2017).

This can incorporate both offline and online aspects and may involve the use of technology alongside contact HSB (Allotey and Swann, 2019).

- The areas covered in the guidance span four domains:
 - Domain 1: TA-HSB factors that may cause harm to the self and/or others: developmentally inappropriate use of mainstream pornography; viewing, disturbing or producing indecent images of children; sexual harassment; grooming; relationship to victim(s) and characteristics of victim(s) where applicable; attitudes towards victims of harmful sexual behaviour; evidence of escalation of behaviours; association between technology-assisted harmful sexual behaviour and contact or non-contact behaviours taking place offline; criminal history, antisocial attitudes or behaviours. -
 - Domain 2: Developmental factors relating to the wider context of the young person’s functioning and wellbeing and any history of abuse and/or trauma: social development, emotional wellbeing, trauma, misuse of alcohol and/or substances and physical/mental health issues.
 - Domain 3: Family factors, which may be causal or influencing in continuing or cessation of sexual behaviours: parents/carers response; their ability to supervise and monitor, as well as their willingness to engage in interventions; the quality of relationship with primary attachment figure(s).
 - Domain 4: Environmental factors in terms of: online activity; relationship with online environment and how this facilitated their TA-HSB; availability of support services; quality of relationships with peers (Allotey and Swann, 2019).
- There are currently no studies to validate the use of this guidance.

General Notes

- It is recommended that assessments should be completed by a co-working pair, given the complexities involved (Allotey and Swann, 2019).
- When gathering evidence, three areas need to be carefully considered: unlike other types of harmful sexual behaviour, TA-HSB may leave a forensic trail; the information-sharing agreements between agencies and any barriers to this, e.g. ongoing police investigations may restrict access to relevant documents; this may be a traumatising experience for the professionals involved, so support should be provided (Allotey and Swann, 2019).
- The TA-HSB guidance is to be used by experienced practitioners with training in similar risk assessments. This guidance should be used to supplement the AIM3 tool in cases where there is direct contact or non-contact harmful sexual behaviour where there is a technology-assisted element. Without the technology-assisted element, the practitioner would only use the AIM3. In instances where there only appears to be technology-assisted harmful sexual behaviour only this practice guidance would be used (Allotey and Swann, 2019; The AIM Project 2019, personal communication).
- The TA-HSB is designed to be used with adolescent males aged 12 to 18 years old. Practitioners are not precluded from using this guidance on females or individuals with learning disabilities; however, they would have to be aware of the research relating to these groups (Allotey and Swann, 2019).