

## Expert testimony to inform NICE guideline development

### Section A: Developer to complete

**Name:** Julie Henniker

**Role:** Manager

**Institution/Organisation  
(where applicable):** AIM Project  
Manchester

**Contact information:**

**Guideline title:** Harmful Sexual Behaviour

**Guideline Committee:** Public Health Advisory Committee F

**Subject of expert  
testimony:** Harmful Sexual Behaviour – AIM project

**Evidence gaps or  
uncertainties:** [Research questions or evidence uncertainties that the  
testimony should address are summarised below]

1. The development of the AIM approach and learning to date.
2. Cross cutting themes that may be relevant to this area and of interest to the committee:
  - Minority populations
  - Young women/gender issues
  - Learning difficulties
  - Autism
  - Parents and carers

## Section B: Expert to complete

**Summary testimony:** [Please use the space below to summarise your testimony in 250–1000 words. Continue over page if necessary ]

**Title:** Building a comprehensive inter-agency assessment and intervention system for children and young people who display Harmful Sexual Behaviours

The issue of children and young people who sexually harm first emerged in the early 1990's (Ref 1) where it was recognised that multi-agency responses were required but the development of such responses were uncertain and geographically patchy (Ref 2). Remain so to date and the issue is critical in terms of the development of a strategic response. (Ref 3)

**Theme:** Clear absence of a national strategy for this group;

As a consequence a multi-agency group of experienced managers in Greater Manchester, committed to developing this area of practice established a steering group. As a first step, they commissioned an audit of current working practices across the 10 local authorities to establish assets and gaps and the AIM (Assessment Intervention and Moving on) Project, was established to develop services for children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviours. It recognised that for too long practitioners had been struggling on top of the 'day job' to develop appropriate responses for this group.

\*A co-ordinator was appointed to;

\*Develop inter-agency policies and procedures;

\*Local and regional interagency networking and service partnerships;

\*Common models of assessment

\*Guidelines for schools, residential units and foster carers

\*Tool kits for treatment

\*External evaluation of both the process and outcomes

Thus from the outset there was a clear vision of strategic partnership objectives that connected to individual agencies, legislative requirements and core business, to more effectively address a child protection issue and enhance existing roles and duties.

**Outline of the work of the AIM Project**

The AIM Project is not a service provider to which agencies can refer children and young people for assessment and intervention. Focusing responses around a specialist service would not only fail to address the level of demand but also result in unhelpful delays to service provision. The advantage of promoting the involvement of front line agencies directly in the work with this group is earlier recognition, assessment and intervention, thus increasing the chances of prompt engagement. This in turn, is likely to result in a more holistic assessment, reduced denial and the increased possibility of achieving positive outcomes.

Summary of policies and procedures in Greater Manchester and their adaption and adoption to other Local Authorities (Ref 4)

Outline of AIM Project models of assessment and Intervention (Ref 4)

So what does it take to improve practice? Lessons learnt along our way...

- \*The journey is as important as the destination
- \*Establish a core and highly committed driver group
- \*Appoint a 'change agent' – co-ordinator to keep the issue 'live'
- \*Engage with front line staff
- \*Integrate new policies and practices within existing bodies of values, knowledge and good practice
- \*Develop a common model of assessment
- \*Recognise the importance of a multi-disciplinary training programme
- \*Engage and equip front line managers
- \*Use specialist resources strategically
- \* Plan evaluation from the outset

Conclusion

Locate the understanding of a child/ young person's sexual behaviour within an ecological view and pay particular attention to their parents and cares Ref 5)

**References to other work or publications to support your testimony' (if applicable):**

1. National Children's Home Report 1992
2. Exercising constant vigilance... Thematic Inspection 1998
3. Ongoing development work AIM and NSPCC
4. [www.aimproject.org.uk](http://www.aimproject.org.uk)
5. AIM2 Assessment model

Expert testimony papers are posted on the NICE website with other sources of evidence when the draft guideline is published. Any content that is academic in confidence should be highlighted and will be removed before publication if the status remains at this point in time.