

AIM Case Study: Addressing the Mental Health Crisis in Prisons





The Challenge

According to the Ministry of Justice Safety in Custody Statistics (2025): Prisons across England and Wales are facing an escalating mental health and safety crisis.

- In the 12 months, the rate of self-harm was 859 incidents per 1,000 prisoners (74,521 incidents)
- Assaults have increased compared with the previous year (6%)
- Deaths in custody, including self-inflicted deaths, remain a serious concern

These figures highlight the growing complexity of managing safety in custody and the increasing need for earlier, more proactive intervention.

Globally, the challenge is even more stark. Research published in Systematic Reviews (Springer Nature) found that between 2000 and 2021 there were 29,711 suicides across 82 prison systems, with rates consistently higher than in the general population, typically ranging from 24 to 89 per 100,000 person-years.

Traditional approaches rely heavily on:

- Self-disclosure from prisoners
- Manual observation
- Fragmented data across multiple systems

This creates a critical gap: early warning signs are often missed, particularly when individuals withdraw quietly rather than present an obvious risk.

Staff need a way to:

- Identify vulnerability earlier
- Build a clearer, real-time picture of behaviour
- Intervene before crisis point

The Solution



AIM is a digital safety tool that brings together behavioural, transactional, and self-reported data to help staff identify individuals at risk of:

- Isolation
- Self-harm
- Suicide

Crucially, AIM supports risk identification across the full custodial journey, from the point of arrival, through custody, and in the lead-up to release, helping to identify behavioural risks early and supporting interventions that can reduce harm and reoffending.

Rather than replacing professional judgement, AIM enhances it by:



Highlighting changes in routine and behaviour



Providing a clear, visual risk profile



Enabling earlier, more informed intervention

Using a simple traffic-light system, AIM flags individuals who show signs of disengagement, such as reduced visits, missed meals, or inactivity, helping staff prioritise support where it's needed most.



Key Results



An evaluation by Professor Danielle McDermott (October 2025), *The Use of Technology in Detecting Risk of Self-Harm & Suicide in Prison: An Independent Evaluation of AIM*, demonstrates that AIM delivers measurable improvements in prisoner safety:



Up to 61% reduction
in self-harm incidents
in a male prison



Up to 80% reduction
in a female prison

In addition:



Earlier identification of risk enables earlier, more informed intervention



Staff are able to detect subtle shifts that would otherwise go unnoticed



AIM supports consistent daily monitoring and structured safeguarding processes

How AIM Works in Practice



Daily Monitoring

Staff routinely review AIM dashboards to identify individuals whose behaviour has changed, ensuring no one “falls through the gaps.”

Early Intervention

Flags such as missed meals, reduced engagement, or withdrawal from activities prompt welfare checks before issues escalate.

First 72 Hours Safeguarding

Early Risk Indicators highlight vulnerabilities during reception, ensuring immediate action for high-risk individuals.

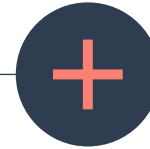
Multi-Agency Collaboration AIM is used in:



Safety Intervention Meetings (SIMs)



Case Reviews



Triage Processes

This ensures decisions are based on shared, evidence-driven insights.

Impact on Staff & Prisoners



Staff are better equipped to build trust and encourage disclosure



Prisoners feel noticed, supported, and less isolated



Improved Decision-Making

AIM provides staff with meaningful context, enabling more informed and empathetic conversations.

- Staff can evidence actions clearly
- Safeguarding decisions become more consistent and transparent



A Shift to Proactive Safety

Instead of reacting to incidents, staff can:

- Identify patterns early
- Intervene sooner
- Prevent escalation

Independent Validation & HMIP Recognition



AIM's impact is evidenced not only through independent academic evaluation, but also across multiple HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) reports.

HMIP has identified AIM as “positive practice”, including:



At HMP Forest Bank, where AIM was named explicitly for the first time and recognised for its role in identifying and monitoring at-risk prisoners



In women's prisons, where AIM was highlighted for supporting the identification of prisoners withdrawing from the regime and at risk of self-harm

Inspectors found that AIM:



Integrates data from multiple IT systems



Uses a traffic-light alert system to highlight potential concerns



Identifies reduced engagement, contact, or activity



Supports daily monitoring and structured intervention through Safety Intervention Meetings (SIMs)

Crucially, HMIP noted that AIM enables staff to:

“Identify potential increases in isolation or self-harm risk and take appropriate action to safeguard individuals”

This consistent recognition across multiple inspections reinforces AIM's role as a proven, innovative approach to safer custody.

Why It Matters

Self-harm and suicide in custody remain among the most urgent challenges facing the justice system.

AIM addressed this by:



Turning routine data into actionable insight



Supporting early identification of vulnerability

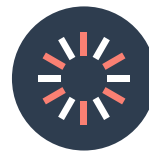


Strengthening the human connection between staff and prisoners

It represents a shift from:



Fragmented, reactive systems



Integrated, proactive safeguarding

Looking Ahead



AIM continues to evolve, with ongoing enhancements focused on:

- Deeper behavioural insight
- Improved data quality and engagement
- Greater integration with wider prison systems

As prisons continue their digital transformation, AIM demonstrates how technology can:

- Enhance professional judgement
- Improve outcomes
- Ultimately, save lives

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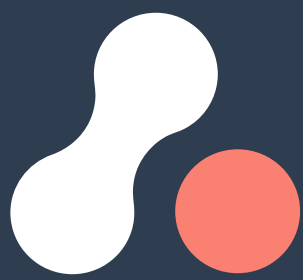


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