

The Howard

• Less crime • Safer communities • Fewer people in prison • 2017: 1

SEE THE LIGHT



Prisonimage

The Howard League for Penal Reform has launched a new campaign to promote practical steps that would reduce pressure on the prison system and save lives.

It follows confirmation that levels of violence and self-injury behind bars have reached an all-time high, with a prisoner losing their life through suicide every three days.

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Extra days in 'out of control' prisons

More than 215,000 days – or 590 years – of additional imprisonment were imposed on prisoners found to have broken prison rules in 2015, a report by the Howard League for Penal Reform reveals.

Prisons across England and Wales, under growing pressure due to overcrowding and a lack of staff, are increasingly resorting to draconian punishments in a desperate and counter-productive attempt to keep control.

The findings have been published in a Howard League report, *A Million Days: The world of prison discipline*, which states that more than 1million additional days – equal to almost 3,000 years – have been imposed on prisoners since 2010.

The report looks at how prisons operate disciplinary hearings called adjudications, where allegations of rule-breaking are tried. These mainly concern disobedience, disrespect or property offences, which increase as conditions in prisons deteriorate.

Governors have a choice in the way they deal with rule-breaking. They can manage it themselves or pay for an external adjudicator, who has the power to impose additional days of imprisonment.

The number of cases sent to external adjudicators soared by more than 80 per cent between 2010 and 2015.

Frances Crook, Chief Executive of the Howard League, said: "The system of adjudications has become a monster. Originally intended as a way to punish incidents of unacceptable conduct, it is now routinely used as a behaviour management technique by prisons that are out of control.

"Instead of solving the problems, these punishments feed a vicious cycle, piling more pressure on the prison population and worsening overcrowding, which in turn creates conditions for drug abuse and violence.

"At the same time, rules to incentivise prisoners' behaviour have been made more punitive, which is also contributing to the poisonous atmosphere behind bars."



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Suicide rate in jails reaches record high

An all-time record number of people lost their lives through suicide in prisons in England and Wales last year, figures seen by the Howard League for Penal Reform confirm.

Official data published by the Ministry of Justice show that 119 prisoners died by suicide during 2016 – the highest number in a calendar year since current recording practices began in 1978.

The previous high was in 2004, when 96 deaths by suicide were recorded.

Twelve women lost their lives through suicide in 2016 – more than double the number of women who took their own lives during the previous year.

They were among a total of 354 people who died in prisons in England and Wales during 2016 – another record high and a 38 per cent rise on the year before.

In addition to the 119 men and women who took their own lives, 196 prisoners were recorded to have died of natural causes. Investigations into the deaths of a further 28 prisoners remain incomplete, with further information awaited.

The figures show that the number of prisoners who died by suicide in 2015 has been revised upwards from 89 to 90, raising concerns that the total recorded in 2016 could yet rise further.

The figures also reveal:

- There were 37,784 reported incidents of self-injury in prisons

during the 12 months to the end of September 2016 – a 23 per cent rise on the previous year.

- Recorded incidents of self-injury among men rose by 30 per cent in a year – from 23,359 in the 12 months ending September 2015 to 30,465 in the 12 months ending September 2016. Recorded incidents of self-injury in men's prisons have risen by 88 per cent since 2012.

- Recorded incidents of self-injury among women in prison fell by 2 per cent. However, although women make up less than 5 per cent of the prison population, women's prisons accounted for 20 per cent of all incidents of self-injury.

- There were 3,372 serious assaults in prisons during the 12 months to the end of September 2016 – a 28 per cent rise on the previous year. There were 25,049 assaults in total – a 31 per cent increase.

- There were 6,430 assaults on prison staff – a 40 per cent increase on the previous year. The number of serious assaults on staff rose by 26 per cent to 761.

Frances Crook, Chief Executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform, said: "It is official – more people died in prisons in 2016 than in any other year on record, and more prisoners died by suicide than ever before.

"No one should be so desperate while in the care of the state that they take their own life, and yet every three days a family is told that



SOLUTIONS: Frances Crook urged ministers to save lives by taking steps to reduce the prison population

a loved one has died behind bars. "Cutting staff and prison budgets while allowing the number of people behind bars to grow unchecked has created a toxic mix of violence, death and human misery.

"The problems are clear for all to see. The Howard League is offering solutions. We have shown ministers how, by taking

bold but sensible action to reduce the number of people in prison, we can save lives and prevent more people being swept away into deeper currents of crime and despair."

The Howard League and another charity, Centre for Mental Health, have been working together on a joint inquiry into preventing prison suicides.

Howard League launches 3 Rs campaign

Overcrowded prisons are rivers of crime.

We are throwing more and more individuals into these raging rivers of violence, drugs, frustration and mental distress, and somehow thinking that this will make them better people.

It does not. The river sweeps them away into deeper currents and further into crime. Ultimately that means more people will go on to reoffend after release. More people will become victims of crime.

What we need is immediate action to stem the flow of people into prison, and support so that staff can focus on working positively with those who remain behind bars.

The state of prisons is now a national emergency. This is why the Howard League has launched a campaign, advising ministers to address the 3 Rs: rules, release and recall.

RULES IN PRISON

Instead of solving problems, imposing additional days of imprisonment for the breaking of prison rules

feeds a vicious cycle. It increases pressure on the prison population and worsens overcrowding, which in turn further enforces the conditions for drug abuse and violence.

At the same time, prisons have made rules to incentivise prisoners' behaviour more punitive, which is also contributing to the poisonous atmosphere behind bars.

Solutions could include making the imposition of additional days conditional on good behaviour, or removing the option of additional days entirely. The rules around incentives and earned privileges must also be revised.

RELEASE FROM PRISON

Prisoners need more opportunities to earn their return to the community through temporary release and parole.

Use of temporary release has fallen by a third since 2013. This means that prisoners cannot demonstrate that they are ready to be released, and it leads to longer sentences.



The Parole Board ought to be resourced adequately, and ministers should adopt a recommendation made by its Chair, Nick Hardwick (pictured), that the test for release should change. This would involve the Prison Service having to demonstrate that a person still presents a risk, rather than a prisoner demonstrating that they do not.

RECALL TO PRISON

The number of people in prison due to recall has increased by 4,300 per cent in 20 years.

Sending someone back to prison for a technical breach of their licence conditions is unjustified. Breaches should be dealt with in the community.

Awards glory for champion projects that help cut crime and transform lives

Community projects that reduce crime and transform lives for the better have been awarded prestigious awards by the Howard League for Penal Reform.

Dozens of schemes were in the running for the charity's Community Awards, which celebrate the work of agencies and voluntary organisations whose innovative services encourage desistance from crime.

The winners were announced at a conference in London, which featured presentations by experts on policing and cutting crime. The awards were presented by Lord Bach, Police and Crime Commissioner for Leicestershire.

Inspector Gail Spruce, of Greater Manchester Police, was named 'Criminal Justice Champion' for 2016. The title is awarded annually to outstanding individuals who have made a difference in reducing the number of people entering the criminal justice system.

The title of 'Organisation of the Year' went to restorative justice provider Remedi.

Remedi was founded in 1996, with just one member of staff working in an office converted from a toilet in Sheffield. The organisation now delivers services across England, with 100 staff, 200 volunteers and 100 sessional workers.

Catryn Yousefi, Programmes Manager from the Howard League for Penal Reform, said: "Evidence shows that projects which help to keep people out of the criminal justice system, by providing alternative, proportionate, effective and targeted interventions, will reduce the risk of reoffending."

Speakers at the conference included Professor Dame Shirley Pearce, Independent Chair of the College of Policing; Chief Constable Sara Thornton CBE QPM, Chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council; and Chief Constable Nick Ephgrave, of Surrey Police.

For the full list of Community Awards winners, please visit: www.howardleague.org/community-awards



ALL SMILES: Greater Manchester Police Inspector Gail Spruce collects her Community Award from Lord Bach



CONFERENCE: Chief Constable Nick Ephgrave, of Surrey Police, answers a question from the audience at the Howard League event in London

Diaries reveal what

Men, women and children have revealed what life is really like behind bars in a collection of diary entries written in prisons across the UK.

The Howard League for Penal Reform invited prisoners to keep a diary for one day in a project to mark the charity's 150th birthday.

The day chosen – 2 September 2016 – was significant, as it would have been the 290th birthday of John Howard, the 18th-century penal reformer after whom the charity is named.

The project was promoted to Howard League members and in the Inside Time newspaper. More than 170 diaries were received, not only from prisons in England and Wales, but also jails in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Frances Crook, Chief Executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform, said: "We would like to thank the men, women, and children, held in prisons across the country, who kept diaries as part of this project to mark the Howard League's 150th birthday. Their words provide a revealing snapshot of what life is really like behind bars."

Below are some extracts from the diaries. All of the entries have been anonymised.

"Subjected to verbal abuse... luckily no liquids thrown at us today"

"Breakfast is coffee with white sliced bread, marj, and a sachet of prison-issue 'orange spread', which I pretend is real marmalade... 8:25am: Just before work is scheduled to start at 8:30am, I notice there's a list on the Level 2 whiteboard of which laundry workers are required. Only 18 out of the 60 of us. No doubt due to the usual excuse of 'staff shortages', or maybe they've just run out of dirty linen to wash. Either way, I'm among the 'lucky' 42 who get a morning off."

– Man, 46, Elmley

"0905 – Call for labour...on way to workshop subjected to verbal abuse from mains prison, luckily no liquids thrown at us today."

– Man, 43, Liverpool

"I am hatching six duck eggs in my room at the moment"

"Breakfast packs are tiny – not enough to feed a child, let alone fully grown men who will do a full day's labour for pennies. Back to work still hungry, listening to all the lads talk of this morning's violence, deaths, riot, rooftop protests, cell smash-ups, nickings, etc. Same old same old but I try to always keep positive and help as many lads as I can. I look around me to see the old, the sick, the unwell, the disabled, those that should be in care or in homes, or in hospital, not in prison."

– Man, 36, Channings Wood

"I wake up at 8:30 and have to take my ADHD medication with my breakfast. I then get showered. I am hatching six duck eggs in my



Pictures: Prisonimage

LIFELINE: "TV provides access to the outside world, so I am grateful for it," wrote one man in Peterborough prison

room at the moment and the last one hatched yesterday. I have six baby ducks in my bedroom in a box and am caring for them. After school I changed the ducklings' water and gave them some food. Peter, my key worker, is helping me look after them."

– Child, 16, Barton Moss

"I've been in prison 10 years and I am so lucky to still get visits"

"The morning is unusual due to no work – whilst pay is dismal, work is preferable to sitting in cell. There is no exercise or activity out of cell in the AM. Time could be used better in prison. Unable to shower due to the lack of privacy over lunchtimes."

– Man, 55, Oakwood

"Normally I work in the library on a Friday afternoon but today I had a visit with my mother and a mutual friend. The visit was from 2–4pm and they had caught the 7:30am train to get here. I've been in prison 10 years and I am so lucky to still get visits but I know how hard it is from them."

– Man, 46, Channings Wood

"We met in Holloway. We were both pregnant at the same time"

"Prepare a lemon drizzle cake that will cook in the servery hotplate tomorrow, using ingredients off

canteen and traded with other inmates... Exercise cancelled due to rain. Fellow inmates I work in kitchens with come by asking about the cake, take them to servery where it's sat in fridge until tomorrow morning. Get good feedback which makes me happy. Look forward to sharing it out (approx. 20 portions) tomorrow as it lifts everyone's spirits."

– Man, 34, Lewes

"Went to a spur to check in on a friend who was having contact with her baby boy later that day. We met in Holloway. We were both pregnant at the same time. I gave birth to my third daughter one

month before she had her son, so I tried to support her through her loss. My daughter is with family but her son is being adopted."

– Woman, 30, Bronzefield

"Undue stress and disgruntlement, but no one dares to complain"

"At 1145 lunch is served. A rissole and a baguette with a bag of crisps and fruit. I eat in my single cell next to the toilet as we have no communal dining area. I go to bed at 2300. It is noisy on my wing as the seg unit is underneath us and not soundproofed ... it can be very disturbing. My prison mattress

and iron bed ensure another disturbed sleep and aching body."

– Man, 59, Isle of Wight

"5:15pm, waiting for phone, when suddenly told the wing would be locked up till 6:30pm, even though this is an official association time. It's the second time it happened this week, usually without warning. It's because one of the two prison officers is needed to cover another wing, and my wing is often penalised. On average it happens twice a week, affecting inmates' plans for shower, phone calls, association, etc. Due to the lack of forewarning, this causes undue stress and disgruntlement, but no one dares to complain."

– Man, 63, Littlehey

"That feels good, having made a connection"

"I work in the call centre. We handle a contract which is a very long script. I try to make the call personal, I complete the script but occasionally a question will provoke a small conversation. That feels good, having made a connection, however fleeting and tiny."

– Man, 44, Dartmoor

"Bang up is early here on a Friday due to a regime change so now banging up at 5:15 for the night, unlock isn't till 11:30am tomorrow... That's another Friday



CONTACT: "I am so lucky to still get visits," wrote one man

prison is really like

The diaries reached a worldwide audience when extracts were published by BuzzFeed News in collaboration with the Howard League for Penal Reform.

Frances Crook, Chief Executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform, said: "The diaries tell how people in prison can be locked up for hours on end in their cells with nothing to do and little to look forward to. How hopes of being engaged in work, education, and exercise can be dashed at the last moment because of staff shortages. How important it is for prisoners to have regular contact with their families.

"All this is set against a backdrop of system failure and tragedy – chronic overcrowding, rising violence, a growing number of incidents of self-injury, and the highest-ever number of people dying by suicide in prisons."

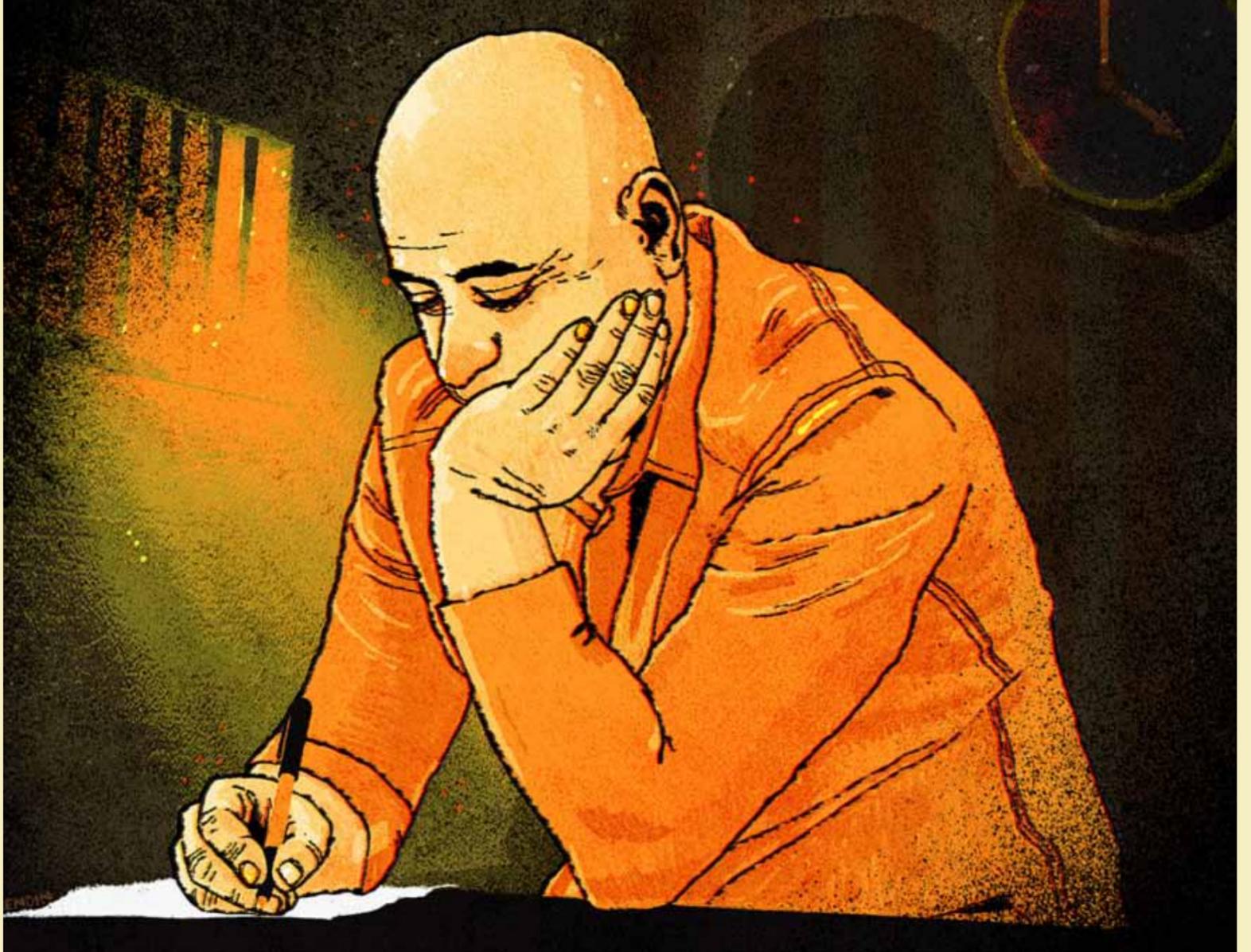


Illustration: Rebecca Hendin and BuzzFeed News

done, another slow weekend to come then start all over again next week."

– Man, 29, Norwich

"How is this getting me ready for release or protecting the public?"

"Walk some more around the football field for three-quarters of an hour. Sit down on a bench and look across the fields. Not long now till I hope to be released. Shower and clean teeth and into bed to watch TV. Asleep by 2140ish and that's it for another groundhog day at North Sea Camp. How is this getting me ready for release or protecting the public? Waste of time and money. Tomorrow will be the same."

– Man, 49, North Sea Camp

"The bed is a solid, flat wooden board. My body weight has slowly crushed it into a misshapen, double-dipped, torture device... Was woken, briefly, by night patrol at 8pm shining a powerful LED torch in my face to make sure I wasn't dead. Sometimes I wish I was. That would show him."

– Man, 43, Bure

"Cups of tea: 6. Days left of sentence: One fewer."

"Lights out – Sleep. Hours out of cell: 5. Purposeful activity:

None. Cups of tea: 6. Days left of sentence: One fewer."

– Man, 46, Elmley

"Though being Saturday tomorrow, we won't be unlocked until 8:30am. That's a long time to be in this room. Despite the apparent remit to 'change lives for the better' we never get to work on Friday afternoons, which once again meant that my afternoon effectively began when I returned from work at 11:15am ... Our library session was cancelled for the second week running."

– Man, 37, Peterborough

"Didn't see anything but sure it was a fight"

"We have a cold tea Fri/Sat/Sun, as we get locked up earlier... There is no work on a Friday afternoon or weekends."

– Woman, 32, Bronzefield

"Heard a lot of commotion in the hall, thought someone dropped a chair or something accidentally. Went out to see what was happening when the noise got disruptive, seen a lot of officers running into the hall area. Didn't see anything but sure it was a fight. Lockdown."

– Man, 55, Low Moss

"I've seen first-hand how the prison system has declined"

"I've resided in various HMP establishments – Wetherby, Leeds, Garth, Lincoln, Hull, Risley, Manchester – from 1999 to present, and I've seen first-hand how the prison system has declined."

– Man, 33, Hull

"Apart from library time and one and a half hours in the morning and five minutes in the afternoon, bang-up all day. I would find long bang-up more difficult if I was not in a single cell!"

– Man, 62, High Down

"When will the government ever get it right? Not in my lifetime"

"It's become a dumping ground, a human warehouse where no one hears the screams of those in misery shut off from the world. Bang-up on all the wings due to total lack of staff, it's a daily event; never knowing what's happening from day to day. When will the government ever get it right? Not in my lifetime and about 200 years after the rest of Europe."

– Man, 36, Channings Wood

"[TV] provides access to the outside world, so I am very grateful for it. Before I escape this nightmare through my dreams, I will lay awake for a while until I can reconcile the madness of the place and somehow console myself for all the things that I didn't get here today – like every night."

– Man, 37, Peterborough

"The real sentence starts on release"

"I don't watch a lot of TV. Contrary to public belief that all inmates get the free full package from Sky, the nine channels that we get I find to be unwatchable in general, so I read. I usually get through 4–6 books a week."

– Man, 64, Wakefield

"I'm sitting here with door ajar, radio on, and the wing echoes with the sound of games, dominos, laughter, and chit chat. Also a constant jingle of keys and squawk of radios. Atmosphere is neither good nor bad, just 'is'. Kinda dull and boring. Reminds me of *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett. All in all, a pretty dull day. One of many hundreds done, and still to go in my sentence of 44 months. Lesson learned. Of course, the real sentence starts on release."

– Man, 34, Hull



WAREHOUSE: Prison is a "dumping ground", said one diarist

Howard League project to help children in care

A major drive to end the criminalisation of children living in residential homes has been launched by the Howard League for Penal Reform.

The two-year programme is being led by the charity, with support from an advisory board chaired by the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP.

Exploring best practice within the police service and the residential care sector, the project will build on the charity's work to keep as many boys and girls as possible out of the criminal justice system.

Howard League research found that children living in children's homes were being criminalised at higher rates than other boys and girls, including those in other types of care.

Children aged 13 to 15 living in children's homes were found to be almost six times as likely to be criminalised as looked after children of the same age in other placements – and almost 20 times more likely to be criminalised than non-looked after children.

The research also highlighted a potential systemic problem that led residential care staff to resort to the police, often over minor incidents that would never come to officers' attention if they happened in family homes.

Frances Crook, Chief Executive of the Howard League, said: "We are delighted to announce this important programme of work, which will build on our existing expertise on the policing of children and respond to concerns that police forces themselves have highlighted to us on the criminalisation of children in residential care.

"There are two questions we shall seek to answer. Firstly, how can children's homes be encouraged to manage children's behaviour without recourse to the police? And secondly, in those cases when the police are called out to homes, what can be done to avoid a child being unnecessarily criminalised?"



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Police praised as child arrests continue to fall

Arrests of children have fallen by 59 per cent in five years, following a concerted effort by police across the country and a successful campaign by the Howard League for Penal Reform to keep as many boys and girls as possible out of the criminal justice system.

Figures published by the charity reveal that, during 2015, police in England and Wales made 101,926 arrests of boys and girls aged 17 and under.

The number has fallen every year since 2010, when police made 245,763 child arrests.

Many forces have reviewed their arrest procedures and policies after the Howard League's positive engagement with them.

Every police force in England and Wales made fewer child arrests in 2015 than in 2010.

Thirty-four forces brought down their number of child arrests by more than half, including 10 who achieved reductions of more than 70 per cent.

The most successful force in the country was Humberside Police, which recorded a 77 per cent drop in the number of child arrests.

There were 871 arrests of primary-age children (10- and 11-year-olds) in 2015.

The statistics have been published in a Howard League report, *Child*

arrests in England and Wales 2015, which shows how reducing the number of children entering the system has stemmed the flow of children into custody.

Frances Crook, Chief Executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform, said: "I applaud the police for their success in reducing child arrests.

matches the reduction in custody for children, and it is no coincidence. "We have stemmed the flow of children into the justice system and the consequential downward spiral into crime and custody."

Between 2010 and 2015, the number of children in prison in England and Wales fell by 59 per cent – decreasing at about the

in prison decreased by the same proportion.

The report states that the welcome fall in arrests can be attributed to better use of resources to solve problems, the removal of national targets, improved staff training, and support from communities.

It adds: "Improvements in policing practice mean that thousands of children have not had their life chances blighted.

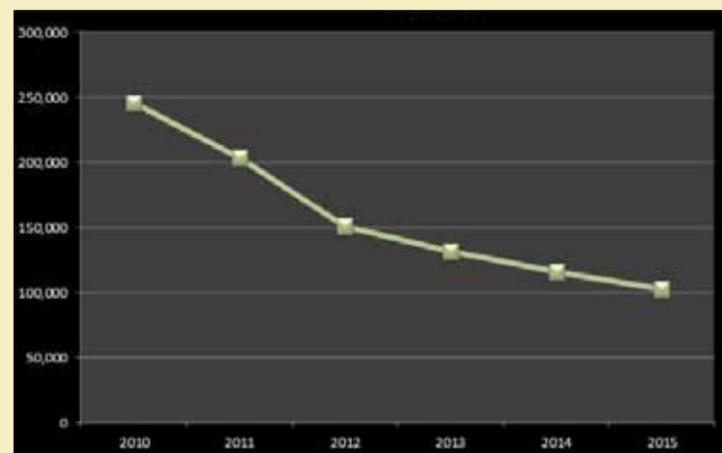
"The majority of childish misbehaviour is best dealt with by parents, carers and schools.

"An arrest has the potential to affect a child's life adversely in many ways, from the immediate traumatic experience of being detained overnight in the police station, to the uncertainty of a criminal trial and even the potential to be imprisoned far away from their families and communities.

"It can also blight their futures, for example through Disclosure and Barring Checks that can result in a job offer or university place being withdrawn."

There is still more work to be done, however. Eleven forces recorded an increase in child arrests in 2015 and, although improvements have been made, arrests remain all too common – a child was arrested every five minutes in England and Wales.

CHILD ARRESTS HAVE FALLEN BY 59% IN FIVE YEARS



"The Howard League is proud to have played its part in a significant change to the policing and life chances of children.

"It is particularly gratifying that the reduction in child arrests

same rate as child arrests.

Arrests of girls are falling at a faster rate than arrests of boys.

Police recorded a 63 per cent drop in girls' arrests between 2010 and 2015, and the number of girls

John Sunley Prize winners named

Three researchers have been awarded prizes by the Howard League for Penal Reform for submitting outstanding Masters dissertations.

Victor Chu, Martha Morey and Anna Norton were winners of the 2016 John Sunley Prize, which rewards students whose work offers new insights into the justice system and furthers the cause of penal reform.

Victor Chu, who studied at the University of Cambridge, conducted a qualitative study of older male prisoners in an open prison.

Fellow Cambridge student Martha Morey (pictured receiving her certificate from Anabel Knight, Chairman of the Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation) submitted a

dissertation about male prisoners' experiences of and attitudes towards different forms of prison work.

Anna Norton, who studied at Manchester Metropolitan University, interviewed staff and prisoners to find out about the prevalence, impact and response to new psychoactive substances in one prison.

David Cross, of the University of Strathclyde, and Isotta Rossoni, of the University of Oxford, were both highly commended.

The winners were selected from a 10-strong shortlist by academics from the Howard League's Research Advisory Group.

Each of the winning dissertations will be published on the Howard League's website.



Probation shake-up puts women's centres at risk

Ten years after *The Corston Report* recommended major changes to the treatment of women in the criminal justice system, MPs and peers find that successful services are jeopardised by the government's Transforming Rehabilitation programme

Women's centres, which provide a range of vital services to help guide women away from crime, are at risk of becoming "a thing of the past" unless immediate action is taken to secure their future, an influential panel of MPs and peers has warned.

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Women in the Penal System (APPG) has found that the centres have been successful in reducing reoffending, but they are now under threat following the break-up of the probation service under the government's Transforming Rehabilitation programme.

The APPG has called on the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) to take responsibility for women's services away from private 'community rehabilitation companies' (CRCs), which were set up as part of the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms.

MPs and peers have found that women's centres are struggling to get funding, while many of the new services for women provided by the CRCs are "a watered-down version of what went before".

The APPG's findings are outlined in a report called *Is this the end of women's centres?*, which states: "There is a real risk that high-quality services for women, particularly women's centres, will become a thing of the past. This will have a hugely detrimental impact on the women that use these services and their communities.

"Women's centres work; the same cannot be said of the poor imitations which are replacing them in many parts of the country."

The Howard League for Penal Reform provides administrative assistance to the APPG.

The APPG is co-chaired by Fiona Mactaggart MP and Baroness Corston, the author of a seminal report on women in the criminal justice system that was commissioned by the Home Office and published in 2007.

Among the recommendations of *The Corston Report: A review of women with particular vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system* was a call for women's centres to be developed, expanded and increasingly used as an alternative to imprisonment.

Baroness Corston said: "Women's centres have been the key success since my recommendations were published, with cross-party support, almost 10 years ago. I am extremely worried that centres which have helped thousands of women to turn their lives around are now under threat unless the government takes immediate action.

"Ministers must intervene now to ensure that these vital services in the justice system are not lost forever."



PrisonImage

TRAPPED: Women are being recalled for technical breaches of their licence, a panel of MPs and peers heard

The report outlines the findings of an APPG inquiry that received written and oral evidence from CRCs, Police and Crime Commissioners, NHS trusts, and service providers, including women's centres.

It states that women's centres are specialist community "one-stop shops" for women involved with, or at risk of involvement with, the criminal justice system, among other groups.

'Women have been given sleeping bags and tents on release'

Services provided include counselling and mental health services, drug treatment, employment skills, help for women in abusive relationships, literacy, CV support, child care, and housing assistance.

The centres provide a safe space for women where they are treated as individuals and their needs can be addressed holistically – an

approach identified in *The Corston Report* as being the best for women in the justice system.

Since *The Corston Report* was published, the number of women's centres has increased modestly. However, the majority have been hampered by instability due to short-term funding, often relying on a patchwork of support from the MoJ, local probation, charities and health bodies.

Despite the difficult operating

and address the particular needs of women.

The inquiry found, however, that there was little evidence that this provision adequately safeguarded quality women's services in practice.

The experience of the women's centres that responded to the inquiry was overwhelmingly negative and indicated serious damage being inflicted to women's services.

Several received no funding from CRCs; some were providing services temporarily, but felt unable to continue long-term; and others had entered into contracts with CRCs that involved providing services of a much lower quality than they were doing previously or would like.

The inquiry heard that CRC lawyers inserted gagging clauses into contracts with women's centres.

This prohibited the centres from speaking out on behalf of the women, raising concerns about the services or criticising the contracts.

Women's centre managers told the inquiry that the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms had resulted in more women being recalled to prison, and this was having a

disruptive impact on the services that they were still able to provide.

They said that women were being recalled for technical breaches of their licence, often for failing to attend appointments, and this was trapping them in cycles of short-term imprisonment.

The inquiry heard that women's centres were trying to step in to support women who were being let down by inadequate "through the gate" services as they were released from prison.

MPs and peers were told that many women are released from prison into homelessness or unstable temporary accommodation for a few nights, and women's centre staff had found that CRCs were ill-equipped to resolve this.

There are cases of women having been given sleeping bags and tents on release.

The report calls on the government to act immediately to protect existing women's centres and then create a sustainable model in which they can expand and develop.

Charities go to court to challenge unfair legal aid cuts for prisoners

Cuts to legal aid for prisoners are unfair and unlawful, and have coincided with a deterioration in safety in prisons across England and Wales, the Court of Appeal has been told.

In July 2015, two charities – the Howard League for Penal Reform and the Prisoners' Advice Service (PAS) – won the right to challenge the government's decision to cut legal aid for prisoners, including children.

The charities' full arguments were heard by the Court of Appeal during a two-day hearing in January and February 2017. Judgment was reserved, and the outcome was still awaited at the time *The Howard* went to press.

Since the cuts came into force in December 2013, violence and self-injury in prisons have risen to record levels. Almost 300 people have lost their lives through suicide.

More prisoners than ever before have called the Howard League and PAS to seek help. Calls to the two charities' advice lines have increased by almost 50 per cent since the cuts were imposed.

The impact of the policy has been far-reaching:

- It means that a prisoner who is being considered for transfer to an open prison, but not release, cannot get legal representation unless they pay.

- It means that prisoners who are stuck in the system cannot get legal help to access the courses they need to demonstrate they are safe for release.

The claimants' skeleton argument in the case contends that: "Within the prison population are some of the most vulnerable members of society.

There is a huge over-representation of the mentally unwell, those suffering from learning or other disability and the illiterate.

"For a proportion of those prisoners the removal of legal aid makes it impossible for them to engage fairly in decision making processes that will have a huge impact on their lives, rendering those decision making processes inherently unfair."

Frances Crook, Chief Executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform, said: "At a time when prisons are out of control, access to justice is more important than ever.

"We currently have a situation where a child or mentally ill person can be denied the option of asking for funded representation, even when they are struggling to progress through the convoluted prison system. This is unjust and must be challenged."

Deborah Russo, Joint Managing Solicitor of the Prisoners' Advice Service, said: "We are finally before the Court of Appeal on this important case and sincerely hope the Court will be able to see the plight of prisoners and how these swingeing cuts have so severely curtailed their ability to access justice."

In another case, guidance has been issued to magistrates after the Howard League took legal action against two courts for unlawfully ordering police to arrest a child for not paying a fine.

The Justices' Clerks' Society, the body that advises magistrates, has told its members "not to request the court to issue a summons or warrant to secure attendance at court in respect of a young person for non-payment".

The Howard League had sought permission to judicially review the decisions and processes that led to the 15-year-old boy being detained for two nights in a police station.

A court does not have the power to order the arrest of a child for non-payment for the good reason that it is recognised that children

do not have the means to pay fines.

In May 2016, a staff member at the children's home where the boy was living called police to report that he was acting aggressively.

When officers arrived, they checked the Police National Computer and found that he was the subject of an outstanding

arrest warrant for non-payment of fines.

Police arrested the boy on the grounds of the outstanding warrant. He was detained at a London police station. After two nights in custody, the boy was taken to court and no further action was taken against him.

Race begins for event places



Howard League supporters can go the extra mile to help the charity - by running in challenge events.

Charity places are available for runners who wish to take part in the Simplyhealth Great North Run and the Royal Parks Foundation Half Marathon.

The Great North Run, a half-marathon which begins in Newcastle and ends in South Shields, will be held on Sunday 10 September 2017.

The Royal Parks Foundation Half Marathon, which takes place in some of the most attractive parks in central London, is to be held on Sunday 8 October 2017.

Runners who join the Howard League's team will receive a Howard League technical t-shirt and a fundraising guide to help them reach their sponsorship target.

To apply for a place or find out more about the events, visit www.howardleague.org or email challenge@howardleague.org

Join today

By becoming a member, I would like to give a monthly amount you add your voice to our movement and help ensure its success. Our members are our strength, our advocates and our most important source of knowledge and financial support.

With your help, we can continue to achieve real and lasting change in the criminal justice system. Please join today.

Return to: The Howard League for Penal Reform, 1 Ardleigh Road, London, N1 4HS

£5 £10 £25 Other £ (minimum £2.00)

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www.howardleague.org

Please collect my payment on the 1st/15th of every month (Please circle preferred date)

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