A MAJOR investigation into the links between crime and problem gambling has been launched by the Howard League for Penal Reform.

The Commission on Crime and Problem Gambling will run for three years with the former Attorney General, Lord Goldsmith QC, as Chair.

Concern about harmful gambling activity has been growing for some time, but this is the first time that a Commission has focused specifically on the relationship between problem gambling and crime.

Lord Goldsmith QC said: “The Commission will seek to establish what the links are; what impact they have on communities and wider society; and, crucially, what steps could be taken to reduce crime and make people safer.”
Social harms, crime and justice on the agenda as experts meet for international conference

**Directors of Public Prosecutions, Max Hill QC, to deliver prestigious Howard League Lecture**

The Howard League, as we look at how the Howard League has been able to achieve change in spite of the ongoing uncertainty in Westminster.

Since the charity’s 125th anniversary in 1892, it has been campaigning to end the criminalisation of children in residential care. Government figures indicate that this work is making inroads, with rates of criminalisation falling.

A new step-by-step guide will help lawyers to advocate for looked-after children at the police station (page 5).

The charity’s advice line receives calls time and again for looked-after children at the police station (page 5).

There is more to do, however. Prisoners are still struggling to get books (page 7), and the work of the Howard League legal team is needed more than ever.

The charity’s advice line receives calls time and again about children who are being held in custody because they do not have a home to go to (page 5).

This is why the Howard League will keep working for less crime, safer communities and support for people in prison.

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**Why the police should stop arresting women**

Frances Crook, Chief Executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform, discusses the charity’s new drive to guide women away from crime.

**McPhee and peers urge police to respond to incidents differently**

Police are arresting vulnerable women with psychiatric disorders at a frighteningly high rate, a new study has found.

The study, led by Dr. Sarah McPhee and her team at the University of Cambridge, indicates that police are arresting mental health patients at a rate of 1 in 10, a rate that has increased in recent years. The study found that police are arresting women with mental health conditions at a rate of 1 in 10, with the rate being significantly higher for women than for men.

The findings are concerning, as they highlight the need for a more effective and compassionate approach to dealing with mental health crises.

The study was published in the Journal of Mental Health Care and Policy, and it calls for changes to police procedures to better support women with mental health conditions.

**Bryony Coxon, Co-Chair of the APPG on Mental Illness, said: “Women who are vulnerable need a safe place to be.”**

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How is crime linked to problem gambling?

The first-ever Commission to investigate the links between crime and problem gambling has begun taking evidence. Experts from across the globe are sharing their knowledge and evidence, inviting submissions and issuing a call for written evidence, before seeking to make recommendations for government, the gambling industry and within the criminal justice system.

It is chaired by Lord Goldsmith QC, a former Attorney General. He leads a team of 16 commissioners, comprising academics and professionals with expertise in the criminal justice system, public health as well as experts with knowledge of the gambling industry and lived experience of addiction.

The commissioners will focus less on individuals and the societal harms that connect the two, before seeking to make recommendations for government, the gambling industry and within the criminal justice system.

They will consider how people affected by problem gambling can be diverted from the criminal justice system.

The Commission will look at the driving forces influencing change and practice, including legislation, politics and the media.

It will engage with industry and experts throughout its work, which will be promoted through national and international media and on the Howard League website.

The Commission held its first business meeting in June 2019 and issued a call for written evidence, inviting submissions from academics, practitioners and policy makers within the criminological, legal and policy disciplines; the gambling industry; and people who are expert by experience.

An academic literature review is being conducted to assist the Commission in its work. The review will consider themes, trends and knowledge gaps in the field.

Lord Goldsmith QC, Chair of the Commission on Crime and Problem Gambling, said: “Concern about harmful gambling activity has been growing for some time, but this is the first Commission to focus specifically on the relationship between problem gambling and crime. “Our Commission will seek to establish what the links are, what impact they have on communities and wider society, and, crucially, what steps could be taken to reduce crime and make people safer.”

Experts from across the globe are submitting evidence to the Commission on Crime and Problem Gambling. They will consider how crime and problem gambling are connected and the harms that they bring. They will also consider how the criminal justice system can work effectively to stop crime.

The Commission will consider how crime linked to gambling is at the heart of a problem that cuts across individuals, communities and society and public health. It will consider how the criminal justice system can work effectively to stop crime.

The charity analysed data from 26 police forces, who received 23,000 call-outs from homes in 2018. The proportion of children with a criminal record.

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Research sheds light on overcrowding and violence behind bars

THE Howard League has urged the government to scrap plans to build new prisons and instead take decisive action to reduce the number of people behind bars.

The charity called on ministers to change direction after drawing the attention of national and local media to figures revealing the true scale of the prison overcrowding crisis in England and Wales.

Statistics published by the Ministry of Justice show that, on a typical day, more than 18,000 prisoners are crammed into cells holding too many people.

Most prisoners living in overcrowded conditions are required to share cells that were designed for one person. A smaller number may be forced to sleep three to a cell, in cells meant for two.

Overall, three in five men’s prisons are holding more people than they are certified to look after.

Local prisons – which tend to hold prisoners on short sentences, awaiting sentence, on remand awaiting trial or awaiting transfer to another prison category – are under the most pressure from overcrowding.

The worst-affected prison is Wandsworth, in south London, where on a typical day more than 1,500 prisoners are held in cells that are overcrowded.

Other jails with particularly high numbers of prisoners in overcrowded cells include HMP Oakwood (916), Leeds (796), Durham (780), Sodsaul,

More than 18,000 prisoners are crammed into cells holding too many people, government figures reveal

PRISONers should be exponents of justice, the Howard League has launched a new programme to find ways of reducing conflict, violence and injustice inside jails.

The charity has met the government to see how it can make prisons safer, and it is visiting jails to consult with prisoners and managers.

It has given evidence to Parliament’s Justice Committee, setting out better prison governance, and been asked to provide submissions to the United Nations Committee for the Prevention of Torture and the Council of Europe Torture Committee.

Frances Crook, Chief Inspector of Prisons – Nottingham, Exeter, Birmingham, Bedfordford and Bristol – all appear on the list of overcrowded jails. Several prisons that have been placed in special measures – including Chelmswood, Elmsly, Howell, Liverpool, Winchester and Wimborne Scrubs – also feature.

The overcrowding statistics were published alongside figures showing that incidents of self-injury and assault in prisons have risen to near-record levels.

Prisons recorded 57,960 incidents of self-injury in the 12 months to the end of March 2019 – at a rate of one every nine minutes.

Frances Crook, Chief Executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform, said: “Books can be a lifeline for prisoners – who often have to spend months or even years locked almost all day in a small cell.

The alternative is a day-time TV.

“We should be moving heaven and earth to get people in prison to read. Prisons must give this priority.”

The Howard League launched its Books For Prisoners campaign in 2014 after the government introduced a ban on sending books into prisons. The campaign drew international support – from leading figures from the arts world, former prisoners of conscience and activists from across the political spectrum, as well as thousands of the charity’s members.

The restrictions were overturned after the High Court ruled that they were unlawful. The Ministry of Justice changed its policy, indicating that prisoners could receive books from approved retailers and families and friends.

Five years on, however, problems persist. Prison inspectors have repeatedly encountered underused libraries and frustrated prisoners.

Brazil prison has a population of about 460, but only 13 men were taken from the wings to the library in May 2019.

A recent inspection of Garth prison, in Lancashire, found that last year, when Garth had a population of about 460, only 17 men were taken from the wings to the library in May 2019.

The figures reveal a clear relationship between overcrowding and violence in prisons.

“This is a challenge for the government. Bold action to reduce the number of people behind bars would not only ease pressure on the prisons; it would save lives, protect staff and prevent crime.”

Howard League drive to promote justice and fairness in prison

PROBLEMS in prisons mean that prisoners are still suffering from excessive punishments and violent behaviour.

The majority of Conflict, Violence, Punishments must be a thing of the past.

To improve conditions and reduce violence, the Howard League urged the government to see how it can make prisons safer, and it is visiting jails to consult with prisoners and managers.

It has given evidence to Parliament’s Justice Committee, setting out better prison governance, and been asked to provide submissions to the United Nations Committee for the Prevention of Torture and the Council of Europe Torture Committee.

Frances Crook, Chief Executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform, said: “Our legal work with children and young adults has revealed that punishments are used on prisoners when prisons are flailing around in desperation.

Adversarial spiral of control, resentment and violence triggers draconian punishments. Our research shows that nearly 1,000 years of extra imprisonment was imposed last year for misdemeanours committed inside.

“As prisoners are not allowed to inflict additional days on certain prisoners, lives or reminders for example, this system is seen to be unjust by both staff and prisoners.

“Having raised the alarm about how exessive punishments are fuelling conflict, the charity is to set a new agenda for prisons.

“Our solution would be to curtail the use of extra days of imprisonment as a response to misbehaviour and for governors to use other sanctions and incentives at their disposal.”

Carol Ann Duffy, the then Poet Laureate, led a poetry reading outside Pentonville prison as part of the Howard League campaign in 2014

Access to libraries remains poor in many prisons, official inspections have found
The Howard League legal team has been inundated with calls to help children and young people who are being kept in prison because they do not have a home and support in place.

The charity, which runs a free and confidential legal advice line, has received about 100 calls in the last year either from or on behalf of children and young people with nowhere suitable to go on release.

Cases dealt with by the Howard League legal team include the plight of a 17-year-old boy who was remanded to custody even though his youth offending team worker had recommended a community sentence.

The boy was a looked-after child but at the point of remand was living in a homeless shelter for adults. The charity argued that he was entitled to care and support, which was provided, allowing him to be given a community sentence.

The Howard League spoke about its casework after a joint inspection by Her Majesty’s Inspectorates of Prisons and Probation found that too many children released from prison did not have suitable accommodation lined up in time for them to receive the support they needed.

Frances Crook, Chief Executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform, said: “The inspectors’ findings are in line with what the Howard League sees through its legal work time and again – children are being let down and set up to fail.

“Children in custody need more than ‘accommodation’; they need a home.

“We have worked with children to find out what home means to them, and they told us that it meant much more than just a roof over their head; it meant love, happiness, caring, safety, food and drink, warmth and comfort. Rushed resettlement makes children feel unloved and uncared for.

“Through its legal work, the Howard League has transformed law, policy and practice for children in the criminal justice system. But the inspectors’ report underlines the fact that there is still so much more to do.”