The Howard League for Penal Reform has offered its advice to the government in a bid to help protect people living and working in prisons during the coronavirus pandemic.

The charity has written to the Secretary of State for Justice to suggest a package of measures that would ease pressure on the prison system.

Frances Crook, Chief Executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform, said: “The government must reduce the number of people behind bars to keep the public safe and ensure that prisons do not become breeding grounds for COVID-19.”
The Howard League puts forward plan to ease pressure on prisons during coronavirus pandemic

The Howard League for Penal Reform has written to the Secretary of State for Justice, putting forward a plan for easing pressure on the prison system during the coronavirus pandemic.

The letter recommended that the government could strengthen the Public Protection Service and community rehabilitation company so that fewer people are recalled to custody. It also recommended that the Chief Magistrate issue guidance to independent adjudicators, to suspend, or avoid where possible, the imposition of additional days’ imprisonment on people for breaches of prison discipline. Prison governors have the discretion to remit additional days. Some prisoners are only in prison due to serving these extra days and have not been considered for remission.

The letter also suggested that the Secretary of State consider early release for prisoners who have been deemed safe for release by the Parole Board could be released to relieve the stress on the system. This could affect prisoners whose release has been directed but who are awaiting spaces in approved premises or waiting for 28 days to pass in accordance with the reconsideration mechanisms.

The Howard League has written to the Secretary of State for Justice, putting forward a plan for easing pressure on the prison system during the coronavirus pandemic.

If we must have prisons, they should meet highest standards of justice and fairness, says charity as programme launches

The Howard League has launched a new programme to think differently about what happens to prisoners.

As the most absolute expression of the criminal justice system, prisons should meet the very highest standards of fair, impartial and respectful treatment. The central message in Justice does not take prisoners should be considered for compassionate release.

The briefing explains how structural unfairness is built into prison regimes, how to think differently about what happens to prisoners.

Lord Ken Macdonald QC announced as president

Lord Ken Macdonald QC has accepted the position of President of the Howard League for Penal Reform.

“Lord Macdonald is a highly-respected and influential voice in the spheres of law, academia and politics. His knowledge of the Howard League’s work, the challenges faced by the justice system and the Howard League’s commitment to the highest levels and provide support, advice and guidance on what we strive for less crime, safer communities and fewer people in prison,” said Frances Crook, Chief Executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform.

If we must have prisons, they should meet highest standards of justice and fairness, says charity as programme launches

The briefing explains how structural unfairness is built into prison regimes and how to think differently about what happens to prisoners.

The briefing concludes that a more just and fair prison system can lead to a more just and fair society overall.
Child arrests reduced by more than 70 per cent

THE Howard League’s drive to keep boys and girls out of the criminal justice system has taken another step forward as figures reveal that child arrests have been reduced by more than 70 per cent in eight years.

The total number of child arrests in England and Wales has been reduced every year since the charity launched a major campaign in 2010, and the rate of arrests has halved in the police force area.

Academic research has shown that each contact a child has with the criminal justice system drags them deeper into it, leading to more crime. This is why the Howard League is working with police to keep as many children as possible out of the system in the first place.

Data from more than 40 police forces show they made 70,078 arrests of boys and girls in 2018. This was a reduction of 38 per cent on 2010, when 113,200 children were arrested.

The Howard League has gone on to publish five more editions of its guide, which is used by a wide range of professionals to help lawyers advise and represent children in court.

HUNDREDS of boys and girls can look forward to a brighter future as officials figures reveal the Howard League’s programme to end the criminalisation of children has been successful.

Data collected by the Department of Education (DfE) indicate that, while the number of children spending time placed in children’s homes continues to rise, the number of children being criminalised is falling significantly.

It follows a concerted effort by the Howard League, police, lawyers, social care and other professionals to keep children out of care and away from crime.

"The Howard League's programme to end the criminalisation of children and the stories of children who have been taken from their homes is why the Howard League is advocating the abolition of the criminal justice system in the first place," said Frances Crook, Chief Executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform.

"We must do all we can to ensure children are not held back by a criminal record.

"Most children in residential care are experiencing problems early in life and are dropping out of school at a young age. They may be a child of neglect, they may need nurture and support and they can be supported to access independent legal advice and representation if there are concerns about segregation planning.

It is the second step-by-step guide to be published by the Howard League in the last 12 months, following a similar document to help lawyers and law students advocate for looked-after children.

The guide helps adults to:

- know when accommodation or support needs to be provided for a child;
- consider whether a child is a victim of exploitation; and
- routinely moot to contacting the police, often over minor incidents that would never come to officers’ attention if they happened in family homes.

"This guide ties together policy and practice to empower lawyers and other professionals to take practical steps to counter the trend of over-representation of looked-after children in the criminal justice system."

Lights on: lawyers’ network events empower staff to support children as they return to the community

E xperts on criminal justice, children’s rights, legal aid, youth justice and social care attended a major conference on youth justice at the University of Oxford.

The event was organised by the Howard League, the National Association of Youth Justice (NAYJ), the Youth Justice Board, the Ministry of Justice, the Department of Education, and supported by a large group of stakeholders, including the Howard League, Youth Justice Board, the University of Oxford and other organisations.

The conference, which was held at the University of Oxford, was attended by around 150 lawyers, legal professionals, local government staff, and academics. It was the second annual event featuring a briefing for lawyers and law students on the legal aid entitlements, rights and responsibilities of children in criminal proceedings.

"There is more work to do, particularly in relation to tackling serious crime instead of arresting naïve children. This will make communities safer and the Howard League is proud to have played its part.

"Building on the success and reducing the number of arrests, the Howard League will continue to work with the police, the DfE and social care to keep children out of care and away from crime.

"We offer confidential support to children in the community and the Howard League is committed to transforming the lives of children and young people of all ages.

"The latest event is the second in a series of initiatives to help lawyers and law students advocate for looked-after children. It follows the successful conference held in 2018, and we continue to work with law students to support them in their studies.

"The Howard League has gone on to publish five more editions of its guide, which is used by a wide range of professionals to help lawyers advise and represent children in court.

"The guide helps adults to:

- know when accommodation or support needs to be provided for a child;
- consider whether a child is a victim of exploitation; and
- routinely moot to contacting the police, often over minor incidents that would never come to officers’ attention if they happened in family homes.

The Howard League campaign has positive impact
Awards for community champions who cut crime and turn lives around

Successful community projects that reduce crime and transform lives for the better have been honoured with prestigious Howard League Community Awards.

Chet, author and broadcaster Prue Leith, presented awards and commendations to outstanding schemes from across the country.

The prize-giving was the highlight of the Howard League’s ‘Policing the Community’ conference in London, which brought delegates together to discuss best practice in policing and diversion from crime and custody.

‘Speakers who appeared at the event included representatives from the Magistrates’ Association, Oxford StaphNath, Clincs and the Beacon Counselling Trust.

The ‘Organisation of the Year’ category was won by C2C Social Action, a charity working with people who have been caught up in the criminal justice system.

The charity’s services include running a women’s centre in Northamptonshire, where women receive help with issues such as homelessness, education, training and employment; health; addictions; finance; debt and benefits; family relationships; domestic abuse; and loneliness and isolation.

Also praised were West Yorkshire projects CATCH (Community Action To Create Hope) and POLIT (Police Online Investigation Team) Pathways, which won the ‘Policing and children’ and ‘Policing and adults’ categories respectively.

The ‘Restorative approaches’ category was won by Restorative Cleveland, part of the Safe in Tees Valley project commissioned by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland.

The Amber Foundation won the ‘liaison and diversion’ category for work with young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It runs a residential centre in Surrey.

The ‘Women’ category was won by LINC (Local Initiatives Nurturing Change), a Willowdene Rehabilitation project that delivers support to women across Warwickshire and West Mercia.

In addition to the successful projects, the Howard League presented awards to two outstanding individuals - Baroness Jean Corston and Julie Parsons.

In 2007 Baroness Corston published her seminal report, A Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System, as an international blueprint for how women in the justice system should be treated.

She has worked tirelessly since then on issues such as stopping strip-search; investing in women’s centres; and stopping the construction of more women’s prisons.

She has led with the Howard League on driving forward stopping the construction of women’s prisons, as an international blueprint for how women in the justice system should be treated.

In 2007 Baroness Corston published her seminal report, A Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System, as an international blueprint for how women in the justice system should be treated.

Julie Parsons founded C2C Social Action in 2003. The charity has diverted many women from crime and has event set up a successful social enterprise bakery, called The Good Loaf.

The charity has three houses, where vulnerable people are offered accommodation and help in accessing appropriate services. There are also plans to provide a safe shelter for homeless women.

Catryn Yousefi, Programmes Manager at the Howard League for Penal Reform, said: “The Howard League Community Awards celebrate successful projects and pioneers who guide people away from crime and help to make us all safer.

“Only the very best schemes in the UK are honoured each year and, once again, we were delighted to receive so many high-quality nominations.”

It was a busy day of networking, keynote speeches and panel events for delegates representing organisations from across the country.
Support our work

By supporting our work, you add your voice to our movement and help ensure its success.

Our supporters 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.

Return to: The Howard League
1 Ardleigh Road
London N1 4HS

www.howardleague.org info@howardleague.org


The rights of children in trouble with the law are routinely overlooked and ignored in the criminal justice system, the Howard League has warned in a briefing to mark the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Convention is the most widely-ratified human rights treaty in history, with the US being the only UN member state that has abstained, but it is also the most violated – and particularly so for children in custody.

In England and Wales, breaches of the Convention affecting children in trouble with the law have been pointed out repeatedly in a series of damning reports by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Since 2002 the Howard League has used its legal and campaign work to fight for the rights of children in conflict with the law and to improve their situation in line with the aspirations of the Convention.

Some of the charity’s achievements are explained in detail in the briefing, called All our children: The work of the Howard League to make the rights of children in trouble a reality in England and Wales.

Landmark cases featured in the briefing include: R (Howard League) v Secretary of State for the Home Department; R (K) v Parole Board; R (DT) v Secretary of State for the Home Department; R (M) v Hammersmith and Fulham London Borough Council; and R (AB) v Secretary of State for Justice.

Frances Crook, Chief Executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform, said: “Through a combination of legal work and campaigning, the Howard League has battled to make the rights set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child a reality for children.

“But it should not require the intervention of lawyers and campaigners to ensure that the rights of children in conflict with the law are upheld.

“The government must end the abuse and neglect of children in custody.”

To download the briefing, visit: https://howardleague.org/publications/all-our-children/