

A NEW COMMISSION ON DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE IS LAUNCHED

A new national commission focusing on domestic and sexual abuse against the most marginalised women and girls has been officially launched today.

The commission, chaired by **Baroness Hilary Armstrong**, will bring together leading experts to look at the situation of women and girls who have experienced violence and go on to face a range of other issues including addiction and poor mental health.

Brought together by **AVA (Against Violence & Abuse)** and **Agenda**, the alliance for women and girls at risk, it will consider what services are available to women and the changes to policy and practice needed to support them.

At the end of the year-long commission, a report will be published with the findings and a series of recommendations including for the government and local authorities.

Baroness Armstrong says: **“I am delighted to be chairing this important new commission. Abuse underpins so many other challenges in the lives of women and girls and it is vital that this is recognised and taken into account.**

“The commission will look in detail at the issues this group of women face in accessing support and will propose recommendations aimed at ensuring they are given the help they need to rebuild their lives.”

The commission, which will take evidence from women with experience of these issues, has been funded by a grant from the **Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales**.

Katharine Sacks-Jones, Director of Agenda, says: “Many women and girls who have experienced violence and abuse are deeply traumatised. They can go on to face multiple problems like very low self-esteem, poor mental and physical health and turning to drugs and alcohol as coping mechanisms.

“We hope this commission will lead to lasting positive change across the board and enable the many thousands of women affected by these issues to get the support and protection they need.”

Donna Covey, Director of AVA says: “Support services have limited capacity, are under-funded and can be poorly equipped to give women the support they need and deserve.

“Thanks to our grant from the Lloyds Bank Foundation, this national commission will draw much-needed attention to these issues and mean future national policy and practice on abuse reflects the reality and complex nature of women’s lives.”

The Commission includes leading professionals from a range of sectors including:

- Dame Gill Morgan, former Permanent Secretary to the Welsh Assembly Government
- Vivienne Adams, Chief Executive of Adfam
- Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Director of the Institute for Social Policy, Housing, Equalities Research at Heriot Watt University
- Marai Larasi, Executive Director of Imkaan
- Jaswant Narwal, Chief Crown Prosecutor for the South East of England
- Dominic Williamson, Executive Director of Strategy and Policy at St Mungo’s.