



One minute guide

Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme - Clare's Law

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What is the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme?

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) was launched nationally in March 2014. The scheme allows people to make enquiries with the police about an individual they are in a relationship with, or who is in a relationship with someone they know, where there are concerns that this individual may be violent, abusive or controlling and coercive towards their partner.

The scheme is also referred to as 'Clare's Law', and was named after Clare Wood who was murdered in 2009 by her ex-partner George Appleton, who had a history of violence against women. This law applies to all people, regardless of gender or sexuality; it should not be viewed solely as a mechanism for women to make enquiries about male partners.

There are two aspects to the DVDS; 'Right to Know', and 'Right to Ask'. 'Right to Know' refers to an obligation the police have to disclose information to individuals, without it being requested, if they consider that information suggests the individual is at risk of harm from domestic violence or abuse. 'Right to Ask' refers to the rights of members of the public to apply to the police for a disclosure of specific information for the purposes of protecting individuals from domestic violence or abuse.

What information may be disclosed?

The police may disclose the following relevant police information in relation to a subject, under either the 'Right to Know' obligation or a 'Right to Ask' application:

- Convictions for an offence related to domestic violence or abuse, which are not yet considered 'spent' under the [Rehabilitation of Offenders Act \(1974\)](#);
- History of a serial perpetrator of domestic violence or abuse; i.e. committed domestic violence or abuse acts against two or more victims;
- Intelligence about previous offending in a domestic setting, which may include cases not proceeded with, or previous concerning behaviour towards previous partners;
- Concerning behaviour by the subject towards the potential victim, e.g. a pattern of behaviours relating to exerting coercive control, stalking etc.;
- The police have a duty to protect members of the public from crime, and are allowed to balance the subject's right to confidentiality against a potential victim's right not to suffer harm from them.

How can people make an application under the DVDS?

Individuals can contact police and make an application by: using the 101 non-emergency telephone number; using the [online form](#); in person at a police station; by speaking to a police officer on the street. There are four stages to the process:

Initial contact and information gathering: a police officer will speak to the applicant and take details about the partners involved, what prompted the enquiry, and when and where it is safe to make further contact with the applicant. If a crime is alleged to have taken place at this point, then this will be investigated and responded to in line with existing domestic abuse procedures. Initial checks will be run to establish if there are any immediate concerns.

Face to face meeting to complete the application: if the application progresses, the applicant may need to attend a face to face meeting with the police, in order to: give further information about the relationship between the partners to help assess the risks; to establish whether there are any children in the household; and to check the identity of the applicant. The police may run checks and speak to other agencies about information they hold.

Multi-agency meeting to consider disclosure: The final decision about whether to disclose will be made by the police and other key safeguarding agencies (e.g. Probation, Prison Service) who will discuss the information in the application and any relevant information from agencies. If they decide to disclose, they will decide who should receive the information (which may not be the person who made the application) and any safety plans required to protect potential victims. The multi-agency meeting will also decide whether to disclose information in the absence of an application, under the Right to Know obligation. A Right to Know disclosure will only be made if it is lawful and proportionate and there is a pressing need to make the disclosure to prevent further crime.

Disclosure of information: the decision to disclose or not to disclose will be relayed to the applicant in person. No written information is given to an applicant, but the conversation is recorded verbatim and kept on police records. If information is shared, the applicant will be asked to sign a written undertaking that they will not share this information further; the police may take action, including civil or criminal proceedings, if this information is disclosed to others without their consent.

The police will act immediately if at any time they consider a person to be at risk and in need of protection from harm.

Key contacts and further information

If you suspect that domestic violence is currently taking place, you should follow your agency's safeguarding procedures, which may include contacting the Children's Social Work Service Duty and Advice Team if there are children in the home on tel: 0113 3760336 (out of hours 0113 5350600).

Further information about the scheme and other sources of information and support in relation to domestic abuse is available from the [West Yorkshire Police website](#).

You can also contact the Leeds Police Safeguarding Unit at:
leeds.safeguarding@westyorkshire.police.uk