



One minute guide

Child Sex Offenders Disclosure Scheme - Sarah's Law

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What is the Child Sex Offenders Disclosure Scheme?

The [Child Sex Offenders Disclosure Scheme](#) (CSODS) was adopted by West Yorkshire Police in March 2011, and nationally shortly afterwards. Under the scheme a parent, carer, guardian or another interested party can ask the police to check whether someone who has access to their children has a record of committing child sexual offences. If they are found to have convictions for sexual offences against children, and pose a risk of causing serious harm to the child or children concerned, then this information may be disclosed.

The scheme is sometimes referred to as 'Sarah's Law', named after eight year old Sarah Payne who was abducted and murdered by Roy Whiting, a man who had already been placed on the Sex Offenders Register for previous offences. Sarah's mother Sara Payne had campaigned for a number of years for the government to allow the public controlled access to the Sex Offenders Register, so parents could know if a child sex-offender was living in their area.

This is similar to the 'Megan's Law' legislation in the US state of California, which makes information available to the public about registered sex offenders.

How should parents, carers and guardians use the scheme if they have concerns?

West Yorkshire Police administer the scheme through their Child and Public Protection Units; disclosures cannot be made by any other officers.

Requests can be made through the police online form, by visiting a police station in person or by calling 101, the police non-emergency telephone number.

For requests made through the 101 number, call handlers have been trained to respond to these requests, and will need to take some details about the applicant, the child(ren) they feel may be at risk, the person they are concerned about and the contact this person has with the child(ren) in question.

If parents, carers and guardians you are working with disclose any information that causes you to suspect that a child may be at risk of significant harm, you must contact the Children's Services [Duty and Advice Team](#) to discuss your concerns with them.

If anyone believes that a child is at immediate risk, they must contact the police on the 999 emergency number.

What is the process for members of the public to make an application under the CSODS?

As noted overleaf, individuals wishing to make an application should first contact West Yorkshire Police via the online form, the police 101 non-emergency telephone number or in person at a police station. The initial information provided will be used to complete relevant checks of police information within 24 hours, in order to determine whether immediate safeguarding action needs to be taken.

Applicants are also asked at this stage whether they consent to the information they have provided being shared with other relevant agencies, such as the Children's Social Work Service, the Probation service and colleagues in health.

Following this initial contact, a police officer from the Child and Public Protection Unit will visit the applicant to ask further questions and obtain additional relevant information in support of the application. Applicants will also be asked to provide proof of identity and proof of their relationship to the children named in the application. From this information, further checks will be made and risk assessments undertaken, which will inform the decision whether or not to disclose information.

Any disclosure by West Yorkshire Police will only be made to the parent, guardian or carer best placed to protect the child or children. Any third party making an application would not necessarily receive disclosure if they were not best placed to protect the child/ children.

Any information disclosed to those best placed to help the child/ children is confidential and should not be shared with anyone. It is only given to protect the child/ children named in the application from harm. Anyone sharing the information more widely could be subject to criminal or civil proceedings.

Key contacts and further information

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

[Duty and Advice](#) tel: 0113 3760336 (out of hours tel: 0113 2409536)

You can find out more about the scheme from the online [practitioner guidance](#) provided by the Home Office, or from the [West Yorkshire Police website](#).