



Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (also known as Clare's Law)

1. What is the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) was launched nationally in 2014, becoming statute in 2023. 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.

2. Two aspects to 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 (including professionals) to apply to the police for a disclosure of specific information for the purposes of protecting individuals from domestic violence or abuse. If an application is being made on behalf of someone else, the only individual with entitlement to information is the Person at Risk and not the Applicant.

Both routes have a timescale for completion within **28 days** (unless there are exceptional circumstances).

3. What information may be disclosed?

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

- Convictions for an offence related to domestic abuse, which are not yet considered 'spent' under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974).

- History of being a serial perpetrator of domestic abuse i.e. committed domestic 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.

4. Make an application under the DVDS What is the process for members of the public (and professionals) to?

Individuals can contact the police in the following ways:

- using the 101 non-emergency telephone number,
- in person at a police station,
- applying online through the Police Single Online Home portal ([Request information under Clare's Law: Make a Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme \(DVDS\) application | North Yorkshire Police](#))

The application will then progress through the following stages:

- **Initial contact and information gathering** - A member of the North Yorkshire Police Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme Team will speak to the applicant to confirm receipt and take details about the individuals/any children involved, what prompted the enquiry, and when and where it is safe to make further contact with the applicant (If these have not already been provided at the point of request). If a crime is alleged to have taken place, 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 requiring contact from a Domestic Abuse Officer or for the application to be expedited outside of normal timescales.
- **Full checks** will be undertaken using systems available to the Police including:
 - If the case is particularly complex, there may be a multi-agency meeting to consider disclosure (DVDS Panel). The final decision about whether to disclose will be made by the police and other key

safeguarding agencies (e.g., Probation, Independent Domestic Abuse Service, Children’s Social Care/ Adult Social Care) who will discuss the information provided by the applicant and any relevant information from agencies. If they decide to disclose, they will decide who should receive the information and any safety plans which need to be in place to protect potential victims.

- Disclosure of information: the decision to disclose or not to disclose will be relayed to the applicant. If there is a decision to share information, the applicant will be required to attend a Police Station and sign a written undertaking that they will not share this information further. No written information is given to an applicant, but the conversation is recorded in written format and kept on police records. Safety planning and signposting will also be offered.

5. Key contacts and further information

- You can use this guide to explain the scheme and the process to people you are working with who may wish to make an application under the scheme.
- If you suspect that domestic abuse is currently taking place, however, you should follow your organisation’s safeguarding procedures.
- If you require advice on the scheme, you can contact DVDS@Northyorkshire.police.uk. This inbox is monitored within office hours by the DVDS Team, North Yorkshire Police. Please note this inbox is not for requesting disclosures, nor for reporting crime.

To find out more information about domestic abuse and who to contact please see the City of York website <https://www.york.gov.uk/domesticabuse#help>

If you are worried about an adult in York, please report any concerns via the city of York safeguarding adults board website:
<https://www.safeguardingadultsyork.org.uk/raise-concern>.

If you would prefer to speak to someone or report information anonymously you can contact the city of York adult social care:

Call: 01904 555111, Mon to Fri, 8.30am to 5.00pm

Out of hours help: 0300 131 2131

For hearing impaired text: 07534 437804

This resource has been adapted from North Yorkshire Police and North Yorkshire Safeguarding Adults Board one minute guide – **with thanks.**

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