



SAFEGUARDING, DISCLOSURE & PERSONAL SAFETY

Clare's Law

Understanding the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, the Right to Ask, the Right to Know, and what happens next.

The key idea

Clare's Law is the common name for the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme. It allows a person to ask police about a current or ex-partner's abusive history, and also allows police to make proactive disclosures where necessary for safety.

What is Clare's Law?

Clare's Law is the commonly used name for the **Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)**. It operates across police forces in England and Wales and is designed to help people make informed decisions about their safety where there are concerns about a current or former intimate partner.

It is a disclosure scheme

Clare's Law does not provide an automatic right to see another person's full criminal record. Police consider whether relevant information should be disclosed because it is **necessary, lawful and proportionate** to protect someone from harm.

The scheme has two routes

Right to Ask

A person can ask police to check whether their current or former partner has a violent or abusive history. A concerned third party, such as a friend or relative, can also make an application about somebody else's partner.

Right to Know

Police can consider making a disclosure proactively when information comes to their attention that indicates a person may be at risk from a current or former partner.

Who can make a request?

You can apply because you are concerned about your own current or ex-partner, or because you are worried about the current or ex-partner of a friend or relative who still has contact with that person. Support services may also help somebody make an application.

If you apply for someone else

Making the application does not necessarily mean the information will be disclosed to you. Police should disclose to the person best placed to protect the person at risk, which may be the person at risk themselves or another appropriate person.

Making a Right to Ask application

A Clare's Law request is made to the police. Current GOV.UK guidance says a request can be made in person, by telephone, by email, online or as part of a police investigation. Police.uk also provides an online route that directs an application to the appropriate force.

Information that may help

- Details identifying the person you are asking about.
- Your relationship to the person who may be at risk.
- Why you are concerned, including relevant behaviour or incidents.
- Safe contact details and any information about how police can contact you safely.
- Information about immediate risks or children who may also be affected.

This is not the route for an emergency

If a crime is happening or somebody is in immediate danger, use the appropriate emergency/reporting route rather than waiting for a Clare's Law application. Call **999** in an emergency.

What happens after you apply?

Police carry out checks and assess risk. They consider whether there is information relevant to the person's safety and whether disclosure is necessary and proportionate. Other agencies may be involved where this helps with safeguarding and risk assessment.

A request does not guarantee a disclosure

Police may decide there is no information to disclose, that disclosure is not necessary or proportionate, or that information should be given to somebody other than the applicant. A decision not to disclose does **not** mean that a person is necessarily safe or that concerns should be ignored.

What might be disclosed?

Where police decide disclosure is appropriate, they share information considered necessary to protect the person at risk. Police.uk explains that the information may be a summary or redacted rather than a complete record.

Not a criminal-record check

A Clare's Law disclosure is **not a full criminal record** and does not replace a DBS check, subject access request or Freedom of Information request. Its purpose is safeguarding a person who may be at risk of domestic abuse.

Confidentiality

Information disclosed under the scheme is sensitive and is normally given in confidence for the purpose of protecting the person at risk. Police should explain any conditions attached to the disclosure and how the information can be used. If you receive a disclosure, follow the instructions given by the police rather than sharing it more widely.

What if nothing is disclosed?

A lack of disclosure should not be treated as proof that a relationship is safe. Relevant behaviour may never have been reported, recorded or resulted in a conviction, and the disclosure test is not the same as simply listing everything held by police.

Your own experience still matters

You do not need a Clare's Law disclosure before seeking domestic-abuse support. If behaviour is frightening, controlling, threatening, coercive or otherwise concerning, you can speak to a specialist service about what you are experiencing and your options.

Clare's Law and reporting abuse

A Clare's Law application asks for information; it is not the same as reporting a crime or domestic-abuse incident. If information you provide indicates that a crime may have occurred, police may need to respond through their usual safeguarding and investigation processes.

Using the information safely

A disclosure can provide important context, but it does not make the decision about a relationship for somebody. The purpose is to support informed choices and safety planning.

If information is disclosed

Consider discussing the disclosure with the police or a specialist domestic-abuse service. They can help you think about risk, safety planning, children, housing, legal protections and other support that may be relevant.

If you are supporting someone else

Avoid pressuring the person to leave immediately or confronting the person you are concerned about. Ask what support feels useful and consider specialist advice about how to help without increasing risk.

Related routes to know about

Ask for ANI / Safe Spaces

The national Ask for ANI pharmacy scheme ended in November 2024, but Safe Spaces continue in participating locations. *See the dedicated Ask for ANI resource in this collection.*

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Act provides a statutory definition of domestic abuse and recognises that abuse can include controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse and emotional abuse as well as physical or sexual abuse. *A dedicated resource appears elsewhere in this collection.*

Power and Control Wheel

Patterns of control can be difficult to recognise when behaviours are viewed one incident at a time. The Power and Control Wheel is one framework for exploring patterns within abusive relationships. *See the dedicated resource in this collection.*

Support & practical reminders

Immediate danger

Call **999** if you or somebody else is in immediate danger.

National Domestic Abuse Helpline — England

Refuge runs the free 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline on **0808 2000 247**. GOV.UK lists additional services for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Making a Clare's Law request

Police.uk provides a current online DVDS application route. You can also contact your local police force. A specialist domestic-abuse service can help you understand the process.

Things to remember

- You can ask about your own current or former partner.
- A third party can raise concerns about somebody else's partner.
- The person who applies is not automatically the person who receives a disclosure.
- Police do not simply hand over a full criminal record.
- No disclosure does not equal a guarantee of safety.
- You can seek domestic-abuse support whether or not you make a Clare's Law application.

About this resource

This PDF provides general educational information about the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme in England and Wales. It is not individual legal, safeguarding or safety-planning advice. Domestic-abuse risk can change quickly and individual circumstances differ.

Information reviewed: September 2026

References & further information

Home Office (GOV.UK). *Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme guidance*. Statutory guidance describing the Right to Ask and Right to Know processes, risk assessment, decision-making and disclosure.

Home Office (GOV.UK). *Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme factsheet*. Overview of the scheme and its statutory footing under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Police.uk. *Request information under Clare's Law: Make a Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme application*. Current public application information, eligibility and online application route.

Home Office (GOV.UK). *Domestic abuse: how to get help*. Current information on Clare's Law, specialist support and protective options.

Great Britain (2021). *Domestic Abuse Act 2021*. London: The Stationery Office.

Scope of this guide

Clare's Law / DVDS described here is the scheme operating in **England and Wales**. Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own domestic-abuse disclosure arrangements, so readers outside England and Wales should use the relevant local police guidance.