



SAFEGUARDING, DISCLOSURE & PERSONAL SAFETY

Ask for ANI

Understanding the domestic abuse codeword scheme,
its current status, and safer ways to find support.

Important current information

The national Home Office Ask for ANI pharmacy scheme ended on 4 November 2024.
Safe Spaces continue in participating pharmacies, banks and building societies.
This guide explains current routes to support and briefly signposts related protections.

Ask for ANI: what changed?

Ask for ANI stands for **Action Needed Immediately**. The codeword was introduced so that a person experiencing domestic abuse could discreetly signal that they needed help in a participating pharmacy. Staff could offer a private space and help the person contact the police or specialist support.

Current position

The national Home Office pharmacy scheme ended on **4 November 2024**. This does not mean that confidential help in community settings disappeared: **Safe Spaces** continue in participating locations. Older webpages and printed materials may still describe Ask for ANI as current, so checking an up-to-date source matters.

Why is Ask for ANI still mentioned?

The scheme became widely recognised and references to it remain in older public information. Some current government material is also inconsistent: the main Home Office domestic-abuse guidance records the scheme as ended, while other public-sector pages still refer to it. For this resource, the main Home Office guidance and current Safe Spaces information are treated as the clearest operational sources.

What happened when someone asked for ANI?

The purpose was to create a discreet route into help. A participating member of staff could move the person to a private area, establish what kind of support was needed and help them contact emergency or specialist services. It was not necessary for the person to explain their situation publicly at the counter.

Important distinction

Ask for ANI was a specific codeword scheme. **Safe Spaces are a separate continuing scheme**. A location offering a Safe Space should not automatically be assumed to be operating the former Ask for ANI process.

What support is available now?

There is no single replacement that everyone must use. Different routes are useful in different circumstances, and a person may use more than one form of support.

Safe Spaces

Safe Spaces are private rooms where someone experiencing domestic abuse can take time, access information, or contact friends, family or specialist services. Current government guidance lists Safe Spaces in **Boots, Morrisons, Superdrug and Well pharmacies, TSB banks and independent pharmacies** across the UK. Availability can change, so use a current locator when possible.

Specialist helplines

For England, the **National Domestic Abuse Helpline**, run by Refuge, is available free on **0808 2000 247**, 24 hours a day. GOV.UK also lists nation-specific services, Women's Aid support and Victim Support.

Emergency help

If somebody is in immediate danger, call **999**. If calling from a mobile and unable to speak, listen to the operator and, when prompted, press **55** to be transferred to police. Pressing 55 does not itself allow police to locate every caller, so following the operator's prompts is important.

Accessing support discreetly

Domestic abuse can include monitoring of phones, online accounts, location, spending or travel. This means a method of seeking help that is safe for one person may not be safe for another. If possible, specialist domestic-abuse services can help someone consider safer ways to communicate, document concerns or make plans in their individual circumstances.

You do not need to decide everything at once

Speaking to a specialist service can be a way of understanding options. Seeking information does not, by itself, mean that someone has to leave immediately, make a police report or pursue a particular legal route.

Other routes you may want to know about

These are included as brief signposts because someone reading this PDF may not encounter the other resources in this collection.

Clare's Law

The **Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme**, commonly known as Clare's Law, includes a **Right to Ask**, where a member of the public can ask police about a partner or ex-partner, and a **Right to Know**, where police may proactively disclose relevant information to protect someone. *See the dedicated Clare's Law resource in this collection for more detail.*

Protective orders

Depending on the circumstances, legal protections can include **non-molestation orders** and **occupation orders**. Newer **Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders (DAPNs/DAPOs)** are currently being piloted in selected areas rather than being available nationally. The pilot is continuing during 2026.

Safeguarding

Domestic abuse may also raise safeguarding concerns, particularly where children or adults with care and support needs are affected. Safeguarding responses should consider risk while also involving the person, where possible, in decisions about what they want to happen. *Related safeguarding resources appear elsewhere in this collection.*

Domestic abuse is not limited to physical violence

Domestic abuse can include physical or sexual abuse, threats, intimidation, coercive or controlling behaviour, emotional abuse and economic abuse. A person does not need visible injuries for their experiences to be serious or for support to be appropriate.

If you are supporting somebody else

Listen without pressuring the person to take a particular action. Avoid confronting the person you believe is causing harm, as this can increase risk. Ask what would feel useful and safe, and help the person access specialist advice if they want it.

Finding the right kind of help

A useful first question is not simply “Which scheme should I use?” but “What kind of help is needed right now?”

I need somewhere private

Look for a current **Safe Space** or another safe location where you can contact somebody without being overheard.

I want confidential advice

A specialist domestic-abuse helpline can discuss what is happening, explain options and help with safety planning.

I am worried about a partner's history

The **Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law)** may be relevant. Requests are made through the police.

I need legal protection

Depending on the situation and location, options may include a non-molestation order, occupation order or, in pilot areas, a DAPO. Specialist services or legal advice can help explain which route may fit the circumstances.

There is immediate danger

Call **999**. If you cannot speak on a mobile call, follow the operator's instructions and press **55** when prompted.

A note about children

Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, a child who sees, hears or experiences the effects of domestic abuse and is related to the victim or perpetrator is recognised as a victim of domestic abuse in their own right. Support may therefore need to consider children's experiences as well as the adult victim's safety.

Support & current information

Because schemes and local provision change, use current sources where it is safe to do so.

National Domestic Abuse Helpline — England

0808 2000 247 • Freephone • 24 hours a day • Run by Refuge. Online information and contact options are also available.

Victim Support

Free, independent and confidential support is available whether or not the abuse was reported to police. Current GOV.UK guidance lists the 24/7 Supportline as **08 08 16 89 111**.

Safe Spaces

Use the current UK SAYS NO MORE Safe Spaces information/locator to check participating locations rather than relying on an old Ask for ANI list.

Emergency

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

About this resource

This PDF provides general educational information. It is not individual legal, safeguarding or safety-planning advice. Domestic-abuse risk can change quickly, and the safest course of action depends on individual circumstances.

Information reviewed: September 2026

References & further information

Home Office (GOV.UK). *Domestic abuse: how to get help*. Main current government guidance on emergency help, national helplines, Safe Spaces, protective orders and the ending of the Ask for ANI pharmacy scheme on 4 November 2024.

UK SAYS NO MORE. *Ask for ANI and Safe Spaces*. Current information confirming the end of the pharmacy Ask for ANI scheme and continuation of Safe Spaces.

College of Policing. *Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme principles*. Current guidance describing the Right to Ask and Right to Know routes.

Home Office and Ministry of Justice (GOV.UK). *Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders*. Current guidance on the DAPN/DAPO pilot and participating areas.

Home Office. *Domestic Abuse Act 2021 statutory guidance*. Guidance on the statutory definition of domestic abuse, children as victims and protective measures.

Why the review date matters

Operational schemes, helplines, pilot areas and local services can change. If you are reading this substantially after September 2026, check the current GOV.UK domestic-abuse guidance and the relevant service directly.