

Clare's Law

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) also known as Clare's Law, gives any member of the public the right to ask the police if their partner (or former partner) may pose a risk to them. This includes same sex relationships and men whose partners may pose a risk.

The process is named after Clare Wood, who was murdered by her ex-boyfriend George Appleton in 2009. Clare had met Appleton on Facebook and was not aware of his horrific history of violence against women, including repeated harassment, threats and the kidnapping at knifepoint of one of his ex-partners. Appleton strangled Clare and set her on fire before taking his own life in Salford, Greater Manchester.

Once an application is made, police and partner agencies will carry out a range of checks. If these reveal a record of abusive offences, or suggest a risk of violence or abuse, we will consider disclosing this information. The aim is to help people to make a more informed decision on whether to continue a relationship and provide help and support when making that choice.

There are two ways in which a disclosure can be made under the scheme:

- **Right to Ask:** A member of the public may make an application regarding a current or ex-partner. A disclosure can also be requested by a third party - a family member, friend, colleague or neighbour to protect someone they believe to be at risk.
- **Right to Know:** A disclosure can be made where police or a partner agency comes across information that indicates an individual is at risk of domestic abuse and where the proactive decision is made to consider disclosing information in order to protect a potential victim.

Method of Disclosure

You can make a DVDS request in two ways, online or at a police station.

1: Online

Website:

<https://www.met.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/daa/domestic-abuse/alpha2/request-information-under-clares-law/>

The online form provides an additional method for the public to make a request for information. It does not replace the other method for making a DVDS request and members of the public can make enquiries at police stations, however it allows 24/7 access via the internet which will help increase the ability to make a request at a time and place that suits the applicant.

The online form has a "quick exit" button as well as sign posting to DA charities and support organisations. Applicants are also sign posted to relevant additional online services such as reporting DA crime online, DA advice and information detailing how to hide browser history. Live-chat is also available to users on the form should they require additional assistance.

You'll need the following details, if possible, to make your request:

- The full name and any previous names of the person you're applying to find out about (in the request process this person is known as the 'subject').
- The current address and any previous addresses in the last five years for the subject.
- We'll ask you, as part of your request, how you'd like to be contacted. We'll only contact you that way. We'll also ask about when it's best to contact you, eg: dates and times.

Please note: You won't be able to save your request as you go; you'll have two hours to complete each step of the form before it times out. Average completion time: 15 minutes.

2: At a Police Station

You can go to any police station to make a request. A police officer or member of police staff will take down some details and talk you through the next steps.

You'll be asked to give your:

- Name
- Address
- Date of birth

A safe means of contacting you will be agreed and we'll carry out some initial checks to make sure there are no immediate risks or concerns. If there are, or if you tell us a crime has happened (domestic abuse is a crime), we may act on that.

What happens after you make a request?

We aim to do an initial review of the application within 24 hours to assess whether:

- The application will progress.
- There is any immediate or imminent risk.

If the application does progress it will be referred to a team / unit to follow up and they'll aim to contact you about a face to face meeting, if one is required, within 10 working days of your application being made.

At that meeting you'll need to bring proof of your identity, ideally photo ID which has your date of birth and address on it (eg: a passport or driving licence). If you don't have a passport or driving licence, we may accept another form of photo ID, a birth certificate, utility bill or bank statement.

If we do decide to share information about the person you've made a request about, we'll only share that information with the person who is at risk of harm or the person who is best placed to protect that person from harm.

If we think someone is at risk, we or our partner agencies, will take action.

We aim to complete applications within 35 working days, but there may be reasons why it takes longer than this. If it does, we will let you know.

If you think someone is at risk, or you suspect or know about domestic abuse happening, please call us on 101 or report it to us online.

Examples of Clare's Law Disclosure Requests

Right to Ask

Sarah and Jack have been in a relationship for 6 months. The first 2 months were good and Jack was caring and attentive towards Sarah. However, the last 3-4 months Sarah has seen a different side to Jack. He is making comments about what she wears, who she can and cannot talk to and Jack has stopped Sarah seeing her friends. Sarah is concerned with this pattern of behaviour and believes that this could leave to violence if she was to leave Jack. She is aware of Clare's Law and wishes to see if she is at risk.

Possible outcomes from review:

Police conduct a review and identify Jack has been arrested 4 times in the last 10 years for domestic related incidents against 3 different partners but no judicial outcomes (charge/caution) - **It is likely police would make a Clare's Law disclosure in these circumstances.**

Police conduct a review and identify Jack has been arrested 4 times in the last 10 years for non-domestic related incidents but no judicial outcomes (charge/caution) - **It is likely police would make a Clare's Law disclosure in these circumstances due to violence being used.**

Police conduct a review and identify Jack has never been arrested but police called to 3 non-crime incidents over a 3 year period with an ex-partner - **It is likely police would make a Clare's Law disclosure in these circumstances due to there being domestic related incidents in a previous relationship.**

Police conduct a review and identify Jack has never been arrested and no history of violence on police records - **It is unlikely police would make a Clare's Law disclosure in these circumstances.**

Right to Know

Sarah and Jack have been in a relationship for 12 months. The first 6 months were good and Jack was caring and attentive towards Sarah. However, the last 3-4 months Sarah has seen a different side to Jack. He is making comments about what she wears, who she can and cannot talk to and Jack has stopped Sarah seeing her friends. Sarah is 6 months pregnant and when she went for a scan the hospital staff were concerned about Jack's behaviour towards Sarah and some of the comments he was making towards her (about who would support the baby when born and that they did not need support from others). A Clare's Law request is made by hospital staff to establish if Jack poses a risk towards Sarah.

Possible outcomes same as above but the disclosure would go to Sarah (if required). Staff member at hospital would be updated but no intelligence shared.

Right to Ask "I have a right to ask"

Selena meets Mark on an online dating website and they form an intimate relationship over a few months. Selena is concerned that Mark has been vague about his past, and that he doesn't have any family or friends that he is prepared to tell her about. He has also started to display odd behaviour and is displaying signs of jealousy (asking her who she has been talking to, going through her phone and social media accounts). Mark is suggesting that it would be easier for him to move in with her, to save him spending so much time travelling to meet up with her.

Selena decides that she is a little worried that things are proceeding a bit too quickly and that there are some red flags concerning Mark and one or two of his behaviours. She makes a Clare's Law application online and is subsequently contacted by the Police who ask her some follow up questions over the phone and via e-mail.

The officer then subsequently ask her to attend a local Police station for chat. When Selena arrives she is met by the officer and an IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate) and they go into a consultation room to speak in private. The Police officer then gives a verbal disclosure to Selena informing her that Mark is known to the Police due to several previous domestic violence allegations. Three of these allegations resulted in Mark being convicted of violent offences against a previous partner and another is for breaching an indefinite restraining order against a separate ex-partner.

As a result of the disclosure, Selena decides to work with the IDVA on how to safely exit the relationship and she is advised on safety planning and methods whilst receiving ongoing support from the IDVA.

Right to Know "You have a right to know"

Victoria's sister Selena has just started dating a male called Mark. Victoria has only met Mark once and was concerned about his body language (Victoria felt that he was constantly hovering over Selena and constantly near her) and the overly sexualised comments that he made in front of other people. Victoria noticed that Mark kept taking Selena's bank card to go to purchase drinks from the bar without asking her. She also noticed that during the encounter that her sister was uncharacteristically shy and withdrawn. She is also concerned that Selena and Mark are possibly progressing their relationship too quickly, with Mark already asking Selena for his own key to her home.

Victoria has tried to speak to Selena about Mark since having met him a few weeks ago, but every time she calls her sister, Mark appears to be there or he has answered Selena's phone. Victoria is concerned enough to confide in her friend who happens to be a Social worker. The friend explains what the Clare's Law scheme is and helps Victoria to fill out an application on the Metropolitan Police website.

Victoria is contacted the next day by officers, who ask some follow up questions and explain how the scheme works. They also have to inform her that they will be making contact with Selena going forward, in order to complete the application and subsequent disclosure, which Victoria will not be able to hear due to how the scheme is designed to be disclosed (only to the person at risk).

A few days later Victoria is contacted by her sister Selena who tells her she has ended the relationship with Mark but Selena doesn't tell her why.