

7 Minute Briefing

February 2025

1

Background

What is Clare's Law? Also known as the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS). Introduced following the death of Clare Woods in 2009, whose partner had a history of violence and abuse. Clare was unaware. She was stalked and then murdered by him when she ended the relationship. At the time of the inquest, the coroner said "Consideration should be given to the disclosure of such convictions and their circumstances to potential victims in order that they can make informed choices about matters affecting their safety and that of their children."

2

Why it matters

The aim of the DVDS is to give a person potentially at risk, their family or a professional, means of making enquiries about an individual who they are in a relationship with; so they can make an informed decision regarding their continued relationship. DVDS enhances previous arrangements whereby disclosure occurred in a reactive way when agencies received information about an offender with a violent history.

3

Elements

Clare's Law has two main elements: the "Right to Ask" and the "Right to Know". Under the scheme an individual or relevant third party (for example, a family member) can ask the police to check whether a current or ex-partner has a violent or abusive past. This is the "Right to Ask". If records show that an individual may be at risk of domestic abuse from a partner or ex-partner, the police will consider disclosing the information.

The "Right to Know" enables the police to make a disclosure if they receive information about the violent or abusive behaviour of a person that may impact on the safety of that person's current or ex-partner. This could be information arising from a criminal investigation, through statutory or third sector agency involvement, or from another source of police intelligence.

A disclosure can be made lawfully by the police under the scheme if the disclosure is based on the police's common law powers to disclose information where it is necessary to prevent crime, and if the disclosure also complies with established case law, as well as data protection and human rights legislation. It must be reasonable and proportionate for the police to make the disclosure, based on a credible risk of violence or harm.

4

What to do

Anyone can make an application under the Right to Ask, not just a partner, but family members or friends or professionals. However information will only be disclosed to the person potentially at risk, not the person who requests it unless they are acting as 'appropriate adult'. The person at risk will not be told who made the application. The Right to Know application is when an agency has information already in their possession that indicates a risk. Under 'Right to Know' agencies that come into possession of information should consider requesting a disclosure by Police to safeguard potential victims from further crime.

5

Information

As a professional, you can make an application for a disclosure under the “Right to Know”. The information will only be disclosed to the potential victim.

Please note: if you are working with someone and you have information about their partner or ex-partner do not ask them to make them an application as you may be putting them at greater risk.

If you are working with an adult or a young person who expresses concerns, you can encourage them to ask for a disclosure under the “Right to Ask” . This can be done at any police station or online. The following information will be required - Full details of the person potentially at risk and any children and the potential abuser/partner. The decision to disclose will be made by a multi-agency decision panel and the rationale for disclosure documented. Remember that one of the most difficult or dangerous times can be after the ‘person potentially at risk’ is provided with information and decides to leave/end the relationship.

6

Support

Is provided at disclosure by the police and the specialist Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA). As the person may be at high risk of serious injury or homicide at time of separation it is important that they get advice from appropriate services re: planning a safe separation from the perpetrator and it is also essential to access legal advice to protect themselves and any children.

7

Resources

- Home Office Factsheet and Guidance: [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme factsheet - GOV.UK](#)
- National Centre for Domestic Violence: A free, fast support service: [Domestic Violence & Abuse · Emergency Injunction Service](#)
- Video clip from Trafford Strategic Safeguarding Partnership explaining the process: [Clare's Law - Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme](#)
- Easy read leaflet and posters: [Clare's Law & DVDS Resources - Clare's Law and Domestic Violence Disclosure Schemes](#)