

# Professionals guide to the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS / “Clare’s Law”) – The ‘right to know’ process

## What is the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme?

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)<sup>1</sup> is a **protective and preventative process** that raises a person’s awareness to the potential risk their partner may pose to them. Often known as “Clare’s Law” the scheme was introduced in 2014 following the death of Clare Wood, who did not know that her partner, who went on to kill her, had a history of perpetrating domestic abuse.

Under the DVDS the police can disclose information to a victim / potential victim about their partner’s history of domestic abuse or violent offending. All applications are risk assessed and the outcome to disclose or not needs to be: necessary to prevent crime, lawful, in accordance with data protection and human rights legislation, reasonable and proportionate based on credible risk of violence or harm.

Applications to the scheme can be made to the police in one of two ways –

- by a professional (called ‘right to know’).
- by a member of the public / potential victim (called ‘right to ask’<sup>2</sup>);

This guide focuses on the ‘right to know’ process.

## How does the scheme work in Sheffield?

In Sheffield all DVDS, sometimes called DADS – domestic abuse disclosure, applications are processed by the police’s Protecting Vulnerable People’s (PVP) team. The PVP team works with partner agencies to carry out checks to identify an individual’s history of domestic abuse perpetration. The police use this information to assess the risk. **Where risk is deemed sufficiently high and warrants disclosure, the police will ensure a robust safety plan is in place and make a disclosure direct to the individual.**

## Why is it important that professionals know about the scheme?

In 2018 a Domestic Abuse Serious Incident Review<sup>3</sup> in Sheffield found opportunities were missed by agencies to apply for a DVDS. Had the professionals used the scheme, the individual may have become more informed of the potential risk of the partner and this could have influenced the choices she made.

Professionals need to routinely consider the DVDS as an option when working with individuals who are known / considered to be at risk of domestic abuse.

## Which professionals can use the DVDS ‘right to know’ process?

Any professional from any agency, including those working in third sector agencies, can apply to the DVDS.

## When should professionals use the DVDS ‘right to know’ process?

Professionals should use the right to know process if any of these three statements apply...

1. **When you have information that makes you consider the individual you are working with is at risk of domestic abuse** – when you have identified risk factors from information they have shared with you about the nature of the relationship e.g. coercive and controlling behaviour, physical abuse, harassment.  
OR
2. **When you have information that gives you reason to suspect you are working with an individual whose partner has a history of domestic abuse perpetration towards someone else.** You should consider a DVDS because the information your agency holds on the partner may not contain the full history and this maybe the most appropriate for the information to be shared e.g. if it is third party information.

OR

<sup>1</sup> Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) (Clare’s Law) Guidance for Professionals

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/575361/DVDS\\_guidance\\_FINAL\\_v3.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575361/DVDS_guidance_FINAL_v3.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://southyorks.police.uk/find-out/right-to-information/clare-s-law/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://sheffielddact.org.uk/domestic-abuse/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2019/10/David-SIR-Learning-Brief.pdf>

3. **When an individual shares what they know about their partner's history of abusive behaviour.** You should still consider a DVDS because they may not know the full details.

### How do I apply for a DVDS?

If you have reason to believe the person is at risk of domestic abuse you need to act and follow the 'right to know' process shown in the box below.

#### The 'right to know' process

There are different processes to follow based on risk. If you consider the person to be at immediate risk follow step 1. If you consider the person is not at immediate risk follow step 2.

##### Step 1 - If you consider the person is at immediate risk

- a. **You should telephone the police on 101 and discuss the situation with them.**
- b. **You should consider if you have information you can share with the individual that will protect them immediately, if there is a lawful basis for sharing the information with them.** Page 5<sup>4</sup> of the DVDS guidance explains this process in more detail, should you require more information. **If you are going to make a disclosure using the information you have available and without using the DVDS then you must provide the victim or potential victim with a robust safety plan, tailored to their needs and based on all relevant information available.**
- c. Talk to your manager, safeguarding officer or domestic abuse lead for advice and to address any concerns.

##### Step 2 - If you consider the person is **not** at immediate risk

- a. **You should apply to the DVDS by email.** Complete the CL2 form (found on page 3) and email it to the police PVP team. The address is **Clares\_Law\_SPOC@southyorks.pnn.police.uk**
  - When you complete the CL2 form you should start at the section titled 'PERSON RAISING NEED FOR POTENTIAL DISCLOSURE'. The section before this is for police use only. Insert your name, organisation and contact details. You should provide the details of the person at risk and the potential abuser. If full details are not provided the police may not be in a position to process the application.
  - Once you have sent the email, the police will contact you to discuss the application further.
- b. **You should talk to the individual,** explain that you are going to apply to the DVDS and address their concerns.
- c. Talk to your manager, safeguarding officer or domestic abuse lead for support.

### What happens after I've submitted the CL2 form?

The police will adhere to the national DVDS guidance. The decision to disclose will be made within 25 days unless it is identified there is an immediate / imminent risk of harm; the police will take immediate action to safeguard those at risk.

All cases are handled on a case by case basis and, due to the sensitivity of the information being shared; the police may or may not inform you of the outcome.

**Where a decision is made to disclose,** should you have any further queries about your request, contact the police at **Clares\_Law\_SPOC@southyorks.pnn.police.uk** or by telephoning 101.

### What if you don't know what to do?

1. Don't apply in a speculative basis – if you are in any doubt or have concerns, talk to your manager, safeguarding officer and/or domestic abuse lead.
2. Contact the police on 101 to discuss.
3. Contact the Sheffield Domestic Abuse Support Service, IDAS on 0808 808 2241 or email [info@idas.org.uk](mailto:info@idas.org.uk)

<sup>4</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/575361/DVDS\\_guidance\\_FINAL\\_v3.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575361/DVDS_guidance_FINAL_v3.pdf)

**DVDS / Clare's Law - RIGHT TO KNOW  
CL2 INITIAL DETAILS**

<b>COMPLETING PERSON:</b>		
<b>INCIDENT NUMBER AND DATE:</b>		
<b>CONNECT INVEST NUMBER</b>		
<b>LRU REF NO</b>		
<b>PERSON RAISING NEED FOR POTENTIAL DISCLOSURE (IF NOT ABOVE)</b>		
<b>Name</b>		
<b>Organisation</b>		
<b>Contact Details</b>		
<b>REASON CONCERN RAISED</b>		
<b>DETAILS OF PERSON AT RISK</b>		
<b>Forename:</b>		
<b>Surname:</b>		
<b>Date of Birth</b>		<b>Place of birth</b>
<b>Address</b>		
<b>Postcode</b>		
<b>Gender</b>		
<b>Landline</b>		
<b>Mobile number</b>		
<b>Email</b>		
<b>Preferred Method of Contact</b>		

DETAILS OF CHILDREN OF PERSON AT RISK			
Forename	Surname	Approx age	Where resides

DETAILS OF SUBJECT (POTENTIAL ABUSER)		
Forename		
Surname		
Date of birth		Place of Birth
Gender		
Address		
Postcode		
Landline		
Mobile		
Email		
Relationship to Person at Risk		