



**If you are in a  
relationship and  
are worried that  
your partner may  
have been abusive  
in the past...**

# Clare's Law



**The Domestic Violence  
Disclosure Scheme**

Read this blue section if **you are in a relationship** and worried that your partner may have been abusive in the past

Read the orange section at the back if you are concerned about **someone you know who is in a relationship** and may be at risk of domestic abuse

# Signs of domestic abuse

**Domestic abuse (also known as domestic violence) may include:**

- **Emotional abuse** – name calling, continual criticism, humiliation, withholding affection.
- **Isolation** – controlling where someone goes or who they talk to, trapping someone in their own home, acting in a jealous or possessive way.
- **Intimidation or threats** – smashing or throwing things when angry, threatening to hurt children, pets or themselves.
- **Economic abuse** – giving someone an allowance, refusing to share money, not letting someone work.
- **Control** – taking ‘privileges’ away, making someone ask permission.
- **Physical violence** – pushing, slapping, biting, kicking or choking. Includes using an object or weapon to hurt someone or driving recklessly to scare them.
- **Sexual abuse** – holding someone down during sex, forcing them to behave or dress in a sexual way.



# Your right to ask

**The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) is known as Clare's Law because it was created after Clare Wood was killed in 2009 by an ex-partner.**

The aim of Clare's Law is to give you a way to make enquiries about your partner if you are worried that they may have been abusive in the past. It also allows you to enquire about an ex-partner, if you are concerned about your safety after the relationship has ended.

If police checks show that your partner or ex-partner has a record of abusive behaviour, or if there is other information to indicate that you may be at risk from your partner, we may be able to share this information with you.

The scheme aims to help you to make a more informed decision on whether to continue the relationship and provides further support when you are making that choice.

# Who can ask for disclosure?

**Disclosure** means sharing specific information about your partner – either with you or with another person – for the purposes of protecting you from domestic violence.

- You can apply for a disclosure about your partner or ex-partner if you have a concern that they may harm you.
- Any other person, such as your parent, neighbour or friend, can also apply for a disclosure if they are concerned about you. This would be known as a 'third party' application.
- However, a third party person who makes an application would not necessarily be the one who is given information about your partner or ex-partner, because it may be more appropriate for someone else – such as you yourself or another person in a position to protect you from the abuse – to receive the information.
- Information will only be given to someone who is in a position to use it to protect you from the abuse.



# How do I make an application?

## Contacting us

There are several different ways you can contact Sussex Police:

You can:

- visit a police station in Sussex
- phone **101**, the police non-emergency number
- email **101@sussex.police.uk**
- speak to a Sussex Police officer on the street

If you believe there is an immediate risk of harm to you or someone else, or it is an emergency, you should always call 999.

The next pages describe what to expect when you contact us to ask for a disclosure...

# 1

## Step One: When you first make contact with us

When you contact Sussex Police, an officer or a member of staff will take details about your concerns and the nature of your relationship with your partner or ex-partner.

**They will ask you when and where it is safe to make contact with you again.**

You will need to give your name, address and date of birth and later, you will need to provide proof of your identity.

We will then run some initial checks based on the information you have provided and assess the risks to establish if there are any immediate concerns.

No disclosure of information will take place at this stage unless it is necessary to provide immediate protection to you.

**If we believe that you are at risk and in need of protection from harm, we will take immediate action.**

If when speaking to us you allege a crime against your partner or ex-partner – for example, you tell us that your partner or ex-partner has hit you – then we may investigate this as a crime and may arrest your partner.

# 2

## Step Two: Face-to-face meeting to complete the application

Depending on the outcome of Step One, you may be asked to attend a face-to-face meeting with us so we can establish further details about your application, assess any risk and establish proof of your identity. This should happen within ten days of when you made contact. As proof of identity, you will need to bring one photo ID and another form of ID (if you don't have photo ID, we will consider other forms of ID).

The forms of ID you could use are:

- **your passport**
- **your driving licence**
- **a household utility bill**
- **your bank statement**
- **your birth certificate**

At the meeting, we will ask you more about the nature of the relationship between you and your partner or ex-partner, in order to determine whether you are at risk of domestic abuse.

Depending on the information you give us, we may run checks and speak to other agencies including the Prison Service, the Probation Service and Social Services. We will work as quickly as possible to complete the checks but it can take some time for the results to be received.

The maximum time it is likely to take to complete the whole process, including these checks and the disclosure of information (if decided necessary) is 35 days.

**We will act immediately if at any point we consider you to be at risk and in need of protection from harm.**

# 3

## Step Three: We meet with other agencies to consider disclosure

Sussex Police will meet with other safeguarding agencies (such as the Probation Service, Prison Service, Social Services) to discuss:

- **the information you have given us**
- **any additional information we may have received from the checks we have run**
- **relevant information from the agencies we have talked to.**

This multi-agency meeting will then decide whether disclosure is **lawful and necessary** to protect you from your partner or ex-partner.

If it is decided that information should be disclosed, they will determine who should receive this information. A safety plan will be tailored to provide you with the help and support you need.





# Step Four:

## The information you are given

### What kind of information might you be given?

If the checks show that your partner or ex-partner has a record of abuse or if there is other information that indicates a disclosure is needed to prevent further crime, we may disclose this information, either to you or to someone who is more able to protect you.

A person's previous convictions are treated as confidential so this information will only be given "if it is lawful and proportionate, and there is a pressing need to make the disclosure to prevent further crime."

If the checks do not show there is a pressing need to make a disclosure to prevent further crime, we will tell you this.

If that is the case, it may be because:

- **your partner or ex-partner does not have a record of abusive offences**
- **or no information is held indicating they pose a risk of harm to you**
- **or there may be some information held on your partner or ex-partner but not sufficient to demonstrate a pressing need for disclosure.**

However, even if the checks do not result in a disclosure, if your partner or ex-partner is showing worrying behaviour, we and other support agencies can provide advice and support to help protect you.

# Your right to know – even if you don't ask

**Under the scheme, you may receive a disclosure even if you have not asked for one.**

This is because, if we receive information about your partner that we believe puts you at risk of harm, we may disclose that information to you or to another person who is best placed to protect you.

The decision to disclose information when you have not asked for it will be made by the multi-agency meeting – and it will only be made if it is lawful and proportionate, and there is a pressing need to make the disclosure to prevent further crime.

## An important note about safety

**You should be aware that police checks or any disclosures made are not a guarantee of safety.**

We can provide you with information and advice on how to recognise the warning signs of domestic abuse and protect yourself. There are also a number of specialist services and organisations that can help with information about domestic abuse and how the authorities can work with you to intervene.

Please see the back page of this booklet for details of local and national support agencies and helplines.

# After you are given information

**“Can I tell my family and friends about this? I really need to talk to someone.”**

If you receive a disclosure, you should treat it as confidential. It is only being given to you so that you can take steps to protect yourself.

You must not share this information with anyone else unless you have spoken to us, or the person who gave you the information, and we/they have agreed with you that it will be shared.

As long as you keep the information confidential, you can:

- **use it to keep yourself safe**
- **use it to keep any children involved in the situation safe**
- **ask what support is available**
- **ask for advice on how to keep yourself and others safe.**

We may decide not to give you information if we think you will discuss it with others. However, if you are at risk of harm, we will still take steps to protect you.

If you disclose the information without our consent, we may take action against you. This could include civil or criminal proceedings.

Please be aware that it is an offence (under Section 55 of the Data Protection Act 1998) for a person to ‘knowingly or recklessly obtain or disclose personal data without the consent of the data controller’ which in this case is usually Sussex Police.

# Support and helplines



## SUSSEX POLICE

- Tel: **101**
- Email: **101@sussex.pnn.police.uk**
- Visit: **www.sussex.police.uk/ClaresLaw**

## SUPPORT IN SUSSEX

- Safe Space Sussex – **www.safespacesussex.org.uk**
- The Portal – **0300 323 9985**
- Worth Services – **0330 222 8181 / 01903 205111**  
Ext. **84395 / 07834 968539** (weekends)
- Victim Support – **0300 303 0554**
- Veritas Justice – **www.veritas-justice.co.uk/about-us/**

## NATIONAL SUPPORT

- National Domestic Abuse Helpline – **0800 200 0247**
- Galop – **0800 999 5428**
- Men's Advice Line – **0808 801 0327**
- National Stalking Helpline – **0808 802 0300**
- Respect – **0808 802 4040**
- Paladin Service: National Stalking Advocacy Service –  
**www.paladinservice.co.uk / 020 3866 4107**



**If you are  
concerned about  
someone you  
know who is in a  
relationship and  
may be at risk of  
domestic abuse...**

# Clare's Law



**The Domestic Violence  
Disclosure Scheme (third party)**

Read the orange section at the back if you are concerned about **someone you know who is in a relationship** and may be at risk of domestic abuse

Read this blue section if **you are in a relationship** and worried that your partner may have been abusive in the past

# Signs of domestic abuse

**Domestic abuse (also known as domestic violence) may include:**

- **Emotional abuse** – name calling, continual criticism, humiliation, withholding affection.
- **Isolation** – controlling where someone goes or who they talk to, trapping someone in their own home, acting in a jealous or possessive way.
- **Intimidation or threats** – smashing or throwing things when angry, threatening to hurt children, pets or themselves.
- **Economic abuse** – giving someone an allowance, refusing to share money, not letting someone work.
- **Control** – taking ‘privileges’ away, making someone ask permission.
- **Physical violence** – pushing, slapping, biting, kicking or choking. Includes using an object or weapon to hurt someone or driving recklessly to scare them.
- **Sexual abuse** – holding someone down during sex, forcing them to behave or dress in a sexual way.



# Your Right to Ask

**The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) is known as Clare's Law because it was created after Clare Wood was killed in 2009 by an ex-partner.**

The aim of Clare's Law is to give you a way to make enquiries about an individual who is in a relationship with someone you know, if you are concerned that individual may have a past record of domestic abuse.

If police checks show that the individual has a record of abusive behaviour – or if there is other information to indicate that the person you know is at risk – we may be able to share this information with you or with the person best placed to protect the potential victim.

We will discuss your concerns with you and decide whether it is appropriate for you to be given more information to help protect the person you are worried about.

The scheme aims to help potential victims make a more informed decision on whether to continue the relationship and provides further support when they are making that choice.

# Who can ask for disclosure?

**Disclosure** means sharing specific information about an individual with the person making the application or a third person for the purposes of protecting a potential victim from domestic violence.

- Whether you are a family member, friend, colleague or neighbour, you can apply for a disclosure to protect someone you are worried about. This would be known as a ‘third party’ application.
- You can apply for a disclosure about an individual who is or was in an intimate relationship with the person you know, if you are concerned that the individual may have harmed someone in the past and could be likely to harm someone else.
- However, if you make an application as a third party, you may not necessarily be the one who is given information about the individual concerned, because it may be more appropriate for someone else – such as the potential victim or someone in a position to protect them – to receive it.





# How do I make an application?

## Contacting us

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You can:

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- phone **101**, the police non-emergency number
- email **101@sussex.police.uk**
- speak to a Sussex Police officer on the street.

If you believe there is an immediate risk of harm to you or someone else, or it is an emergency, you should always call 999.

The next pages describe what to expect when you contact us to ask for a disclosure...

# 1

## Step One: When you first make contact with us

When you contact Sussex Police, an officer or a member of staff will take details about your concerns and the nature of your relationship with the potential victim and their partner.

**They will ask you when and where it is safe to make contact with you again.**

You will need to give your name, address and date of birth and later, you will need to provide proof of your identity.

We will then run some initial checks based on the information you have provided and assess the risks to establish if there are any immediate concerns.

No disclosure of information will take place at this stage unless it is necessary to provide immediate protection to the potential victim.

**If we believe that someone is at risk and in need of protection from harm, we will take immediate action.**

If when speaking to us you allege that a crime has taken place – for example, if you tell us you have witnessed someone hit their partner – then we may investigate this as a crime and may arrest the partner.

# 2

## Step Two: Face-to-face meeting to complete the application

Depending on the outcome of Step One, you may be asked to attend a face-to-face meeting with us so we can establish further details about your application, assess any risk and establish proof of your identity. This should happen within 10 days of when you made contact. As proof of identity, you will need to bring one photo ID and another form of ID (if you don't have photo ID, we will consider other forms of ID).

The forms of ID you could use are:

- **your passport**
- **your driving licence**
- **a household utility bill**
- **your bank statement**
- **your birth certificate**

At the meeting, we will ask you more about the nature of the relationship between the person you know and their partner or ex-partner. We may also ask you more about why you have made an enquiry under this scheme.

Depending on the information you give us, we may run checks and speak to other agencies including the Prison Service, the Probation Service and Social Services. We will work as quickly as possible to complete the checks but it can take some time for the results to be received.

The maximum time it is likely to take to complete the whole process, including these checks and the disclosure of information (if decided necessary) is 35 days.

**We will act immediately if at any point we think the person you know is at risk and in need of protection from harm.**

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This multi-agency meeting will then decide whether disclosure is lawful and necessary to protect the person you are concerned about from their partner.

If it is decided that information should be disclosed, we will determine who should receive this information. A safety plan will be tailored to provide the potential victim with the help and support they need.



# Step Four: The information you are given

## What kind of information might you be given?

If the checks show that the individual you are enquiring about has a record of abuse or if there is other information that indicates a disclosure is needed to prevent further crime, we may disclose this information, either to you or to someone who is most able to protect the potential victim.

A person's previous convictions are treated as confidential so this information will only be given "if it is lawful and proportionate, and there is a pressing need to make the disclosure to prevent further crime."

If the checks do not show there is a pressing need to make a disclosure to prevent further crime, we will tell you this.

If that is the case, it may be because:

- **the individual does not have a record of abusive offences**
- **or no information is held indicating they pose a risk of harm to the person you know**
- **or there may be some information held on the individual but not sufficient to demonstrate a pressing need for disclosure.**

However, even if the checks do not result in a disclosure, if the individual you are asking about is showing worrying behaviour, we and other support agencies can provide advice and support to help protect the potential victim.

# Your right to know – even if you don't ask

**Under the Scheme, you may receive a disclosure even if you have not asked for one.**

This is because, if we receive information about the person you know that we believe puts that person at risk of harm from their partner, we may disclose that information to you if you are best placed to protect the potential victim.

The decision to disclose information when you have not asked for it will be made by the multi-agency meeting – and it will only be made if it is lawful and proportionate, and there is a pressing need to make the disclosure to prevent further crime.

## An important note about safety

**You should be aware that police checks or any disclosures made are not a guarantee of safety.**

We can provide you with information and advice on how to recognise the warning signs of domestic abuse and help protect someone from abusive behaviour. There are also a number of specialist services and organisations that can help with information

about domestic abuse and how the authorities can work with you to intervene.

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# After you are given information

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As long as you keep the information confidential, you can:

- **use it to keep the potential victim and yourself safe**
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