

# Keeping people safe from domestic abuse



## The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme

This leaflet is for you if you are in a relationship and are worried that your partner may have been abusive in the past

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Textphone: **18001 101**  
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# What is the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme?

The aim of this scheme is to give you a way to make inquiries about your partner if you are worried that they may have been abusive in the past.

If police checks show that your partner has a record of violent behaviour, or there is other information to indicate that you may be at risk from your partner, we will consider sharing this information with you.

The scheme aims to help and support you to make a more informed decision on whether to continue a relationship.

## Who can ask for a disclosure?

A disclosure under this scheme is the sharing of specific information about your partner with either you or a third person for the purposes of protecting you from domestic violence.

- You can make an application about your partner if you have a concern that they may harm you
- Any concerned third party, such as your parent, neighbour or friend can also make an application if they are concerned about you
- However, a third party person making an application would not necessarily receive information about your partner. It may be more appropriate for someone else to receive the information, such as you, or a person who is in a position to protect you from the abuse
- Information will only be given to someone who is in a position to protect you from the abuse

## How do I make an application?

You can:

- Visit a police station
- Phone 101, the non-emergency number
- Speak to a member of the police on the street

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



## Step one: initial contact with police

When you contact us, a police officer or a member of police staff will take the details of what prompted your enquiry and the nature of your relationship with your partner.

We will also ask you when and where it is safe to make contact with you again.

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

We will run some initial checks based on the information you have provided and conduct an initial risk assessment. The purpose of these initial checks is for us to establish if there are any immediate concerns. These checks will not be undertaken while you are present.

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

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

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



## Step two: face-to-face meeting to complete the application

Depending on the outcome of step one, you may then be required to participate in a face-to-face meeting. This meeting will be to establish further details about your application in order to assess any risk and for you to provide proof of your identity. This should comprise a photo ID and another form of ID (if photo ID is not available, we will consider other ways of proving your identity).

The forms of ID that could be used are:

- Your passport
- Your driving licence
- A household utility bill
- Your bank statement
- Your benefit book
- Your birth certificate

We will then use the meeting to gather more information from you about the nature of the relationship with your partner to help us decide if you are at risk.

## Step two continued

We may run checks and speak to other agencies, including the prison and probation services, as well as social services, based on the information you give us.

We will work as quickly as possible to complete the checks but, depending on the circumstances, some checks may take longer for the results to be received.

The maximum time it will take to complete the whole process, including 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.



## Step three: multi-agency meeting to consider disclosure

We will meet with other safeguarding agencies (such as the probation, prison and social services) to discuss the information that you have provided, along with additional information from the checks we have run, and any relevant information from the agencies we have talked to.

The multi-agency meeting will then decide whether any disclosure is lawful, necessary and proportionate to protect you from your partner. If we decide to disclose information, we will decide who should receive the information and set up a safety plan tailored to your needs to provide you with help and support.

## Step four: potential disclosure

### **The kind of information you might be given**

If the checks show your partner has a record of violent offences or there is other information that indicates a pressing need to make a disclosure to prevent further crime, we may disclose this information to you or to a person who is more able to protect you. A person's previous convictions are treated as confidential and the information will only be disclosed if it is lawful and proportionate.

If the checks do not show there is a pressing need to make a disclosure to prevent further crime, we will tell you that. This may be because your partner does not have a record of violent offences or there is no information held to indicate they pose a risk of harm to you, or it may be that some information is held on your partner but this is not sufficient to demonstrate an urgent need for disclosure.

It may be the case that your partner is not known to us for violent offences or there is insufficient information to indicate they pose a risk of harm to you but they are showing worrying behaviour. In this case, we can work to protect you by providing advice and support.



## Step four: potential disclosure continued

Under the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, you may receive a disclosure even if you have not asked for one. That is because if we receive information about your partner which we consider puts you at risk of harm of domestic abuse, then we may consider disclosing that information to you or another person who we consider best placed to protect you.

The decision to disclose information when you have not asked for a disclosure will be made by the multi-agency meeting. The disclosure will only be made if it is lawful and proportionate.

### Important note

You should be aware that checks or any disclosures are not a guarantee of safety. They will, however, make sure you are aware of what local and national support is available.

**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, it should be treated as confidential. It is only being given to you so 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 they have agreed that it can be shared.

Subject to the condition that the information is kept confidential, you can:

- Use the information to keep yourself safe
- Use the information 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 that you will discuss it with others. However, we will still take steps to protect you if you are at risk of harm.



## Important note continued

We may take action against you if the information is disclosed without our consent, which could include civil or criminal proceedings. You should 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 us.

If no disclosure is made but you still have concerns and want further information about protecting yourself, there is action you can take to protect yourself in the future.

We can provide you with information and advice on how to protect yourself and how to recognise the warning signs of domestic abuse. There is also a number of support groups which provide information about domestic abuse, how to spot it and how to work with the authorities to intervene.

## Support helplines

If you would like additional help and support relating to domestic abuse, you can contact any of the following national helplines:

999 for emergencies or 101 for police non-emergencies

- Freephone 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline - 0808 2000 247
- Mankind Initiative for male sufferers - 01823 334244
- Broken Rainbow helpline (run by Galop UK) for LGBT sufferers - 0300 999 5428 or 0800 9995428
- National Centre For Domestic Violence (NCDV), free legal helpline - 0800 970 2070 or text 'NCDV' to 60777

Local community domestic abuse outreach services:

1. Cambridge Women's Aid (Cambridge City and South Cambs) - 01223 361214
2. Peterborough Women's Aid - 01733 552200
3. Fenland, East Cambs and Huntingdonshire Outreach service - 07787255821





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