

What is Clare's Law?

The domestic violence disclosure scheme (DVDS), also known as Clare's Law, allows police officers to disclose a perpetrator's history of domestic abuse and violence towards others, to their current or ex intimate partner. This information enables and empowers the partner to make informed safeguarding decisions for themselves and their children.

The process contains two avenues through which a person can receive information:

The Right to Ask

- Information can be requested by victims and survivors themselves or a person on their behalf – such as an IDVA, support worker, or family member.
- The application can be made in person at a police station or online on the Met Police website: www.met.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/daa/domestic-abuse/alpha2/request-information-under-clares-law/
- The police will consider whether information can be shared.
- If the information can be shared, a police officer will contact the victim-survivor, to disclose the information and offer domestic abuse support from a specialist service such as the Gaia Centre.

The Right to Know

- If there is a current investigation, the police officer in charge may decide that there is information about a perpetrator that an existing or potential victim-survivor should know.
- The police will consider whether information can be shared.
- If information can be shared the officer will contact the potential victim-survivor, to disclose the information.
- They will also offer domestic abuse support from a specialist service such as the Gaia Centre.

Considerations

Clare's Law can be a useful resource however, it's important to consider the following:

- Domestic abuse is under reported, so not all perpetrators will have a criminal record or have had criminal allegations made against them
- Victims and survivors may not want, or feel able, to leave their relationship even after the disclosure
- The alleged perpetrator may have already told the victim/survivor about their offending history
- Information given within a disclosure is often brief and may not provide the full picture
- Regardless of whether victims and survivors leave the relationship it's crucial to offer specialist domestic abuse support and continue supporting them alongside other agencies.

How Gaia supports victims and survivors with a Clare's Law disclosure

The Gaia Centre supports Lambeth residents experiencing any form of gender-based violence including domestic abuse. **To get help, please contact them on 020 7733 8724 / lambethvawg@refuge.org.uk**

Once someone is referred to Gaia, a support worker will have an initial conversation with them and complete a risk assessment; it may be that a Clare's Law disclosure under the Right to Ask route would be relevant. If so, Gaia will:

- support victims and survivors to apply online or go to the police station to apply in person.
- provide emotional support directly after the disclosure.
- offer practical advice on staying safe either within the relationship - or if the victim-survivor decides to leave - including issues such as, housing, income, applying for protective legal orders, attending court, supporting children.
- work with victims and survivors on their own timescale, ensure they are not pressured to make decisions before they are ready to.

Other forms of information sharing:

As part of other formal information sharing processes, such as child protection conferences, MARAC or Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings, information is disclosed regarding risk. This can be the first time that victims and survivors, or the professionals supporting them are made aware of this information and can be upsetting. If information comes to light during one of these information sharing forums, it is always best practise to refer to specialist domestic abuse support services such as the Gaia Centre.