

## Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

Please speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead:  
**Hannah Pallôt** or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead:  
**Rachel Heffer** immediately with any concerns.  
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# Claire's Law



Every Moment Matters

## Seven Minute Safeguarding

WB 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2022

### What is Claire's Law?

The official name for 'Clare's Law' is the [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme \(DVDS\)](#). It simply means any member of the public has the right to ask the police if their partner might pose a risk to them by accessing their partner's criminal history. This also applies to 'third party' members of the public who are able to make enquiries of the partner of a family member or close friend. This is known as a 'right to ask'. There is also a 'right to know' which places a risk management responsibility on safeguarding agencies.

Clare's Law is named after Clare Wood who was murdered in February 2009 by her ex-boyfriend, George Appleton. Clare was aware he had a criminal record but believed this was for motoring offences. Clare ended the relationship after she found out he was having affairs with several other women. A few days later, Clare reported to police he had threatened to burn down her house and

have her stabbed.

Following several incidents of harassment and denying an allegation of sexual assault, the breach to bail conditions was deemed as minor and non-threatening by the officers dealing with the case. Advice given by the Criminal Prosecution Service was to issue a fixed penalty notice for causing criminal damage. They were not aware of the sexual assault allegation. A month later, he attended her address, battered and strangled her to death, then set fire to her body. The IPCC later criticized the way the police had handled the case. Clare had met Appleton on Facebook. She knew nothing about his history of violence against women, which included threats, repeated harassment and the kidnapping at knifepoint of one of his ex-girlfriends.

Following her murder, Claire's father began campaigning, calling for a system to be put in place to allow people to find out whether their new partners had a violent past. In July 2012, Clare's Law was launched as a pilot in 4 police forces. After a successful pilot, the scheme was launched across England and Wales on 8th March 2014 – International Women's Day

### How is the applicant protected?

There are a number of safeguards throughout the process:

- during the initial contact if the police believe the applicant is alleging a crime, they must deal with the crime and begin an investigation.
- a safe means of contacting the applicant will be established and police should provide safety advice
- no written correspondence should be sent to the applicant
- a risk assessment should be completed at every stage of the process  
If an immediate risk is identified, then safeguarding action must take place
- a safety plan should be in place when disclosure is made to the person at risk
- the applicant should be sign posted to local support where relevant

### How does 'Claire's Law' work?

There are 2 procedures under the DVDS:

1. The 'Right to Ask', triggered by a member of the public applying to the police for a disclosure.
2. The 'Right to Know', triggered by the police making a proactive decision to disclose information to protect a potential victim.

In both cases the police and other safeguarding agencies will carry out checks and where necessary the police have common law powers to disclose information about a person's known history of violence or abuse. Whilst actual disclosure falls to the police, it is generally a multi-agency panel that decides whether the risk is sufficient to warrant disclosure

Anyone has the right to ask and submit an application. This includes where a person asks, because they believe that their friend or relative might be in a relationship with a potentially abusive partner. However, any disclosure will only be made to the person in the relationship i.e. the person at risk. The same principle applies to the 'right to know'. There may be some occasions where disclosure might be made to a third party if they are best placed to safeguard the person at risk.

If there is the need for disclosure, there is standard wording that must be read to the person receiving the disclosure. They will be told that the information must only be used for the purpose for which it has been shared i.e. safeguarding. They will be asked to sign an undertaking that they agree that the information is confidential, and they will not disclose this any further.



Click on the image to read Devon and Cornwall Police's 'easy read' leaflet regarding Claire's Law