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Background

Clare's Law, (the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme) (DVDS) was introduced following the death of Clare Woods (1973-2009). She was in a relationship with George Appleton. She was unaware of his violent history of abuse. When the relationship ended, she was subjected to harassment by George Appleton, and was raped and strangled by him before her body was set on fire and later discovered in her home in Salford. At the inquest, the coroner said: "... Consideration should be given to the disclosure of such convictions and their circumstances to potential victims in order that they can make informed choices about matters affecting their safety and that of their children.

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Why it matters

The aim of DVDS is to allow the person potentially at risk a formal mechanism to make enquiries about any individual who they are in a relationship with, so they can make a more informed decision regarding their continued relationship. It was initially set up as a pilot scheme in September 2012 across four areas, but went nationwide on March 8th 2014.

It enhances previous arrangements whereby disclosure occurred in a reactive way when agencies received information about an offender with a violent history.



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Are we clear about who we can encourage to apply for information?

2. Including young people?



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Information

The legal framework allows the Police to share information:

- In the interest of Policing Purposes
- For pressing Social need

The information sharing must be proportionate and relevant. In these cases, the public interest outweighs potential breach of privacy.

Under 'Right to Ask' individuals can apply to the police for information about a person's previous violent behaviour.



Clare's Law

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2. Full Details of Subject - Name, DOB, address

3. Details of any Children – Names, DOB, address

The processes for right to ask and right to know requests are slightly different, but the starting point for both is the same. Remember that that potentially one of the most difficult or dangerous times is after the 'person potentially at risk' has been provided with information and decides to end the relationship.

Support is provided to those people by the DVPO Officers and IDVA services.

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Questions to consider

As a professional, you can ask information under the right to know.

If you are working with an adult or a young person who expresses concerns, you can encourage them to ask for information. They can do this via a Domestic Violence Protection Officer/ PPU or Local Police.

They will need to give certain information, at least:
1. Full Details of Person Potentially at Risk – Name, DOB, address

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A family member/friend can also make an application on their behalf, but information will only be disclosed to the person potentially at risk, not the person who requests it unless they are acting as 'appropriate adult'.

The person at risk will not be told who made the application.

Under 'Right to Know' agencies that come into possession of information can be expected to consider disclosure to safeguard potential victims from further crime.

