

One-minute guide: Sarah's Law & Clare's Law

What is the Child Sex Offenders Disclosure Scheme (Sarah's Law)?

The Child Sex Offenders Disclosure Scheme (CSODS) has been used by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Police for nearly 15 years. **Under the scheme anyone who is worried about someone's behaviour towards a child can ask the police to check whether someone who has access to the child/children poses a risk to them due to historic involvement in child sexual offences.** The applicant does not have to be a child's parents but could be people like a grandparent, neighbour or friend.

If they are found to have concerning police information for sexual offences against children and pose a risk of causing serious harm to the child or children concerned, then this information may be disclosed to whoever can use the information to keep the child safe. This might not be the person who made the application, it might be someone else (like the child's parents).

The scheme is sometimes referred to as 'Sarah's Law', named after eight-year-old Sarah Payne who was abducted and murdered by Roy Whiting, a man who had already been placed on the Sex Offenders Register for previous offences.

How should parents, carers and guardians use the scheme if they have concerns?

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Police administer the scheme through their Safeguarding Conference Team. Requests can be made through the police [online form](#), by visiting a police station in person or by calling 101, the police non-emergency telephone number. For requests made through the 101 number, call handlers will need to take some details about the applicant, the child(ren) they feel may be at risk, the person they are concerned about and the contact this person has with the child(ren) in question.

If parents, carers and guardians you are working with disclose any information that causes you to suspect that a child may be at risk of significant harm, you must [report a child safeguarding concern](#) to the IOW Children's Service Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub or contact IOW Children's Social Care on 01983 823435.

If anyone believes that a child is at immediate risk, they must contact the police on the 999-emergency number.

What is the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law)?

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) was launched nationally in March 2014. The scheme allows people to make enquiries with the police about an individual they are in a relationship with, or who is in a relationship with someone they know, where there are concerns that this individual may put their partner at risk of domestic abuse.

The scheme, despite not being a specific “law”, is often referred to as ‘Clare’s Law’, to honour the memory of Clare Wood who was murdered in 2009 by her ex-partner George Appleton, who had a history of violence against women.

This scheme applies to all people, regardless of gender or sexuality; it should not be viewed solely as a mechanism for women to make enquiries about male partners. There are two aspects to the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS); ‘Right to Know’, and ‘Right to Ask’.

‘Right to Know’ refers to an obligation the police have to disclose information to individuals, without it being requested, if they consider that information they hold suggests the individual is at risk of harm from domestic violence or abuse.

‘Right to Ask’ refers to the rights of members of the public to apply to the police for a disclosure of specific information for the purposes of protecting individuals from domestic violence or abuse. You can do this [online](#).

What information may be disclosed?

The police may disclose the following relevant police information in relation to a subject, under either the ‘Right to Know’ obligation or a ‘Right to Ask’ application:

- Convictions for an offence related to domestic violence or abuse which may indicate a risk to future partners.
- Intelligence about previous offending in a domestic setting, which may include cases not proceeded with, or previous concerning behaviour towards previous partners.
- Concerning behaviour by the subject towards any partners, current or previous, e.g. a pattern of behaviours relating to exerting coercive control, stalking etc.
- Any relevant information that may suggest a risk to the potential victim of domestic abuse

The police have a duty to protect members of the public from crime and are allowed to balance the subject’s right to confidentiality against a potential victim’s right not to suffer harm from them.