

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DISCLOSURE SCHEME POLICY**  
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## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DISCLOSURE SCHEME**

**Owning Department:** Crime, Safeguarding and Incident Management Command

**Department SPOC:** MASH and DA Detective Inspector

**Risk Rating:** High

**Legal Sign Off:** N/A

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## Legal Basis

### Legislation specific to the subject of this policy document:

- Criminal Justice Act 2003 ([Section 34A](#))
- The Children Act 1989
- Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021

### Other relevant legislation which you must check this document against (required by law)

- [Human Rights Act 1998 \(in particular A.14 – Prohibition of discrimination\)](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#)
- [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated Regulations](#)
- [Article 6\(1\)\(e\) Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\) and Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- [Freedom Of Information Act 2000](#)
- [The Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)

### Other documentation which you must check this document against:

- [College of Policing – Code of Ethics](#)
- [Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies' Standards of Professional Behaviour](#)
- [College of Policing – Authorised Professional Practice](#)
- Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) Statutory Guidance

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) provides a formal mechanism for individuals or professionals to request information about a partner, ex-partner, or potential partner where safeguarding concerns exist. The scheme applies where there is an intimate relationship or a clear intention to enter one. Applications from individuals in early-stage or casual relationships should not be automatically excluded if credible safeguarding

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concerns are present, particularly where there is an intention to form an intimate relationship.

- 1.2 Section 77 of the Domestic Abuse Act places the guidance for the DVDS on a statutory footing by imposing a duty on the Home Secretary to issue guidance on the DVDS to chief officers of police. The DA Act imposes a duty on the police to have regard to the guidance when using the DVDS.
- 1.3 The DVDS applies where there is an intimate relationship or a clear intention to enter one. Applications from individuals in early-stage or casual relationships should not be automatically excluded if credible safeguarding concerns exist. Definitions of casual dating and thresholds for progression are outlined in the DVDS Framework.
- 1.4 The scheme provides a formal mechanism to make enquiries about an intimate partner, ex-partner or potential partner and allows professionals to apply for information for the purposes of protecting an individual from harm. It helps an individual to make a more informed decision on whether to continue a relationship and provides further help and support to assist them when making that choice.
- 1.5 When assessing an application under the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), the following principles apply:
- 1.6 The first step is to confirm the application type – whether it is a **Right to Ask** (public request) or a **Right to Know** (police or professional-initiated disclosure). This ensures the process follows the correct pathway.
- 1.7 The relationship between the person at risk and the subject must involve emotional or physical intimacy. Applications relating to casual dating or online-only contact should not normally progress unless there are credible safeguarding concerns. DVDS is intended for situations where there is an established intimate relationship or a clear intention to enter into one.
- 1.8 **Definition of Casual Dating:** For the purposes of DVDS, casual dating refers to a social interaction between two individuals who meet for companionship or romantic interest without forming an established intimate relationship. It is characterised by:
  - Lack of commitment or exclusivity – neither party considers themselves in a formal partnership.
  - No shared domestic arrangements – they do not live together or share financial responsibilities.
  - Limited emotional or physical intimacy – interactions are occasional and exploratory rather than sustained.
  - No expectation of permanence – the relationship is not intended to progress to a long-term partnership.

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- 1.9 **Post-Separation with Children:** Applications should only progress if there is evidence of ongoing risk (such as threats or coercion) towards the person at risk (PAR).
- 1.10 **Early Rejection Criteria:** Applications should be rejected at an early stage if:
- The person at risk is already aware of the subject's convictions.
  - The subject's domestic abuse history relates solely to the person at risk.
  - There is only one historic offence against a single victim, unless the offence is of such severity or there is evidence of ongoing risk that disclosure is necessary and proportionate.
- 1.11 A process chart and application framework can be accessed here (Suffolk DVDS process map).

## 2. Application Process

- 2.1 Applications can be made via the Constabulary website or by calling 101.
- 2.2 Applications made personally to Police Stations will be accepted, and provision should be made for the applicant to make their application by telephone to 101 in private if no officer is available to assist them. If it is not possible to offer the applicant a separate room, they should be offered the opportunity to wait.

## 3. Initial Contact

- 3.1 Relevant Forms:
- Initial Contact (Form 1) – Right to Know (for members of the public)
  - Initial Contact (Form 1) – Right to Ask (for police or other professional)

### Calls into 101

- 3.2 When initial contact is made via 101, the CCR call-taker should first encourage the caller to complete an online DVDS application, as this is the quickest and most secure way to process requests. If the caller is unable to complete an online application, the CCR will proceed with creating a Smartstorm event and book a double appointment in the diary for the Crime Coordination Centre (CCC) or Domestic Abuse Video Response (DAVR) team, sending the details via Storm to the appropriate team.
- 3.3 The Smartstorm event number should then be given to the applicant in order to verify their identity should they wish to enquire about the process of their application in the future.

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- 3.4 The initial contact form will then be completed by the CCC who will subsequently send the CAD to the local Community Policing Team (CPT) to arrange a face-to-face meeting with the applicant, or if appropriate, the DAVR team will complete the application process.
- 3.5 Upon completion of the initial contact form by the CCC, a 'closing statement' regarding consent and information sharing (section 7 of the Initial Contact Form) will be read to the applicant.

### Online Applications

- 3.6 All applications made via the online form will be sent to the CCR for a CAD to be created and will then be sent to the local CPT to arrange a face-to-face meeting with the applicant.

### General Points on Initial Contact

- 3.7 Minimum checks on Police National Computer (PNC), Athena, Crime Information System (CIS) and Violent and Sexual Offender Register (ViSOR) are to be carried out on the subject to assess any immediate risks. **If it is identified that urgent action is required due to immediate/imminent risk of harm to any person then ACTION MUST BE TAKEN IMMEDIATELY** and existing domestic abuse/safeguarding procedures should be followed.
- 3.8 All applications made via the online form during usual business hours will be subject to initial checks by the MASH Business coordinator or MASH DS within 24 hours of receipt to identify immediate and imminent risk. Should risk of this nature be identified, a CAD will be created for officer attendance.
- 3.9 From 1600 on Fridays to 2000 on Sundays, initial checks and risk assessment will be conducted by a CCC DS using this guidance and this form.
- 3.10 It is important to recognise, and deal with, any inappropriate or rejected enquiries at this early stage. Applications/enquiries which clearly do not fit the criteria for the scheme should be identified as such and dealt with as early as possible. See SOP for full guidance.
- 3.11 Initial Contact Forms must be saved on Athena. Once uploaded, the form must be sent immediately to the Business Support Coordinator at DVDS@suffolk.police.uk.
- 3.12 Where the application is made by a professional and no face to face interview is required, the SmartStorm event may be closed once the Initial Contact Form is completed. The form must be saved on Athena and sent immediately to the Business Support Coordinator at DVDS@suffolk.police.uk.

## 4. Face to Face Interview

- 4.1 Relevant Forms:

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- Diary Car Officer Check (Form 2)
  - Face-To-Face (Form 3)
- 4.2 Face-to-face interviews or DAVR appointments are only required for applications received from members of the public. They should be made at a time/place where the applicant feels safe. CCR staff to ensure that at the time of the initial call the most suitable time and date for a call back is recorded on the Initial Contact Form. CCC must contact the applicant within 24 hours. Face-to-face interview must be completed promptly, and the applicant should be aware that no face-to-face interviews will take place in the presence or hearing range of the subject.
- 4.3 Once the face-to-face interview has been arranged, the Smartstorm event can be closed.
- 4.4 Community Police Officers (CPOs) must complete the Diary Car Officer Check Form prior to attending the face-to-face interview in order to check for any concerns that may have arisen since the completion of the Initial Contact Form and to identify any possible concerns for officer safety.
- 4.5 Where an applicant has a disability, learning difficulty, speech or language impairment, or is under 18, officers must follow standard procedures for involving appropriate adults and interpreters. Officers must also ask whether the applicant faces any barriers to taking part in a face to face interview because of a disability, health condition or communication need, and agree any reasonable adjustments required. These considerations and adjustments must be recorded.
- 4.6 If the subject of the application holds a position, paid or voluntary, in a regulated profession or occupation that could pose a risk to the public or vulnerable groups, officers must:
- Advise the applicant that Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks (or equivalent) are a separate, established mechanism to verify eligibility to work in that role;
  - Complete a position of Trust Referral via the MASH.
- 4.7 Where concerns are raised by the potential recipient as the reason for the application, or where the person at risk makes a disclosure, a Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DARA) must be completed. The DARA should be uploaded to the DVDS Athena record, and all safeguarding actions recorded. For medium-risk DARAs, the attending officer must seek consent to refer to ACT and record this on the enquiry log. Athena will automatically create a task for DAC review for medium-risk cases and for IDVA review where the risk is high.
- 4.8 Throughout the face-to-face interview, officers should make clear that no disclosure or promise of disclosure of information can be made to them at this stage of the process. The applicant should be informed that:

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- the application process could take up to 28 days from start to finish;
- the length of the enquiry is largely dependent on the complexity of the application;
- checks will be made with internal departments and relevant external agencies;
- if any immediate risks are detected during this period, immediate action will be taken in order to safeguard the person at risk and any child/children concerned;
- all provisions will be put in place to ensure that their details remain confidential;
- third party applicants may not necessarily receive disclosure as a result of their application. Information will only be disclosed to the person best placed to protect that individual.

4.9 If officers have any concerns that the enquiry being made is malicious, then this should be brought to the attention of their Supervisor immediately, and the MASH Business Support Coordinator should be informed of the concerns.

4.10 Police will carry out in depth research regarding the applicant/person at risk and subject; as such it is important to record accurate details of the persons concerned. Verification of identity should be sought from the applicant in the form of photographic identification such as a passport or driving licence. Other identification such as birth certificates, benefit books, bank statements are also acceptable. The applicant should be advised that if they are unable to prove their identity then any relevant disclosures may not be given.

4.11 On completion of the interview, the applicant should be asked to sign the face-to-face form on page 6. The form should be immediately sent to the Business Support Coordinator via email [DVDS@suffolk.police.uk](mailto:DVDS@suffolk.police.uk) and original returned via internal mail.

## 5. Empowerment/Information Packs

5.1 During the face-to-face interview, the applicant should be given an 'Empowerment Pack' of leaflets which explains the DVDS (see Appendix A). The pack also includes domestic abuse information that may assist them in the safeguarding of themselves and any children in their care.

## 6. Full Research and Consideration for Disclosure

6.1 Relevant Forms:

- Research template
- Decision Making Rationale (Form 5)

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- 6.2 All applications should be input on to Athena by the Business Support Coordinator with a classification of 'Non-crime investigation – DVDS', these should be recorded as separate classifications for right to know and right to ask. (Non-Crime Investigation – DV Disclosure Scheme – Right to Ask NCI/40. Non-Crime Investigation – DV Disclosure Scheme – Right to Know NCI/40.) Details of all involved parties should be recorded, and all completed forms should be saved to the document management section. Each application should be recorded on the DVDS spreadsheet held within the Joint File Share.
- 6.3 For guidance on how acceptance criteria, research, relevant offences and decision making, please use the DVDS SOP and Guidance Flowchart.
- 6.4 Applications presenting seven or more high-risk indicators will normally be treated as priority cases. This threshold is based on local operational guidance to ensure resources are focused on the highest-risk cases.

Note: National DVDS guidance does not mandate a numeric threshold; decisions must remain risk-based and allow for professional judgment overrides where exceptional circumstances exist. All rationale for classification must be recorded.

- 6.5 Where there are children residing with the person at risk, or risk to any adult at risk of abuse has been identified, a child/adult protection referral will be submitted on the Athena Investigation to the MASH Safeguarding Team for multi-agency consideration of any possible concerns raised by the application.

## 7. Disclosure

### 7.1 Relevant Forms:

- Research Template
- Decision Making Rationale (Form 5)
- Disclosure Stage (Form 6)

- 7.2 Where the subject has relevant previous convictions or other concerning information, the Business Support Coordinator must complete a Decision Rationale Form recommending disclosure and proposing specific wording. This form is then submitted to the MASH Detective Sergeant for authorisation. All disclosures must be lawful, necessary, and proportionate, with clear rationale provided. Decisions must take account of the subject's rights under the Human Rights Act and the potential risks to the applicant.

- 7.3 Decision makers must provide sufficient detail and context about relevant offences to enable applicants to make informed decisions regarding their own safety and the safety of those they are responsible for:

- 1) Helping the applicant identify specific risk factors
- 2) Supporting the development of a safety plan

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- 3) Signposting to specialist services and support.
- 7.4 Disclosures must be delivered by the police. Goodsam video calls are the preferred method of contact. Where appropriate, consideration should be given to involving other agencies in the delivery or having them present (e.g., IDVA or Social Care Services).
- 7.5 If children are involved or reside with the person at risk, and disclosure has been approved, the Initial Contact Form must be shared with the Local Authority to enable a multi-agency threshold discussion regarding the level of risk. The form should be sent by email to [Customer.First@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Customer.First@suffolk.gov.uk).
- 7.6 The threshold discussion must consider whether multi-agency involvement is required, including the need for CYPS to complete its own assessment. The Research Template and Decision Rationale Form should inform decisions on disclosure wording and delivery method (e.g., single or joint agency visit). Actions for CYPS during a joint visit (such as statutory assessment or Section 47 investigation) must also be agreed. After the threshold discussion, Police Decision Makers must notify DVDS staff of the outcome via email or the folder CSODP/DVDS – POST STRAT. If no discussion occurs, CYPS will share its MASH outcome with police via Liquid Logic. Where a joint visit is agreed, contact details for the relevant Local Authority team or worker must be provided.
- 7.7 All DVDS applications must follow the DVDS & CSODS Workflow as set out in the process flow chart. Refer to the workflow and SOP for steps on recording, research, authorisation, and delivery.
- 7.8 Ensure the Decision Making Rationale (Form 5) and Disclosure Stage (Form 6) are attached to the Athena investigation before any task is sent.
- 7.9 Where a joint visit is agreed, include the relevant Local Authority team or worker contact details.
- 7.10 Where there are no children involved, or residing with the person at risk, disclosure can be made single agency by the Domestic Abuse Coordinators.
- 7.11 Before disclosure, agree a safe time, date, and location with the recipient (and the Local Authority if a joint visit is planned). Disclosures must be verbal only, using the wording from Form 6 and including the confidentiality undertaking.
- 7.12 Goodsam video calls are the preferred method where appropriate and agreed by the recipient. When deciding the method, consider the risk of technology-facilitated abuse. Ensure the disclosure occurs in a safe setting that meets the recipient's needs.
- 7.13 If there is to be more than one person receiving a disclosure of information, a Disclosure Stage (Form 6) should be completed for each person receiving information.

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- 7.14 Officers must ensure the Disclosure Stage (Form 6) is signed and that no written information is left with the recipient. The signed Form 6 must be uploaded to the Athena investigation and the task closed in line with the DVDS workflow.
- 7.15 The officer delivering the disclosure must upload the signed Disclosure Stage (Form 6) to the document management section of the Athena investigation and update the enquiry log to confirm completion. An Athena task must then be sent to the PNC Bureau requesting a locate/info marker on the PNC record for the subject (and applicant if relevant) confirming a DVDS disclosure.
- 7.16 Consider whether the source of risk should be referred to an appropriate perpetrator management framework based on harm posed to the community. Options may include MAPPA, Integrated Offender Management (IOM), or the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Unit (DAPU). Perpetrator consent is required for DAPU referral.
- 7.17 At conclusion, submit a “Request Non-Crime Investigation Be Filed” task on Athena to the Supervisor for filing using the outcome codes below. Update the DVDS spreadsheet to confirm the disclosure date.

### 7.18 Outcome Codes

- Outcome 1: NFA – Application does not meet DVDS or CSODS criteria.
- Outcome 2: Successful Disclosure – Information disclosed to applicant.
- Outcome 3: Non-Disclosure – Decision made not to disclose.
- Outcome 4: Withdrawn – Disclosure authorised but delivery not possible.

## 8. Withdrawal of Application

### 8.1 Relevant Form:

- Withdrawal of Application (Form 4)

- 8.2 Form 4 (Withdrawal of Application) must be completed only when the applicant formally withdraws from the DVDS process. The electronically signed copy should be attached to the Athena record and emailed to DVDS@suffolk.police.uk
- 8.3 If potential risks to a child or vulnerable adult have already been identified, submit a child/adult protection referral on Athena to the MASH Safeguarding Team for multi-agency consideration.
- 8.4 Form 4 is not required in cases where a “Right to Know” disclosure cannot be delivered due to non-response or unavailability. In these circumstances,

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three documented attempts must be recorded on Athena, and safeguarding referrals should still be considered.

- 8.5 Once Form 4 has been completed, it must be emailed to DVDS@suffolk.police.uk to ensure the Business Support Coordinator is notified. The Business Support Coordinator will then submit a “Request Non-Crime Investigation Be Filed” task on Athena to the Supervisor for closure of the investigation. In addition, the DVDS spreadsheet must be updated to confirm the withdrawal of the application.
- 8.6 Where a “Right to Know” disclosure cannot be delivered because the applicant is unavailable or fails to respond, three documented attempts must be made to arrange an appointment, and these attempts should be recorded on Athena. A safeguarding referral should also be considered to address any risks to children or adults with care and support needs. In these circumstances, completion of Form 4 is not required.
- 8.7 Failure to deliver a disclosure after reasonable attempts does not remove the responsibility to manage ongoing risk. Safeguarding actions must continue in line with statutory guidance, even if disclosure cannot occur.

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## Appendix A – Empowerment Pack

- Lighthouse Women's Aid (Tel: 01473 228270)  
Domestic Abuse Support primarily in Ipswich – Mon-Fri. They offer a number of services including free legal appointments, money advice, coffee mornings, programmes and workshops. Lighthouse are located at 238 Felixstowe Road in Ipswich.
- Anglia Care Trust (Tel: 0800 977 5690)  
They offer specialist domestic abuse services to individuals experiencing domestic abuse, including money advice and support through the family court process in relation to child contact.
- Brightsky is an app with lots of support services available that you can search for.
- Hollie Guard is a personal safety app that you can download to your smart phone, this app allows you to alert a nominated contact if you are in trouble and need help.
- National Centre for Domestic Violence (NCDV) (Tel: 0800 970 2070)  
They can assist with obtaining civil injunctions called non-molestation orders, which are designed to keep an individual away from you. They carry the power of arrest if someone breaches this type of order.
- National domestic abuse Helpline (Tel: 0808 2000 247 (24/7 calls))
- Wellbeing service  
You can do a self-referral and this service offers help and support to improve wellbeing (including managing anxiety, stress and low mood).
- Mankind (Tel: 01823 334244)  
If you are a victim of domestic abuse, you are not alone, Mankind are there to help. No matter what your background, age, job, race or sexuality, they are there to give all the support they can. One in six men will be a victim of domestic abuse in their lifetime.

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