



# Suffolk Constabulary Policies & Procedures

## PROCEDURE

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### Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)

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#### Process Chart and Forms:

A process chart and all forms are available [here](#).

The majority of information created through the processes mentioned by this procedure is considered a minimum of **OFFICIAL – SENSITIVE** (especially in regards to active and planned operations) as per the Government Security Classification Scheme and must be treated as such.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) gives people a formal way to apply for a police check into the past of a person where there is a concern that a relationship may be, or may become abusive. This is available to anyone in a relationship, or who is seeking to enter a relationship or to anyone who has concern for another person who is in a relationship.
- 1.2 The scheme provides a formal mechanism to make enquiries about a 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.

## 2. Application Process

- 2.1 Applications should be made to Suffolk Constabulary via telephone to the Contact and Control Room (CCR) on 01473 613500.
- 2.2 Applications made personally to Police Stations will not be accepted, however, provisions should be made in the event that the applicant is unable to make an application by telephone. Persons visiting a Police Station in person must be allowed to make their referral to Suffolk Constabulary via the 01473 613500 telephone number in a private room. If

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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
- Initial Contact (Form 1) – Right to Ask

3.2 The call-taker will create an [Initial Contact Form](#) under the criteria of DVDS. Minimum checks on Police National Computer (PNC), Athena, Crime Information System (CIS) and Violent and Sexual Offender Register (ViSOR) are to be carried out by the call-taker 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.

3.3 A Webstorm event should be created for each initial application made. The Webstorm 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.

3.4 At the end of the call a 'closing statement' regarding consent and information sharing (section 7 of the Initial Contact Form) will be read to the applicant.

3.5 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.

#### 3.6 Examples of enquiries that do not fit the remit:

- The person at risk and subject are not in a relationship
- The person at risk and subject do not intend to enter a relationship
- Ex-partners to the person at risk

3.7 Where the application is made by a member of the public, and there is no immediate risk, CCR staff should ensure that the Webstorm event created from the Initial Contact is moved into the Incident and Crime Management HUB (ICMH) queue. This will enable prompt contact with the applicant to arrange a suitable appointment with a Neighbourhood Support Team (NST) Officer to complete face-to-face interview.

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- 3.8 Initial contact forms are to be saved to the Joint File Share within the relevant Year/Month folder. The Initial Contact Form should then be sent immediately to DVDS staff via email [DVDS@suffolk.pnn.police.uk](mailto:DVDS@suffolk.pnn.police.uk).
- 3.9 Where the application is made by a professional, the Webstorm event can be closed once Initial Contact Form is completed as no face-to-face interview is required. The form should be saved to the Joint File Share at W:\Collaboration\ProtectiveServices\Crime\PVPMASH\Org\SharedWorking\Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme within the relevant Year/Month folder, and sent immediately to DVDS staff by email [DVDS@suffolk.pnn.police.uk](mailto:DVDS@suffolk.pnn.police.uk).

#### 4. Face To Face Interview

##### 4.1 Relevant Forms:

- Diary Car Officer Check (Form 2)
- Face-To-Face (Form 3)

- 4.2 Face-to-face interviews 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. ICMH must contact the applicant within 24 hours. Face-to-face interview must be completed within 10 days of the initial contact 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 Webstorm event can be closed.
- 4.4 Neighbourhood Support Team (NST) Officer 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 In the event the applicant appears to have a disability/learning difficulty/speech or language difficulty/or is under 18 years, routine police procedures around appropriate adults and interpreters should be adopted. In the event that the subject of the application appears to be in any role, paid or unpaid (voluntary work) through which the individual may present as a risk to members of the public in general, or children and/or vulnerable adults, the Disclosure and Barring Services/Notifiable Occupation Team should be informed in order for the team to consider a disclosure to the relevant regulatory body, if appropriate.

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- 4.6 Throughout the face-to-face interview, officers should stress 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:
- the application process could take up to 35 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.
- 4.7 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 DVDS staff should be informed of the concerns.
- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 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 DVDS staff via email [DVDS@suffolk.pnn.police.uk](mailto:DVDS@suffolk.pnn.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. The pack also includes domestic abuse information that may assist them in the safeguarding of themselves and any children in their care.

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### 6. Full Research and Consideration for Disclosure

#### 6.1 Relevant Forms:

- Research template
- Decision Making Rationale (Form 5)

6.2 All applications should be input on to Athena by DVDS staff 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 Full checks on PNC/CIS/VISOR/ATHENA and Police National Database (PND) should be carried out in respect of the subject and PNC/CIS in respect of the applicant/person at risk. All relevant offending history for involved parties should be recorded on the research template for consideration for disclosure.

6.4 Other relevant checks with external agencies can be made by phone or e-mail where necessary. The results of these checks should be recorded within the Athena Investigation enquiry log.

6.5 Once research is completed, a recommendation for disclosure/non-disclosure should be made by DVDS staff using the Decision Making Rationale Form (Form 5). Information considered both relevant and non-relevant to disclosure should be mentioned at this stage and a brief explanation of the rationale for decision.

6.6 The completed Research Template and Decision Rationale Form should be saved to the document management section of the Athena investigation.

6.7 In the event that the subject has no relevant previous convictions and no relevant intelligence is held for disclosure, DVDS staff will complete the Decision Rationale Form recommending non-disclosure; this is then sent to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Detective Inspector for sign-off. Once approved, an email is sent to the Domestic Abuse Team with the Decision Rationale Form attached, to enable them to confirm the outcome to the applicant/person at risk. This may be done over the phone, or in person, and further support/safety advice is offered. Where there are children residing with the person at risk, or risk to any vulnerable adult has been identified, a child/adult protection referral will be submitted on the

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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 In the event that the subject has relevant previous convictions or there is concerning information held, DVDS staff will complete the Decision Rationale Form recommending disclosure suggesting specific disclosure wording; this is then sent to MASH Detective Inspector for sign off. All disclosures should be lawful, proportionate and necessary and sufficient rationale should be provided to support this; as well as considering the rights of the subject in accordance with the Human Rights Act and risks to the applicant.

7.3 Where there are children involved, or residing with the person at risk, and once disclosure is approved, the Initial Contact Form must be shared with the Local Authority to facilitate a multi-agency threshold discussion to take place to consider the risk involved. The Initial Contact Form should be sent by email to [Customer.First@suffolk.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:Customer.First@suffolk.gcsx.gov.uk).

7.4 Threshold discussion should consider need for multi-agency involvement, specifically the need for Children and Young People Services (CYPS) to undertake their own assessment as part of the disclosure process. Completed Research Template and Decision Making Rationale form will be considered and discussed with a view to agreeing the disclosure wording and how the disclosure should be made i.e. single/joint agency visit. It should also be agreed what action will be taken by CYPS in the event of a joint visit i.e. statutory assessment, section 47 investigation, etc.

7.5 Once the multi-agency threshold discussion has been completed, Police Decision Makers should inform DVDS staff, by email/folder 'CSODP/DVDS – POST STRAT', of their outcome. If a joint visit with CYPS has been agreed, the relevant Local Authority Team/worker contact details should be provided.

7.6 At the disclosure stage, applications should be allocated by DVDS staff to the Domestic Abuse Team as below:

- Where the application was submitted by a Domestic Abuse Officer, a task is sent via Athena to the submitting officer, ensuring the

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Decision Making Rationale form (Form 5) together with the Disclosure Stage (Form 6) confirming the disclosure wording, are attached to the Athena investigation. They will also be advised of the relevant Local Authority Team/worker to contact in the event of a joint visit.

- Where the application was submitted by any other professional or a member of the public, a task is sent via Athena to the Domestic Abuse Team Supervisor for allocation to an officer to complete disclosure. Ensure that the Decision Making Rationale form (Form 5) together with the Disclosure Stage (Form 6) confirming the disclosure wording, are attached to the Athena investigation before the task is sent. They will also be advised of the relevant Local Authority Team/worker to contact in the event of a joint visit.
- 7.7 Where there are no children involved, or residing with the person at risk, disclosure can be made single agency by the Domestic Abuse Team.
- 7.8 There should be consultation with the person who is to receive disclosure (as well as relevant Local Authority Team/worker where joint visit is agreed) to agree an appropriate time, date and place to complete disclosure. At the time of disclosure, completing officers should ensure that a verbal disclosure only is given. They should read the agreed disclosure wording from the Disclosure Stage (Form 6). They should also read out the 'Undertaking' which advises the person receiving disclosure of the confidential nature of the information being provided to them.
- 7.9 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.
- 7.10 Officers should ensure that the Disclosure Stage (Form 6) has been signed and that no written information is left with the person receiving the disclosure. Once completed, the signed Disclosure Stage (Form 6) should be immediately sent to DVDS staff via email [DVDS@suffolk.pnn.police.uk](mailto:DVDS@suffolk.pnn.police.uk) and original returned via internal mail.
- 7.11 DVDS staff should ensure that the signed Disclosure Stage (Form 6) is saved to the document management section on the Athena Investigation, and that the enquiry log is updated to confirm disclosure has been completed. An Athena task should then be sent to the PNC Bureau, [PNC.Bureau@suffolk.pnn.police.uk](mailto:PNC.Bureau@suffolk.pnn.police.uk) requesting a locate/info marker is added to the PNC nominal record for the subject (and applicant if relevant) confirming a DVDS disclosure has been made.
- 7.12 At conclusion, a 'Request Non-Crime Investigation Be Filed' task on Athena investigation should be submitted to Supervisor to file the Athena

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Investigation and DVDS spreadsheet should be updated confirming disclosure date.

### 8. Withdrawal of Application

#### 8.1 Relevant Form:

- Withdrawal of Application (Form 4)

8.2 In the event that an applicant withdraws their application, the department that is dealing with the application at that time should complete a Withdrawal of Application Form. If potential risks to a child or vulnerable adult have already been identified, then a child/adult protection referral will be submitted on Athena to the MASH Safeguarding Team for multi-agency consideration of the concerns raised.

8.6 The completed Withdrawal of Application Form should be sent by email to [DVDS@suffolk.pnn.police.uk](mailto:DVDS@suffolk.pnn.police.uk) to ensure that DVDS staff are aware. DVDS staff should submit a 'Request Non-Crime Investigation Be Filed' task on the Athena Investigation to Supervisor to file the Athena Investigation and DVDS spreadsheet should be updated confirming withdrawal.

**Department:**

Safeguarding and Investigations - PVP

**See Also:**

[Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board Website](#)

[Schedule 34A Criminal Justice Act 2003](#)

[The Children Act 1989](#)

[Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008](#)

[Human Rights Act 1998](#)

[General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\) and Data Protection Act 2018](#)

**Authorised By:**

Head of Protecting Vulnerable People

**Author:**

DVDS Administrator

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

**JNCC Approved:**

06.12.16

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