Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPNs) and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs)

Find out how DAPNs and DAPOs can help protect you if you or someone you know is a victim of domestic abuse.

From:
Ministry of Justice and **Home Office**

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If you are in immediate danger, call 999 and ask for the police. If you can't speak and are calling on a mobile press 55 to have your call transferred to the police. You can find more information on how to recognise domestic abuse and get help at: Domestic abuse: how to get help

This document provides information on what Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPNs) and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) are, how you can apply for a DAPO, and what it means if a DAPO is applied for on your behalf and made by the court. From November 2026, these orders are available across England and Wales (national rollout).

If you are a victim of domestic abuse or know somebody else who is, you may be able to apply for a DAPO. If you are a victim, it may be that a

DAPO is applied for on your behalf, for example by the police, by a relative or a social worker and made by the court. Or the court may make a DAPO of its own initiative during an ongoing court case.

The Victims' Code explains your rights as a victim of crime.

What is domestic abuse?

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 says that abusive behaviour can consist of any of the following: physical or sexual abuse; violent or threatening behaviour; controlling or coercive behaviour; economic abuse; psychological, emotional, or other abuse.

What is a Domestic Abuse Protection Notice (DAPN)?

A DAPN is the first stage of the Domestic Abuse Protection framework, providing immediate protection while the police apply to the court for a Domestic Abuse Protection Order (DAPO).

A DAPN is issued by the police to a perpetrator to provide immediate protection to victims of all forms of domestic abuse. A DAPN can be issued where the police officer considers there are reasonable grounds to believe that a person has been abusive towards another person who is aged 16 or over. The perpetrator must be aged 18 or over. The victim and the perpetrator must also be personally connected – for example, they are, or have been married or civil partners, are or were in a relationship or are related. DAPN contains specific instructions that the perpetrator must follow, such as staying away from a victim's home.

The police will consider whether a DAPN is necessary to protect the victim from domestic abuse or the risk of domestic abuse. If the police issue a DAPN, they must apply for a DAPO to be heard by the magistrates' court within 48 hours, with the DAPN remaining in force until the court has considered the application.

A DAPN is legally binding, and failure to follow its conditions could result in the perpetrator being arrested and brought before a magistrates' court.

What is a Domestic Abuse Protection Order (DAPO)?

A DAPO is the court order that may follow a DAPN and provides longer-term protection. A DAPO can also be made without a DAPN having first been issued.

A DAPO can be made by the court to protect victims from all forms of domestic abuse, including non-physical abuse and controlling or coercive behaviour. A DAPO may be made by a court of its own initiative during ongoing criminal, family, or civil proceedings. Applications can also be made by the police, by a victim themselves or by someone who is not directly involved (on behalf of the victim), known as a 'third party'. A third party could include a family member, a friend, a domestic abuse specialist support worker or a social worker.

DAPOs are protective orders and can be used to impose restrictions and conditions on a perpetrator of domestic abuse.

- A prohibition is a rule that prevents someone from doing something. For example, this could include stopping a perpetrator from contacting a victim via phone (telephone calls, text messages), email or social media or coming within a specified distance of a victim's home and/or any specified premises, such as a victim's workplace.
- A DAPO will always include mandatory notification requirements. This means that a perpetrator subject to a DAPO must tell the police their name and address and tell the police of any changes to these. The perpetrator subject to a DAPO is required to first tell the police their name and address within 3 days of a DAPO being made, and after that, within 3 days of any changes to these.
- The court may decide to impose electronic monitoring (known as 'tagging') on a perpetrator to monitor whether they are following certain rules of the DAPO, for example those that stop a perpetrator from coming within a specified distance of the victim's home. Electronic monitoring will not be available from the start of national rollout in November 2026 but is expected to be introduced from early 2027.
- The court may also decide to impose a positive requirement that calls for the perpetrator to take positive action. At national rollout, programme-based positive requirements, such as attending a behaviour change programme, will initially only be available when the police are making an application on your behalf or the order is made in ongoing criminal proceedings. Non-programme based positive requirements, such as removing content relating to you from social media or returning keys to a property, can be imposed.

How long does a DAPO last?

A DAPO has no minimum or maximum duration. The court will consider how long the DAPO needs to last to protect a victim from domestic abuse or the risk of domestic abuse and will specify the duration of the order when it makes a DAPO.

What happens if the conditions of the DAPO are not followed?

A DAPO is legally binding and breaking any of its rules is known as a breach. Breach of a DAPO is a criminal offence and should always be reported. If you are aware that any of the conditions or rules of a DAPO have been broken, you should contact the police. If you are in danger, you should call 999.

When a breach of a DAPO is reported, the police will investigate it and work with the Crown Prosecution Service to decide whether the case will be charged as a criminal offence. The police will keep you informed about how the case progresses. If the person is convicted of breaching a DAPO, the court may impose a sentence of up to five years' imprisonment, a fine, or both.

When you report a breach, the police will give you a crime reference number. Keep a note of this in case you need to follow up.

How can I apply for a DAPO?

There are various ways you can apply for or request a DAPO:

- You can report domestic abuse to the police and request that they issue a DAPN or apply for a DAPO on your behalf. The police will decide whether a DAPN is needed initially.
- You can apply for a DAPO yourself in the family court. To do so, you will need to complete a DA1 court form. You can find the form at: Apply for a domestic abuse protection order in a family court
- If both you and the person you are seeking protection from are already involved in another family court case, you can also apply directly to that court, using the DA1 form. In some circumstances, the court may also decide to make a DAPO of its own initiative if it considers this necessary to protect you. If you're involved in civil action, find out how to apply in a county court

- If there is a criminal case against the perpetrator for another offence, the court can also make a DAPO for your protection, regardless of whether the perpetrator has been convicted or acquitted for that offence.

A ‘third party’ can also apply for a DAPO on your behalf. A ‘third party’ is someone who is not directly involved in the abuse. For example, this could be a family member, a friend, domestic abuse specialist support worker/service or social worker. As well as reporting domestic abuse to the police, a third party can make an application to a family court, so long as they have permission from the court. To do this, a third party will need to complete forms DA1 (Application for a Domestic Abuse Protection Order) and DA2 (Application for leave to apply for a Domestic Abuse Protection Order).

You can seek any requirement which may be considered necessary to protect you from domestic abuse or the risk of domestic abuse. The court will consider these requests when making a DAPO.

Is there any cost associated with applying for a DAPO?

There are no court fees for victims applying for a DAPO.

Where can I apply for a DAPO?

Following national rollout in November 2026, DAPOs are available across England and Wales. Information about how to apply to the family court, including court forms and guidance, is available on GOV.UK. You can find your local court using this link: https://www.gov.uk/find-court-tribunal

I’ve had a DAPO made on my behalf, what does this mean for me?

If you are a victim of domestic abuse, a DAPN may be used or a DAPO applied for on your behalf and for your protection. In some circumstances, a DAPN will be given or a DAPO will be made without your consent if it is believed you are at risk of harm.

If you are already involved in another criminal, family or certain civil court case, the court may make a DAPO if the court decides it is necessary to protect you. The court can do this even if the case does not relate to domestic abuse. The court will consider your views before doing so.

The law also allows the police to issue a DAPN or make a DAPO application to protect you. They will do this if they consider the perpetrator has been abusive towards you or you are at risk of domestic abuse. The police have a duty to consider your views before proceeding.

When the police apply for a DAPO on your behalf, they may ask you whether you would like to submit oral or written evidence to support their application. Any evidence submitted may be considered by the court at the hearing. If the police apply for a DAPO on your behalf, you cannot be compelled to attend the court hearing, unless you have submitted evidence.

Support is available if a DAPN has been issued or a DAPO has been made to protect you. You may wish to contact a specialist domestic abuse support service for advice and support - https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help#get-help-and-support. These services can provide practical and emotional support, help you understand what a DAPN or DAPO means, discuss your options and help you with safety planning. You can also speak to an independent domestic violence adviser (IDVA), social worker or other support professional if you need help accessing services or understanding the support available to you.

What happens when the DAPO ends?

If a DAPO is coming to an end soon, and you're concerned about your safety, you can contact the police or a domestic abuse support service. You, a third party or the police can apply to change the order (known as vary) to make it last for longer. If the order has already ended, you, a third party or the police can apply for a new order.

What if I don't agree with the DAPO or want to change it?

You can apply to the court that made the order to change it (vary) or to bring it to an end (known as discharge). To do this, you will need to complete form DA3 (Application to vary or discharge a domestic abuse protection order), supported by a witness statement. You can also ask the court that made the DAPO how to do this.

You can also appeal against a DAPO. You can ask the court that made the DAPO how you can appeal.

You may want to get legal help or advice if you don't agree with a DAPO or want to change it (see below).

Can I get free legal advice?

You may wish to seek legal advice about a DAPO that has been made for your protection or about applying for a DAPO. Legal aid can help to cover the costs of legal advice and is available for victims who want to apply for DAPOs, subject to means and merits tests. You can find out more about whether you can get legal aid at: www.gov.uk/legal-aid.

If you are already involved in a family or county court case with the perpetrator, your legal adviser will usually apply for legal aid on your behalf.

If you are unsure where to get legal advice, a specialist domestic abuse support service may be able to provide information and signpost you to appropriate legal support, including legal advisers where relevant.

Who can help me apply for a DAPO?

FLOWS (Finding Legal Options for Women Survivors) offer free legal help and advice to victims and survivors of domestic abuse on how to apply for a DAPO. You don't have to be eligible for legal aid to get help from FLOWS. You can contact FLOWS on 0203 745 7707, by email flows@rjadvice.org.uk or through their website.

You may be also able to get help from other organisations who offer help and support to victims of domestic abuse.