# Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPN) and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPO)

# Guidance if a DAPN has been given or DAPO has been applied for or made against you

If you have been given a Domestic Abuse Protection Notice (DAPN) or a Domestic Abuse Protection Order (DAPO) has been applied for or made against you, this guide will help you to understand what a DAPN or DAPO is, what it means, and what you need to know about complying with the notice or order. From November 2026, these orders are available across England and Wales (national rollout).

DAPNs and DAPOs are legally binding. If a DAPO is made and you breach its conditions without reasonable excuse, you may commit a criminal offence and could face imprisonment, a fine, or both.

A DAPN can be given or a DAPO applied for when domestic abuse is identified. The court will consider whether a DAPO is necessary to protect a person from all forms of domestic abuse or the risk of domestic abuse, including non-physical abuse and controlling or coercive behaviour.

If you want advice about a DAPN or DAPO, you may wish to contact a solicitor or Citizens Advice. They may be able to provide information about your options and any legal support that may be available to you.

If you are concerned about your behaviour being abusive and wish to change, Respect Phoneline offers free telephone, email and webchat support for perpetrators of domestic abuse within the UK. You can find more information on their website at: www.respectphoneline.org.uk

## What is domestic abuse?

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 says that abusive behaviour can include 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 issued by the police to provide immediate protection to victims of domestic abuse. It contains specific instructions that the perpetrator must follow, such as staying away from the victim's home. A DAPN can be issued where the police officer deems there are reasonable grounds to believe that a person 18 or over has been abusive towards another person who is at least 16 or over. The perpetrator and the victim must also be personally connected, for example are, or have been married or civil partners, in a relationship or are related.

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 Domestic Abuse Protection Order (DAPO) to be heard by the magistrates' court within 48 hours.

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

## What does it mean if the police have given me a DAPN?

A DAPN puts immediate limits and rules in place that the police think is necessary to prevent domestic abuse or to reduce the risk of domestic abuse. This could include specific instructions such as stopping contact with the victim or staying away from the victim's home.

The police will let you know when they have given you a DAPN or applied for a DAPO against you. If a DAPN is issued, the police must give it to you in person.

The police will explain the conditions of a DAPN when they issue it. If a DAPN has been issued against you, **you must comply with its terms.** A DAPN is legally binding. If you do not comply with its conditions, you may be arrested and brought before the first available magistrates' court. If the police issue a DAPN, they must then apply for a DAPO. A DAPO application will usually be heard by the magistrates' court within 48 hours.

## What is a Domestic Abuse Protection Order (DAPO)?

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 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 the victim's behalf), known as a 'third party'. A third party could include a family member, a friend, or a social care worker. If the police were not involved in a DAPO application, the court or the legal representative of the person who applied will let you know a DAPO has been applied for or made against you. The police will also be notified of any DAPO that is made, even where they were not the person or organisation that applied for the order.

A DAPO is legally binding. Breach of a DAPO without a reasonable excuse is a criminal offence and may result in imprisonment, a fine or both. DAPOs can be used to impose rules and conditions that you must follow.

- A **prohibition** is a rule that prevents you from doing something. For example, it may include stopping you from coming within a specified distance of the victim's home and/or any specified premises, such as the victim's workplace.
- A DAPO will always include **mandatory notification requirements.** This means that you must tell the police your name and address and tell the police of any changes to these. You are required to first tell the police your name and address within 3 days of a DAPO being made, and after that, within 3 days of your name or address changing.
- The court may decide to use **electronic monitoring** (known as 'tagging') to monitor whether you are complying with the rules of the DAPO. 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 use a **positive requirement** that calls for you 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 apply for the order or the order is made in ongoing criminal proceedings. Non-programme based positive requirements, such as

removing content relating to the victim from social media or returning keys to a property, can be imposed.

## How long does a DAPO last?

**The 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. The court will specify the duration of the order when it makes a DAPO.

## What should I do if I have been served with the notice of a DAPO hearing?

When a DAPO is applied for against you, the court or the police will let you know when the court will hear your case. You should go to court to give your evidence – see under **What will happen at court?** for more on what to expect. A DAPO can still be imposed against you if you do not attend court.

## What should I do if I have been served with a DAPO?

In some cases, the court can make a DAPO without notifying you in advance or giving you the opportunity to attend a hearing before the order is made. This may happen where the court considers it just and convenient to make the order without notice or as necessary to protect the victim. The police or court will then notify you of the order and inform you of its terms, including its duration and any requirements or prohibitions. The court papers will say when the next hearing will take place, where you will have the right to give your evidence – see under **What will happen at court?** for more on what to expect.

**A DAPO is legally binding, and breaking any of its rules is known as a breach. Breach of a DAPO is a criminal offence.** Breach of a DAPO is punishable by up to five years imprisonment, or a fine, or both. When deciding the appropriate sentence, the court will consider the relevant sentencing guidelines: https://sentencingcouncil.org.uk/guidelines/breach-of-a-protective-order-restraining-and-non-molestation-orders/

You must take the DAPO seriously and comply with its terms. If you have been served with a DAPO, you should:

- Familiarise yourself with the terms of the order,
- Make sure you understand what the DAPO requires you to do and not do,
- Avoid any contact with the victim. The DAPO may stop you from contacting the victim including phone calls, text messages, email, social media, or any other form of communication.
- Seek legal advice, if necessary.

Remember, **it is your responsibility to follow the order's rules.** Failure to do so is a breach of the order.

## What will happen at court?

You will be given a time and date to appear at court for a DAPO.

The court will hear and consider the evidence of the case. You will be given an opportunity to ask questions and provide evidence. After hearing the evidence, the court will consider whether it is more likely than not that you have been abusive

towards the person to be protected by the DAPO (i.e., the victim). The court will then consider whether a DAPO is 'necessary and proportionate' to protect the victim from domestic abuse or the risk or threat of further domestic abuse. A DAPO is not a criminal conviction.

In some cases, a magistrates' or Crown court may consider whether a positive requirement would help address the behaviour that led to the DAPO application. This could include attendance at a behaviour change programme, or a substance misuse or mental health programme. Where appropriate, a DAPO may be imposed by the court with a requirement for you to attend a suitability assessment and if deemed suitable, for you to participate in a programme. The police will provide you with details of the assessment.

Non-programme based positive requirements may also be imposed requiring you to take an action. This could be for example removing content relating to the victim from social media or returning keys to a property.

**What happens if I don't follow the conditions of the DAPO?**

**Breach of a DAPO is a criminal offence.** This means that if you do not comply with the conditions of the order you could face up to five years' imprisonment, or a fine, or both.

**What if I do not agree with the DAPO or want to change it?**

You can apply to change it (this is known as variation) or bring it to an end (known as discharge) by making an application to the court that made the order. To do this, you will need to complete form https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/673efeffb3f0df6d2ebaefe3/DA3_1124.pdf, supported by a witness statement. You can also ask that court how to do this.

You can also appeal against a DAPO. You can ask the court that made the DAPO for information about how to appeal.

You may want to get legal help or advice if you want to change a DAPO or appeal against it (see below).

**Can I get free legal advice?**

Legal aid can help meet the costs of legal advice and will be available for DAPOs, subject to the usual means and merits tests. You may get legal aid if you are eligible – this will depend on your case and on your financial circumstances. You can find out more about whether you can get legal aid here: https://www.gov.uk/legal-aid.

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