# Domestic abuse survivors face unsafe financial traps due to £308 anonymity fee



When Sierra\*, a survivor of domestic abuse, escaped her tormentor in 2019, she found herself facing not only emotional trauma but substantial financial hardship. Relocating multiple times with her children to evade her abuser left her crippled with around £40,000 in debt, largely accrued through legal expenses and living costs during a tumultuous period. As she articulated in a conversation with The Independent, “All of the debts I accrued were because of domestic violence.” Her plight highlights a broader issue affecting many survivors: the daunting financial implications that accompany their efforts to rebuild their lives.

In a cruel twist of fate, after discovering her eligibility for a Debt Relief Order (DRO)—a mechanism designed to help those struggling with unmanageable debt—Sierra was met with further obstacles. The order would require her personal details, including her home address, to be listed on a public register, placing her safety at risk. To safeguard her information, she needed a Persons At Risk of Violence (PARV) order, which unfortunately came with a £308 fee. Given her precarious financial situation, this sum was a significant barrier. The implication that she would have to go deeper into debt to secure her anonymity illustrates a critical flaw in the current system.

Sierra ultimately opted for the DRO without the added safety of the PARV order, fearing that her financial situation would decline further before the court could approve her request. “I was very scared because I know what I’ve gone through and the dangers I was putting myself into,” she admitted. This dilemma is not unique to Sierra; it reflects the experiences of around 1,500 victims supported annually by Money Wellness, one of the government-commissioned hubs for Debt Relief Orders in the UK.

Advocates within the sector argue vehemently for reform. Francesca Ferrier, serving as the economic abuse and empowerment lead at Refuge, stated, “The racking up of debts in a survivor’s name is a common tactic used by perpetrators of domestic abuse… survivors must pay over £300 to obtain an anonymity order when they make a legal claim for debt relief.” This pressing reality reveals systemic failures that compel survivors to prioritise their financial situations, often at the expense of their safety.

Current protocols govern how victims can shield their addresses from public view in the insolvency register and include provisions for fee remissions under specific circumstances. However, these measures fall short for many. The costs associated with securing a PARV order for those who are already living in poverty can create an unbearable burden, forcing vulnerable individuals to make unimaginable choices regarding their safety. A government spokesperson noted that officials are assessing the charges related to PARV orders and their impacts on access to justice for those at risk.

Beyond individual cases like Sierra's, the issue raises fundamental questions about the welfare system's support for domestic abuse survivors. The UK has seen increased attention to the financial consequences of abuse, with campaigns calling for the abolishment of the PARV fee and a comprehensive review of the insolvency register. The discourse is shifting, aiming to ensure that survivors do not have to navigate the perilous intersection of financial insecurity and personal safety alone.

The ramifications of these financial hurdles are profound, contributing to ongoing cycles of fear and dependence. Survivors often find themselves in a precarious position, struggling not only for their physical safety but also for the financial stability necessary to start anew. As we strive for a society that genuinely supports those affected by domestic abuse, these systemic flaws must be addressed, ensuring that no survivor is left to choose between their safety and their financial recovery.

\*Name changed to protect identity.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5: [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/domestic-abuse-debt-relief-fee-money-refuge-b2746498.html)
2. Paragraphs 6, 7, 8: [[2]](https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/legal/debt/debt_relief_orders/debt_relief_order_specialist_resources/apply_to_hide_an_address_from_insolvency_register), [[3]](https://www.moneywellness.com/blog/our-autumn-budget-wish-extra-protection-for-domestic-violence-survivors), [[6]](https://www.moneywellness.com/blog/domestic-violence-survivors-safety-at-risk-from-rise-in-court-fees)
3. Paragraphs 9, 10: [[4]](https://survivingeconomicabuse.org/i-need-help/getting-support/organisations-that-can-help/), [[5]](https://www.moneywellness.com/blog/call-for-more-help-for-survivors-of-economic-abuse)
4. Paragraph 11: [[7]](https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-survivors/flexible-fund/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/domestic-abuse-debt-relief-fee-money-refuge-b2746498.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/legal/debt/debt_relief_orders/debt_relief_order_specialist_resources/apply_to_hide_an_address_from_insolvency_register> - This page from Shelter England provides detailed information on applying to hide an address from the insolvency register, including the application fee of £308 for a Person at Risk of Violence (PARV) order. It also discusses the possibility of fee remission and the process for obtaining consent from the Debt Relief Order (DRO) Team to avoid a court hearing.
3. <https://www.moneywellness.com/blog/our-autumn-budget-wish-extra-protection-for-domestic-violence-survivors> - Money Wellness advocates for the abolition of the £308 fee for PARV orders, highlighting that survivors of domestic violence often face financial hardship and should not be forced to choose between safety and debt relief. The article emphasizes the need for government action to support these individuals.
4. <https://survivingeconomicabuse.org/i-need-help/getting-support/organisations-that-can-help/> - Surviving Economic Abuse lists organizations that offer support to individuals experiencing economic abuse, including the Financial Support Line for Victims of Domestic Abuse, run by Money Advice Plus. This service provides specialist advice to those in financial difficulty due to domestic abuse.
5. <https://www.moneywellness.com/blog/call-for-more-help-for-survivors-of-economic-abuse> - Money Wellness calls for the removal of the court fee for PARV orders, stating that expecting vulnerable individuals already experiencing extreme financial problems to find over £300 is unrealistic and unfair. The article also mentions that in some cases, the fee may be waived if applicants meet certain income-related criteria.
6. <https://www.moneywellness.com/blog/domestic-violence-survivors-safety-at-risk-from-rise-in-court-fees> - Money Wellness reports on the rise in court fees, including the £308 fee for PARV orders, and how this increase could put vulnerable people at risk of violence. The article discusses the impact of these fees on survivors of domestic violence and calls for the government to drop the PARV fee.
7. <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-survivors/flexible-fund/> - Women's Aid introduces the Flexible Fund, a one-off payment of up to £500 for essential items and up to £2,500 to help survivors of domestic abuse secure a sustainable independent future. The fund is available through referrals from eligible frontline services in England and Wales.