

Designing content for vulnerable parents

52%

**of applicants had their
fee waived because they
experienced and
reported domestic abuse**

- Early research showed that a large number of service users had experienced domestic violence.
- At the beginning of alpha, anywhere between 30% and 60% of users in live call listening and jobcentre research volunteered this information.
- Initial service statistics showed 33% of applicants had experienced domestic abuse.
- Figure was updated to 52% as a result of the new telephone script ensuring all users were asked if they had experienced domestic abuse.



Organisations we've worked with to learn more about domestic abuse

- Family Mediation
- Women's Aid
- NIDAS (refuge)
- Citizens Advice
- Newcastle City Council
- Gateshead Council
- Child Arrangements Service
- Reducing Parental Conflict
- Troubled Families service

Reassuring them

The challenge

People who have been through an abusive relationship or an acrimonious separation are really wary about:

- + sharing personal information if they think there's a risk it could end up with the other parent
- + the prospect of contacting the other parent and setting off a chain of distressing events

We need to reassure these people they can apply safely.

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User needs

I need to know it's safe to make an application

I need to know I don't have to contact the other parent

I need to know the other parent can't contact me with the information I give

Before:

Standard messaging

- their National Insurance number
- their date of birth

There's usually a £20 application fee. You'll need a debit or credit card to pay this.

Your personal details will not be shared with the other parent.

Start now >

Before you start

Check if you're eligible [link](#).

What is your phone number?

We will only use this to contact you about your application.

Your answer is confidential.

Phone number

Continue

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After:

More helpful messaging on start page

If you're worried about contacting the other parent

We will try to contact the other parent about setting up child maintenance – you do not need to.

If we cannot contact the other parent, we might not be able to set up an arrangement.

We will not share your answers with the other parent.

Start now >

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After:

More helpful headers

What's the best number to call you on if we have questions about your application?

We will not share your answers with the other parent. We will tell you which number we will call you from at the end of your application.

Phone number

If you do not have your own phone, give the phone number of someone you trust.

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After: More control for parents

When can we call you, if we need to?

Preferred times

We will try to call you at your preferred time. We can only call you from Monday to Friday between 8am and 7:30pm, and Saturday between 9am and 4pm.

- ☐ Between 8am and 10am
- ☐ Between 10am and midday
- ☐ Between midday and 2pm
- ☐ Between 2pm and 4pm
- ☐ Between 4pm and 6pm
- ☐ Between 6pm and 7:30pm
- ☐ Any time

or

- ☐ None of these times work for me

Can we leave a voicemail message if we cannot speak to you?

We will not mention any details about the Child Maintenance Service or your application.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Continue

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**Asking about
domestic abuse**

The challenge

We need to ask users whether they or their children have ever been through domestic abuse. This is so we can work out whether they need to pay the £20 application fee, according to the policy criteria.

However, we know this is an incredibly emotive topic to talk about, no matter what a user's circumstances are.

User needs

I need to understand what domestic abuse is and how it affects my application if I've experienced it

I need to understand what the different types of abuse are


I need to know why you're asking if I've experienced domestic abuse

I need to know what support is available

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Before:

Asking the question plainly

 **GOV.UK**

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Have you or your children ever experienced domestic abuse?

This could include things like emotional, physical or sexual abuse, or threats and intimidation.

☐ Yes ☐ No

[Continue](#)

[GOV.UK Prototype Kit v8.6.0](#) [Clear data](#)



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After:

Describing domestic abuse

Check whether you need to pay the application fee

We will not share your answers with the other parent or anyone else.

Have you or your children ever experienced any of these behaviours?

- psychological or emotional abuse
- physical or sexual abuse
- financial or economic abuse
- coercive control (an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation, intimidation, degradation, isolation and control)
- harassment and stalking
- online or digital abuse

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