

# Adult Safeguarding Policy

Protection of Vulnerable Adults  
Guidance for Councillors and Staff



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## 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy and procedure sets out the Council's commitment to addressing adult safeguarding issues and ensuring that the appropriate agencies are engaging in providing a response to any concerns raised. It outlines what should be the response of a council representative if they encounter an adult safeguarding issue. Council representatives include Councillors, officers and contractors.

This policy applies to all adults in need of safeguarding that come to the attention of Chorley Council officers and representatives as they undertake their roles and responsibilities for the Council.

## 2. BACKGROUND

In 2000 the Department of Health published "No Secrets" which provided guidance to local agencies who have a responsibility to investigate and take action when a vulnerable adult is believed to be suffering abuse.

The term "vulnerable adults" became "adults in need of safeguarding" to recognise a shift in service philosophy and practice since the publication of "No Secrets" in 2000.

The term 'Safeguarding Adults' reinforces that all adults have the right to live free from abuse and degrading treatment, but that some people may have that right compromised.

It is recognized that particular sections of our community such as those that access social care; the elderly and those with learning difficulties may be at greater risk from abuse than others.

## 3. SCOPE

The policy and procedure applies to all representatives of Chorley Council whilst in the performance of their duties, roles and responsibilities. This includes Councillors, officers and contractors.

The procedure provides a framework for raising concerns about an adult safeguarding issue and a process by which those concerns can be escalated or referred to the most appropriate agency for further action.

The Chorley Council Child & Young Person Protection Policy details the responsible officers, reporting procedures and relevant documentation which can also be used to address any concerns that staff may have with regard to potential vulnerable adult abuse.

Related documents include:

- "No Secrets" – Dept of Health 2000
- Child & Young Person Protection Policy – Chorley Council 2011

## 4. RESPONSIBILITIES

### Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO):

- Will provide a point of contact for staff who wish to test concerns about safeguarding and act appropriately, either seeking advice from, or making a formal referral to, statutory agencies regarding a safeguarding disclosure, report or concern.

- Will provide a point of contact with the County Council Adult Services Duty Officer and hold an up-to-date list of contact details for statutory adult safeguarding agencies
- Chorley Council has three nominated DSO's as follows:  
Head of Health Environment and Neighbourhoods – Simon Clark  
Head of Housing – Zoe Whiteside  
Senior HR&OD Consultant – Graeme Walmsley

**It is not the role or responsibility of any representative of the Council to decide whether abuse is taking place. DSO's should take advice from a relevant statutory agency before deciding to refer reports, concerns or disclosure formally.**

#### **Lead Safeguarding Officer – Head of Health Environment and Neighbourhoods**

- Holds all of the responsibilities of a Designated Safeguarding Officer but in addition:
- Will act as the lead officer for the Council with responsibility for safeguarding procedures.
- Will liaise with the statutory adult safeguarding agencies as appropriate.

#### **Directors and Managers:**

- Are responsible for making sure that all of their staff are aware of, and understand the importance of this policy and related guidance.
- Will arrange for appropriate training for their staff and maintain a log of this training.
- Must make sure that any contractors, agents or other representatives who they have engaged to undertake duties on behalf of the Council involving contact with vulnerable adults understand and comply with this policy.

#### **Monitoring Officer – Head of Governance**

Has responsibility for receiving safeguarding concerns and allegations made against elected Members. The monitoring officer in liaison with the Lead Safeguarding Officer and Chief Executive Officer will determine the most appropriate course of action.

#### **All Staff and Councillors**

- Should be aware of this policy and should commit themselves to safeguarding vulnerable adults.
- Are expected to act on any suspected or potential case of vulnerable adult abuse. In line with the existing 'Whistle Blowing' Policy, Chorley Council will support anyone who, in good faith, reports his or her concerns even if those concerns prove to be unfounded.
- Should challenge poor practice as appropriate.

## **5. DEFINITIONS**

The definition of a vulnerable adult is:

*“ a person who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness: and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation”*

This could include people with learning disabilities, mental health problems, older people and people with a physical disability or impairment. Their need for additional support to protect themselves may be increased when complicated by additional factors, such as physical frailty or chronic illness, sensory impairment, challenging behaviour, drug or alcohol problems, social or emotional problems, poverty or homelessness.

The definition of abuse is:

*“Abuse is a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other person or persons”.*

Abuse of a vulnerable adult may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may occur as a result of a failure to undertake action or appropriate care tasks. It may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur where a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter a financial or sexual transaction to which they have not, or cannot, consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, exploitation of the individual.

### **Multiple Forms of Abuse**

This may occur in an on-going relationship or an abusive service setting to one person or to more than one person at a time, making it important to look beyond single incidents or breaches in standards, to underlying dynamics and patterns of harm. Any or all of these types of abuse may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent and targeting of vulnerable people, negligence or ignorance.

### **Criminal Acts**

Some instances of abuse will constitute a criminal offence. This may lead to criminal proceedings and intervention must take this into account. Vulnerable adults are entitled to the protection of the Law in the same way as any other members of the public. Alleged criminal offences differ from all other non-criminal forms of abuse in that the responsibility for initiating action invariably rests with the State in the form of the police and the Crown Prosecution Service.

Therefore, whenever complaints about alleged abuse suggest that a criminal offence may have been committed, it is imperative that reference is made to the police as a matter of urgency. Criminal investigation by the police takes priority over all other lines of enquiry. Ensuring the safety of victims however must be assured.

### **Definitions of Abuse**

#### **Note of Caution:**

When a number of the abuses listed below are present, this should alert practitioners to consider that abuse may have occurred. However, the presence of one or more does not confirm abuse/mistreatment. A cluster of several signs and indicators may indicate a potential for abuse/mistreatment and the need for further assessment.

### **Physical Abuse – Mistreatment**

Definition – The infliction of pain or physical injury, which is either caused deliberately, or through lack of care. This can include:

- Hitting
- Slapping
- Pushing
- Kicking
- Punching
- Forcing - including force feeding

- Inappropriate use of restraints
- The use of incorrect moving and handling techniques that are potentially dangerous and are known to cause distress
- The misuse of medication

### **Sexual Abuse**

Definition: The involvement of a person in sexual activities to which he or she has not consented or does not truly comprehend or where the other party is on a position of trust power or authority. Sexual abuse includes:

- Touching
- Fondling
- Sexual intercourse
- Attempted sexual intercourse
- Offensive or inappropriate language
- Indecent exposure
- Sexual teasing
- Looking
- Inflicting pornography on an individual

***N.B: Sexual abuse is usually thought of as the involvement of a person in a sexual activity which they have not consented or which they do not truly comprehend. However, it must be remembered that to prevent a person from expressing their chosen sexuality may also threaten their human rights and may be considered to be a form of abuse.***

### **Psychological Abuse**

Definition: Acts or behaviour that cause mental distress or anguish to the victims or which negate the wishes of the vulnerable adult. These can include:

- Threats of harm or abandonment
- Intimidation
- Scolding or treating like a child
- Making a person feel ashamed of involuntary behaviour
- Blaming someone for attitudes or actions or events beyond their control
- The use of silence
- Effects of other forms of abuse (e.g.; financial when family member is perpetrator)
- Humiliation
- Controlling or creating over dependence
- Lack of privacy/dignity
- Deprivation of social contact
- Deliberate isolation/denial of access to visitors
- Threats to withdraw help/support
- Denial of spiritual/cultural needs
- Denial of choice
- Failure to respond adequately to emotional needs
- Failure to protect from the emotional abuse of others
- Threatening medical or legal consequences if the individual does not comply with the desired behaviour

### **Financial or Material Abuse**

Definition: The inappropriate use of the money, property or possessions of a vulnerable adult by another, including:

- Misuse of a person's money, property or possessions
- Refusing access to the person's money, property or possessions
- Extortion of money, property or possessions through theft
- Failing to account satisfactorily for the use of a person's money, property or possessions
- Pressure in connection with wills, property, inheritance etc
- Misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits
- Denying the right of someone who may be competent to handle his or her own financial affairs.

### **Neglect of Acts of Omission**

Definition; A vulnerable person may be suffering from neglect when their general well-being or development is impaired, include:

- Lack of adequate food or fluids
- Lack of adequate heating/lighting
- Lack of appropriate medical care
- Poor hygiene/cleanliness

### **Discriminatory Abuse**

Definition: The inappropriate treatment of a vulnerable adult because of their race colour, sex (or sexuality), disability etc.

## **6. PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES**

Consideration of the following factors could assist in the preventing or minimising the risks of abuse occurring.

### **Helping Vulnerable Adults to Protect Themselves from Abuse**

- The awareness of vulnerable adults can be raised by providing advice or education about what constitutes abuse.
- User groups should be supported to enable vulnerable adults to talk about issues which concern them.
- Self-Advocacy is available to support vulnerable adults to disclose abuse and to talk about other issues, which concern them.
- Counselling and Advocacy services are available to speak up or to take action on behalf of vulnerable adults when necessary
- Information should be made available, accessible and understandable to vulnerable adults
- Wherever possible, vulnerable adults should share in any decisions, which affect their lives.

### **Staff can Minimise Risk by:**

- Developing an understanding of the issues, which constitute abuse
- Having open and honest discussions about support issues and concerns
- Raising awareness of the issues of vulnerability
- Investing in training and skill development
- Supporting a learning culture by giving feedback within the staff team
- Being prepared to question support practices which could be abusive

### **The Service or Setting can Minimise Risk by:**

- Having a Whistle Blowing policy (available on the loop)
- Effective employment and recruitment practices (CRB checks)

- Ensuring that staffing levels and competence can meet the needs of the service users
- Encouraging good communication between staff and line managers
- Encouraging good communication between staff, service users and external agencies
- Recording complaints and responding to them in a positive manner
- Encouraging staff or volunteers to understand what constitutes abuse.
- Encourage training initiatives about all areas of support
- Introducing clear and easily accessible policies which promote good practice
- Making appropriate links with other agencies
- Being prepared to listen and to respond to staff and users when procedures and practices are questioned
- Welcoming visitors and ensuring service users are able to access community facilities.

## 7. WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE AWARE OF OR SUSPECT ABUSE

It is important to note that just because a situation may lead you to think that abuse may have taken place, it must never be automatically assumed that it has. If there are physical or other signs present, this still does not mean that abuse has taken place.

There should be a thorough consideration of each case on an individual basis, and where necessary by referring to and consulting colleagues, before reaching any conclusions.

Although staff and Councillors are encouraged to be alert to the signs and signals which may indicate that someone is being abused, many incidents will only come to light because the person disclosed this themselves.

The role of the person of whom an allegation of abuse is disclosed is to respond sensitively to the person making the disclosure and then pass on the information to DSO.

### **If someone discloses abuse:**

#### **Do:**

- Stay calm and try not to show shock or disbelief
- Listen carefully to what they are saying
- Be sympathetic (*'I am really sorry this has happened to you'*)
- Be aware of the possibility that medical evidence may be needed.
- Tell the person that:
- They did the right thing
- You are treating the information seriously
- It was not their fault
- You are going to inform the appropriate person
- You/the organisation will take steps to protect and support them
- Report to your line manager/chief executive or the police
- Write down what was said by the person disclosing as soon as possible

#### **and do not:**

- Press the person for more details
- Stop someone from freely recalling significant events (for example: don't say *'Hold on we'll come back to that later'* as they might not tell you again)
- Promise to keep secrets you cannot keep this kind of information confidential
- Make promises you cannot keep (such as *'This will never happen to you again'*)
- Contact the abuser
- Be judgemental (for example *'why didn't you just run away?'*)



- Pass on information to anyone other than those with legitimate 'need to know', such as your line manager or other appropriate person.

***At the first opportunity make a note of the disclosure and date and sign your record.***

You should aim to:

- Note what the person actually said, using their own words and phrases
- Describe the circumstances in which the disclosure came about
- Note the setting and anyone else who was there at the time
- Separate out factual information from your own opinions
- Use a pen or biro with black ink, so that the report can be photocopied
- Be aware that your report may be required later as part of a legal action or disciplinary procedure

### **Perpetrators**

It is of particular concern that abuse is not only perpetrated by family members but also by people in positions of trust, power or authority who use their position to the detriment of the health, safety and welfare of the people in their care.

Agencies have a responsibility to the vulnerable adult who has been abused. However, they may also have responsibilities in relation to the perpetrator. The roles, powers and duties of the various agencies in relation to the perpetrator will vary depending on whether the abuser is:

- A member of staff, proprietor or manager
- A member of a recognised professional group
- A volunteer or member of a community group such as place of worship or a social club
- Another service user
- A spouse, relative or member of the person's social network
- A neighbour, member of the public or stranger
- A person who deliberately targets vulnerable people in order to exploit them

## **8. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR REPORTING CONCERNS AND DISCLOSURES?**

All members of staff and Councillors have a role in identifying abusive situation and reporting these to the responsible authority.

This includes abuse by another service user. Sometimes staff do not identify such behaviour as abusive particularly when the service user exhibits challenging behaviour. The focus must be on the abusive act itself and not the degree of responsibility or intent of the person carrying out that act.

Chorley Council will ensure that appropriate action is taken in accordance with this policy.

Such action may include:

- The instigation or referral for criminal proceedings to take place
- Disciplinary action against the member(s) of staff

**What are my responsibilities, as a member of staff, if I believe a vulnerable adult is being abused?**

The following points may be helpful in assisting individuals to decide what action to take:

- Everyone has a duty to report any allegations or suspicions of abuse or potential abuse of a vulnerable adult wither to their immediate line manager or to the police.
- This includes not only abuse identified as endemic within a service but also abuse carried out by someone else with whom the vulnerable adult has a personal or professional relationship.
- Any member of staff with reason to believe their line manager is colluding in the abuse should follow the whistle blowing procedures (see Whistle Blowing Policy, available on the loop).
- If the vulnerable adult is thought to be in immediate danger, urgent action needs to be taken to ensure their safety including calling the appropriate emergency services.
- If the alleged abuser is also a service user, then action needs to be taken to ensure that they do not pose a risk to other vulnerable adults.
- If there is a reason to believe a crime has been committed, then the police should be contacted immediately. In cases involving suspected physical or sexual abuse, particular care must be taken to preserve evidence.
- No individual should alert or confront the alleged abuser. Staff need to be mindful of their own safety, the safety of other staff, the safety of other service users and the safety of the vulnerable person.
- The appropriate line manager should then decide whether the allegation appears to constitute abuse and therefore needs further investigation or whether the matter does not constitute abuse and so would be more appropriately dealt with internally.
- If the alleged abuser is a member of staff or a volunteer, consideration must immediately given to protecting the vulnerable adult(s) from the possibility of further abuse until the issues have been investigated. Staff will refer to the internal staff disciplinary procedures.
- There is an expectation that line managers and staff providing services to vulnerable adults will co-operate fully in any investigation, whether it is carried out internally or by the police.
- Further advice is contained within the Child & Young Person Protection Policy, and either of the Designated Safeguarding Officers can be contacted where the person who suspects there may be potential abuse or the line manager, to discuss the matter further.

'Whistleblowing' is the term commonly applied to in a situation where a member of staff or a volunteer reports concern about something taking place in the work environment. Reference should be made to the Councils 'Whistleblowing' Policy if colleagues have any concerns about the implications of raising issues which might be described as 'whistleblowing'

This could be with regard to fraud, health and safety issues, abuse or the standard of support provided to a vulnerable adult.

The important issue is to ensure your concerns are reported to a person who has the responsibility and authority to act i.e. a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO).

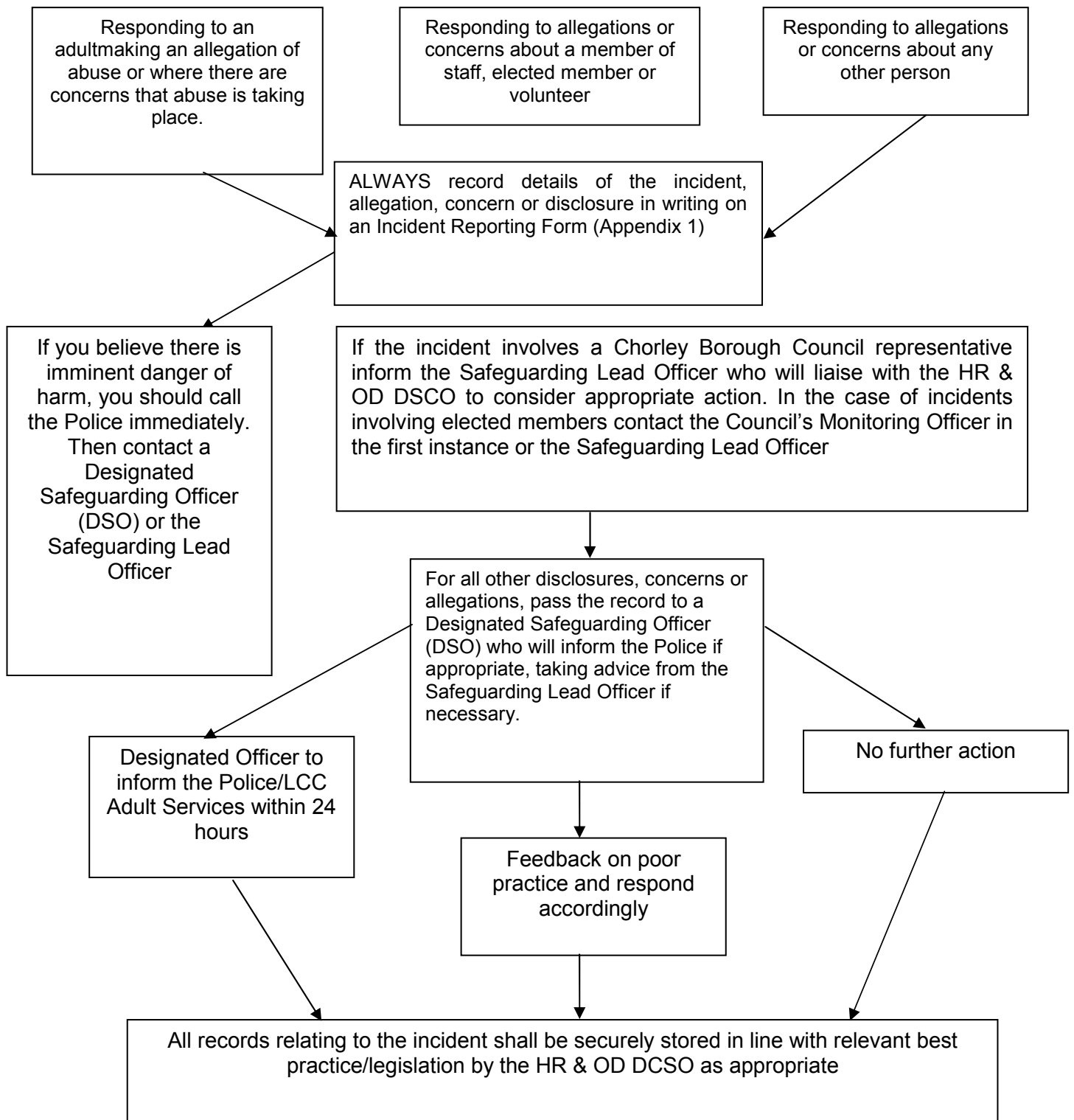
The Public Disclosure Act 1998 sets out a requirement for organisations to have procedures under which staff can raise, in confidence, any serious concerns that they may have and do not feel that they can raise in any other way.

These can include situations when an employee believes that:

- A criminal offence has been committed
- Someone has failed to comply with legal obligation
- A miscarriage of justice has occurred
- The health and safety of an individual has been endangered
- There are or may be financial irregularities

**Appendix 1**

**How to respond to allegations, concerns and disclosure**



**Remember your role is not to investigate but to gather, collate and report relevant information about safeguarding concerns, disclosures or allegations of abuse.  
If you are not sure what to do contact a Designated Safeguarding Officer for advice.  
If there is imminent danger of harm, you should call the Police immediately and try to maintain surveillance.**

## Appendix 2: Safeguarding Incident Reporting Form

### Safeguarding Incident Reporting Form

Please give as much information as possible, using extra sheets if necessary. All information will be treated in strict confidence.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Venue: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Adult: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Are you reporting your own concerns or passing on those of someone else? \_\_\_\_\_ Own/Other \_\_\_\_\_

Give details:

Brief description of what has prompted the concerns: include dates, times, locations etc of any specific incidents. Please write only facts and avoid interpretation.

Any physical signs? Behavioural signs? Indirect signs?

Have you spoken to the adult? Yes/No (if so what was said?)

Has anybody been alleged to be the abuser? Yes/No (if so give details)

Have you consulted anybody? Yes/No

If so, give details of Police or Adult Services contact ie Police Officer Name, Badge No, Social Worker details, give dates.

Does the adult have a disability Yes/No

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

To Whom reported: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of reporting: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

This form **must** now be given to a Designated Safeguarding Officer by hand in a sealed envelope marked 'confidential'.

**REMEMBER TO MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY. DO NOT DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH ANYONE OTHER THAN THOSE THAT NEED TO KNOW.**

## Appendix 3 Useful Contacts

| Safeguarding Role                                                                                 | Officer Designation                                                       | Contact                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Corporate Safeguarding Lead and DSO                                                               | Head of Health Environment and Neighbourhoods                             | 01257 51573<br>07949 164717 |
| DSO: Human Resources (Contact for issues relating to allegations against Chorley representatives) | Senior HR and OD Advisor                                                  | 01257 515186                |
| Monitoring Officer and DSO: (Contact for issues relating to Members only)                         | Head of Governance                                                        | 01257 515102                |
| DSO : People and Places                                                                           | Head of Health Environment and Neighbourhoods                             | 01257 51573<br>07949 164717 |
| DSO: Partnerships Planning and Policy                                                             | Head of Housing                                                           | 01257 515711                |
| Lancashire County Council Adult Services                                                          | Initial Assessment Team                                                   | 0845 053 0000               |
| Police                                                                                            | Non Emergency Contact<br><br>Emergency Contact (if an adult is in danger) | 0845 125 3545<br><br>999    |