



# Safeguarding Voices

Making Safeguarding Personal in Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire.

Summary Report



# Contents

About Healthwatch Together.....	3
Introduction.....	3
Methodology.....	4
Recommendations.....	5
Safeguarding Voices in Blackburn with Darwen.....	8
Safeguarding Voices in Blackpool.....	9
Safeguarding Voices in Lancashire.....	11
Multi-agency professionals.....	13
Conclusion.....	14



# About Healthwatch Together

Healthwatch was established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 as an independent consumer champion to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak out on their behalf.

Healthwatch Together is the collaboration of four Healthwatch across the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System (ICS). HWT works in partnership to effectively operate over the whole footprint and consists of Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen, Healthwatch Blackpool, Healthwatch Lancashire, and Healthwatch Westmorland and Furness. Each Healthwatch organisation works in their own local authority area and is their own unique entity, providing a local approach to community engagement.



## Introduction

The Care Act 2014 provides the legislative framework for Safeguarding Adults and emphasises a personalised approach that is led by the individual, not by the process. Making Safeguarding Personal principles, defined by the Care Act 2014, should be followed to ensure that safeguarding is person-led and outcome focussed.

Healthwatch Together delivered a robust engagement project to independently review the effectiveness of the Section 42 Safeguarding case management for Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire Safeguarding Adult Boards. Healthwatch Together project explored the experiences of the individual, the carer (where applicable) and multi-agency professionals involved in a section 42 safeguarding enquiry and whether they felt involved, supported and valued.

# Methodology

Healthwatch Together engaged with individuals and carers involved in a section 42 safeguarding enquiry, as well as professionals who have raised a safeguarding enquiry. The aim of the engagement was to investigate whether people felt involved, valued and listened to.

**258 people**  
**engaged with**

Healthwatch Together engaged with 258 people between 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023 and 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023 and this was conducted through one to one interviews, to provide rich qualitative data.

Local Authority area	Individuals	Carers	Multi-agency professionals
<i>Blackburn with Darwen</i>	20	10	2
<i>Blackpool</i>	13	16	27
<i>Lancashire</i>	26	64	59
<i>Across multiple local authorities/not stated</i>	-	-	18 across multiple local authorities 3 not stated

The target for the number of individuals engaged with was determined using safeguarding closure data, gathered by Lancashire County Council, which was compared with local authority population sizes. The target for each Healthwatch is detailed below:

Local Healthwatch	Engagement target
Blackburn with Darwen	30
Blackpool	28
Lancashire	90



# Recommendations

Healthwatch Together have formulated the following recommendation in response to feedback received which include overall recommendations and local recommendations for each local authority. These recommendations are in line with Making Safeguarding Personal Principles.

**Empowerment:** People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and give informed consent.

1. Embed a consistent approach to explaining what a safeguarding enquiry entails and why there is an investigation. Ensure all staff are relaying the same message to individuals and carers, regardless of their prior knowledge. This explanation should be done at the earliest opportunity. We recommend that all individuals and carers involved in an enquiry should be given a document (also available in an Easy Read version) explaining the safeguarding enquiry process.



“No. I phoned up Social Services so the incident of physical abuse towards me was entered on his record, but nothing was explained to me about safeguarding.”

2. Consult with individuals and carers to understand how they would like to receive information and strive to make sure each person receives information in a way that is accessible for them. Reduce inconsistencies with the information shared to individuals involved in a safeguarding enquiry, and strive to make sure each person receives information in a way that is accessible for them.



“They said they would keep me updated. they rang me to let me know what was going on. I did ask for letter form but I never received a letter, I was told I would receive emails but I don't have access to my emails” – *carer*.

3. Aim to contact individuals and carers early in the safeguarding process to remove confusion and gain involvement from those involved at the earliest opportunity. It is crucial that communication is initiated in a clear and concise manner from the outset to avoid confusion (**Blackpool specific**).
4. Involve individuals and carers in decisions through regular communication (agreed at the beginning of the enquiry) and work closely to put actions in place in agreement with individuals to ensure full involvement throughout the safeguarding enquiry (**Lancashire specific**).

**Prevention:** It is better to take action before harm occurs.

5. Consider future plans and the sustainability of the approach taken when finalising the safeguarding enquiry, to hopefully prevent the situation from arising in the future. Involve the individuals and carers in discussions about the future to ensure this is embedded into an action plan.

"I don't have a plan for the future."



6. Provide a more detailed and clear explanation of actions being taken as part of the enquiry to the individual and/or carers, including next steps and any proposed timeframes (**Lancashire specific**).

**Proportionality:** The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.

7. Implement a model or communication framework that includes asking the individual and carers what support they need to make people feel more comfortable through the safeguarding process and ensure that everyone's needs are met appropriately. Feelings, views and experience should be at the heart of decision-making.



"It was a 2 minute conversation then he left. I wasn't involved in it. Noone asked me what I wanted."

**Protection:** Support and representation for those in greatest need.

8. Develop a consistent approach to supporting individuals across the safeguarding team, and ensure they have a good understanding of the situation throughout, to help ensure that some people do not feel ignored through the process. Clear communication and listening to people's needs and preferences is essential to making safeguarding personal (Blackburn specific).

**Partnership:** Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.

9. Celebrate the positive feedback and best practice highlighted within the findings, to encourage a cohesive and progressive approach across the team. It is clear that there is some excellent work happening and this should be recognised.

"[Social worker] throughout the process which is still ongoing, has taken the weight and the worry away from us so we can start a new chapter without having to worry about the baggage which was destroying [relative] as a person- *carer*."



10. Consult with more multi-agency professionals from Blackburn to gain a more representative overview of experiences. Healthwatch Blackburn will conduct a second phase of engagement with multi-agency professionals through an online survey to collect a wider range of feedback (Blackburn specific).

**Accountability:** Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

11. Ensure there is a consistent approach across teams by providing all individuals and carers with a direct point of contact, to foster positive rapport and consistency.

"I found it difficult to get back to the safeguarding team there was no direct number for me to use. I had to go through 4 or 5 switches before I could speak to the person that I needed to speak to. They always had to ring me back."

12. Aim to close the feedback loop with those involved in a safeguarding enquiry before closing the case or stopping contact, to ensure individuals are not left wondering what the outcome is. Communication is key (**Blackburn and Blackpool specific**).
13. Allocate a designated Safeguarding Officer to each enquiry, to foster positive rapport and consistency. Each individual or carer should be made aware of the most appropriate method to make contact with this worker should they encounter any difficulties or have any further questions (**Blackpool specific**).
14. Ensure communication is followed through in a timely manner, particularly when an individual is informed they will receive a further telephone call or visit. It may not always be required to have additional contact with an individual or carer, but this should be explained in order to manage expectations and create a trusting relationship. The next steps in an enquiry should always be explicitly clear for those involved, where possible (**Blackpool specific**).

## Safeguarding Voices in Blackburn with Darwen

This executive summary offers a comprehensive overview of the key themes and findings from the responses of individuals and carers involved in safeguarding enquiries living in Blackburn with Darwen. It highlights the diverse experiences and emphasises the importance of clear communication, involvement, and support throughout the safeguarding process.

These findings can serve as valuable insights for further refinement of the Making Safeguarding Personal agenda in Blackburn with Darwen, to better meet the needs of individuals and carers involved in safeguarding enquiries.

**Lack of explanation and understanding:** More than half of the people we spoke with told us that they were not told what a safeguarding enquiry was and over half were not told that they were subject to a safeguarding enquiry.

**Support:** The majority of people we spoke with felt that it was easy to contact the safeguarding team if they needed to speak with them.



Over half of the individuals were asked what support they needed, with some not needing any further intervention from the team but some stated that they had not been asked.

**Planning for the future:** Feedback about the support received was generally positive. Just under half of the individuals we spoke with who had been through the safeguarding process had been given support to plan for the future, however it was clear from talking with the others that this was not needed and was not perceived to be a gap in support.

Similarly, not all of the carers we spoke with had been asked what support they needed as a carer.

**Involvement and feeling heard:** The majority of individuals and carers felt that they were involved in decisions made through the process and felt listened to. However, a few people did not feel involved at all.

## Safeguarding Voices in Blackpool

This executive summary offers a comprehensive overview of the key themes and findings from the responses of individuals and carers involved in safeguarding enquiries living in Blackpool. It highlights the diverse experiences and emphasises the importance of clear communication, involvement, and support throughout the safeguarding process.

These findings can serve as valuable insights for further refinement of the Making Safeguarding Personal agenda in Blackpool, to better meet the needs of individuals and carers involved in safeguarding enquiries.

**Varied explanation and understanding:** The understanding of what a safeguarding enquiry entails varies among individuals and carers. Some reported clear explanations, particularly those with previous experience in the health and social care sector or through external agencies. However, an equal number did not receive any explanation, resulting in uncertainty and confusion.

**Listening and involvement:** A substantial proportion of individuals and carers expressed that they felt listened to and involved in the safeguarding process. They emphasised the importance of their opinions being considered and regular involvement in meetings.

Conversely, some participants reported not feeling heard or being actively involved, citing poor communication, lack of empathy, and inconsistent approaches as barriers to effective participation.

**Support and future planning:** Experiences with the support provided during the safeguarding process were mixed. Several participants praised the support received, describing it as "excellent," "brilliant," and "outstanding." They highlighted effective practice, clear explanations, and a caring approach.

Others expressed negative experiences, noting that support was often hindered by stretched resources, inconsistency, and a lack of information. Some reported feeling unsupported and left to handle issues themselves.

**Receiving relevant information and clarity:** Most participants reported that they received relevant information that was easy to understand. Effective communication and clarity were appreciated.

However, a few individuals noted a lack of information following their interaction with adult social care, leading to frustration and confusion.

**Involvement in decision-making:** A majority of participants felt involved in the decisions made during the safeguarding process, with their opinions considered and valued. They found this to be crucial for the success of the process.

However, some individuals reported limited or no involvement, attributing this to inconsistent decision-making and poor communication.

**Planning for the future:** Approximately half of the participants reported having a plan for the future, which was facilitated by social care, external agencies, or Safeguarding Voices 28 their own initiative. This planning was seen as essential for ensuring the wellbeing and safety of the individuals involved.

On the other hand, some participants had not received any support for future planning, while a few did not believe it was necessary.

**Additional comments:** Several participants provided additional comments related to their experiences with the safeguarding process. These comments covered both positive and negative aspects, emphasising the need for better communication, reassurance, and feedback.

Recommendations were made to improve practice, including regular updates, spot checks in care homes, and providing additional reassurance to individuals and carers to ease the emotional impact of the process.

# Safeguarding Voices in Lancashire

This executive summary offers a comprehensive overview of the key themes and findings from the responses of individuals and carers involved in safeguarding enquiries. It highlights the diverse experiences and emphasises the importance of clear communication, involvement and support within the safeguarding enquiry process.

These findings can serve as valuable insights for further refinement of the Making Safeguarding Personal agenda in Lancashire.

**Explanation and understanding:** A higher proportion of carers compared to individuals shared that it was explained that they were involved in a safeguarding enquiry. For those it was not explained to, this left people feeling confused and unsure what was happening. There was mixed feedback from individuals and carers regarding whether staff introduced themselves, explained their role and why they were involved. Some respondents shared that they were not always contacted by the same professional which they would have preferred during a distressing time.

**Receiving relevant information and clarity:** Only half of individuals shared that they were clear on actions being taken along with timeframes, with a slightly higher proportion of carers having this understanding.

**Communication:** Feedback has revealed that there is an inconsistent approach regarding communication between professionals and individuals/carers involved in a safeguarding enquiry, with some being provided a direct contact number and others being provided a main office number.

**Support for individuals:** 61% of individuals were asked what support they needed but only 40% of these said that they received this support. Four individuals shared that they were Autistic and/or had a learning disability and relied on their key workers for support.

Satisfaction rates for support received by individuals was varied and there was mixed feedback from individuals about whether the support put in place improved their wellbeing. Less than half of individuals received support to plan for the future.

**Support for carers:** Only 35% of carers were asked what support they needed and although most carers shared, they were focused on the support needed for the individual, feedback suggests that some carers did not feel supported regarding their own wellbeing.

**Praise for social workers:** Positive feedback was given about social workers, with comments made about their empathy, professionalism and offering of personalised care.

**Accessible information:** Satisfaction rates were fairly high regarding the format in which information about the enquiry was presented to them, however, suggestions were made to make information accessible.

**Involvement and feeling heard:** Feedback from individuals and carers was mixed regarding whether they felt listened to, with a lower proportion of individuals feeling involved in decisions. Feedback from individuals indicated that many felt they had to 'push' for what they wanted, or decisions had already been made by the time they were informed, which made individuals not feel involved in the process.



# Multi-agency professionals

Healthwatch Together received feedback from 109 professionals about their experience of being involved in a safeguarding enquiry.

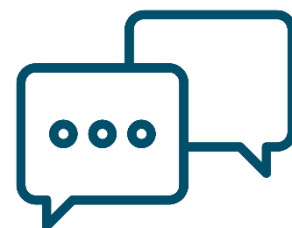
## There were positive experiences of:

1. Raising a safeguarding concern
2. Being able to provide an input into the enquiry
3. The individual and/or carer's feelings, wishes and beliefs were listened to and respected
4. Knowing how to challenge a decision made if dissatisfied



## There were mixed experiences of:

5. Being involved throughout the safeguarding enquiry
6. Being provided with a point of contact if professionals had any questions or updates to share
7. Being informed of the outcome of the safeguarding enquiry and action that had been taken



## There were negative experiences of:

1. Not being clearly informed of what would happen with their concern within an agreed timeframe
2. Not being given an explanation for any delay/s that occurred
3. The outcome of the decision not being shared with professionals



"My experiences with safeguarding over the past twelve months have been varied. I have found that some safeguarding concerns have been investigated and closed without the person of concern receiving a visit from a safeguarding Social Worker. Some of the safeguarding social workers will keep me up to date and will involve me in the alert, where other social workers have not kept me updated and I have to chase them."

# Conclusion

To conclude, Healthwatch Together have had the privilege of hearing about excellent working practice with the key principles of Making Safeguarding Principles applied. These included social workers showing real kindness, empathy and personalisation throughout the safeguarding enquiry when people are potentially at some of their most vulnerable times. However, there are clear inconsistencies with the approach being taken by social workers within the three local authority areas covered by this project, as well as the experiences of individuals and carers.

There have been examples of individuals and/or carers being provided with a point of contact, receiving regular updates and feeling involved in decisions made. On the other hand, some individuals/carers do not know they are involved in a safeguarding enquiry, do not have a named professional to contact when they have an enquiry and do not feel involved in decisions made.

Recommendations made are focused around improving communication, providing tailored support to individuals' and carers' needs, providing accessible information and supporting individuals to plan for the future. These recommendations have been made to improve working practice in line with the six key principles of Making Safeguarding Personal, ensuring each Safeguarding Adult Board is providing an outcome-focused and person-centred safeguarding process.

Good practice is evident in some areas and by some professionals, and this should be celebrated and applied across all areas.



Email: [info@healthwatchlancashire.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchlancashire.co.uk)