



Cheshire East Safeguarding Adults Board

## A protocol for professionals to support 'Seldom Heard' Adults in Cheshire East

The term 'seldom heard' is used to describe groups of people who don't have a voice and are often under-represented, and/or do not engage with services, working with seldom-heard individuals is often very challenging for practitioners, this guide is to support frontline staff when working with this group of people.

Previously, these individuals have been described as 'hard to reach' or 'difficult to engage' – suggesting that there is something that prevents their engagement with services. Seldom heard emphasises the responsibility of agencies to reach out to seldom heard adults, ensuring that they have access to social care services and that their voices can be heard.

### 1. Introduction

In Cheshire East, there are some people living in the community whose voice is seldom heard. Quite often these people have complex needs or present with challenging circumstances that mean the cases can be difficult to manage. This can often cause difficulties in planning resolutions to their particular situations.

This protocol sets out a framework for all adult safeguarding agencies to work in partnership using an outcome focused, solution-based model. The protocol offers clear guidance to operational staff and managers on how the needs or presenting problems of seldom heard adults at risk should be addressed.

### 2. Rationale for the protocol

Seldom heard adults can have diverse needs that often fall between different agencies and in some cases problems can be longstanding and recurring. The work can be very time consuming and stressful for staff, largely because there are no straightforward and proven approaches available to follow. Research in this area suggests that what works is a multi-agency, multi professional and multi-disciplinary approach. Therefore, this protocol aims to ensure that there is as much coordination with this client group as possible in order to reduce duplication, prevent individuals being overlooked and wherever possible to get a positive outcome for the adult at risk themselves. It aims to assist managers and staff to make the best possible decision in each case with a clear, transparent record as to how it was reached.

### 3. Aims of the protocol

to improve the management of cases that include seldom heard adults with appropriate outcome focused solution-based support.

to improve the coordination of services between agencies in taking responsibility for the management and support of such cases.

to raise awareness of the full range of services available.

to establish best practice guidance

to improve knowledge of the relevant legislation

for all partners to fully cooperate in the implementation of the protocol

#### **4. Best Practice**

**i)** The Care Act 2014 (Section 42) requires that each local authority must make enquiries, or cause others to do so, if it believes an adult is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect and because of their care and support needs they are unable to protect themselves. An enquiry should establish whether any action needs to be taken to prevent or stop abuse or neglect, and if so, by whom. In all cases partners must follow the [North West Safeguarding Adults Policy \(stopadultabuse.org.uk\)](http://stopadultabuse.org.uk)

**ii)** after following the North West Policy, if there are still significant concerns about the individual being 'seldom heard' and there is likelihood of significant risk of abuse and neglect, including self-neglect. This may be important where there is a concern about potential risk to the adult; or where there is uncertainty amongst professionals about the necessary steps to protect the adult from risk or abuse, a multi-agency meeting will be needed. This meeting may be helpful where professional disagreements are impacting on effective work with a seldom-heard adult, or where professionals need an opportunity to reflect on the plans for working with the adult when progress is not being made. ***Partners are requested to follow the Multi-agency Meeting template (appendix 1)***

**iii)** If concerns continue following the Multi-agency Meeting a referral to the Multi-agency Complex Safeguarding Forum will need to be considered [Complex Safeguarding Forum Referral Process \(stopadultabuse.org.uk\)](http://stopadultabuse.org.uk)

Adult Social Care Staff must also consider referring the case to the Legal Gateway Meeting for legal advice.

#### ***Appendix 1***

<https://www.stopadultabuse.org.uk/docs/Adult-Services-Policies.doc>