



Participants at the Craigavon workshop take part in a 'role-play'.

# The ABC

access to benefits circular



access to benefits  
for older people

October 2007

## What we've been doing

:: In July, we reported on the series of focus groups we were running with older people and community sector workers to test the 'prototype' screening tool. These groups have now been completed and the feedback was both very positive and very useful.

:: Our pilot of the 'prototype' screening tool is now up and running in the North West. Over the summer we liaised with several organisations and at the beginning of September we provided training for the non-advice organisations that are taking part. Benefit screenings as part of the pilot started on 24 September.

:: In addition to the pilot, we have started a series of workshops with the themes of 'rural' and 'health.' These are taking place in a wide range of locations across Northern Ireland, including Enniskillen, Magherafelt, Larne and Newry. The workshops will allow us to make contact with older people and community development workers and learn more about how we can address barriers to benefit entitlement.

:: A2B is working closely with our system design partner, Core Systems, to create system design documentation for the permanent benefit screening tool which will replace the test prototype. The procurement process to select a company to build the system is also currently underway.

:: Our website has been updated and is now online at [www.a2b.org.uk](http://www.a2b.org.uk). The content of this newsletter can also be accessed there.

:: A2B has responded to consultations on the Review of Domestic Rating and the Section 75 Effectiveness Review.

## About A2B: Access to Benefits for Older People

A2B is working to help older people in Northern Ireland maximise their take-up of benefit entitlements.

We are developing a 'Benefit Screening Tool' which will calculate benefit entitlement for an older person and will also signpost them to other benefits which do not depend on their income.

## Our plans for the rest of '07

The pilot of our Benefit Screening Tool prototype will be running over the next few months and we hope to screen up to 400 older people for benefit entitlement. After the pilot finishes we will be assessing all the feedback and this will help to improve our engagement processes.

The health and rural workshops will run, in the first instance, until the end of December. We would like to keep in touch with workshop attendees and come back to them for further input in 2008.

The design phase of the benefit screening tool is on target to be completed by the end of October. We aim to award the contract for building the system by the middle of November.

### The A2B staff team

- Patrick Minne, Chief Executive Officer
- Tracy Bell, Project Coordinator
- Hilary Doherty, Outreach/Community Development Officer
- Zoë Anderson, Content Officer
- Kate Cowan, User Experience Officer
- Neil Curran, Technology Officer
- Rey Muradaz, Project Facilitator

### Other news

Winter Fuel Payments are available to both men and women aged 60 or over in the qualifying week, which this year was 17 – 23 September 2007. Most people receive this important benefit automatically if they already receive a State Pension or other social security benefit, but if you have not received it before then you may need to make a claim.

For more information about Winter Fuel Payments, or to get a claim form, you can ring the Winter Fuel Payment

### Contact Us

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