



ISSUE 10

A2B: THE FIRST SIXTEEN MONTHS

- 7,667 valid benefit checks completed
- 1087 older people helped into previously unclaimed benefit
- £16.8m in unclaimed benefit calculated
- £3.5m per annum in unclaimed benefit applied for

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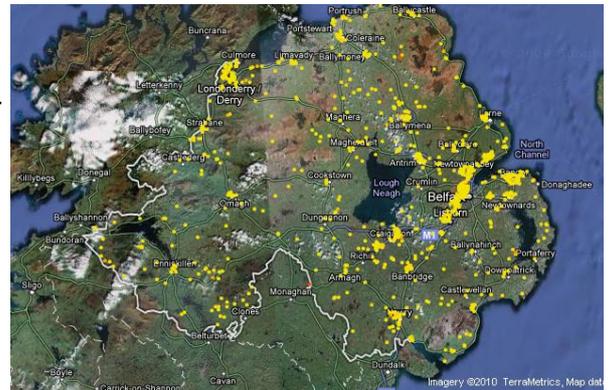
access to benefits circular

www.a2b.org.uk

MAR 2010

Economy here benefits from £3.5m entitlement boost

Building on its excellent first year figures in October 2009, A2B has more reasons to thank its Partnership Network in 2010. We've added another £1.4m to the total, annually recurring value of previously unclaimed benefit that has been applied for. Since we started work, that makes the economy here over £3.5million a year better off. While the Benefit Calculator that empowers people to identify their unclaimed benefit continues to be available publicly at www.a2b.org.uk, many of the 160 organisations trained in helping older people through the calculation are starting to use their own, bespoke website addresses, driving traffic to their own websites.



The forecast across the region for benefit entitlement is improving. The light clusters in this map show where people have done A2B checks

The A2B Benefit Calculator at www.a2b.org.uk was the first of its kind in Northern Ireland. Originally devised to help older people, it allows people of any age to work out their entitlement completely anonymously. This means they can find out what they're due first, independent of government, before making a claim.

Last year, A2B's independently commissioned research indicated that £62 million a year goes unclaimed by over 60s here in Pension Credit alone. That's why we continue to hit home the message that it's money not just lost to older people, but money lost the economy because it does not come from the Northern Ireland block grant. So claiming your entitlements isn't asking for a handout, it's good citizenship!

Maximising Access in Rural Areas

A2B continues to be a leading player in a multi-agency approach to improve access to benefits in rural areas.

We are working on a project with the Public Health agency, CAB, Advice NI and other key organisations on a project lead-funded by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. In 13 of the least advantaged rural areas across Northern Ireland, 'enablers' will be trained to carry out home visits to screen up to 4,200 clients for entitlement to any unclaimed benefit and to help them claim it. A2B is contributing money, IT resources and expertise to make the project a big success this year and next.

a2b | access to benefits
REAPING REWARDS FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Play the Age Advantage!

A2B was delighted to announce the completion by Advice NI of the development of the 'Older Person Adviser Course', along with Age Concern and Help the Aged. This four-way partnership has produced a certified

training course, up to 12 days, on a wide range of age awareness and social welfare issues. The course appeals to statutory and community sector organisations and is available in a variety of flexible formats and modules.

The first cohort of trainees were taken through their paces as part of the development of the course, and the second have started classes in February 2010. Get more information from emma@adviceni.net.

April 2010 sees significant changes to State Pension. These changes are being introduced to better reflect how we live and work today, and to take account of some remarkable increases in life expectancies over the last fifty years.

The changes will affect everyone reaching State Pension age from 6 April 2010 and a small number of people who have reached State Pension age before that date, as well as parents and carers. Depending on your age and your personal circumstances, the changes may affect you in the next few months.

Most people will not need to take any action as the changes will happen automatically, but you may need to take action to make sure you get everything you are entitled to. To find out more visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/betterfuture or call 0800 678 1132.

Partner Roundup

Over 160 groups have now availed of the free training from A2B in how to carry out Entitlement Checks using the Benefit Calculator.

Over the winter, training has taken place in a number of venues including Derry, Magherafelt, Belfast and Coleraine. Groups that have recently completed training include staff from across Clanmil Housing Association and some of our local MLA Constituency Offices.

Meanwhile, here are just some of the events A2B has been represented at:

- * Young at Heart event in Derry
- * Fuel Poverty Events in Belfast and Derry
- * The Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation National Benefits Conference
- * HABIT (Health Advice and Benefit Information Team) events in Lisburn, East Belfast and Bangor
- * Safe and Sound events in Moyle Council



The series of rural roadshows first piloted in the Dungannon and South Tyrone area has been taken up in other districts and roadshows have taken place in Coalisland, Killeshal, Ballyronan, Aughnacloy, Killyman, Stewartstown, Ballygawley and Pomeroy.

Our plans for the coming months

We'll be sending out copies of our short DVD about how A2B can help Partnership Network organisations deliver for their older clients. Why not contact us for a copy? Here is a selection of some of the events where you can find A2B over the coming months:

- Young at Heart Exhibition in St George's Market, Belfast
- * Rural roadshows in Clonoe and Broughderg
- * Health fairs in Newtownabbey and East Belfast
- * An information stand in Connswater Shopping Centre

Training will be taking place over the coming weeks in Carrickfergus, Comber, Cookstown, Antrim, Moy and Omagh.

Amanda Boyd is our Training Officer and if you would like to arrange training or further discuss what we can offer, contact her on amanda@a2b.org.uk or on 028 9075 4070.