



ISSUE 11

A2B: THE FIRST 22 MONTHS

- 15,090 valid benefit checks completed
- 1,689 older people helped into previously unclaimed benefit
- £22m+ in unclaimed benefit calculated
- £4.48m a year in unclaimed benefit applied for

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access to benefits circular

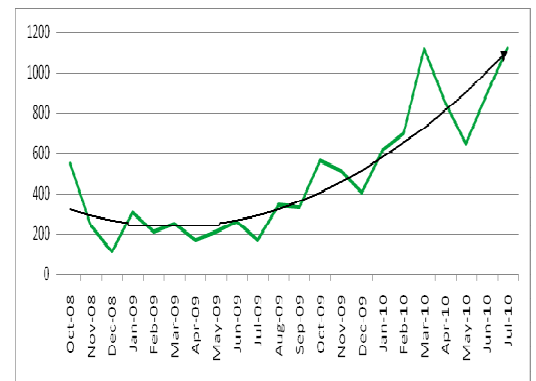
www.a2b.org.uk

SEPT 2010

Demand swells for A2B Benefit Checks

The number of people using A2B's free and anonymous online benefit calculator has seen significant increases in the last 6 months. By July 2010, the monthly average number of users completing valid benefit checks had increased from 462 to 889, whilst the value of annually recurring benefits identified and applied for every month had grown to £275,000.

A2B Chief Executive Patrick Minne explains that there are a number of factors that explain the increases: "Our continuing commitment to community development on the ground has increased the size of our Partnership Network to 200 organisations, leading to more assisted benefit checks. Apart from that, the increasingly gloomy economic forecasts are prompting more people to carry out their own entitlement 'health checks' on our website at a2b.org.uk to optimise their incomes. Additionally, our rural outreach project with the Public Health Agency (PHA) and Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has also kicked in, boosting the number of home-based benefit calculations."



Monthly number of A2B users applying for previously unclaimed benefits, Oct 08 to Jul 10

Maximising Access

This PHA-led project, 'Maximising Access', has started targeting 4,200 rural homes around Northern Ireland with home visits intended to provide holistic health and benefit checks. 240 enablers, managed by 10 different organisations, are delivering the checks and signposting people into much needed services and entitlements they were not previously aware of.

They provide benefit checks using both a paper-based version of the A2B Benefit Calculator questionnaire, and a Digital Pen version, which stores answers on a specially designed pen.

a2b | access to benefits
REAPING REWARDS FOR OLDER PEOPLE

UK Social Inclusion Award

Earlier in the year, A2B was entered into a competition run by the Institute of Rates Revenues and Valuations. Its 'Excellence in Social Inclusion' award recognises new and effective models of benefit uptake in the UK. The IRRV were interested in the work A2B had done around Rate Relief and Lone Pensioner

Allowance Uptake with its partners in Land and Property Services, but were further impressed at the range of up to 70 entitlements which the A2B benefit calculation service covered. The awards ceremony take place in Harrogate at the end of September so cross your fingers and wish us luck!

A2B's warmer homes partners, National Energy Action, are seeking research participants over 60 who are customers of Northern Ireland Electricity. They

will be holding a number of two-hour, informal focus groups to seek views of older people on keeping warm in the winter. Tea, coffee and light refreshments will be provided and reasonable travel costs will be covered.

Participants will be eligible for a **£15 voucher**, to be collected on the day.

Focus groups will be held on the following **October 2010** dates :
Tuesday 12th
Wednesday 13th
Thursday 14th
Friday 15th

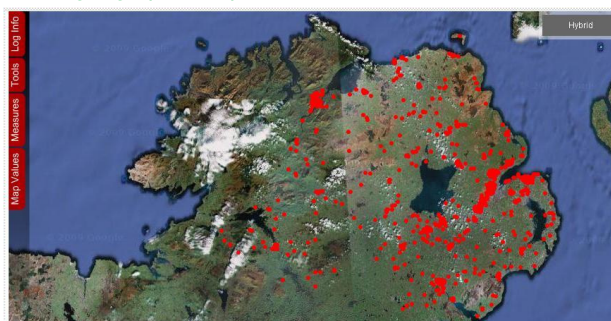
If you're interested, or have any questions on the research, **please telephone NEA on 028 9023 9909**



Partner Roundup

Over 200 groups have now availed of the free training from A2B in how to carry out Entitlement Checks using the Benefit Calculator. A2B has been represented at:

The geographical spread of A2B benefit checks in red



- Mobile Information Unit (with Warm Homes and LPS) Westwood Centre Belfast Ballycastle and Strabane
- Young at Heart annual and regional events
- Money Talks event Dungannon
- Keep Safe Keep Well events Armagh and Markethill
- Tesco Community fairs in Antrim and Newtownabbey
- Info stand at Connswater Shopping Centre
- NEA seminars Belfast and Newtownabbey
- HABIT events (Health Advice and Benefit Information Team) Bangor, Antrim, Portadown, Ballybeen, Carrickfergus and Glengormley

Our plans for the coming months

- Mobile Information Unit Ballymena and Dromboughil
- Fear of Crime roadshow Portstewart
- Country Comes to Town Portadown
- Tesco community fairs Ballygomartin and Newtownbreda
- Warm Homes event Cookstown
- Make a Difference events (for signposters and enablers) Ballymena Portstewart Ballymoney Coleraine Armagh and Newtownabbey councils
- Fun Day Strathroy
- Healthfair Glengormley
- Electric Blanket roadshows, Dungannon Banbridge Kilkeel Portadown Newry Warrenpoint and Lurgan
- Rural roadshows in Donemana Castleberg Hilltown Mayobridge Attical Forkhill and Ballygawley
- HAP (Home Accident prevention) event Belfast
- Benefits day Lisnaskea