



SAT NEWS

January 2006
Edition One

Welcome to the first edition of SAT News! This brief newsletter will be issued periodically to keep you informed of progress made on the Single Assessment Tool (SAT) project which has been commissioned by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. The contract for this project was awarded to a team from the University of Ulster led by Professor Brendan McCormack and Dr Brian Taylor.

Current policy in health and social care emphasises the importance of comprehensive assessment of people's needs in order to adequately determine and deliver the most appropriate care and services. With this in mind, the DHSSPS in Northern Ireland has begun the process of developing a single comprehensive assessment process. The principle product of this work will be a single tool for assessing the health and social care needs of older people but the learning and outcomes arising from this project could also inform further projects to apply common principles to the assessment of needs amongst other groups.

Existing evidence suggests that many older people experience a wide range of assessment approaches by a variety of different health and social care professionals. These multiple and often disconnected assessments, not all of which are validated, fail to capture a complete picture of the older person and their care needs. Older people, their carers and those who advocate on their behalf have for a long-time called for a less bureaucratic, better co-ordinated and managed approach to the assessment of care needs; service delivery and review. It is precisely with this intention in mind that this project has been established. The aims of the project are to:

- examine current assessment models;
- develop, test and revise a model for a single assessment tool; and

- prepare for implementation of the tool across Northern Ireland.

The focus during this project is on the creation of an assessment procedure, including screening triggers for specialist assessment; a summary of need; and an outline care plan for care management (screening, assessment, care plan service delivery and review) purposes. The assessment tool will be designed to gather the information necessary to plan home care services for people with complex needs so as to enable them to continue living at home, with appropriate home care support, or to make a decision regarding the need for nursing or residential home care.

This project is about developing a mechanism to promote responsive and integrated services in line with the Government's 'reform agenda'. The single assessment tool will address all of the Government's Citizen Tests (consumer, taxpayer and user) by:

- focusing on users, carers and families;
- ensuring that the scale and depth of assessment is kept in proportion to the older persons' needs;
- offering a framework for best practice in working with older people;
- promoting independent living among older people through prevention of deterioration and managing crises;
- ensuring that services remain appropriate to needs;
- flagging up potential health or social problems beyond the immediate problem that may have an impact on the life expectancy and quality of the individual being assessed;
- facilitating co-operation and information sharing among health and social services professionals;

- ensuring best use of care resources through effective and efficient assessment processes;
- incorporating respect and understanding for cultural differences as part of the assessment process;
- supporting equity in standards of care provided;
- providing information that is standardised across Northern Ireland for monitoring needs and strategic planning.

The single assessment tool will be developed and tested over a two-year period before being 'rolled-out' across Northern Ireland. The project team are currently in the early stages of planning the programme of work to be undertaken, including:

- establishing groups, including a stakeholder group and a consultation group;
- searching and reviewing literature including the review of existing assessment tools, frameworks and policy documents;
- developing processes for establishing pilot sites and criteria for selection of sites.

This is a challenging project, but the outcome in terms of benefiting users, carers and their families as well as the co-ordination of services is exciting.



Any comments or questions are very welcome and should be directed to SAT@dhsspsni.gov.uk