

## **Press release**

**Wednesday 11 February 2009**

**Health Minister Michael McGimpsey today launched a new tool for assessing the health and social care needs of older people in Northern Ireland.**

The first of its kind in the UK, the Northern Ireland Single Assessment Tool (NISAT) is a fully tested and validated assessment tool designed specifically for the health and social care system in Northern Ireland. While other regions across the UK have developed Single Assessment Processes, they have chosen to use “off the shelf” tools, with different regions using different tools. We are the first to develop a single assessment tool which is tailor made to underpin our assessment process.

The Department of Health commissioned the development of NISAT from the University of Ulster led by Professor Brendan McCormack and Dr Brian Taylor.

At the launch the Minister outlined how older people would benefit from the introduction of the new tool. He said: “NISAT will give older people a real opportunity to have their voices heard and to be at the very heart of the assessment process.

“The process will focus on a person’s abilities and strengths rather than their disabilities. It will also reduce the stress experienced by many older people who are frustrated when faced by a stream of well meaning professionals all wanting to ask them the same questions.”

The introduction of NISAT will standardise and streamline assessment and care planning processes, thereby simplifying access to community care services for older people.

The Minister continued: “We are unique in that we have developed a single assessment tool specifically designed for the health and social care system in Northern Ireland, and that now gives us a golden opportunity to make a real difference to the lives of older people here.

”It is the first time that older people across the country will be assessed using the same tool so that we can ensure that, whether they live in rural Fermanagh, urban Belfast or on the North Coast of Antrim they can expect to be assessed in exactly the same way.”

It is expected that NISAT will be rolled out across all the health and social care trusts by June 2010.

### **Notes to Editors**

- The DHSSPS commissioned the development of the Northern Ireland Single Assessment Tool (NISAT) from the University of Ulster. Projects leads were Professor Brendan McCormack and Dr Brian Taylor.
- NISAT has been designed to capture the information required for holistic, person-centred assessment of the health and social care needs of the older person and will result in an assessment that has focused on the person's abilities and strengths rather than their disabilities.
- NISAT will standardise and streamline assessment and care planning processes, thereby simplifying access to community care services. It will reduce duplication and promote multi-disciplinary working.
- Other areas of the UK have introduced single assessment processes but they have not developed an assessment tool to underpin those processes. Northern Ireland is unique in that it has developed a single assessment tool, specifically designed for the health and social care system in Northern Ireland, and its use across the region will bring consistency to the assessment of older people.
- A programme of work to implement NISAT across all HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland is underway with full implementation expected by June 2010
- For all media queries, please contact Sarah Williams, DHSSPS Information Office on 028 9052 2841 or 07791 149246. Out of office hours please contact the Duty Press Officer via pager number 07699 715440 and your call will be returned.