

Rural Needs

Annual Monitoring Report

1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023

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Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

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Foreword

This is the 6th Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report which covers the period 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023.

The report provides details of Rural Needs Impact Assessments undertaken by the public authorities listed in the Schedule to the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (the Act) during this period and shows how public authorities have considered rural needs when exercising their functions.

The combination of geographical isolation, poor public transport links and low population density often impact on the ability of people in rural areas to access public services and therefore adopting the same approach to public service delivery in rural areas as in urban areas may not always be appropriate. The Rural Needs Impact Assessment process helps ensure that public authorities understand the impact of their policies on people in rural areas and consider how any differential impact might be addressed to ensure that rural communities are not disadvantaged.

The Rural Needs Toolkit for Health & Social Care was formally launched in October 2022 and is designed to help those working in the health and social care sector to address the needs of people in rural areas when designing and delivering health and social care services. The Toolkit recognises that people in rural areas can face particular challenges in accessing health and social care services and will be a valuable resource for policy makers across the health and social care sector in seeking to improve outcomes for rural dwellers.

The report shows that the Rural Needs Impact Assessment process is now well embedded within public authorities and that policymakers are now more aware of the need to consider the needs of people in rural areas when developing policies and designing public services. It should also be noted that the positive impact of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 for rural dwellers may not be fully reflected in the report as there may be occasions when public authorities decide against taking a course of action due to the impact on people in rural areas without undertaking a Rural Need Impact Assessment.

Finally, DAERA would like to thank all those public authorities who have contributed to this year's Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report and for the timely manner in which their returns were submitted. DAERA will continue to work with public authorities through the Rural Needs Network to help ensure that the Act is implemented effectively and delivers better outcomes for rural dwellers.

DAERA Overview

The Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (the Act) was introduced to help improve outcomes for rural dwellers in Northern Ireland by ensuring that the social and economic needs of people in rural areas are given due regard to by public authorities when exercising their functions.

The Rural Needs Impact Assessment is the process recommended in the official guidance on the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 to help ensure that public authorities fulfil their duty to have due regard to rural needs under Section 1(1) of the Act. During the period of the report the Department undertook 25 Rural Needs Impact Assessments, details of which are included in the DAERA section of the report.

During the period of the report DAERA continued to provide support to public authorities with implementing the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016. This included the delivery of five intensive classroom based training courses for Rural Needs Co-ordinators to ensure they have the knowledge and expertise required to perform their role effectively. Rural Needs Co-ordinators play a key role in ensuring that public authorities fulfil their monitoring and reporting obligations and that DAERA meets its deadline for publishing the Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report. They also play an important role in raising awareness of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 within their organisations and providing advice to colleagues on Rural Needs Impact Assessments.

DAERA also held the first two face to face meetings of the Rural Needs Network which was established to facilitate co-operation and the exchange of information between public authorities. Membership of the Rural Needs Network is open to the Rural Needs Co-ordinator in each public authority subject to the Act and the Network provides a good opportunity for Rural Needs Co-ordinators to formally engage with DAERA and to share their experiences with colleagues. These events included presentations from Libraries NI on its “Out of Hours Service” in rural libraries and from the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service on delivering its services in rural areas.

In October 2022 the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the Minister of Health jointly launched the Rural Needs Toolkit for Health and Social Care. The Toolkit aims to help those working in the health and social care sector in Northern Ireland to address the needs of rural communities when designing and delivering health and social care services.

DAERA published the 5th Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report in December 2022 which contains information on Rural Needs Impact Assessments completed by public authorities during the period 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022.

Glossary

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
Co.	County
COVID-19	Coronavirus COVID-19
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
e.g.	For example
Etc.	Et cetera
EU	European Union
i.e.	That is
Ltd.	Limited
NI	Northern Ireland
PDF	Portable document format
S.R.	Statutory Rule
St.	Saint
UK	United Kingdom

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

Reporting Period 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
1	The introduction of a deposit return system in Northern Ireland for single use beverage containers.	No rural needs were identified.
2	The introduction of a Pig Sector Support Scheme.	The Department has identified that the pig sector within the agriculture industry in Northern Ireland, which is predominately based in rural areas, has incurred financial losses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The scheme will provide payments to those farm businesses hardest hit financially due to market disruptions caused by the pandemic. As the scheme is predominately based in rural communities, it is envisaged that the scheme will have a greater positive impact on people in rural areas than in urban areas.
3	Amendment of Regulation (EU) 1306/2013, Article 75.	In recognition of the crisis within the industry, the amendment to the regulation was made to allow the Department to pay beneficiaries of area-based schemes funded by national monies earlier. All beneficiaries of these schemes will be paid earlier and will affect all the beneficiaries equally, although the beneficiaries are predominately based in rural areas. This should have a positive impact on people in rural areas.
4	Amendment of Delegated Regulation 640/2014 Article 39 (4) supplementing Regulation 1306/2013.	This is an amendment to current legislation to remove the automatic application of intentional penalties (higher penalties) to negligent non-compliances. This amendment will not have any significant impact on people in rural areas.
5	The Sulphur Content of Solid Fuel (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022.	This is a technical amendment to The Sulphur Content of Solid Fuel Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1998. This amendment will not impact on people in rural areas.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
6	Revision to the Legacy European Union Fruit and Vegetable Aid Scheme in Northern Ireland.	The changes to the Fruit and Vegetable Aid Scheme policy are technical and have been made as a consequence of the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union and the Common Agricultural Policy and are triggered by the switch to Retained European Union Law for the scheme on 1 July 2022. Taking into account the rural needs identified, the Department's aim has been to ensure a smooth transition from legacy European Union schemes to new domestic policies. The scheme is therefore expected to continue in Northern Ireland, match-funded by the Department, until 31 December 2025.
7	Development of pilot "Platinum Jubilee Pollinator Garden Award".	The Department has identified a lack of safe shared space in rural towns and villages. There has also been a decline in pollinators due to lack of habitat and overuse of pesticides. The Rural Community Pollinator Scheme 2021/22 previously funded by the Department indicated that there was significant demand for pollinator gardens in rural areas. The Platinum Jubilee Pollinator Garden Award will provide access to green spaces where people in rural areas can meet and socialise.
8	Development of phase 2 pilot "Rural Social Enterprise Investment Scheme".	Evidence emerged from the Rural Policy Framework that there is a need for social enterprises in rural areas. Given that previous schemes under Priority 6 programmes (i.e. the LEADER and Rural Tourism aspects of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme) had "business" and "community" schemes, it was identified that social enterprises often had difficulty fitting within the requirements or objectives of these schemes. Therefore a need has been identified for direct support to social enterprises in rural areas. The previous Rural Social Economy Investment Scheme focused on support for emerging and established social enterprises with interventions of between £25k and £50k. It is envisaged that the Rural Social Enterprise Investment Scheme will be of benefit to established social enterprises, in particular those that have the potential to implement innovative projects that will have direct positive impact in their local rural areas. These social enterprises will subsequently be able to distribute surpluses profits to charitable/communal causes in their local rural communities.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
9	Development of a Marginalised Minority Border Communities Digital Access Pilot Scheme for voluntary and community organisations in rural areas.	<p>A need has been identified to provide fit-for-purpose digital access to reduce the barriers to accessing services in rural areas. It was recognised that rural areas can be isolated by geography, have poor provision of public transport and limited (or no) access to broadband, making access to essential services difficult and expensive.</p> <p>The development of a Marginalised Minority Border Communities Digital Access Pilot Scheme is needed to identify the support required for rural communities who own or manage community facilities. In response to the rural needs identified this scheme aims to enable formally constituted community and voluntary organisations to create digital hubs which can facilitate remote working and provide facilities that can deliver digital skills training. The pilot scheme will target the 14 rural halls that have successfully implemented the mentoring and capital grants stages of the Rural Halls Refurbishment Scheme and are located within five miles of the border. This is a pilot intervention to inform the development of a future programme.</p>
10	Development of pilot "School Garden Pollinator Scheme".	<p>The Department has noted that there is a decline in pollinators due to lack of habitat and over use of pesticides. It is therefore critical that this is addressed as pollinator numbers have declined significantly over the past 50 years with around 50% of bee, moth and butterfly species showing evidence of decline according to the 2013 State of Nature Report. The Rural Community Pollinator Scheme 2021/22 also indicated that there was significant demand for pollinator gardens in rural areas.</p> <p>The School Garden Pollinator Scheme will operate in both rural and urban areas and will provide an opportunity to increase access to green spaces with pollinators in rural areas.</p> <p>The outcomes of the pilot will also help inform any future programme.</p>

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11	Development of a Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme 2022 to provide support to rural community and voluntary organisations.	<p>The evaluation of the Rural Micro Grant Scheme 2021 identified the demand for the Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme 2022 to assist the continued recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme 2022 is specifically focussed on rural community and voluntary organisations and their users and should have a positive impact on the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.</p>
12	Forest Park Enhancement and Community Trails Development Scheme 2022/23.	<p>The Forest Park Enhancement and Community Trails Development Scheme involves joint collaboration between councils, the Forest Service and Rural Affairs Division.</p> <p>Extensive consultations have identified that each Forest Park Scheme has significant potential to enable each forest to become a highly valued community resource providing shared outdoor spaces. The scheme will have a positive effect on rural areas with the potential to increase tourism and employment and also address poverty and social isolation issues in rural areas.</p>
13	Providing funding to enable not-for-profit voluntary and community sector and district council partners to deliver measurable key environmental outcomes.	<p>Work undertaken to identify the environmental needs of rural areas did not identify or suggest any significant issues regarding social or economic needs of people in rural areas that required further detailed considerations in relation to the development of the Environment Fund. Whilst social and economic rural needs have not specifically been factored into the evaluation process, environmental needs have and the Department will continue to establish if any areas of the priorities and themes are not being addressed when the application assessment processes have been carried out. Remedial action may need to be considered to address gaps in the proposed projects against the priorities and themes to be addressed through the fund, which will apply to both rural and non-rural areas. However, due to the nature of the priorities, the outcomes are anticipated to be positive for rural communities. Where the Department is aware of rural needs that align to the priorities of this grant programme, this has and will be included as a priority for the fund.</p>

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<p>14 Wildfires in Northern Ireland, A Strategic Way Forward.</p>	<p>Development of “Wildfires in Northern Ireland, A Strategic Way Forward” has been underpinned at all stages by the rural needs noted in the Rural Needs Impact Assessment and various stakeholder engagement events that have occurred since 2018. The feedback from these events including the survey in 2018 have helped shape the content and proposed outputs of the proposed plan. The plan will be further refined taking into consideration of feedback received during the forthcoming consultation process.</p> <p>The plan includes specific recommendations such as the development of the Firewise© for rural communities to help them prepare and plan for wildfire incidents in their immediate neighbourhood and in doing so help reduce the impact of wildfires on the community, rural businesses and the environment. The plan will deliver continued engagement with the rural community on the wildfire issue, so input from the rural community will be ongoing after the plan is adopted. This will allow any new social and economic needs related to wildfires to be identified and any new actions developed to take account of any emerging issues or needs.</p> <p>Implementation of the “Wildfires in Northern Ireland, A Strategic Way Forward” will lead to positive outcomes for the environment and rural communities in Northern Ireland.</p>
<p>15 The Environmental Offences (Fixed Penalties) (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022.</p>	<p>No specific rural needs were identified.</p> <p>This is a technical amendment to the Environmental Offences (Fixed Penalties) (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012.</p>
<p>16 Amending The Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2007 to include obligated producer recycling targets for 2023.</p>	<p>No rural needs were identified.</p> <p>This policy is not likely to impact on people in rural areas as the amendment to legislation relates to recycling targets for packaging producers only.</p>

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17	Introducing the Packaging Waste (Data Reporting) Regulation (Northern Ireland) 2023.	<p>No rural needs identified.</p> <p>This policy is not likely to impact on the social and economic needs of people in rural areas as the legislation relates to packaging producers only.</p>
18	Assessment for public consultation for the Northern Ireland Environment Agency Regulatory Charging Policy 2021/23.	<p>The policy is activity based and therefore has no differential impact on rural and urban areas. There is no evidence to suggest that a business within rural areas would be disproportionately impacted compared to a business in urban areas.</p>
19	Amendment to regulations: Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals - Restrictions on the use of lead in gunshot in or around wetlands.	<p>The introduction of amendments to The Environmental Protection (Restriction on Use of Lead Shot) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 could impact on people in rural areas by restricting areas (no use or carrying of lead shot ammunition within 100m of any wetland) where hunting or sports shooting can take place, increasing costs for participation in hunting or sports shooting, impacting on sporting goods supply shops or by restricting and increasing costs for vermin control by farmers.</p> <p>Alternative policy options are not possible as the introduction of these legislative changes are required under the Northern Ireland Protocol and therefore Northern Ireland must legislate for the changes which took place on 15 February 2023. As lead shot alternatives are available with prices expected to become lower with uptake, and the Health and Safety Executive reports a low economic impact for the average hunter, it is considered that the impact on rural communities would be minor.</p>
20	Proposal to introduce Bovine Viral Diarrhoea herd restrictions.	<p>The key driver for the development of the Department's proposed policy on herd restrictions is to eradicate Bovine Viral Diarrhoea from Northern Ireland. It aims to improve farm productivity, make farm businesses sustainable and increase their opportunities for trade. It also aims to deliver wider benefits in terms of reduced antimicrobial usage and greenhouse gas emissions to advance the needs of society as a whole, including those of people that reside in rural communities. It is also proposed that the Department should have a power to authorise the movements of breeding</p>

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	<p>bulls into restricted herds under licence. It is considered that taking steps to eradicate Bovine Viral Diarrhoea by introducing herd restrictions should bring significant medium to longer term economic benefits to farmers, outweighing any initial cost impacts.</p>
21	<p>Draft Ammonia Strategy.</p> <p>The development of the draft Ammonia Strategy was underpinned by the rural needs in the Rural Needs Impact Assessment and it will be further developed taking into consideration the feedback received during the consultation process and the production of a reworked draft Ammonia Strategy.</p>
22	<p>Future Agricultural Policy Decisions for Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The Future Agricultural Policy Decisions will affect virtually all farmers in Northern Ireland and therefore will affect people in rural areas. The future agricultural support policies and schemes will replace existing Common Agriculture Policy Schemes and will be designed to deliver four main outcomes of the Northern Ireland Future Agricultural Policy Framework Portfolio:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An industry which pursues increased agricultural productivity as a means to sustained profitability; • Is environmentally sustainable; • Displays improved resilience to external shocks; and • Which operates an effective functioning supply chain. <p>The social and economic needs of people in rural areas identified in the Northern Ireland Future Agricultural Policy Framework stakeholder engagement carried out in 2018 and the consultation on Future Agricultural Policy Proposals 2021 have been considered. The Future Agricultural Policy Decisions and associated policy development should take into consideration the responses received; namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effect on people in rural areas if farmers are not viewed as equal partners in the supply chain; • Different types of farms/farmers/landscape (e.g. hill farmers and lowland farmers; small farms and large

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	<p>farms), different communities (e.g. farmers in border communities and farmers in non-border communities) and different types of producers (e.g. horticulture and agriculture);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadband quality and public transport and maintenance and road networks; and • Rural poverty, mental and physical health, inequalities in health and social inclusion. <p>While the decisions provide a clear direction of travel for future agricultural policy in Northern Ireland there is still significant policy work to be done that will be cognisant of addressing the rural needs identified.</p>
23 Northern Ireland Regional Food Programme 2023-25.	<p>During the development and revising of the business case and associated guidance notes/application form for Northern Ireland Regional Food Programme 2023-24, rural needs have been considered to ensure fair and equitable treatment of people in rural areas. The Department is open to new, innovative ideas and approaches when considering how to take account of rural needs. The Northern Ireland Regional Food Programme Selection Panel scoring matrix was adjusted for the 2018/19 Programme to give increased weighting to the criterion relating to the development of a sustainable and thriving rural economy - this measure within the scoring matrix continues in the current Northern Ireland Regional Food Programme 2023-24.</p>
24 The introduction of an Exceptional Costs Pig Sector Support Scheme.	<p>The pig sector is predominately based in rural communities and it is envisaged that the scheme will have a greater positive impact on people in rural areas than urban ones.</p>
25 Phase 2 of Social Prescribing Rural project.	<p>Research continues to show that many significant issues continue to face rural communities. This intervention supported by the Department enhances the delivery of the scheme in 10 rural areas across Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The scheme is based in rural communities and it is envisaged that it will have a positive impact on people in rural areas.</p>

Department for Communities

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
26 A prospective Scheme of Delegation for the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.	Pre-consultation meeting with the Rural Community Network and the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action who represent organisations, both rural and urban. There were no adverse rural impacts with the proposed policy raised during the pre-consultation engagement. Any Scheme of Delegation would apply equally with regards to charities and their trustees in both rural and urban areas.
27 Together: Building a United Community Uniting Communities through Sport and Creativity programme.	<p>Business case developed to obtain approval for roll out to new areas which involved completion of a Rural Needs Impact Assessment. However, identification of where to prioritise funding was based on analysis of hate crime statistics. It was noted that cross community youth provision has been historically challenging to establish due to working with population settlements of less than 5,000.</p> <p>The Together: Building a United Community Programme Board took the policy decision to review the target groups in the Uniting Opportunities Grant Scheme to improve the uptake of funded projects in rural areas. This resulted in the introduction of the “Young People at risk of rural isolation” category. It is anticipated that this new category will encourage rurally based community organisations to apply for funding to deliver projects which will address this need and support young people with a range of needs and/or barriers to better engage with their community.</p> <p>The Rural Needs Impact Assessment noted that distribution of funds in approved geographical locations will not impact differentially on people in rural areas.</p>
28 2022/23 Access and Inclusion Programme.	The programme was developed in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the disability sector to improve access for people with disabilities at arts, cultural and active recreation venues across both rural and urban areas

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	of Northern Ireland. A business case and Rural Needs Impact Assessment were completed and no adverse rural impacts found.
29 Sub-Regional Stadia Programme for Soccer.	This programme is still in a development stage, early investigation suggests the benefits of the programme will be the same for people in rural and urban areas. Work continues on the shape and scope of the programme and at this development stage, there is no known negative impact on people in rural areas. A Rural Needs Impact Assessment has not yet been carried out but will be carried out in full during the development of the business case.
30 Historic Environment Fund 2022-23.	The funding scheme is designed to support repairs, regeneration, research, and revival activity across the whole of Northern Ireland and is not based on which heritage assets or groups can avail of the funding. The approach was subjected to a business case and Rural Needs Impact Assessment with no negative impacts anticipated.
31 Village Catalyst Grant Scheme.	This scheme was developed in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, the Architectural Heritage Fund and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. It seeks to tackle rural poverty and social isolation by developing sustainable community uses for underutilised historic buildings in rural villages of fewer than 5,000 people. Rural needs have therefore been front and foremost in the development of this grant scheme which was launched in February 2022 and has been managed via a joint programme board during this financial year.
32 The Private Tenancies Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.	At this stage the Department does not envisage that the Private Tenancies Act will affect tenants living in rural areas any differently than those in urban areas. However, as we begin to commence the various sections of the Act for example considering minimum energy efficiency standards or the outcome of any potential rent control, the Department will revisit to consider if the impact of these changes impact those in rural/urban areas any differently.

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	<p>Sections 1-6 of the Private Tenancies Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 came into operation on 1 April 2023. Two sets of Regulations were drafted namely the Tenancy Information Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 and the Tenancy Deposit Scheme (Amendment) Regulations 2023 with Rural Needs Impact Assessments considered for both. All tenants will now be provided with a tenancy information notice within 28 days of the granting of their tenancy and a variation notice within 28 days of any changes. This will provide greater protection to all tenants whether from rural or urban areas.</p> <p>Sections 8 and 10 of the Private Tenancies Act will have a positive impact on both rural and urban tenants.</p>
33 Housing Rights Core Funding Grant - Housing Advice Services & Policy Support 2022-2025.	The Department for Communities and its delivery partner Housing Rights has taken account of the needs of people in rural areas to ensure the project is widely available throughout Northern Ireland (delivered via telephone/ online chat and face-to-face).
34 Intermediate Rent Policy.	Introducing an Intermediate Rent policy in Northern Ireland may have a positive impact on people in rural areas by increasing housing options that address a wider range of affordable housing need. It is anticipated the impact will be similar in rural and urban areas depending on viability of the areas.
35 Increasing the Northern Ireland Co-Ownership Housing Association (Co-Ownership) Property Value Limit from £175,000 to £190,000.	The review for this increase was carried out in October 2022, and a Rural Needs Impact Assessment was carried out accordingly to identify and consider the potential impact on those living in rural areas. Co-Ownership operates on a Do-It-Yourself Shared Ownership basis where customers select a property of their choice to purchase through shared ownership, therefore properties can be sourced anywhere in Northern Ireland, in this context there is no indication that the impact on people living in rural areas will be any different than that on those living in urban areas. However, purchasing a home poses different issues for those living rurally, as there are less housing options available that may allow them to remain in their

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	community and close to friends and family, increasing the property value limit supports the Department's work to address a lack of affordable housing options in rural areas by increasing the pool of properties which may be purchased through shared ownership, thereby helping to meet the social and economic needs of people living rurally.
36 The Social Security (Habitual Residence and Past Presence) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022.	The policy is being implemented in connection with the Government's undertaking to relocate and resettle people living in Ukraine to the United Kingdom. As the policy makes no distinction between rural and urban dwellers, there will be no adverse impact on people who live in rural areas. The amendments being made will ensure that there is day-one access to income-related benefits and disability and carer benefits for those coming to Northern Ireland from Ukraine in certain circumstances.
37 The Child Support (Amendments Relating to Information) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 177).	As the policy makes no distinction between rural and urban dwellers, there will be no adverse impact on people who live in rural areas.
38 The Child Support (Amendments Relating to Electronic Communication) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 178).	As the policy makes no distinction between rural and urban dwellers, there will be no adverse impact on people who live in rural areas.
39 The Social Fund (Child Funeral Fund) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 179).	As the policy makes no distinction between rural and urban dwellers, there will be no adverse impact on people who live in rural areas.
40 The Social Fund Winter Fuel Payment (Temporary Increase) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 215).	As the policy makes no distinction between rural and urban dwellers, there will be no adverse impact on people who live in rural areas.

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41	The Social Fund (Budgeting Loans) (Applications and Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 222).	As the policy makes no distinction between rural and urban dwellers, there will be no adverse impact on people who live in rural areas.
42	Occupational Pension Schemes (Collective Money Purchase Schemes) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No.191) and Occupational Pension Schemes (Collective Money Purchase Schemes) (Modifications and Consequential and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 192).	The Department considers this policy to be largely technical in nature and as such, there is no relevant evidence rural/urban data in relation to the proposed Statutory Rule. However, no adverse rural impact is expected.
43	Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Disclosure of Information) (Statements of Benefits: Money Purchase Benefits) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 208).	The Department considers this policy to be largely technical in nature and as such, there is no relevant evidence rural/urban data in relation to the proposed Statutory Rule. However, no adverse rural impact is expected.
44	The Occupational Pension Schemes (Climate Change Governance and Reporting) (Amendment, Modification and Transitional Provision) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 209).	There is no relevant rural/urban data in respect of the impact of the Statutory Rule. No adverse rural impact is expected.
45	The Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment) (Employer-related Investments by Master Trusts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 210).	There is no relevant rural/urban data in respect of the impact of the Statutory Rule. No adverse rural impact is expected.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
46	The Occupational Pension Schemes (Governance and Registration) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 216).	The Department considers this policy to be largely technical in nature and as such, there is no relevant evidence rural/urban data in relation to the proposed Statutory Rule. However, no adverse rural impact is expected.
47	The Occupational Pension Schemes (Master Trusts) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 234).	No data is available in relation to the rural/urban split of membership of Master Trust pension schemes. However no adverse rural impact is expected.
48	The Pensions Dashboards Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 296).	The Department considers this policy to be largely technical in nature and as such, there is no relevant evidence rural/urban data in relation to the proposed Statutory Rule. However, no adverse rural impact is expected.
49	State Pension Debits and Credits Revaluation Order (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 297).	The Order is highly technical. No adverse rural impact is expected.
50	State Pension Revaluation for Transitional Pensions Order (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 298).	This is a technical Order giving effect to a statutory requirement to specify the percentage that will be used to revalue the “protected payment” element of a new State Pension for persons who reach State Pension age on or after 11 April 2023. Consequently there are no barriers or additional costs associated with implementing the policy in rural areas.
51	Occupational Pensions (Revaluation) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 300).	The Order is highly technical. No adverse rural impact is expected.
52	The Pensions (2005 Order) (Disclosure of Restricted Information by the Pensions Regulator) (Amendment of Specified Persons) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 301).	No adverse rural impact is expected.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
53 The Income Related Benefits (Local Welfare Provision Disregard) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022.	No adverse rural impact is expected.
54 The Universal Credit (Transitional Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022.	No adverse rural impact is expected.
55 The Universal Credit (Administrative Earnings Threshold) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022.	No adverse rural impact is expected.
56 The Universal Credit (Administrative Earnings Threshold) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023.	No adverse rural impact is expected.
57 The Benefit Cap (Annual Limit) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023.	No adverse rural impact is expected.
58 Occupational Pension Schemes (Collective Money Purchase Schemes) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 (S.R. 2023 No. 7).	The Department considers this policy to be largely technical in nature and as such, there is no relevant evidence rural/urban data in relation to the proposed Statutory Rule. However, no adverse rural impact is expected.
59 2022-2023 Annual up-rating of pensions and benefits. The relevant legislation is as follows: • The Social Security Benefits Up-rating (No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 231);	The Department has not sought the views of rural stakeholders on the likely impact of the policy as no negative outcomes are envisaged. Thus, no mitigations are required.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Social Security Benefits Up-rating (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 232); • The Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Conditions and Amounts) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 229); • The Social Security (2022 Benefits Up-rating) Order (Northern Ireland) 2023 (S.R. 2023 No. 27); • The Social Security (2022 Benefits Up-rating) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 (S.R. 2023 No. 30); and • The Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (2022 Conditions and Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 (S.R. 2023 No. 28). 	
<p>60 2023-2024 Annual up-rating of pensions and benefits.</p> <p>The relevant legislation is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern Ireland) 2023 (S.R. 2023 No. 43); • The Social Security Benefits Up-rating Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 (S.R. 2023 No. 45) and; 	<p>The legislation and schemes of this up-rating package enable the increased rates of pensions, benefits and lump sum payments to be paid to all eligible recipients from April 2023, irrespective of whether they reside in a rural or urban area.</p> <p>The Department has not sought the views of rural stakeholders on the likely impact of the policy as no negative outcomes are envisaged. Thus, no mitigations are required.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Conditions and Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 (S.R. 2023 No. 44). 	
61 The Pension Protection Fund and Occupational Pension Schemes (Levy Ceiling) Order (Northern Ireland) 2023 (S.R. 2023 No. 22).	The Order is highly technical. No adverse rural impact is expected.
62 The Guaranteed Minimum Pensions Increase Order (Northern Ireland) 2023 (S.R. 2023 No. 29).	The Order is a routine, annual order that is purely technical. No data is available in relation to the rural/urban split. However no adverse rural impact is expected.
63 The Loans for Mortgage Interest (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 (S.R. 2023 No. 31).	No adverse rural impact is expected and no mitigations are required.
64 The Social Security Revaluation of Earnings Factors Order (Northern Ireland) 2023 (S.R. 2023 No. 35).	No data is available in relation to the rural/urban split. However no adverse rural impact is expected.
65 The Pension Protection Fund (Compensation) and Occupational Pension Schemes (Fraud Compensation Payments) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 (S.R. 2023 No. 41).	The Department considers this policy to be technical in nature and as such, there is no relevant evidence rural/urban data in relation to the proposed Statutory Rule. However, no adverse rural impact is expected.
66 The Occupational Pension Schemes (Governance and Registration) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 (S.R. 2023 No. 52).	There is no change to existing requirements and no adverse rural impact is expected.

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67	The Occupational Pension Schemes (Master Trusts) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023. (S.R. 2023 No. 59).	No data is available in relation to the rural/urban split. However no adverse rural impact is expected.
68	The Occupational Pension Schemes (Administration, Investment, Charges and Governance) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 (S.R. 2023 No. 62).	The Department considers this policy to be technical in nature and as such, there is no relevant evidence or information available to inform this screening, however, no adverse rural impact is expected.
69	The Housing Benefit and Universal Credit (Victims of Domestic Abuse and Victims of Modern Slavery) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 211).	These regulations are beneficial to the targeted audience and therefore no adverse rural impact is expected.
70	The Housing Benefit and Universal Credit Housing Costs (Executive Determinations) (Modification) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 (S.R. 2023 No. 4).	No adverse rural impact is expected.
71	The Social Security (Medical Evidence) and Statutory Sick Pay (Medical Evidence) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022. (S.R. 2022 No. 182).	No adverse rural impact is expected.
72	JobStart.	Employers from across Northern Ireland were encouraged to participate in the Scheme. Applications were received and approved within all council areas. The JobStart Team considered the issue of broadband availability in rural areas and the impact that it may have had on the ability of some young people to access details of job opportunities. To mitigate against this work coaches were able to offer a telephony or face-to-face service to the young people. It has also been

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>recognised that young people in rural areas may have had to travel further to avail of a face-to-face meeting with a work coach and so the policy regarding reimbursement of travel costs incurred as part of work search activities was applied.</p> <p>Once a JobStart opportunity was commenced, travel to work expenses could be paid by the Department for Communities through the Adviser Discretion Fund to participants who requested this assistance for a maximum three month period to cover the cost of travel which removed barriers in the uptake of opportunities for young people in rural areas. This is most likely to be taken up by those who had to make multiple or long journeys to work.</p>

Department for the Economy

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
73 Higher Education - Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 - Department for the Economy Public Service Bodies Regulations.	This policy will provide access to period products in the premises of specified public service bodies, regardless of where these premises are located. This policy will impact on the target audience (i.e. women and girls who menstruate) in rural areas to the same extent as it will impact on their non-rural counterparts.
74 Higher Education - Amendments to existing legislation through The Education (Student Support, etc.) (Amendment) (No.3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 to amend The Education (Student Support) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 (the Student Support Regulations) and the Student Fees (Amounts) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.	This Rural Needs Impact Assessment considered the amendments to the student support package which will apply to all prospective eligible students undertaking eligible courses across Northern Ireland, irrespective of location. In light of this it was not considered that individuals residing in rural areas would be more affected/impacted than those who reside in non-rural areas.
75 Strategic Policy Division - Draft Circular Economy Strategy for Northern Ireland.	<p>We have undertaken a significant public consultation over a period of 10 weeks on the draft Circular Economy Strategy. The draft Circular Economy Strategy is underpinned by robust evidence base. We undertook an extensive evidence programme over a period of two years working with a Circular Economy Coalition of stakeholders from industry/business groups, academia, central and local government, and the community and voluntary sector. We are also engaging with our Arm's Length Bodies including Invest NI, Tourism NI and the Consumer Council.</p> <p>At this stage of developing the strategy, which is setting the high-level strategic direction, work has not been carried out to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas for specific policy areas. Rural needs will be assessed in full as part of individual policy/programme/project work as it develops as part of next steps delivery workstreams.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
76	10x Economy: An Economic Vision for a Decade of Innovation.	The 10x Performance Management Framework will provide a framework for lower-level policy making in the Department. Specific lower-level policy proposals are yet to be developed but it is intended that the ultimate outcome of the 10x Economic Vision will be to provide better economic, social and environmental outcomes to all individuals regardless of whether they are located in rural or urban areas. Policies and actions arising from the framework will be subject to rural proofing.
77	Vocational Qualification Reform.	It is not anticipated that any outcome of this review, would have any differential impact on rural areas, as per the aims/objectives of the review. It aims to streamline the vocational qualification suite/landscape for all potential students and businesses which are accessible in all mainstream and educational settings. In addition, the Further Education Colleges in Northern Ireland provide the majority of Vocational Qualifications and the different campuses cover the rural areas in Northern Ireland. In light of this it is not considered that individuals residing in rural areas will be more affected/impacted than those who reside in non-rural areas.
78	Review of Level 4 & 5 Provision and Higher Education in Further Education.	Rural populations access can be compounded by their remoteness, lack of access to regular and frequent public transport services and costs of travel to complete a Higher Education course. Northern Ireland's six colleges currently have relatively even distribution throughout the province with smaller additional campuses through their catchment area making them more regionally accessible, particularly for rural populations. Higher Education in Further Education provides students with more choice of study and helping to widen participation in higher education by providing local opportunities for those unable to travel to a university campus. Higher Education in Further Education is also more likely to offer part-time or courses suitable for those in employment and on day release or with childcare responsibilities.

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	<p>Northern Ireland had less university provision per population density than elsewhere in the UK and therefore Higher Education in Further Education clearly benefits the needs of the wider Northern Ireland population who do not live close to a university, including rural populations. This provision is important for those in rural areas, and the Review of Level 4 & 5 Provision and Higher Education in Further Education is ultimately about seeking to bolster and reinforce Higher Education in Further Education, ensuring it remains viable by addressing the causes for the decline in enrolments. A continued fall could render parts of Higher Education in Further Education financially unsustainable if no action is taken which could lead to withdrawal of provision.</p> <p>In addition to this the Department has provided additional funding for the redevelopments of several Further Education college campuses with state-of-the-art facilities. This regional investment programme has delivered a world-class learning environment that will help achieve the aims of the Department's 10x Economy Vision and equipping learners, including those from rural communities, with the skills they need for the constantly evolving jobs market and building on Northern Ireland's successes on the global stage. It will also help ensure that regional Further Education colleges are at the forefront of the drive to meet the evolving and wide-ranging demands of a modern economy.</p> <p>The Department is undertaking this review to ensure Higher Education in Further Education provision is sustainable long into the future and ensure that the growth and opportunities we create from 10x Economy Vision are fairly distributed throughout the rural and urban population. Ensuring that Higher Education in Further Education remains viable will support rural populations and the skills obtained will address the shortage in level 4 & 5 as outlined by the skills barometer. It would be anticipated that rural access to Higher Education will lead to more employment which would also benefit rural areas.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>79 Amendment to the Further Education (Student Support) (Eligibility) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 (the 2012 Regulations).</p>	<p>The 2012 regulations apply to Northern Ireland domiciled students and other qualifying persons undertaking designated Further Education courses. The Further Education (Student Support) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 (the 2022 Regulations) amend the 2012 regulations to include the introduction of new eligibility categories for those persons relocated to Northern Ireland under:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Schemes; (ii) British nationals who relocated from Afghanistan under Operation Pitting; and (iii) Under the Ukraine Family Scheme, Home for Ukraine Resettlement Scheme and the Ukraine Extension Scheme. <p>The 2022 regulations also make eligibility changes for joining family members and late applicants to the EU Settlement Scheme.</p> <p>The Rural Needs Impact Assessment did not identify any negative impact for those from rural communities.</p>
<p>80 Southern Regional College Hardship Fund (Discretionary).</p>	<p>This policy is updated annually and this review was undertaken of the current arrangements for access to the College Hardship Fund (Discretionary) which exists to provide support for students who are faced with significant financial difficulties that might otherwise prevent them from undertaking their chosen programme of study. It is specifically designed to respond to hardship needs, particularly those that arise through sudden changes in circumstances where other administrative schemes are not able to respond in year. Priority will normally be given to students, for whatever reason, who are economically or socially disadvantaged.</p> <p>This Rural Needs Impact Assessment considered the implementation of proposed reviews to the current policy for current and prospective students, irrespective of location. In light of this it is not considered that individuals residing in rural areas will be more affected/ impacted than those who reside in non-rural areas.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
81	Southern Regional College Admissions Criteria.	<p>This policy is updated annually and the review was undertaken of the importance of admitting applicants to a course suited to their ability and aspirations. The admissions procedure takes account of all aspects of an application, not just an applicant's academic profile to ensure equality of opportunity to all. Southern Regional College encourages progression to further study. In seeking to attract applications from learners, the College is committed to widening participation and to promoting wider access to Further and Higher Education. Applications for admission to all courses are considered without regard to any inappropriate distinction e.g. age, ethnic origin, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, gender, religious or political beliefs, marital status, care experience or socio-economic background.</p> <p>The Rural Needs Impact Assessment did not identify any negative impact for those from rural communities.</p>
82	Southern Regional College Fees Policy & Procedure.	<p>This policy is updated annually and this review was undertaken of the current arrangements to establish guidelines by which fees and charges may be levied for the provision of appropriate educational facilities and services.</p> <p>The Rural Needs Impact Assessment did not identify any negative impact for those from rural communities.</p>
83	Southern Regional College Learning Support.	<p>This policy is updated annually and this review was undertaken to ensure that effective processes are in place to provide learning support for students with additional needs which are consistent across the Further Education sector and applied in a manner that is compliant with legislation and in accordance with the Colleges' commitments to equality and inclusion. This policy aims to provide the best opportunities to students identifying with additional learning needs, disabilities or long-term illness in order to reach their full potential in terms of achieving their learning goals, being able to progress towards training and employment or towards independent living and integration within the wider community.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
		The Rural Needs Impact Assessment did not identify any negative impact for those from rural communities.
84	TOURISM NI. Developing a policy, strategy or plan - Prospective new Rural Tourism Capital Fund.	Collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to scope a new £ multi-million Rural Tourism Capital Fund and support on pre-development and market testing activity and to support objectives as part of the Rural Policy Framework.
85	TOURISM IRELAND. Tourism Ireland's new global campaign - 'Fill your heart with Ireland'.	<p>Tourism Ireland's strategy to rebuild revenue from overseas holidaymakers to pre-pandemic levels includes targeting 'value-adding tourists' i.e. visitors who stay longer and spend more in our regions. Its promotional activity is focused on driving more business to the regions, ensuring the benefits of overseas tourism are distributed right around Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Tourism Ireland's new global campaign - 'Fill your heart with Ireland'- went live in key markets around the world in March 2023. The new campaign is demonstrating how Northern Ireland and the island of Ireland fill the heart of celebrities, influencers and real-life holidaymakers to win share amongst a more affluent holidaymaker audience. While the key objective is revenue generation, regional messaging is also built in. One of the first ads features places like the Mussenden Temple, Dunluce Castle and the Giant's Causeway.</p>
86	TOURISM IRELAND. 'Fill your heart with Ireland' - supporting campaigns.	<p>Tourism Ireland's strategy to rebuild revenue from overseas holidaymakers to pre-pandemic levels includes targeting 'value-adding tourists' i.e. visitors who stay longer and spend more in our regions. Its promotional activity is focused on driving more business to the regions, ensuring the benefits of overseas tourism are distributed right around Northern Ireland.</p> <p>In addition to the main 'Fill your heart with Ireland' campaign, a series of supporting campaigns will have particular focus on encouraging value-adding tourism and will include regional messaging. These include campaigns around The Open at Royal Portrush, Derry Halloween, luxury travel, as well as outdoor activities.</p>

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<p>87 TOURISM IRELAND. Twinning' initiative.</p>	<p>Tourism Ireland's strategy to rebuild revenue from overseas holidaymakers to pre-pandemic levels includes targeting 'value-adding tourists' i.e. visitors who stay longer and spend more in our regions. Its promotional activity is focused on driving more business to the regions, ensuring the benefits of overseas tourism are distributed right around Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Tourism Ireland is continuing its 'twinning' initiative this year, which involves overseas markets 'twinning' with a specific region or area - placing a special focus on that area and helping to drive more business to our regions. Armagh and the Mournes are twinned with France; the Causeway Coastal Route is twinned with the United States; Derry-Londonderry is twinned with Great Britain; and Fermanagh is twinned with Germany.</p>
<p>88 TOURISM IRELAND. International Programming Fund.</p>	<p>Tourism Ireland's strategy to rebuild revenue from overseas holidaymakers to pre-pandemic levels includes targeting 'value-adding tourists' i.e. visitors who stay longer and spend more in our regions. Its promotional activity is focused on driving more business to the regions, ensuring the benefits of overseas tourism are distributed right around Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Tourism Ireland's International Programming Fund is supporting broadcasters to create long-form, engaging content. The fund will enable Tourism Ireland to dial up key messages about our regions.</p> <p>For example, images of the Mournes and the Glens of Antrim were beamed into millions of homes across Great Britain in summer 2022, when the latest series of Mountain Vets aired on BBC Two. The six-part series was supported by Tourism Ireland and followed staff based in four veterinary practices - Castle Vets in Castlewellan, Gleno Vets in the Glens of Antrim, Tullyraine Equine Clinic in Banbridge and the Ulster Society for the Prevention Cruelty to Animals.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
89	TOURISM IRELAND. Programme of familiarisation visits.	<p>Tourism Ireland's strategy to rebuild revenue from overseas holidaymakers to pre-pandemic levels includes targeting 'value-adding tourists' i.e. visitors who stay longer and spend more in our regions. Its promotional activity is focused on driving more business to the regions, ensuring the benefits of overseas tourism are distributed right around Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Tourism Ireland's programme of familiarisation visits for overseas media and travel trade - undertaken in close partnership with Tourism NI - includes a major focus on our regions.</p>
90	TOURISM IRELAND. Tourism Ireland encourages and supports Northern Ireland industry partners - from right across Northern Ireland - to participate in our overseas marketing platforms, to grow their business from overseas.	<p>Tourism Ireland's strategy to rebuild revenue from overseas holidaymakers to pre-pandemic levels includes targeting 'value-adding tourists' i.e. visitors who stay longer and spend more in our regions. Its promotional activity is focused on driving more business to the regions, ensuring the benefits of overseas tourism are distributed right around Northern Ireland.</p>
91	TOURISM IRELAND. Digital and digital outdoor campaign with Lastminute.com.	<p>Tourism Ireland's strategy to rebuild revenue from overseas holidaymakers to pre-pandemic levels includes targeting 'value-adding tourists' i.e. visitors who stay longer and spend more in our regions. Its promotional activity is focused on driving more business to the regions, ensuring the benefits of overseas tourism are distributed right around Northern Ireland.</p> <p>A digital and digital outdoor campaign with Lastminute.com ran in Milan around Saint Patrick's Day 2023 - encouraging Milanese cyclists to come and discover our spectacular cycling routes in Northern Ireland, along the Causeway Coastal Route and in County Down. The advertisements featured eye-catching images of the Giant's Causeway, Dark Hedges and County Down.</p>
92	Draft Offshore Renewable Energy Action Plan.	<p>The action plan sets out the steps for delivery of offshore wind in Northern Ireland which includes putting into place the relevant processes and policies to enable</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	the deployment of offshore wind. At this stage in development the action plan is not likely to have any impacts on people. However, once progress has been made on the development of any subsequent policy, the Department for the Economy will work to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.
93 Revocation of EU Guarantees of Origin.	<p>It is not envisaged that the revocation of EU Guarantees of Origin will have an effect on the social needs of rural people in relation to local facilities; funding programmes; transport; education; mobile services; or accessing of services.</p> <p>The economic impact, if there is one, would be difficult to quantify. The industry has given EU Guarantees of Origin a financial value and if the certificate price rises this may affect the cost of electricity to consumers. Stakeholders are being asked within the consultation on the potential effect on consumers.</p>
94 Consultation on design considerations for the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme for Northern Ireland.	No support scheme design has been determined yet. As such it is not possible to fully predict how this policy will impact the needs of people in rural areas. Once responses to the consultation on design considerations for a renewable electricity support scheme have been received and analysed, and progress has been made on the development of this policy, the Department for the Economy will work to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.
95 Consultation on the proposal to amend the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Regulations to include Miscarriage Leave and Pay Entitlement.	The proposal to amend the entitlement to statutory leave and pay under the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Regulations will impact equally upon those in rural and non-rural areas. The impact will not be adverse in nature provide a minimum level of statutory rights and safeguards.
96 Energy One Stop Shop Implementation - Consultation on Policy Options.	People in rural areas are more reliant on home heating oil, don't have access to natural gas, are more likely to be fuel poor, have less access to public transport and have poorer broadband connectivity.

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	<p>The social and economic needs relevant to the services that we propose the Energy One Stop Shop will provide include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater level of financial support; and • Access to non-digital communication and engagement channels. <p>The Department for the Economy has developed the policy options for the Energy One Stop Shop to ensure the needs of consumers and businesses living and operating in rural areas are met. We have included below some of the draft Energy One Stop Shop objectives, guiding principles and scope that demonstrate our rural needs approach. In particular, we are proposing that the Energy One Stop Shop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides tailored services - the Energy One Stop Shop will meet the needs of individual consumer groups to ensure all consumers - domestic and non-domestic, rural, low income etc., have access to the adequate type and level of information, advice and support that they need; • Delivers service in partnership with other bodies and organisations - The Energy One Stop Shop will create partnerships with other organisations to ensure a presence across Northern Ireland, in particular rural areas, and to maximise the benefits to consumers of the information, advice and support network in Northern Ireland; • Domestic consumers with vulnerable characteristics, including rural consumers, are listed as one of the four groups that the Energy One Stop Shop will inform, advice and support; and • The Energy One Stop Shop will have special regard to the needs of vulnerable consumers, in particular in terms of the communication channels offered and the type and level of support provided. <p>The Energy One Stop Shop will adopt a multi-channel consumer engagement and communication approach.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>97</p>	<p>The Gas (Designation of Pipe-lines) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022.</p>	<p>The Gas (Designation of Pipe-lines) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022 legislation which seen the designation of a new three kilometres section of gas pipe-line connecting Kilroot Power Station, Carrickfergus (“EP Kilroot”) to the existing natural gas network in Northern Ireland for the purposes of the regulated common transmission tariff which is paid by all gas consumers in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Gas Policy considered how the postalisation policy supports the economic and efficient development of the natural gas industry in Northern Ireland by adding the cost of constructing/maintaining gas transmission pipelines to a postalised pot which is recovered from all gas consumers in Northern Ireland (both business and domestic) over an extended period through a regulated common transmission tariff within gas bills. The policy was consulted upon and as part of this process a Rural Needs Impact Assessment was completed. The assessment deemed that plans to designate the new gas transmission pipe-line at EP Kilroot for the purposes of the common tariff would not impact upon the needs of people in rural areas. This was because most gas consumers reside in urban areas where there are sufficient gas loads to make the provision of gas networks economically viable and the new pipe-line was not envisaged to lead to an increase in relation to the regulated common transmission tariff in gas bills.</p>

Department of Education

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>98 "A Fair Start" - Provision of Digital Devices to support teaching and learning in class and at home.</p>	<p>We have used the data from the NI School Census 2020/21 to ensure that a full picture was gained of the children and young people in education across Northern Ireland.</p> <p>A survey was issued to schools with the highest Free School Meal Entitlement percentage, initially (49.5%+) of the total enrolment figure of schools with high levels of Free School Meal Entitlement pupils. This would equate to circa 131 schools. This decision was based on the number of devices available and could be accommodated this year. E.g. if you have a total enrolment of 600 pupils, 10%-12% of your enrolment would equate to potentially 60 to 70 devices where they have a specific need.</p> <p>Based on the returns, 17 out of 174 responses were from rural schools, which equated to 10% of the overall allocation.</p> <p>At system level, the Education Authority will monitor and evaluate the outworking of the policy.</p> <p>Research indicates that there is a continuing risk that the gains made in closing our attainment gap could be significantly impacted by the lockdown periods caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most agree the consequences of the pandemic will be far reaching for all children, but particularly for those from socially disadvantaged families.</p>
<p>99 Period Products (Free Provision) Regulations - Department of Education Public Service Bodies.</p>	<p>The Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is wide-ranging and will make provision for people on the premises of schools and other specified public service bodies, regardless of their location. The Department of Education is not proposing to narrow this provision unnecessarily, in the making of the regulations. Therefore, provision can be accessed by people in rural areas. (2011 Census - 37% of population).</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>The Department uses Free School Meals as an indicator of social deprivation to inform its decisions regarding policy such as this.</p> <p>The percentage of Free School Meal Entitlement pupils in rural areas is significantly smaller than those in urban settings. Nevertheless, schools in rural and urban settings will both be supported by this provision.</p>
100 Engage III Programme.	<p>We have used the data from the NI School Census 2019/20 to ensure that a full picture is available of the children and young people in education across Northern Ireland including in rural areas.</p> <p>The programme specifically considered the needs of all children and young people attending all pre-primary settings, education otherwise than at school, primary, post-primary and special schools across Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Given the unique and continuing circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, all pre-primary settings, education otherwise than at school, primary, post-primary and special schools in Northern Ireland will be provided with varying levels of funding to provide additional resource.</p>
101 Mainstreaming Shared Education.	<p>The implementation of this strategy applies equally to both rural and urban. The introduction of this strategy does not impact differently on rural and urban needs. The strategy recognises the diversity across the education system in Northern Ireland and sets out how it will support partnerships to bring children and young people from different communities together.</p> <p>For example, the strategy proposes to provide funding to support the transport costs of moving pupils between schools recognising this as an additional inescapable cost of Shared Education delivery, which can apply in any circumstance including rural communities, as well as those schools located in urban areas.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
102 The Department of Education Corporate Plan 2023-2028.	<p>In developing the Draft Corporate Plan, the Department undertook a series of focus groups with key stakeholders and ensured that a representative sample of individuals was chosen, based on age; gender; socio-economic group; and location (rural/urban), across all areas of education including schools, representative organisations, parents, pupils and Trade Unions. This engagement process was undertaken between November 2021 and March 2022.</p> <p>The Corporate Plan and the strategic priorities within it will seek to impact positively on children and young people in all areas, regardless of location. A key commitment for the Department of Education incorporated into the Draft Plan is to introduce a more agile and responsive Area Planning process which will bring forward area-based solutions that bring about more sustainable education provision (with a focus on more sustainable provision in rural communities).</p> <p>The five year Corporate Plan forms a key implementation plan within the wider Children & Young People Strategy and the identified need within this to take account of the needs of those living in rural communities.</p>
103 Fair Start Key Action 1: Roma 0-6 Early Intervention Pilot.	<p>The focus of this pilot is in an urban area. The objective of the pilot is to test the impact of an integrated, collaborative approach which extends the geography and age range of existing Sure Start provision, on outcomes for Roma children and families in the South Belfast area.</p>

Department of Finance

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
104	Making of The Public Service Pensions Revaluation Order (Northern Ireland) 2023.	The policy/strategy/plan/public service was not influenced by rural needs.
105	Making of The Pensions Increase (Review) Order (Northern Ireland) 2023.	The policy/strategy/plan/public service was not influenced by rural needs.
106	Making of The Public Service Pensions (Employer Cost Cap and Specified Restricted Scheme) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022.	The policy/strategy/plan/public service was not influenced by rural needs.
107	Making of The Public Service Pensions (Exercise of Powers, Compensation and Information) Directions (Northern Ireland) 2023.	The policy/strategy/plan/public service was not influenced by rural needs.
108	Consultation on a set of proposed Amendment Regulations to The Public Service (Civil Servants and Others) Pensions Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.	The policy/strategy/plan/public service was not influenced by rural needs.
109	Development of a research piece for Smart Towns and Villages measure of the PEACE PLUS Programme.	<p>As part of the development of this measure, the Special EU Programmes Body has undertaken a specific piece of research, to inform calls and potential applicants.</p> <p>The focus and consultation base of this has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural development bodies; • LEADER+ Local Action Groups in Ireland; • Local councils, especially those with large rural areas; and • Community organisations in rural towns and villages. <p>The work was completed in late 2022, and dissemination of the work to respondents has taken place.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
110	Pre-development Workshops and application assistance.	As part of the development of applications for PEACEPLUS, Special EU Programmes Body has been cognisant of the need for rural outreach. The workshops have been held in rural areas and made available online for those for whom travel to centres would be difficult.
111	Development of Investment Area 4.2 - Rural Regeneration and Social Inclusion.	<p>This investment area will support social, economic and environmental projects which contribute to the creation of healthy communities in rural areas.</p> <p>A specific pre-application workshop has been held in Dungannon, in March. Invitations were specifically targeted at those groups and organisations which have a rural remit, and projects will help to demonstrate how they can improve the provision of services across a wide of spectrum of issues which affect rural areas in the eligible area.</p>
112	Development of a small grant's delivery strategy and partnership under Measures 1.2 and 6.2 of PEACEPLUS - in development.	While the main thrust of these measures is around peace building, capacity building and broad community development, an important target group for these measures will be hard-to-reach groups, and importantly, rural communities. The development of a delivery partner strategy between the Special EU Programmes Body and Pobal is aimed at ensuring widespread coverage of small grants for these groups, addressing the aims mentioned above. However, the Special EU Programmes Body foresees that these grants will be important to rural communities, especially those within the immediate border areas of Ireland and Northern Ireland. These will be monitored to ensure maximum impact in areas and groups which have been traditionally under-represented in previous spend profiles.
113	Pay Award 2022.	Consideration was given to any impacts of the Pay Awards on rural areas across Northern Ireland from an economic and social perspective. There are no impacts specifically as the policy applies to all Northern Ireland Civil Service staff regardless of whether they reside in a rural location or not.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
114	Revision of Chapter 8.29 of the HR Handbook: Starting Pay on Appointment.	Consideration was given to any impacts of this policy on rural areas across Northern Ireland from an economic and social perspective. There are no impacts specifically as the policy applies to all Northern Ireland Civil Service staff regardless of whether they reside in a rural location or not.
115	Revision of Chapter 8.30 of the HR Handbook: Starting Pay on Appointment.	Consideration was given to any impacts of this policy on rural areas across Northern Ireland from an economic and social perspective. There are no impacts specifically as the policy applies to all Northern Ireland Civil Service staff regardless of whether they reside in a rural location or not.

Department of Health

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
116	Health and Social Care Pension Scheme - proposed amendments to scheme regulations.	The policy team concluded that the proposed amendments related to the Health and Social Care Pension Scheme would be applied across all of its members and consequently no rural impacts were identified.
117	Autism Strategy 2023-2028.	The policy team concluded that the intention of the Autism Strategy was to impact positively on autistic people, those awaiting assessment, their families and carers across all geographical areas of Northern Ireland, regardless of whether they are located in a rural or urban area. Although the policy team did not directly take steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas, the questionnaire issued to consultees included 'access to services' and within the responses reference was made to consider more accessibility to social activity and opportunity, particularly in rural or suburban communities.
118	Draft Domestic & Sexual Abuse Strategy 2023 - 2030.	To inform the drafting of the strategy, the Departments held a 10 week Call for Views exercise, from 10 January 2022. The Departments received 91 written responses and 661 surveys were also completed. Five online public events were held and 22 stakeholder engagement events, one of which focused on the needs of victims of domestic and sexual abuse living in rural areas (on 1 March 2022). This included representatives from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Support; • Ulster Farmers' Union; • Northern Ireland Veterinary Association; • Vet Support; • Western Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership; and • Women's Institute.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	The analysis of this engagement has influenced the content of the draft strategy, which includes a section about the needs of different groups of victims, including those living in rural areas. A key priority area of focus will also be to better understand the intersectional needs of individuals and to ensure victims get the responses and support they need. This applies to all victims regardless of whether they live in a rural or urban area.
119 Draft Foster Placement and Fostering Agencies Regulations (Northern Ireland).	The policy team concluded that due regard had been paid to the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, however it was not considered that the introduction of the legislative provision requiring registration and regulation of fostering agencies to approve foster parents or the updated requirements for approval of foster carers would have a material impact on the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.
120 Proposed Amendments to the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) (Independent Guardian) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016.	The policy team concluded that the proposed amendments to the 2016 regulations were expected to have a neutral impact on rural areas as the overall objective of the Independent Guardian Service would not change and no issues on rural needs arose in the responses to the consultation.
121 The future of Muckamore Abbey Hospital as a regional specialist hospital facility for Learning Disability patients.	The policy team concluded that the closure of Muckamore Abbey Hospital would benefit the remaining patients by providing them with a better quality of life in the community and the closure would not disadvantage anyone, as the level of care would be provided to patients within their own Trust area. There would be no detrimental impact on anyone in a rural area.
122 Violence and Aggression in the Workplace Health and Social Care Framework.	The policy team concluded that the Violence and Aggression in the Workplace Health and Social Care Framework was a regional policy which would apply to and impact staff working within all Health and Social Care organisations, and it was not anticipated that it would have any direct or differential impact on or was related to social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
123	Raising a Concern in the Public Interest (Whistleblowing) Framework and Model Policy.	The policy team concluded that the Raising a Concern in the Public Interest (Whistleblowing) Framework and Model Policy was a regional policy which would apply to and impact staff and service users within all Health and Social Care organisations and it was not anticipated that it would have any direct or differential impact on or would be related to social and economic needs of people in rural areas.
124	Family Mediation Service.	<p>Policy makers designed the service using the principle “Equal access to services regardless of the service user’s location is a key requirement of the service”. In developing the policy they considered that children and families living in rural communities required additional consideration because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tendency for specialist services to be sited in the greater Belfast conurbation; • Established difficulties in accessing services due to the cost of private transport and the limitations of public transport; • The risk of child sexual exploitation, neglect and abuse being poorly recognised in rural settings; and • The risk of stigma and detection of ‘difference’ in rural settings. <p>Social and economic needs and issues associated with people in rural areas included deprivation; poverty; access to transport; broadband provision/access; isolation; and demographic (aging (rural) population).</p>
125	Regional Health and Social Care Communication Support Service in Northern Ireland; for People who are Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing.	<p>Policy makers designed the service based on the principle that access to the Communication Support Service for people who are Deaf, Deafblind or Hard of Hearing is based on access to Health and Social Care Services irrelevant of where you live.</p> <p>There was noted a possible disproportionate effect on people in rural areas who do not have access to high quality broadband and wish to access remote sign language interpreting services. These people may have to utilise their mobile data.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>The tender specification includes evidence as to how the provider will ensure the service is promoted and made available to people who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing living in rural areas.</p> <p>The Service will also include a monitoring schedule that will enable Strategic Planning and Performance Group to obtain and review service user data including postcode distribution, and on that basis develop a more detailed insight into the needs and characteristics of service users in rural areas.</p>
126 Independent Advice, Support and Mediation to Children in Need and their Parents and Carers acting on their behalf.	<p>Policy makers considered a range of statistical information mainly sourced from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, together with a report published in January 2021 following a Department of Education public consultation on the Children and Young People's Strategy. The needs of children and young people living in rural areas are being considered under the procurement exercise in respect of specific issues identified during the Children and Young People's Strategy consultation.</p> <p>The issues below were considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service will be accessible to children in rural areas through digital media. However, it is not envisaged that the service will be physically delivered in all areas due to contract quantum and limits to staff being ability to travel; and • The current provider successfully engages children virtually and this is to be expected in this procurement. Nonetheless the issues regarding connectivity (both in digital and travel terms) will be considered when the specification is being developed. Equal access to services regardless of the service user's location is a key requirement of the service. <p>Children with a disability are more prevalent in the target service user group. Data from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency highlights that this population live in rural as well as urban areas and the approved provider of services will need to demonstrate how they will ensure that the needs of these children are met.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>127 Young Carers Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide interventions which will support the participation of young carers in mainstream services such as in the education, health, youth and community services; • Inform young carers and their families, of other available services and support in their local area; and • To link young carers with each other through group activity and short breaks. 	<p>Policy makers considered information from a number of sources in relation to rural needs including the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, the Department for Infrastructure and the Children and Young People’s Strategy.</p> <p>It was recognised that there could be a disproportionate effect on people in rural areas who rely on public transport services. To mitigate against this issue, it will be a requirement that the service provider is able to offer support comprehensively via telephone, as well as face-to-face meetings in the locality, and home visits. It is an expectation of this contract that local partnership arrangements are developed and maintained with other agencies such as schools. This will help mitigate against any additional travel costs for young carers.</p> <p>The service will be offered in a range of different formats that best suit the young carers needs via face-to-face sessions, group work, day short break activities, online sessions and community based events. Individuals will be provided with information about how to access the service in multiple formats, including by word of mouth and written materials. Service providers will ensure that the young carers can access the service and necessary information in the most appropriate way.</p> <p>There are potentially pockets of hidden poverty and deprivation within rural areas and the Strategic Planning and Performance Group will maintain the current expectation, for example, that the service provider should have an understanding of the locality-based needs and requirements of rural young carers and take these into account when delivering the service.</p> <p>The tender specification and contract will take into account all of the considerations above and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tender specification will include consideration of how the service providers will ensure the service is promoted and made available to young carers living in rural areas. This will form part of the monitoring and reporting process; and

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring information will continually be gathered to develop a better understanding of the distribution of support and levels of update and need in rural areas. The service will require service providers to review the monitoring data in regard to young people's address and therefore provide insight into the needs and characteristics of service users in rural areas and their ability to access the service fully.
<p>128 Acquired Brain Injury Adult Training and Rehabilitation Service/Support Services for People with Acquired Brain Injury and their Carers.</p>	<p>Access to Acquired Brain Injury services is a regional issue with models of service provision often tending to focus upon a single provider location or base, meaning that service access and associated transport issues can become barriers to supporting equitable service uptake across the user (or potential user) cohort.</p> <p>The model being developed is one of a number of approaches under development which will require the provider to deliver services, either directly or indirectly, via not only a provider base/s, but also via the many community and faith based venues across Northern Ireland. Such venues may take the form of community and voluntary sector bases, local libraries, churches and leisure centres, supermarket 'community rooms' as well as more traditional Health and Social Care healthcare and hospital sites.</p> <p>Policy makers considered a range of issues in relation to rural needs including transport availability and cost for the delivery of services on a face-to-face basis and broadband quality for the delivery of services remotely.</p> <p>The model has been influenced by a range of feedback from users and carers, who have clearly stated a preference for services delivered close to home or in local community and other similar bases wherever possible.</p> <p>They noted that if transport is not available for the service users in a rural area to get to a group activity, any future provider would be required to offer opportunity to meet via Zoom, however they acknowledge that this may be a different experience than a face-to-face meeting for the service user.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
129	General Medical Services. Review of 2022/2023 General Practitioner Practice Boundary (area) Applications.	<p>The key principles in the procedure to apply for a Change to Practice Area (boundary) submitted by a General Medical Services Practice, takes into consideration patients living in rural areas as the entire Strategic Planning and Performance Group area must be covered by General Medical Services contractors, and each household should fall within the areas of at least two or preferably three, General Medical Services contractors to facilitate patient choice, patients living in rural areas.</p> <p>The application will be considered bearing in mind the responsibility to ensure that there is appropriate level of locality coverage, a conformance to equality legislation and that there is equitable treatment of contractors.</p>

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance

The majority of National Institute for Health and care Excellence guidance is of a technical nature and is not regarded as falling within the scope of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016. However, the following National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence Guidance does fall within the scope of the Act and has been subject to assessment.

Rural Needs Impact Assessments were completed in each case, however, endorsement, implementation, monitoring and assurance of **National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence** Clinical Guidelines in Northern Ireland apply to all Health and Social Care organisations in both urban and rural areas. The Department of Health considered its role on each specific issue and confirmed that the social and economic needs of people in rural areas is the responsibility of Health and Social Care organisations, under the statutory duty of quality as specified in Article 34 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, to put in place the necessary systems, which should include adequate and comprehensive dissemination, as part of their clinical and social care governance arrangements, for implementing **National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence** guidance.

National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence Clinical Guideline NG197 - Shared decision making (partially updates and replaces CG138).

National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence Public Health Guideline NG209 - Tobacco: preventing uptake, promoting quitting and treating dependence (updates and replaces NG92).

National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence Clinical Guideline NG211 - Rehabilitation after traumatic injury.
National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence Clinical Guideline NG215 - Medicines associated with dependence or withdrawal symptoms: safe prescribing and withdrawal management for adults.
National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence Clinical Guideline NG217 - Epilepsies in children, young people and adults (updates and replaces CG137).
National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence Clinical Guideline NG219 - Gout: diagnosis and management (updates and replaces TA164).
National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence Clinical Guideline NG220 - Multiple sclerosis in adults: management (updates and replaces CG186).
National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence Clinical Guideline NG222 - Depression in adults: treatment and management (updates and replaces CG90).
National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence Clinical Guideline NG224 - Urinary tract infection in under 16s: diagnosis and management (updates and replaces CG54).
National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence Clinical Guideline NG225 - Self-harm: assessment, management and preventing recurrence (updates and replaces CGs 16 & 133).
National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence Clinical Guideline NG226 - Osteoarthritis in over 16s: diagnosis and management (updates and replaces CG177).
National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence Clinical Guideline NG228 - Subarachnoid haemorrhage caused by a ruptured aneurysm: diagnosis and management.
National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence Clinical Guideline NG229 - Fetal monitoring in labour (partially replaces CG190).
National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence Clinical Guideline NG230 - Thyroid cancer: assessment and management.

Department for Infrastructure

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
130	DEM168/22 - Policy Development for the specification of surfacing aggregate/chippings Polished Stone Value (surface friction) on minor (B, C and U-class) public roads.	This is a technical policy and as such no rural needs identified.
131	DEM 169/22 - Policy Development for the specification of surfacing aggregate/chippings Polished Stone Value (surface friction) on non-trunk A-class public roads.	This is a technical policy and as such no rural needs identified.
132	The development of a new Public Service Agreement between the Department for Infrastructure and the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (trading as Translink) for the provision and delivery of public passenger transport services across Northern Ireland.	<p>People in rural areas, as in urban areas, need the ability to access key public services such as health and education, the ability to access suitable employment opportunities and the ability to enjoy a healthy lifestyle.</p> <p>Many who live in rural areas work in urban areas (rural businesses account for just 20% of employees) and will need a means of transport to access work (only 5% of those from rural areas walk to work).</p> <p>People in rural areas live a further distance from key services than those in urban areas. Access to key services by public transport is sometimes poor or impractical due to a combination of journey length and remote location. The availability of public transport in rural areas is also inferior to that in towns and cities both in terms of the frequency of public transport services and the walking distance from bus stops. Private transport is often therefore a necessity in many rural areas.</p> <p>Those who live in rural communities can be cut off from social interaction. Lack of public transport provision combined with increased travelling distance to retail, social and leisure facilities may significantly impact on the ability of elderly people, the less physically able and those with young children to socially interact.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>Social isolation and loneliness have been linked to poor physical and mental health and to depression.</p> <p>The Department has considered the need for access to employment, education, services, and social and leisure opportunities for rural residents and the disparity in access for those living in rural areas compared to urban areas.</p> <p>The Department also took into account the environmental impact of car use and the need to provide an alternative, affordable and attractive means of transport to create meaningful modal shift to help tackle the climate emergency.</p> <p>The Department has also considered the challenges of providing public transport in rural areas, including geography, low population density, and the dispersed nature of many rural settlements.</p> <p>These challenges makes practical and affordable public transport difficult to provide in these areas. However, accessible and affordable transport is a lifeline for many rural residents. While car ownership is high in rural areas, some rural households have no access to a car.</p> <p>Access to public transport services is therefore vitally important in rural areas, otherwise rural residents will be at risk of social isolation and increasing levels of poverty (if they are unable to access employment and education opportunities) and dependency on the private car will increase.</p> <p>The 2022 Public Service Agreement will require Translink to provide 66 million kilometres of bus journeys and 5.5 million kilometres of rail service per annum. Rural areas are served by Ulsterbus which operates over 270 service groups and in 2019/20 delivered 37.9 million passenger journeys.</p> <p>Due to the challenges providing public transport in rural areas, the majority of rural services often fail to cover their operating costs and require subsidy from the</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>Department. Taking the rural needs into consideration, the Department remains committed to providing services in rural areas and continuing to subsidise these socially necessary routes. Therefore, despite the budgetary pressures facing the Department, service provision in rural areas will continue at current levels in the new Public Service Agreement.</p> <p>The Public Service Agreement allows Translink to adjust service provision and make changes to the network to optimise efficiency and better meet customer needs, however, the new Public Sector Agreement introduces a requirement for Translink to seek approval from the Department where those changes would result in the removal of a route, helping to ensure continued provision of services in rural areas.</p> <p>The new Public Service Agreement also includes a number of key performance indicators on punctuality, reliability, accessibility, customer satisfaction and safety which aim to improve customer experience, encourage modal shift and help increase passenger numbers in both rural and urban areas going forward.</p> <p>The Department remains committed to improving the level of service provision and accessibility of services in rural areas and will continue to explore options to address any imbalances between rural and urban areas over the duration of the Public Service Agreement.</p>
133 Amendment to - The Taxis (Taximeters, Devices and Maximum Fares) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021.	<p>The need for adequate transport choices to rural communities to address social and economic needs especially for those consumers who do not drive and/or have no access to other means of transport, including assistance from family members or friends.</p> <p>The requirement to balance the needs of the taxi industry and the cost of living crisis against the concerns of the rural areas in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distance of travel to and from essential services; • The continuing decline in the number of taxis and operators in rural areas; and

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate choice of transport to meet all needs within rural areas. <p>The steady decline in the number of taxis operating in the rural areas, due in part to the increase in the overhead expenditure, has resulted in less choice of taxi operators for the consumer and in some cases no choice at all as firms have shut down. It is anticipated that implementing an increase in the taxi fare tariff will mitigate against further decreases in the taxi numbers and help to encourage new drivers into the industry, thereby resulting in competitive pricing among operators in the rural areas. This will advantage those consumers totally dependent on this mode of transport.</p>
134	<p>RSPPG E004 version 2, The activity is 'Privately Funded Planting of Roundabouts, Road Verges and the Department for Infrastructure Car Parks.'</p> <p>This is a technical policy and as such no rural needs identified.</p>
135	<p>Widening of the Lagan Towpath at two locations in Lisburn near to Bridge Street/Hill Street/ Sloan Street to Address Safety Concerns.</p> <p>This is a safety issue and as such no rural needs identified.</p>
136	<p>This Technical Guidance Note provides the guidance related to the Departments management and assessment of riverbank erosion.</p> <p>This is a technical policy and as such no rural needs identified.</p>
137	<p>Ban on the use of Older Tyres (aged 10 years or over) on the front axles of heavy vehicles and all tyres in single configuration on minibuses.</p> <p>This is a technical road safety issue and as such no rural needs identified.</p>
138	<p>Department for Infrastructure Business Plan 2022-23.</p> <p>The "Key Rural Issues 2021" report by the Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs identifies a number of key domains in which there are particular</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>impacts for those living in rural areas. The report identifies availability of transport (both public and private) as a critical factor impacting across a range of domains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to employment and educational opportunities; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Those living in rural areas must travel significantly further when commuting, doing business, or accessing education (see figure 12, page 15 of report). • Access to general commercial services and socialising opportunities; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Those living in rural areas must travel significantly further to avail of socialising opportunities (e.g. meeting friends or travelling to social/entertainment activities) and accessing shops (see figure 12, page 15 of report). • Access to services and healthcare; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Those living in rural areas must travel significantly further to access essential services, such as doctor's surgery, pharmacist, or financial service provider (see figure 28, page 29); and - Those living in rural areas (particularly those > 1 hour from Belfast) are significantly less likely to have access to any suitable public transport to access these essential services (see figure 27, page 28). <p>In more general terms, the availability of public transport access is significantly inferior in rural areas when compared to that of urban areas - just 18% of rural dwellers live within a three minute walk of the nearest bus stop (compared to 40% of urban dwellers), whilst 10% of rural dwellers live more than 44 minutes walk from the nearest bus stop, (see figure 25, page 26). The report also found that 92% of rural dwellers reported that the nearest train station was more than 44 minutes walk (see page 27).</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>The report also highlights the disparity in frequency of public transport services between rural and urban areas with 69% of urban dwellers reporting a bus service every hour, compared to just 19% of rural dwellers reporting a similar frequency (see figure 26, page 27).</p> <p>Given the lack of availability and frequency of public transport in rural areas, it is little surprise that more than half (52%) of rural respondents reported ‘never’ using bus services (page 26). This may also provide some explanation as to why rural dwellers are significantly more reliant on private transport - 86% of rural dwellers hold a driving licence compared to 73% of urban dwellers (page 26). Further evidence for this reliance on private transport is the significantly greater proportion of rural dwellers who travel to work by car (see figure 14, page 16).</p> <p>The relative lack of public transport options and greater reliance on private transport also has cost implications for rural dwellers. As noted in the report, 92% of rural households have access to at least one private vehicle as compared to 78% of urban households (figure 47, page 44). The report notes that this higher level of private vehicle ownership (arguably a necessity) represents a larger cumulative impact on living costs for people who live in rural areas.</p> <p>These factors taken together would suggest that actions outlined in the Business Plan which relate to significant changes in public transport policy/strategy and road maintenance and network planning may have particular impact on people living in rural areas and, as such, are likely to require significant further consultation and assessment in the context of rural needs.</p> <p>The proposed development of a new transport strategy, for example, has potential to have a major impact in rural areas. This impact could be positive, should the strategy lead to enhancement or improvement of public and private transport links within rural areas or it could be negative, should a new strategy result in lower levels of investment in these respects in rural areas.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	The continuing work on expanding the road network through various ongoing projects may help enhance connectivity within and between rural areas. Similar to the development of a transport strategy, however, the proposed development of a new Strategic Asset Management Plan for the Road Network would need to have regard for the impact (positive and/or negative) on rural communities.
139 The introduction of three new Level Crossing Orders for Cullybackey Station, Cullybackey North and Cullybackey South crossings.	This is a technical policy and as such no rural needs identified.
140 Period Products (Free Provision) Regulations - Specifying the Department for Infrastructure Public Service Bodies for the Provision of Free Period Products.	The Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is wide-ranging, and the associated regulations will make provision for people on the premises of the Department's specified Public Service Bodies in both rural and urban locations. The Department is not proposing to narrow the provision made under the Act unnecessarily, in the making of the regulations. By enabling provision of free period products, the regulations will address the social and economic needs of people in rural and urban areas equally.
141 Driver & Vehicle Agency Business Plan 2022-23.	<p>The "Key Rural Issues 2021" report by the Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs identifies a number of key domains in which there are particular impacts for those living in rural areas. Those elements that are most pertinent to the Driver & Vehicle Agency services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadband availability and speeds in rural areas continue to improve, but still lag behind those available than in urban areas. In 2021, only 70% of rural properties in Northern Ireland had access to superfast speeds; • Average download speeds and data usage have increased markedly in both rural and urban areas since 2018, yet both remain higher in urban areas.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>For some rural properties, access to a functional broadband connection remains an issue, with 19% of internet-enabled rural premises in Northern Ireland still unable to achieve a 'decent' broadband speed in 2021;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 2001 and 2020, the population of rural areas rose by 20%, compared to an increase of just 7% for urban areas; • There is also a higher life expectancy in rural areas, which is likely to mean a higher proportion of elderly citizens; and • The large majority of adults living in rural areas report holding a full driving licence (86%, compared with 73% of urban dwellers). <p>These factors taken together would suggest that the Driver & Vehicle Agency has many service users within the rural community who are elderly and who may have difficulty in accessing our online services.</p> <p>Whilst many of the Driver & Vehicle Agency's services (such as appointment bookings and various application forms), are now available online, the Driver & Vehicle Agency continues to provide a range of alternatives to these electronic services, for a range of customers who may have difficulty accessing the online services.</p> <p>As in the previous answer, the Driver & Vehicle Agency is aware of the challenges some service user groups (including rural dwellers) have in relation to online services, and so provides a range of alternatives to make services more accessible to those groups.</p>
142 The Motor Vehicles (Access to Driver Licensing Records) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 to allow the sharing of driver licensing records with authorities in other countries or territories that are responsible for the regulation of drivers.	No rural needs identified.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
143	Policy Development for the management and maintenance of verges, including grass cutting.	This is a technical policy and as such no rural needs identified.
144	DEM 192/22-The use of "I" Bar Road Markings on the Public Road - This Director of Engineering memorandum sets out how the Department handles requests for the provision of "I" Bar road markings.	This is a technical policy and as such no rural needs identified.
145	Consultation on a draft Equality Action Plan following an audit of the Department for Infrastructure's functions for any inequalities.	<p>Transport infrastructure varies in rural areas and is generally weaker in terms of physical networks. There is a higher dependency on the private car in rural areas because of less frequent public transport services and distances to bus stops which can lead, in some cases, to rural isolation reducing access to, for example, work opportunities and hospital/further education facilities which tend to be in urban areas.</p> <p>Rural transport services, funded by the Department for Infrastructure, were set up in 1998 with the primary objective to reduce this social isolation. The service provides transport options for any individual living in a rural area who is unable to access, or has difficulty accessing, public transport.</p> <p>Transport infrastructure varies in rural areas and is generally weaker in terms of physical networks.</p> <p>There is a higher dependency on the private car in rural areas because of less frequent public transport services and distances to bus stops. This can lead in some cases, to rural isolation reducing access to, for example, work opportunities and hospital/further education facilities which tend to be located in urban areas.</p> <p>Currently there are Rural Community Transport Partnerships operating in 11 areas. The plan identifies</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>that the Department working in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs and our other partners' needs "to maximise available accessible rural transport services within resource available to benefit rural people including women, younger and older people or those who have a disability".</p> <p>Action 9 of the draft Equality Action Plan identified the need to maximise available accessible rural transport services within resource available to benefit rural people including women, younger and older people or those who have a disability.</p> <p>The plan identifies that the Department working in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and our other partners needs "to maximise available accessible rural transport services within resource available to benefit rural people including women, younger and older people or those who have a disability".</p> <p>The action has been influenced by the ongoing transport needs of rural dwellers who are currently able to access (apply for access to) the Rural Community Transport Partnerships in 11 operational areas.</p>
146 Driver & Vehicle Agency Business Plan 2023-24.	<p>The "Key Rural Issues 2021" report by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs identifies a number of key domains in which there are particular impacts for those living in rural areas. Those elements that are most pertinent to the Driver & Vehicle Agency services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadband availability and speeds in rural areas continue to improve, but still lag behind those available in urban areas; • In 2021, only 70% of rural properties in Northern Ireland had access to superfast speeds; • Average download speeds and data usage have increased markedly in both rural and urban areas since 2018, yet both remain higher in urban areas.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>For some rural properties, access to a functional broadband connection remains an issue, with 19% of internet-enabled rural premises in Northern Ireland still unable to achieve a 'decent' broadband speed in 2021;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 2001 and 2020, the population of rural areas rose by 20%, compared to an increase of just 7% for urban areas; • There is also a higher life expectancy in rural areas, which is likely to mean a higher proportion of elderly citizens; and • The large majority of adults, living in rural areas report holding a full driving licence (86%, compared with 73% of urban dwellers). <p>These factors taken together would suggest that the Driver & Vehicle Agency has many service users within the rural community who are elderly and who may have difficulty in accessing our online services.</p> <p>Whilst many of the Driver & Vehicle Agency's services (such as appointment bookings and various application forms), are now available online, the Driver & Vehicle Agency continues to provide a range of alternatives to these electronic services, for those customers who may have difficulty accessing the online services.</p> <p>As in the previous answer, the Driver & Vehicle Agency is aware of the challenges some service user groups (including rural dwellers) have in relation to online services, and so provides a range of alternatives to make services more accessible to those groups.</p>

Department of Justice

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
147 Proposals to reappoint Lay Magistrates who were required to retire at the age of 70, following the increase in retirement age to 75 for members of the judiciary which was introduced by the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Act.	The policy seeks to set eligibility for reappointment as a Lay Magistrate and does not impact on people in rural areas. The Department did not identify any differential impact on the social or economic needs of people in rural areas.
148 Consultation on plans for routine use of audio and video 'live links' for court and tribunal hearings.	<p>Rural Needs Impact Assessments were completed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In January 2022, a Rural Needs Impact Assessment was completed for S. R. 2022 No. 24 (extending temporary provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020); • In July 2022, a Rural Needs Impact Assessment was completed for the public consultation on making permanent provisions, which included reference to the further extension order made in September 2022 (S.R. 2022 No. 227); and • We updated the Rural Needs Impact Assessment on 14 March 2023 in relation to a further statutory rule, S.R. 2023 No. 24. <p>The aim of the policy is to facilitate digital working as part of a wider solution to improve and enhance access to justice in a way which meets the needs of the Northern Ireland population. The Rural Needs Impact Assessment recognised the investment made to facilitate wider availability of live links for court and tribunal users while retaining access to current practice and procedure. Judicial discretion safeguards the key principles of our justice system for users. No significant adverse or differential impact on the needs, experiences and priorities of people living in rural areas were identified. Any impact appears minimal, temporary in nature and linked to the digital infrastructure available in their location.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
149 A consultation on increasing the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility in Northern Ireland.	<p>There have been no specific rural needs identified in respect of the policy. The policy is anticipated to have a positive impact on children from all areas, both rural and urban, in that it will seek to reduce their contact with the justice system. We do not believe that the impact of the policy will be different for those living in rural areas when compared to those living in urban areas.</p> <p>The policy aim is to keep children out of the justice system, including custody. At present, the only youth detention centre in Northern Ireland is Woodlands, which is based in Bangor, County Down. For those visiting children who are being held in custody in Woodlands, the journey would be more difficult for those relying on public transport and living in rural areas than it would be for those in a similar position living in an urban area. Therefore any policy change which results in fewer children held in custody could potentially have a positive impact on families from rural areas.</p>
150 Proposed amendments to custodial arrangements for children.	<p>There have been no specific rural needs identified in respect of the policy. The proposed changes to custodial arrangements for children will apply equally to all individuals sentenced to custody in Northern Ireland. As the figures show these children are more likely to come from urban areas, the policy will have less impact on those from rural areas in terms of outright numbers. However, the revised policy is anticipated to have a positive impact on children from all areas, both rural and urban, in that it will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove younger children from custody for less serious offences; • Ensure all children in custody are held in child-appropriate locations and regimes; and • Provide greater flexibility in the custody/community split of sentences, with the potential to spend more time under supervision in the community.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
151 Proposed amendments to Judicial Pensions Regulations.	The regulations make technical amendments to the Judicial Pension Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015. The Department did not identify any differential impact on the social or economic needs of people in rural areas.
152 Consultation on a proposed new three year modern slavery and human trafficking strategy.	Rural and urban areas are equally susceptible to human trafficking/modern slavery. Traffickers and enslavers are targeting vulnerable people across Northern Ireland and globally. Their crimes can take place in inner city areas, in large factories, in rural border areas or, due to immigration controls avoidance, in areas accessible by small boats. Therefore, the consultation paper on the draft strategy does not seek to differentiate between rural and urban areas but will impact on all areas of Northern Ireland.
153 Proposals to amend fees to be charged for planning appeals and deemed planning applications.	The Department has not identified any potential differential impact on the social or economic needs of rural communities as the proposals only change the fees applicable in deemed planning applications and appeals.
154 Consultation on options to provide coroners in Northern Ireland with a statutory power to undertake an investigation into the death abroad of a Northern Ireland citizen where a body has been repatriated here.	It is considered that the policy proposals would impact positively on families across Northern Ireland by an inquest being held when a death has occurred abroad and the body has been returned to Northern Ireland. It does not have any significant or differential impact on people living in rural areas. Consequently, no differential impact has been assessed.
155 Consultation on changes to secondary legislation to implement changes arising from the McCloud Judgement for judicial pensions.	The regulations form part of the remedy to give effect to the McCloud Judgement and do not impact on people in rural areas. The Department did not identify any differential impact on the social or economic needs of people in rural areas.
156 Consultation in conjunction with the Department of Health on a proposed new Domestic and Sexual Abuse strategy to cover the period 2023 - 2030.	To inform the drafting of the strategy, the Department of Justice and the Department of Health held a ten week Call for Views exercise. The Departments received 91 written responses and 661 surveys were also completed. Five online public events were held and 22 stakeholder engagement events, one of which focused

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>on the needs of victims of domestic and sexual abuse living in rural areas (on 1 Mar 2022). This included representatives from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Support; • Ulster Farmers' Union; • Northern Ireland Veterinary Association; • Vet Support; • Western Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership; and • Women's Institute. <p>The analysis of this engagement has influenced the content of the draft strategy, which includes a section about the needs of different groups of victims, including those living in rural areas. A key priority area of focus will also be to better understand the intersectional needs of individuals and to ensure victims get the responses and support they need. This applies to all victims regardless of whether they live in a rural or urban area.</p>
157	<p>Consultation on what evidence of domestic abuse should trigger an automatic prohibition on cross-examination in person in family courts.</p> <p>The Department did not identify any potential differential impact on the social or economic needs of people in rural areas as the forms of evidence of domestic abuse outlined in the consultation will apply equally to all victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse across Northern Ireland.</p>
158	<p>Consultation on secondary legislation changes that will address the retrospective element of the McCloud Remedy in the police pension scheme.</p> <p>A Rural Needs Impact Assessment was completed and concluded that implementation of the proposals will not have any significant adverse or differential impact on people living in rural communities compared with those in an urban setting.</p>

The Executive Office

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>159 Development of draft Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls and Draft Foundational Action Plan.</p>	<p>The co-design process ensured that the development of the draft Strategic Framework was a collaborative process and stakeholders' input has been key to the development of the draft Strategic Framework to be issued for consultation.</p> <p>The issues identified directly link to the proposed action plan and overall draft Strategic Framework.</p> <p>Additional specific actions in relation to key groups, including rural women, are anticipated to be identified through the task group sprints research process. The draft Strategic Framework aims to ensure that women and girls feel and are safe everywhere in our society.</p> <p>In general, the issues identified by rural stakeholders were comparable to those of urban or regional stakeholders. However, one issue identified as potentially more prevalent in rural areas was in relation to property rights where the family home is also the main source of income, for example on a farm. There are also additional vulnerabilities and obstacles to support identified for women living in violent or controlling relationships in rural homes, as neighbours, public transport and public services are all at a greater distance.</p> <p>The National Rural Crime Network in the UK - highlights the issue on a UK scale in the report "Captive & Controlled - Domestic Abuse in Rural Areas - National Rural Crime Network". This report has been used by Women's Aid Northern Ireland to highlight the impact of domestic violence on women rural areas in Northern Ireland. Some of the issues highlighted by this report are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural victims are half as likely to report their abuse to others; • Rural victims' abuse goes on significantly longer; • Rural victims cannot readily access support services;

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural victims live in a society that de facto protects the perpetrators; and • Rural victims are isolated, unsupported and unprotected. <p>Task group sprint research which is intended to be carried out on key areas of focus early in the implementation of the draft Strategic Framework will examine key groups, including women living in rural areas, and seek to identify actions to support the delivery of key outcomes for these groups. The model will involve those who have lived experience and expertise in service delivery in a rural context.</p>
160 Review the current Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997.	<p>The Racial Equality Strategy 2015 - 2025, committed the Department to reviewing the current Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 to provide protection for Minority Ethnic Communities which equals that of Great Britain in order to correct the disparity in legislative protections within the United Kingdom. It also required that the legislation should, where possible equal that of the Republic of Ireland and wider European Union Directives whilst attempting to future proof the legislation. Input provided through public consultation will provide policy proposals for ministerial consideration in the next Mandate.</p> <p>The impact on rural communities would be no different to the positive impact on Northern Ireland as a whole of enriching our culture through adequate protection against racial inequalities for our Minority Ethnic Communities.</p> <p>After consideration of all aspects of the legislation it was decided that there was no need for a full impact assessment to be carried out as the work was based on the impact and needs of Minority Ethnic Communities no matter where in Northern Ireland they would choose to reside.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>161 Implementation of Together: Building a United Community Policy.</p>	<p>The Community Relations Council's work falls into two areas: funding and engagement.</p> <p>Funding:</p> <p>The Community Relations Council operates evaluation measurements that identify the geographic coverage and the thematic content of funded work. These measurement tools enables the Community Relations Council to identify how it is addressing the good relations needs of rural communities and also measure the amount of support it is providing to address these issues.</p> <p>Each year a review is carried out and Welcome Statements are published to address any funding gaps that have been identified either on a thematic or geographic basis. These statements set out specific themes and areas that the Community Relations Council would particularly welcome applications from. The Welcome Statements for 2022/23 asked for applications from a number of geographic locations which contain rural communities, including: Ards and North Down; Fermanagh and Omagh; Mid and East Antrim; Mid-Ulster; and Newry, Mourne and Down.</p> <p>The Community Relations Council supports a broad range of good relations activity within rural communities including providing core-funding support to strategic partners and regional bodies who are delivering good relations programmes specific to the needs of rural communities. Full details are published in the Annual Report and Accounts.</p> <p>In 2022/23 the Community Relations Cultural Diversity Grant funded the following groups working in rural areas: Foundation for Forgiveness and Reconciliation; Together in Music; Artsawonder; Two Castles Community Development Association; Erne East Community Partnership; George Elliott BKYL Academy; Newbuildings Cricket Club; and Rathfriland and District Regeneration Company.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>In 2022/23 Community Relations Council's Core Fund provided awards to the following groups working in rural areas: An Gaelàras; Community Relations Forum; Community Relations in Schools; Corrymeela; Early Years; Falls Community Council; Irish Football Association; Irish School of Ecumenics; Londonderry Bands Forum, The Playhouse; PeacePlayers Northern Ireland; Rural Community Network; Tides Training; Tobar Mhuire Retreat Centre; Trademark; Ulster Gaelic Athletic Association; and Youthlink.</p> <p>The Community Relations Council works with local District Councils to identify emerging needs and will run information events throughout the year to encourage new applications that will include those from rural communities.</p> <p>Engagement:</p> <p>As part of its engagement work, the Community Relations Council delivers the Together: Building a United Community Engagement Forum on behalf of The Executive Office. The Forum meets three times a year and has been held in venues across the region and online to facilitate wide attendance.</p> <p>The Community Relations Council also runs regular Shared Learning events that are attended by groups from across the region (rural and urban).</p> <p>The Community Relations Council Engagement Team conducted a number of Funding Fairs throughout Northern Ireland in 2022-23, with the aim of reaching groups that had not been engaged previously. Many community groups from rural areas attended the Funding Fairs which took place in: Cookstown 15 November 2022; Larne 9 February 2023; and Antrim and Newtownabbey 28 April 2023.</p> <p>This year's winner of the Community Relations Council Good Relations Award for Connecting Communities was Damien Devine at the Dennett Valley Health Network. This group works in the rural area of Donemana, organically bringing people together from across the communities in the area.</p>

<p>Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.</p>	<p>Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.</p>
	<p>The Engagement Team also took the opportunity this year to showcase three groups working in rural areas that the Community Relations Council supported through grants. The team created videos interviewing: Dennett Valley Health Network, Derg Valley, and Rural Community Network providing them with the opportunity to speak on the work they do with and for the local rural communities.</p> <p>The Community Relations Council continues to showcase projects and resources on its website and social media to ensure wide access to information across the region including those based in rural locations.</p>

Public Prosecution Service

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>162 Updating an existing Policy for Prosecuting Cases of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.</p>	<p>No geographical distinction is made in directing upon the prosecution, or not of these types of offences.</p> <p>Neither the home area of a defendant, location of alleged offence(s) committed nor potential court location for criminal proceedings is a factor in considering prosecution.</p> <p>Eventual court proceedings are typically conducted in the court area within which an offence has been committed. There are rare occasions when court proceedings may be moved to an alternative location, but this is under the authority of the court and the Public Prosecution Service has no influence over such a decision.</p> <p>It is considered that application of this policy will have no impact (positive or negative) on rural needs.</p>
<p>163 Drafting a Policy for Prosecuting Cases of Domestic Abuse for public consultation.</p>	<p>No geographical distinction is made in directing upon the prosecution, or not of offences related to domestic abuse.</p> <p>Neither the home area of a defendant, location of alleged offence(s) committed nor potential court location for criminal proceedings is a factor in considering prosecution.</p> <p>Eventual court proceedings are typically conducted in the court area within which an offence has been committed. There are rare occasions when court proceedings may be moved to an alternative location, but this is under the authority of the court and the Public Prosecution Service has no influence over such a decision.</p> <p>It is considered that application of this policy will have no impact (positive or negative) on rural needs.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>164 Drafting a Policy for the Prosecution of Cases Involving Stalking for public consultation.</p>	<p>No geographical distinction is made in directing upon the prosecution, or not of offences related to stalking. Neither the home area of a defendant, location of alleged offence(s) committed nor potential court location for criminal proceedings is a factor in considering prosecution.</p> <p>Eventual court proceedings are typically conducted in the court area within which an offence has been committed. There are rare occasions when court proceedings may be moved to an alternative location, but this is under the authority of the court and the Public Prosecution Service has no influence over such a decision.</p> <p>It is considered that application of this policy will have no impact (positive or negative) on rural needs.</p>
<p>165 Publication of a joint Public Prosecution Service - Service Prosecution Authority Protocol regarding the exercise of criminal jurisdiction in Northern Ireland, for public consultation.</p>	<p>The only geographical distinction required in considering the prosecution, or not of offences allegedly committed by individuals subject to Service law is the part of the UK in which an alleged offence is committed. The home area of a defendant, nor potential court location for criminal proceedings is a factor in considering prosecution.</p> <p>Eventual court proceedings are typically conducted in the court area within which an offence has been committed, although the protocol creates exceptions.</p> <p>It is considered that application of this protocol will have no impact (positive or negative) on rural needs.</p>

DISTRICT COUNCILS

Reporting Period 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
166 Community Planning Capital Grants.	<p>Following a review of the Council's Community Facilities Policy it was proposed that a Community Planning Capital Grants programme be developed. These grants will be made available to local Community and Voluntary Organisations for funding to develop new facilities or to provide enhancements to existing facilities that are able to meet evidence based need. This programme is open to all areas of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough.</p> <p>In Summary:</p> <p>A positive impact in relation to rural needs with due regard being implemented through the rural screening process, consultation with rural stakeholders and through ongoing engagement when delivering the Community Planning Capital Grants.</p>
167 Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2023-2024.	<p>The six objectives identified in the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan are intended to directly or indirectly positively benefit all residents of the Borough, including those living in rural areas.</p> <p>In the context of this Plan, the rural areas of the Borough are defined by existing census data and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. The Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan uses evidence compiled as part of the development of the Community Plan. In addition, evidence has been gathered from a range of consultations and surveys carried out by Council.</p> <p>In Summary:</p> <p>A positive impact in relation to rural needs with due regard being implemented through the rural screening process, consultation with rural stakeholders and through ongoing engagement when delivering the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2023 - 2024.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
168 Entertainment Licensing Policy.	<p>This policy sets out how Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (“the Council”) seeks to regulate the provision of live entertainment at venues within the Borough and how the application of legislative provisions will be both proportionate and fair.</p> <p>This policy will provide, in so far as possible, transparent, accountable and consistent decision making to develop and therefore maintain public confidence in the Council’s performance of its duties.</p> <p>In Summary:</p> <p>A positive impact in relation to rural needs with due regard being implemented through the rural screening process, consultation with rural stakeholders and through ongoing engagement when delivering the Entertainment Licensing Policy.</p>
169 Statement of Community Involvement.	<p>The Statement of Community Involvement sets out the Council’s policy/procedures for involving and consulting the community and other interested parties on its planning functions. This includes rural areas also.</p> <p>The requirement to produce a Statement of Community Involvement is contained within the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (the Act) which introduced a new reformed two-tier planning system. The Planning (Statement of Community Involvement) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 set out how this should be carried out.</p> <p>The Statement of Community Involvement details how the community and other interested parties will be involved in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The preparation of the Local Development Plan; • Development Management; • Planning Enforcement; • Supplementary Planning Guidance; • Conservation Area Designation; and • Simplified Planning Zone Designation.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>In Summary:</p> <p>A positive impact in relation to rural needs with due regard being implemented through the rural screening process, consultation with rural stakeholders and through ongoing engagement when delivering planning functions.</p>

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
170 Operation London Bridge. Protocol on the Death of Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II.	The policy will impact on people from rural areas as the proclamation relating to this policy will only be held in the Town Hall, Bangor and Newtownards. Due to the nature of the policy rural areas are not suitable for this event. However, the lowering of flags in commemoration will be implemented throughout the Borough. The proclamation will also be recorded and made available on the Council's website for those who cannot attend. An online book of condolence will be opened for those that wish to sign.
171 Amendment to Ards and North Down Borough Council Burial Rules.	Amendments made to the Council's current Cemetery Pricing Policy would allow those that previously resided in the Borough and were due to live back in the Borough (following a period of living overseas) to qualify for the residents' discount, i.e., if the deceased's family can produce evidence that would indicate 'imminent residency'. Benefits all those wanting to live in the Borough irrespective of area.
172 Notice of Motion - Withdrawal of funding to sporting organisations.	Would apply equally across the Borough therefore no identified rural impacts.
173 Developing a Roundabout Sponsorship Policy.	Positive impact - Council will endeavor to enhance the appearance of roundabouts by agreeing sponsorship within strict guidelines without compromising highway safety. Potentially would be a boost to social and economic needs in rural areas due to advertising and awareness of local businesses.
174 New strategy Big Plan part ii.	Positive impact - Workstream activity may at times be directed towards people in rural areas if the evidence shows that this is where interventions and support is most needed. This is a strategy and does not go into the detail of specific programmes.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
175	Review of Access and Use of Household Recycling Centres.	May impact rural needs - Although statistical information is not available to substantiate, rural households would tend to make more use of vans, pick-ups, large trailers, agricultural vehicles etc., that will require a permit for a visit. Some rural activities also result in the generation of additional waste (agriculture) that the Household Recycling Centres are viewed as a disposal route for. The Council is not obliged to accept agricultural waste at the Housing Recycling Centres.
176	Developing a Street Naming and Numbering.	The policy will not impact any differently in rural areas as people in rural areas will have the same opportunities under the policy.
177	Installation of Person Rescue Equipment.	Positive impact - Life saving equipment will be used throughout the Borough's coastal areas, helps prevent water ingress and therefore assists with buoyancy allowing more time for emergency services to attend.
178	Developing a Local Biodiversity Action Plan.	Positive impacts on rural areas - bringing more biodiversity to all areas and allowing community to input into the local areas.
179	Developing a Friends Group Policy.	Positive impact - Smaller community organisations, such as Friends Groups, operating at the local level can play an integral part in community development. A key strength is their sensitivity to local issues and culture, and knowledge of their specific areas.
180	Review of Anti-Fraud and Bribery.	No rural impacts identified.
181	Developing a Good Relations Strategy 2022-25 and 1 year Action Plan.	Positive impact - The action plan will impact on individuals and groups across the Borough and some of the work will be specifically targeted at those living, working or receiving education in rural areas. This is because the Good Relations Strategy is to deliver a programme of a breadth of events across the Borough. To ensure this is achieved programmes will be delivered and promoted in rural areas and be appropriate for the target audiences and relevant to the issues identified and encourage the promotion of good relations.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
182	Development of Whitespots Country Park Scheme.	Positive impact - this environmental improvement scheme will improve accessibility of Whitespots Country Park and provide a green outdoor space that has usable, safe and accessible space with signage. The scheme will increase the pride of people living in its surroundings and will also assist in the wellbeing and improve health outcomes.
183	Developing Ards and North Down Borough Councils Policing and Community Safety Partnership Strategic plan 2022-2025 and Action Plan 2022-2023.	Positive impact - The consultation developing this strategy and action plan involved rural areas, their Elected Members and their community organisation representatives. It will be beneficial to reduce rural crime and increase rural safety.
184	Review of Asset Management Policy.	This policy aims to provide staff with a proportionate control environment in respect of asset acquisition, management, and disposal. No rural impacts identified.
185	Review of Treasury and Investment Management Policy and Practices.	The purpose of this document is to set out the Council's policy and practices for the Treasury Management function in accordance with legislative requirements and The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy Code of Practice on Treasury Management. No rural impacts identified.

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
186	4C UR Future Live Event.	This was an event organised for schools in the Borough. No rural needs were identified.
187	Age Friendly Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2025.	<p>This is the first Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Age Friendly Strategy and Action Plan developed in response to our ageing population to promote physical and social environments that support healthy and active ageing and a good quality of life for older people in the Borough.</p> <p>The strategy was influenced by the following rural needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Inclusion - Connect older people and prospective volunteers to training and support to improve digital inclusion for older people; • Transport Issues - Explore partnership initiatives to expose and support older people to access public and community transport; • Loneliness and isolation - Support and promote the work of the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Loneliness Network, to encourage people to connect with each other; and • Access to services - Map existing activities and services. <p>Work to ensure that individuals know where to go to get advice, and information on social activities and training and learning opportunities.</p> <p>Connect our older people to services that will enable them to live independently for longer in their own homes.</p> <p>Mental health - Action plan scope and collaborate to promote good mental health and wellbeing. There will also be actions to promote the uptake of mental health programmes including for those in rural hard to reach areas.</p>
188	Armagh Palace Demesne Public Park - TJ McElmeel Cross Country Event.	This was an event held at the Armagh Palace Demesne Public Park. No rural needs were identified.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
189	Armagh Palace Demesne Public Park- Ulster Cyclocross League 9 Race Event.	This was an event held at the Armagh Palace Demesne Public Park. No rural needs were identified.
190	Armagh Palace Demesne Public Park - Ulster Secondary Schools Association District D Cross Country Race Event.	This was an event held at the Armagh Palace Demesne Public Park. No rural needs were identified.
191	Armed Forces Day Community Event.	Community Event held in respect of Armed Forces Day. No rural needs were identified.
192	Banbridge Baptist Church - Praise in the Park Event.	This was an event held in Solitude Park. No rural needs were identified.
193	Banbridge Town Dressing Project.	This is an innovative project which aims to encourage pride in the Banbridge area, even though it is urban based it will have a positive effect on the surrounding rural hinterland.
194	Brownstown Park Football Tournament.	This was an event held at Brownstown Park. No rural needs were identified.
195	Casual Usage Policy.	No rural needs were identified.
196	Corporate Health and Safety Policy.	No rural needs were identified.
197	Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Policy.	No rural needs were identified.
198	Financial Regulations.	No rural needs were identified.
199	Loughgall Country Park - Request from the Royal Black Institution to hold an event.	This was an event held at Loughgall Country Park. No rural needs were identified.
200	Lurgan Baptist Church - Praise in the Park Event.	This was an event held at Lurgan Park. No rural needs were identified.
201	Lurgan Park Funfair.	This was an event held at Lurgan Park. No rural needs were identified.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
202 Lurgan Park - Request from the County Armagh Kennel Club to host their Annual Dog Championships.	This was an event held at Lurgan Park. No rural needs were identified.
<p>203 Park Events 2023 (15).</p> <p>These Rural Needs Impact Assessments are available on request:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Ultra Event; • Emmanuel Church, Easter Funday; • Darkness into Light Walk; • Portadown Canine Association; • Bells Fun Fair; • Huhtamaki Staff Fun Day; • Lurgan Show; • Craigavon Pipe Championship; • Craigavon Cup Football Festival; • B Positive 24 hour charity walk; • St. Peters Half Marathon; • NI Hyatt Ltd. Football Tournament; • Country Comes to Town; • TJ McElmeel Cross Country Event; and • Square Wheels Cyclo Cross Event. 	These are events held in Council Parks. No rural needs were identified.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
204	Play Strategy 2018-2026 - Non-Fixed Play.	Residents in rural areas have the right to enjoy a healthy lifestyle so it is important they have access to non-fixed play programmes. Criteria are used to inform non-fixed play programmes across the Borough. This takes into account the needs of residents in rural areas.
205	Quality Management Policy.	No rural needs were identified.
206	Small Settlement Business Support Grant Scheme.	This is an innovative grant scheme which aims to encourage owners and tenants to invest in their buildings. The grant scheme has two tiers aimed at supporting businesses located within small settlements with a population between 1000 and 4999. It will have a positive impact on the following rural settlements - Tandragee, Keady, Richhill, Rathfriland, Dollingstown, Gilford, Donaghcloney, Markethill, Magheralin, Laurelvale/Mullavilly, Aghagallon and Bleary.
207	Work Experience and Placement Procedure.	No rural needs were identified.

Belfast City Council

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
208	Corporation Street & Exchange Street Placemaking Brief.	This project has considered the impacts on a range of existing and potential stakeholders. We do not consider this policy to have relevance to the social and economic needs of persons in rural areas.
209	Heritage Trail Sign Policy - City Hall.	The Heritage Trail Policy - City Hall applies only to the installation of interpretive signs at City Hall in Belfast City Centre and is not likely to impact people in rural areas. Therefore, the council has not taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.
210	Development of a Commercial Plan.	The draft Commercial Plan aims to contribute to the Council's investment plans, its efficiency programme and to 'recovering' and 'rebuilding' from the COVID-19 pandemic. This will assist to safeguard services that are delivered in all our local communities (both rural and urban). That being the case, it is anticipated there will be no adverse impact on people in rural areas. The draft Commercial Plan was not adopted by the Council and therefore, the Council is not implementing it at this time.
211	Naming a new public park in Colin as Páirc Nua Chollann.	The name of the new park has no implications for the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.
212	Onboarding of Council Services and return to the office for office-based staff.	Some Council staff live in and travel from rural areas. However the current proposals to recover all Council service provision and return to the workplace, office based staff, who have been working remotely during the pandemic, will revert to their contracted pre COVID-19 working patterns/working locations.
213	Introducing a Car User Policy.	The policy is for use by internal staff of Belfast City Council and has no impact on people in rural areas.
214	Reopening of Knockbreda Road entrance to Cherryvale Playing Fields.	No rural needs were identified in planning the Knockbreda Road entrance gate into Cherryvale Playing Fields and park having given due regard to likely users coming from a localised vicinity to the proposed reopening of the access point.

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215	Hub of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Belfast Roadmap.	The roadmap will have no direct impact on people in rural areas as it is focused on digital innovation and creative industries on the Maritime Mile.
216	Age Friendly Belfast Plan 2022-26.	The plan does not make specific proposals for rural areas at this stage, however more detailed planning in relation to the specific actions will consider any potential differential impacts on rural areas as they are progressed.
217	Fuel Poverty Hardship Fund.	We will ensure the support available through the Fuel Poverty Hardship Fund will reach those most in need in both rural and urban areas on an equitable and inclusive basis through the application of pre-set eligibility criteria and effective monitoring and verification processes built into the project management system.
218	Additional leave provisions for bereavement, miscarriage and fertility treatment.	The policy is for use by internal staff of Belfast City Council and has no impact on people in rural areas.
219	Smart Belfast Urban Innovation Framework 2022-2026.	The framework will have no direct impact on people in rural areas as it is focused on urban innovation. A public consultation carried out on the framework did not identify any specific issues for people in rural areas or any likely adverse rural impact.
220	Security Unit Shift Rota.	The policy is for use by internal staff of Belfast City Council and has no impact on people in rural areas.

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
221 Design of a Stained Glass Window to commemorate NI 100.	No rural needs have been identified.
222 The development and introduction of a Council-wide Fleet Safety Policy.	<p>At policy design stage the following factors were taken into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing services to rural communities geographical dispersion; • Fleet failures impact: service provision, service quality, greater economic cost for service users to avail of a comparable service; and • Impacts on small businesses who rely on doorstep refuse collection. <p>Social interaction through the provision of services may reduce isolation determined via the Economic Development Strategy.</p> <p>In rural areas reductions in harmful emissions will also have a positive impact on rural communities which often rely on farming for their livelihood. As a result, operational routes are periodically reviewed to ensure optimum utilisation.</p>
223 Implementation of the Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme.	<p>Extensive consultation has been undertaken in the settlements through the Rural Development Village Renewal Programme 2014-2020 which highlighted the lack of public transport, lack of activity programmes for young people and the elderly populations. Other issues such as lack of recreation facilities, walking paths, outdoor games and play areas particularly relating to children with disabilities were highlighted along with a sense of dereliction of street furniture and outdoor spaces.</p> <p>The needs of rural dwellers has informed the direction of resources towards rural areas with regards to regeneration.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>224 A Better Future Together for Causeway Coast and Glens Community Plan and Delivery Plan.</p>	<p>Development of a baseline of the existing conditions and key issues in the area. Based on this statistical evidence and information gathered following a range of Thematic Working Group meetings, public meetings and other engagement processes, the Community Plan contained three population outcomes, supported by 12 intermediate outcomes.</p> <p>Information was identified and collated on the social, economic, and environmental needs of the area in the context of regional, national and European policies and strategies, taking account of communities and issues that extend into neighbouring council areas and jurisdictions.</p> <p>Issues such as access to public/sustainable transport networks, social isolation, access to services and facilities are more pronounced in rural areas. This informed the prioritisation of issues during the development of more specific strategic actions (Delivery Plan). Examples of which include but are not limited to: Local Housing Need, Local Transport, Age Friendly Strategy, Loneliness Network, Anti-Poverty, collaborative working for Children and Young People and protection of natural heritage, led by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.</p> <p>Specific issues rural citizens experience including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural workers (91%) are also much more likely to use private transport to commute; • Broadband speed and availability, though improving, is still much lower in rural areas; • Access to public transport in rural areas is much lower than that in towns and cities - journey times to key services by car are on average twice as long for rural dwellers: and • Rural pensioners are nearly twice as likely to experience relative or absolute poverty than their urban counterparts (“Key Rural Issues, Northern

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.	
	<p>Ireland 2020”, by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs).</p> <p>Data was sourced Borough wide, and where available at District Electoral Area level to measure progress over the lifetime of the Community Plan.</p> <p>Rural residents have been engaged through face-to-face meetings via our libraries, consultation drop-in sessions in rural and urban settings and public/elected members questionnaire.</p> <p>Individuals attending our libraries consultation drop-in sessions continue to highlight issues such as access to public/sustainable transport networks, social isolation, access to services and facilities and more so currently due to the current cost of living crisis.</p>	
225	Citizens’ Newsletter Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.	Distribution and online publication of the Citizens’ Newsletter directly to all households across the Borough.
226	Vehicle, Plant and Machinery Asset Policy.	No rural needs have been identified.

Derry City and Strabane District Council

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
227 Corporate & Improvement Plan 2022/23.	<p>Examples of Improvement Objectives inserted following consultation to contribute to economic and social wellbeing:</p> <p>Draft Improvement Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase employment opportunities and economic growth through a range of measures including creating new business start-ups, supporting existing business and delivering visitor growth as a destination of choice; <p>Sub Objectives related to rural needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create jobs through the Rural Business Investment Scheme. • To assist develop healthy lifestyles through increased participation in high quality leisure and sports activities; <p>Sub Objectives related to rural needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To target under-represented groups through inclusive leisure, sport and physical activity participation to lead more active lives. • To protect and enhance the environment through creating and supporting a culture of environmental stewardship; <p>Sub Objectives related to rural needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To protect and promote our natural and built assets; and - To protect and enhance our environment.
228 Hybrid Working Policy.	The hybrid working arrangements will be offered to all staff working in suitable service areas regardless of whether they live in rural or urban areas.

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229	Council Meeting Arrangements.	This proposal to hold hybrid Council meetings is about improving participation for all elected members however it is noted that members in rural areas may benefit more from virtual meetings through greater reductions in travel time, better time management where they can attend more meetings and better engagement with their electorate who are more dispersed in the rural areas.
230	Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Policy.	This policy is applicable to all staff however staff from rural areas who experience abuse may be more inclined to use the support and help provided by Council due to the lack of support in rural areas in general.
231	Risk Management Strategy.	This is a technical policy and therefore has no differential implications for any people in the rural areas as compared to people in urban areas.
232	Conflict of Interest Policy.	This is a technical policy and therefore has no differential implications for any people in the rural areas as compared to people in urban areas.
233	Gifts and Hospitality Policy.	This is a technical policy and therefore has no differential implications for any people in the rural areas as compared to people in urban areas.
234	PEACEPLUS 1.1 Funding Bid.	Through the co-design process which strongly engaged with rural communities in each of the 3 rural in our district electoral areas council area, the 16 projects were suggested, scoped and selected for inclusion in the PEACEPLUS Local Co-Designed Action Plan.
235	Review of Code of Practice on Producing Information.	This is a technical policy and therefore has no differential implications for any people in the rural areas as compared to people in urban areas.
236	Fuel Poverty.	Following dedicated meetings with the rural local growth partnerships to design ways to address the challenges of access to broadband and support services in the roll out of this initiative, the following measures have been agreed to reduce any barriers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of more trusted partners who could complete the forms on behalf of rural citizens;

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulation of the criteria and sections of the form in advance of the opening; and • Agreement to the acceptance of photographs of evidence and the application form which could be emailed from trusted partners as well as individuals.
237 Rates Estimates 2023-24.	<p>To set out the budgets for the 2023-24 year.</p> <p>Delivery of the Council's Corporate and Improvement Plan and implementation of the decisions of Council.</p>
238 Litter/Dog Foul Bin Policy.	<p>Purpose of policy was to set out internal processes for the installation, emptying and maintaining of the litter and dog foul bins.</p>
239 Review of Bulky Lift Policy.	<p>The Bulky Lift Policy is designed to provide a free service to all residents of the Derry City and Strabane Council area to allow them to dispose of unwanted large items in an environmentally friendly way.</p>

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
240	Information and Communication Technology Policies & Procedures.	The Council has not considered issues in relation to the social and economic needs of staff in rural areas as the policy will not impact differently on staff based in rural areas compared to those in urban areas. The policy will be applied equally irrespective of location.
241	Safe Driving at Work Policy.	The Council has not considered issues in relation to the social and economic needs of staff in rural areas as the policy will not impact differently on staff based in rural areas compared to those in urban areas. The policy will be applied equally irrespective of location.
242	Visitor Experience Development Plan.	The Council has not considered issues in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas as the plan will not impact differently on people in rural areas compared to those in urban areas. The plan will have the same positive impact on people in rural and urban areas.
243	Enniskillen Place Shaping Plan.	<p>The actions identified in the plan have been informed through research and extensive engagement with key stakeholders (including the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs) with the goal of bringing tangible and effective change to Enniskillen. This will positively support growth and change throughout the district, providing more opportunity for economic growth, access to skilled workforce, improved digital infrastructure and other services.</p> <p>The plan will have a positive impact for surrounding rural communities, thereby helping to sustain these areas. The plan strongly advocates for the completion of the A4 Enniskillen Southern Bypass, which would also positively benefit surrounding rural communities by improving their connectivity and accessibility.</p>
244	Omagh Place Shaping Plan.	The actions identified in the plan have been informed by through research and extensive engagement with key stakeholders (including the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs) with the goal of bringing

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	<p>tangible and effective change to Omagh. This will positively support growth and change throughout the district, providing more opportunity for economic growth, access to skilled workforce, improved digital infrastructure and other services.</p> <p>The plan will have a positive impact for surrounding rural communities, thereby helping to sustain these areas. The plan strongly advocates for the completion of the A5 Western Transport Corridor, which would also positively benefit surrounding rural communities by improving their connectivity and accessibility.</p>
245 Assisted Bin Lift and Additional Bin Collection Policy (including 360L recycling blue bin).	<p>The Assisted Bin Lift, Additional Bin Collection and 360L Blue Recycling Bin Policy will have the same positive impact on people in rural and urban areas. Each application will be assessed on a case by case basis. The Policy will be applied equally irrespective of location.</p>
246 Local Development Plan.	<p>In January 2023, the Department for Infrastructure issued a direction to the Council to adopt the plan/strategy with modifications. The Department's direction included two schedules. The first schedule contains recommended amendments which reflect the Council's proposed changes (October 2020). The Council has already screened these proposed changes in the Rural Needs Impact Assessment Appraisal Addendum FODC114. The second schedule in the direction included for screening purposes are those modifications which the Department for Infrastructure has directed as being necessary for the adoption of the Plan Strategy. It should be noted that of the 50 proposed modifications directed by the Department for Infrastructure, many of these consist of minor edits to proposed changes previously suggested by Fermanagh & Omagh District Council. Therefore, this further Rural Needs Impact Assessment Addendum should be read in conjunction with the Rural Needs Impact Assessment FODC105 and the Rural Needs Impact Assessment Appraisal Addendum FODC114.</p>

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247	Travel & Subsistence Policy.	The Travel and Subsistence Policy (for staff) will have the same positive impact on staff in rural and urban areas. The purpose of the policy is to ensure a consistent approach to the full and prompt reimbursement of costs necessarily incurred by staff of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council in the course of their duties. The policy will not impact differently on staff in rural areas as it will be applied equally irrespective of location.
248	Financial Reserves Policy.	The Financial Reserves Policy will have the same positive impact on people in rural and urban areas. The purpose of the policy is to assist with the effective financial management of the Council by providing adequate cover for future financial liabilities or unexpected costs. The policy will not impact differently on people in rural areas as it will be applied equally to employees and the general public across the whole district, irrespective of location.
249	Breastfeeding Policy.	The Council has not considered issues in relation to the social and economic needs of staff in rural areas on this occasion as the policy will not impact differently on staff in rural areas. The policy will be applied equally irrespective of location.
250	Maternity Leave Policy.	The Council has not considered issues in relation to the social and economic needs of staff in rural areas on this occasion as the policy will not impact differently on staff in rural areas. The policy will be applied equally irrespective of location.
251	Paternity Leave Policy.	The Council has not considered issues in relation to the social and economic needs of staff in rural areas on this occasion as the policy will not impact differently on staff in rural areas. The policy will be applied equally irrespective of location.
252	Parental Leave Policy.	The Council has not considered issues in relation to the social and economic needs of staff in rural areas on this occasion as the policy will not impact differently on staff in rural areas. The policy will be applied equally irrespective of location.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
253	Shared Parental Leave Policy.	The Council has not considered issues in relation to the social and economic needs of staff in rural areas on this occasion as the policy will not impact differently on staff in rural areas. The policy will be applied equally irrespective of location.

Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>254 Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2022-23.</p>	<p>Rural needs given due consideration through the screening exercise undertaken by the Council. The programme provides targeted support to businesses within rural areas only.</p> <p>Funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs under the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme, the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme allocated a budget of £70,000 to Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council. The programme aims to support at least 14 rural micro businesses with capital grant capped at £4,999 at a match-funding rate of 50% from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and 50% from participating businesses. Businesses operating within a rural area will have the opportunity to benefit from the fund via a competitive application process.</p> <p>The rural share of the Northern Ireland population is growing. Over the years 2001-2011 the number of people living in rural areas of Northern Ireland increased by 15% in comparison to a rise of only 4% in urban areas. According to the Interim Local Rural Development Strategy (2016), just under half of the population (47.2%) in the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council area live in rural areas. In the last decade to 2016, suburban areas have seen the highest growth rate of 22.1% with five wards alone covering over half of the districts growth - Ballymacross (44.3%), Carrowreagh (9.7%), Maghaberry (7%), Glenavy (6.3%) and Derriaghy (6.2%).</p> <p>In Northern Ireland 58% of businesses are based in rural area. The business base in the region as a whole is predominantly small to medium enterprises with a dominance of micro business. In terms of businesses located only in rural areas, 94% are defined as micro (having less than 10 employees). Rural businesses located in Northern Ireland have particular challenges and need specific solutions. The slow uptake of agriculture and rural enterprises in Northern Ireland</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>with regards to innovation, the fact that only 67% of rural areas have superfast broadband coverage (98% in urban areas) and 14% of tourism expenditure takes place in rural areas (compared with 86% in urban) are further examples of challenges facing the small rural businesses in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme focuses on the three priority areas of access poverty, financial poverty and social isolation which targets vulnerable groups in rural areas based on identified need.</p>
255 Labour Market Partnership.	<p>The aim of the Labour Market Partnership is to improve employability outcomes and labour market conditions by working through a coordinated, collaborative and multi-agency partnership. Thus achieving regional objectives whilst being flexible to meet the needs presented by localised conditions and helping to connect employers with employees.</p> <p>The Labour Market Partnership is responsible for improving the labour market across Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council regardless of location. COVID-19 has had a dramatic impact on the local labour market. At its peak almost 140,000 employees were on furlough equivalent to roughly 15% of all employees. In March 2021, 100,000 employees were still on furlough. Evidence suggests the impact was greater on younger employees, those with low skills and workers with smaller enterprises. A demographic assessment of sectoral employment by the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre highlighted a number of concerns including increased vulnerability of women, individuals with long term health conditions and people living in flexible forms of employment. The impact on those with low or no qualifications was also highlighted as an area of concern.</p> <p>Extensive consultations with Social Enterprise Organisations led to the discovery of significant employability gaps across Lisburn & Castlereagh.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>The rate of disability in Northern Ireland is higher than the other UK regions with the exception of Wales. The most striking finding was that 60.2% of disabled people in Northern Ireland are economically inactive while the comparative figure for the UK as a whole stands at 42.5%.</p> <p>Using the desk based research and findings from our consultations led Lisburn & Castlereagh Labour Market Partnership to develop an action plan which is geared towards alleviating unemployment and improving the labour market across the province. Therefore, both rural and urban dwellers will benefit collectively.</p>
256 European Social Fund - Call 3 Application Call.	<p>The European Commission part-funds the European Social Fund along with assistance from public authorities in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The strategic aim of the Northern Ireland European Social Fund Operational Programme 2014-2020 is to combat poverty and enhance social inclusion by reducing economic inactivity and to increase the skills base of those currently in work and future potential participants in the workforce.</p> <p>Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council have allocated a total of £100,000 to match fund successful applicants from the Department for the Economy's third call of the European Social Fund. The timeframe for projects will run from 1 April 2022 for 12 months. This is a competitive grant funding process with all award decisions made on the basis of merit.</p> <p>The European Social Fund Programme supports a wide and diverse range of projects across Northern Ireland. The programme provides organisations with financial assistance to enable participants that are disadvantaged to develop the skills and confidence that they require in order to find employment. Projects offer a range of services, courses and activities, including advice, guidance, support, practical training and qualifications that enables participants to achieve their full potential.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>The programme especially targets groups who are most likely to experience disadvantage in accessing employment and will particularly benefit some groups, for example, disabled people and younger people.</p> <p>The programme is geared toward assisting young people, people out of work, people with a disability or those requiring a family support programme.</p> <p>The European Social Fund is the European Union's most important instrument for helping citizens with finding better jobs and for ensuring fairer job opportunities for all. It plays an important role in meeting Europe's goals of more and better jobs as well as in promoting an inclusive society, and in mitigating the consequences of the economic crisis - particularly the increase of unemployment and poverty. The project will enhance the employment opportunities for disadvantaged residents of Lisburn & Castlereagh regardless of their rural/urban location.</p>
257 Development of an Interim Inclusive Fixed Play Park Provision Policy.	<p>The development of the Interim Fixed Play Provision Policy has considered the social and economic needs of people in rural areas and the need for children and families in rural areas to have equitable access to quality, inclusive play facilities that are reasonably accessible to where they live.</p> <p>The policy recognises the contribution fixed play parks make to addressing health and wellbeing and social isolation for families and children, including in rural areas.</p> <p>Steps will be taken to ensure that fixed play provision will be distributed evenly across the borough in both rural and urban areas. In rural areas, play parks tend to be located in rural villages. Accessibility has been considered in rural areas and, where possible, access is provided for wheelchairs and buggies. When funding allows, inclusive fixed play equipment will be installed in rural play parks.</p> <p>In future fixed play park development, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council will carry out targeted consultation with rural community groups, who will have an interest in the policy.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>258 Formation of new PEACEPLUS Partnership 2022-2027.</p>	<p>The PEACEPLUS Programme is a €1.14bn investment in the social, economic and environmental development of Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. It comprises six themes, which encompass 21 individual investment areas.</p> <p>Local Authorities will be delivering their plans under Investment Area 1: Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities, specifically Theme 1.1 Co-designed Local Community PEACE Action Plans.</p> <p>The PEACEPLUS Partnership will oversee the implementation of the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council PEACE Action Plan 2022-27. It is a requirement of the funding that the partnership is representative of Section 75 groups and Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council aims to ensure it is also representative of the district's electoral areas, including rural and urban. The main consideration at the partnership formation stage was to ensure balanced representation in membership.</p> <p>In forming the partnership, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council invited all key target groups to apply to become a member, including groups that represent the rural community. Promotion of the opportunity included public adverts, information session and specific targeting.</p> <p>Programme activities will seek to address social and economic needs of people in rural areas in a balanced way.</p>
<p>259 Outline Business Case for City Deal Investment in Hillsborough Castle & Heritage Village.</p>	<p>The Rural Needs Impact Assessment for this city deal investment outlines consultation that was undertaken with local rural residents and rural businesses, particularly within the tourism, hospitality and retail sectors regarding the further development of Hillsborough Castle & Gardens and an associated public realm scheme for Hillsborough Village to maximise the rural tourism offer of the proposal.</p> <p>The social and economic impact on rural businesses was considered via an analysis of the impact of potential economic displacement that may arise if certain options</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>were to be implemented, whilst analysis was also undertaken as to how the project could positively impact on job creation and increased gross value added within the surrounding rural area.</p> <p>Significant consultation has been undertaken with government departments to determine potential positive and negative impacts of infrastructure proposals aimed to enhance the visitor experience, alleviate traffic and pedestrian flows and improve car parking in a rural village that will potentially see a significant increase in tourist visitors in future years.</p>
260 Integrated Marketing Campaign.	<p>The Integrated Marketing Campaign is a campaign aimed to promote the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area as a visitor destination across Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland and also to support the promotion of Lisburn City Centre and its commercial offering (mainly retail and hospitality).</p> <p>Whilst the campaign will promote the rural and urban areas of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council; cognisance will be taken of the imbalance of tourism dwell time in rural and urban areas.</p> <p>The sustainability and stability of businesses is very important in a rural context as these businesses sustain the local community. By engaging in the Integrated Marketing Campaign businesses will have the opportunity to explore ways of increasing sales, improving productivity and profitability.</p> <p>With almost half of the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council district being considered rural, the spread of tourism benefits to tourism and hospitality providers throughout the whole council area is well placed. This is verified in the Interim Local Rural Development Strategy (2016), with just under half of the population (47.2%) in the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area live in rural areas.</p> <p>In the last decade to 2016, suburban areas have seen the highest growth rate of 22.1% with five wards alone covering over half of the districts growth - Ballymacross (44.3%), Carrowreagh (9.7%), Maghaberry (7%), Glenavy (6.3%) and Derriaghy (6.2%).</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>261 Royal Hillsborough Historic Moira Programme.</p>	<p>The Royal Hillsborough Historic Moira Programme is a continuation of the Rural Tourism Collaborative Experience Programme and has been funded by the Department for Communities.</p> <p>The programme is aimed at tourism and hospitality businesses to encourage them to collaborate in an attempt to redress the current imbalance of tourism dwell time in rural and urban areas. The programme will also help build businesses up after the temporary closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The key aim of this programme is to bring together a number of rural businesses and other potential partners who will co-develop a combined experience to offer the visitor an end to end holistic product that meets the visitor's need, increasing dwell time in the rural area and driving economic growth.</p> <p>The programme focuses on Royal Hillsborough and Moira, two rural villages in the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area that have a rich history and a unique, high quality food offering.</p> <p>The sustainability and stability of businesses is very important in a rural context as these businesses sustain the local community. By engaging in the Rural Tourism Collaborative Experience Programme businesses will have the opportunity to explore ways of increasing sales, improving productivity and profitability.</p> <p>With almost half of the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council district being considered rural, the spread of tourism benefits to tourism and hospitality providers throughout the whole council area is well placed. This is verified in the Interim Local Rural Development Strategy (2016), with just under half of the population (47.2%) in the Lisburn & Castlereagh area live in rural areas.</p> <p>In the last decade to 2016, suburban areas have seen the highest growth rate of 22.1% with five wards alone covering over half of the districts growth - Ballymacross (44.3%), Carrowreagh (9.7%), Maghaberry (7%), Glenavy (6.3%) and Derriaghy (6.2%).</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
262 Food and Drink Programme.	<p>The Food and Drink Programme aims to bring together a number of rural artisan producers and other potential partners to strengthen food areas and raise awareness of the range and quality of food producers. The Lisburn & Castlereagh Tourism Strategy 2018-2022, identified supporting the growing food sector to establish the area as a culinary destination. By showcasing events with local producers it is offering the producers a chance to sell direct to the public. These events boost the area reputation by putting food and drink at the heart of its tourism experience. It is offering visitors to the food events experiences increasing dwell time in the rural area and driving economic growth.</p> <p>In Northern Ireland 58% of businesses are based in rural areas. The business base in the region as a whole is predominantly small to medium enterprises with a dominance of micro businesses. In terms of businesses located only in rural areas, 94% are defined as micro (having less than 10 employees).</p> <p>Rural businesses located in Northern Ireland have particular challenges and need specific solutions. The slow uptake of agriculture and rural enterprises in Northern Ireland with regards to innovation, the fact that only 67% of rural areas have superfast broadband coverage (98% in urban areas) and 14% of tourism expenditure takes place in rural areas, compared with 86% in urban, are further examples of challenges facing the small rural businesses in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Considering that almost half of the Lisburn & Castlereagh district is rural, regeneration is a key priority for the Council whom over the next 10 years will continue to invest in regeneration initiatives. Economic development initiatives such as the Food and Drink Programme will benefit the local rural population and visitors to the area. The project will contribute towards Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's overall objective of increasing economic development in the Lisburn & Castlereagh area for the benefit of all citizens.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
263 Annual Lisburn Light Festival.	<p>Whilst this project is delivered in the urban centres of Lisburn City, Carryduff and Dundonald, many people living in rural areas visit these areas to enjoy the Light Festival. The Light Festival is advertised widely across the council area and is for the benefit of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council residents although we know the reach of the Light Festival goes beyond the council area.</p> <p>The Light Festival will not primarily impact on people in rural areas differently, it will have a neutral impact as the Light Festival is delivered for the benefit of town dwellers and rural dwellers equally.</p> <p>The overall Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council wide Christmas Programme is delivered as such which includes Christmas light switch ons in many of the surrounding rural villages. Pole mounts are also installed across many of the rural villages to the benefit of residents living in those areas.</p> <p>All residents of the Lisburn & Castlereagh area will benefit from the Christmas Programme.</p> <p>The Light Festival is advertised widely across the council area and we know the reach of the light festival goes beyond the council area.</p> <p>The objectives of the Light Festival include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting urban centres as a positive lifestyle destination e.g. shopping, entertainment, arts and culture; • Changing the perception of Lisburn City Centre as a Christmas visitor destination; • Animating Lisburn City Centre over the Christmas period; • Improving the public's perceptions of the area as a result of this project; and

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working in partnership with local Lisburn City Centre businesses to maximise the economic contribution into the Council area by attracting spend from inward investors and visitors as well as residents. <p>Monitoring of events held in these areas such as Christmas Markets and family friendly events has indicated that rural residents travel into the urban centres to partake in the festivities.</p> <p>Information sources include; Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council website and social media channels as well as local community groups.</p> <p>Surveys are carried out pre (November) and post (January) Light Festival and associated events (throughout December) in order to inform and justify the delivery of events year on year.</p> <p>All residents of the Lisburn & Castlereagh area and neighboring council areas will benefit from the Christmas Programme.</p>
264 COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme.	<p>The programme is funded through the Department for Communities, the Department for Infrastructure and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. The funders outlined a number of initiatives that could be delivered as part of this programme and this was used to create a final plan which was agreed upon by the funders and confirmed via a letter of offer to the council in January 2022.</p> <p>The programme aims to deliver on these objectives through realising a range of benefits including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical regeneration of small settlements in order to improve place making and aid recovery from COVID-19; Improvements that encourage people to live, work, visit and invest in the area by 2022/23; and Improvements that enhance walking, cycling and other associated facilities within the scheme area by 2022/23.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council have previously developed Rural Village Renewal Plans (2016) that have been used to help inform the improvements required in rural villages within the council area and the named Small Settlements. External consultants helped the council to deliver this initiative and consultations were organised at the time to inform the final plans.</p> <p>Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's Communities Team are developing village plans through a consultation process in order to inform environmental improvements.</p> <p>Statistics from the Census 2011 had also helped to inform the programme and the equality needs of the people who live in the highlighted areas.</p> <p>The COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently than people in urban areas.</p> <p>This is because the programme is being directed specifically on Small Settlements which happen to be situated in rural areas.</p> <p>The programme includes physical regeneration in order to improve place making and aid recovery from COVID-19, improvements that encourage people to live, work, visit and invest in the area by 2022/23 and improvements that enhance walking, cycling and other associated facilities within the scheme area by 2022/23.</p>
265 Evaluation Services.	<p>The appointment of a specialist to deliver evaluation services for Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council will have a positive impact on people in rural areas.</p> <p>The appointment of a specialist to deliver evaluation services will enable Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build upon existing investment, success and engagement with businesses; • Complement other events and initiatives;

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record and report the success of initiatives to members and stakeholders which may lead to further investment; • Ensure it is delivering services based on need; • Make services more efficient and effective; • Provide direction and inform strategic decisions; • Ensure we maximise access to grant opportunities by providing evidence based support; and • Strengthen and inform communication and marketing efforts in respect the deliverables and outcomes. <p>The appointment will not impact on people in rural areas differently from people in urban areas, it will have an equally positive impact on town dwellers and rural dwellers.</p>
266 Development of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council International Trade Programme 2022-23.	<p>The International Trade Programme aims to deliver an annual programme of international trade activity as part of an overall strategy to support local businesses to grow through developing new customers and markets outside Northern Ireland. Location/rurality is not a factor in deciding whether an applicant business will be supported.</p> <p>Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council staff have considered the need to ensure the programme is well promoted to businesses in rural areas and to ensure there are no barriers to access. They are also aware of the need to try to ensure equitable spread of benefit across rural areas.</p> <p>Where feasible, support is tailored to the needs of the particular business and will take into account any rural-specific factors that are relevant to the programme.</p>
267 Development of Enterprise Lisburn Castlereagh Programme 2022-2023.	<p>The Enterprise Lisburn Castlereagh Programme offers a range of activities that aim to encourage growth in entrepreneurship. This includes initiatives that are aimed particularly at stimulating Youth and Female Entrepreneurship as well as creating a support network for existing entrepreneurs and encouraging innovation in the micro-business sector.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>In developing the annual plan for this programme, there was consideration of its potential to contribute to business creation and employment/self-employment for people who want to live and work in rural areas. There was also consideration of how the programme would be promoted and implemented to ensure people in rural areas are aware of it and experience no barriers to access or participation. There was recognition of the need for balanced support for enterprise and business creation across the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area, including in rural areas.</p>
<p>268 Development of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Business Development Collaborative 2022-23.</p>	<p>Activities under this programme include business awards, public relations and promotional activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support businesses; networking events; and • Responsive and tailored consultancy advice and support that reflects business needs. <p>Activities are potentially available to benefit businesses, regardless of rural or urban location.</p> <p>All Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council business support initiatives recognise the need for balanced and equitable support across the district, including the need to support employment and business growth in rural areas.</p> <p>The overall operation and proposed programme of activity have not been particularly influenced as businesses in both rural and urban locations are intended to benefit equally.</p> <p>However, staff are aware of the need to ensure the programme activity is well promoted and that there are no barriers to information, support or participation for businesses located in rural areas.</p>

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
269	Coronation Plans in Mid and East Antrim.	Considered appropriate data; completion of screening and mitigation where appropriate.
270	Performance Improvement Plan 2022-2023.	Considered appropriate data; completion of screening and mitigation where appropriate.
271	Entertainment License Policy.	Considered appropriate data; completion of screening and mitigation where appropriate.
272	Retention & Disposal Schedule.	No rural needs were identified. This is an internal document affecting employees within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. No rural needs were identified as being impacted during this process.
273	Menopause Policy.	No rural needs were identified. This is an internal document affecting employees within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. No rural needs were identified as being impacted during this process.
274	Procurement.	No rural needs were identified. This is an internal document affecting employees within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. No rural needs were identified as being impacted during this process.
275	Acceptable Use - Information and Communications Technology.	No rural needs were identified. This is an internal document affecting employees within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. No rural needs were identified as being impacted during this process.
276	Internet and Email.	No rural needs were identified. This is an internal document affecting employees within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. No rural needs were identified as being impacted during this process.
277	Laptop Security.	No rural needs were identified. This is an internal document affecting employees within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. No rural needs were identified as being impacted during this process.
278	Mobile Phone.	No rural needs were identified. This is an internal document affecting employees within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. No rural needs were identified as being impacted during this process.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
279	Network Security.	No rural needs were identified. This is an internal document affecting employees within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. No rural needs were identified as being impacted during this process.
280	Software.	No rural needs were identified. This is an internal document affecting employees within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. No rural needs were identified as being impacted during this process.
281	Strong Password.	No rural needs were identified. This is an internal document affecting employees within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. No rural needs were identified as being impacted during this process.
282	Tablet.	No rural needs were identified. This is an internal document affecting employees within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. No rural needs were identified as being impacted during this process.
283	Virus Protection.	No rural needs were identified. This is an internal document affecting employees within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. No rural needs were identified as being impacted during this process.
284	Risk Management.	No rural needs were identified. This is an internal document affecting employees within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. No rural needs were identified as being impacted during this process.
285	Fraud.	No rural needs were identified. This is an internal document affecting employees within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. No rural needs were identified as being impacted during this process.
286	Raising Concerns.	No rural needs were identified. This is an internal document affecting employees within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. No rural needs were identified as being impacted during this process.
287	Standing Orders.	No rural needs were identified. This is an internal document affecting employees within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. No rural needs were identified as being impacted during this process.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
288	The Retention and Disposal Schedule Planning Addendum.	No rural needs were identified. This is an internal document affecting employees within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. No rural needs were identified as being impacted during this process.

Mid Ulster District Council

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
289	Mid Ulster District Council's Digital Transformation Strategy.	Mid Ulster District Council has considered rural needs in the development of the Council's Digital Transformation Strategy by recognising that within the district there are areas that do not have quality access to broadband. To address this, the strategy commits to maintaining non-digital channel options to contact the council. These options will afford the same quality of service as the service that is provided to customers who choose to use the digital channels.
290	Development of Drumcairne Forest.	Mid Ulster District Council has considered rural needs in the development of this forest by gathering information via public consultation and informal user group meetings. The feedback from these sessions has influenced the final development of Drumcairne Forest. The overall outcome is that the Drumcairne area has now been provided a wider range of recreation opportunities and the services will be on offer to the whole community in the surrounding area.
291	Development of Derrynoyd Forest.	Mid Ulster District Council has considered rural needs in relation to the development of Derrynoyd Forest that the works will have a positive impact on the local rural area as it creates more opportunities for new and improved outdoor recreation facilities, thereby improving the health and well-being of people from all sections of the local rural area and beyond.
292	Redevelopment of Ballyronan Marina.	Mid Ulster District Council has considered rural needs in relation to the redevelopment of Ballyronan Marina by ensuring that people living in this rural area will have greater access to outdoor and indoor recreation opportunities. This project will also provide opportunities for recreational activities within the rural community, improving health and wellbeing, as well as opportunities for employment within this rural community.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
293	Development of Iniscarn Forest.	Mid Ulster District Council has considered rural needs in relation to the development of Iniscarn Forest by gathering information from the local community and ensuring that the needs of the local community were met by the development project. As a result of this development, the Iniscarn area has been provided with a wider range of recreation opportunities that are accessible to the whole community.
294	Development of Manor Park Moneymore.	Mid Ulster District Council has considered rural needs in relation to the development of Manor Park Moneymore ensuring that the final development of this rural settlement offers a greater range of opportunities for people living in this area than what was available previously.
295	Development of the Beechland Park and Drive.	Mid Ulster District Council has considered rural needs in relation to the development of Beechland Park and Drive by ensuring that people living in this rural area will have greater access to outdoor and indoor recreation opportunities. This project will also provide opportunities for recreational activities within the rural community, improving the health and wellbeing of residents and providing opportunities for employment within this rural community.
296	Development of Castledawson Pocket Park and Allotments.	Mid Ulster District Council has considered rural needs in relation to the development of Castledawson Pocket Park and Allotments by ensuring that the existing facilities and further enhanced with greater community and recreational activities, particularly focusing on children and young people. The development aims to provide an environment that is inclusive and that will aid the health and well-being of all who visit it and provide opportunities for social engagement and interaction with the aim of reducing isolation within this rural area.
297	Mid Ulster Age Friendly Strategic Plan (2023-2026).	Mid Ulster District Council has considered rural needs in relation to the development of Mid Ulster Age Friendly Strategic Plan (2023-2026) by undertaking consultation

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
		throughout rural areas in the district. Feedback from this consultation process has been included in the strategy in order to ensure that the social and economic needs of the older people in the district are met. Overall the strategy aims to promote physical and social environments that support healthy and active ageing and a good quality of life for older people in the Mid Ulster District council area.
298	Pitches Strategy.	Mid Ulster District Council has considered rural needs in relation to the development of the Mid Ulster Pitches Strategy by including the provision of sports pitches across the district, including in rural areas.
299	Equal Opportunities Policy.	Mid Ulster District Council has considered rural needs in relation to the development of the Mid Ulster Equal Opportunities Policy by recognising and addressing the differing experiences that some workers and applicants may face in relation to factors such as increased travel times and fuel costs.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
300	Developing an agile working policy.	No social and economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the Council in relation to the policy.
301	Developing the Active and Healthy Communities Directorate Business Plan 2022-2023.	<p>When developing the Active and Healthy Business Plan consideration has been given to information provided by the Council's Evidence and Research Team in relation to the social and economic needs of people within the district. This sets out information including that related to population, multiple deprivation, access to services, economy, income and transport, housing, crime, and health and wellbeing.</p> <p>While the Active and Healthy Communities Business Plan details positive actions for all the community, there are some specific actions which will directly positively impact on people living in the rural areas. An example of this is the Home to Hospital volunteer driver schemes in the Slieve Gullion and the Mournes District Electoral Areas.</p>
302	Developing a bulky collection service.	No social and economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the Council in relation to the policy.
303	Developing the Chief Executive Directorate Business Plan 2022-2023.	<p>The actions and objectives detailed with the Chief Executive's Business Plan are corporate objectives which will benefit all residents of the district regardless of where they live.</p> <p>No social and economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the Council in relation to the policy.</p>
304	Revising the policy on complaints, comments and compliments.	No social and economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the Council in relation to the policy.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
305	Revising and reviewing the conflict of interest policy and associated conflict of interest procedures.	No social and economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the Council in relation to the policy.
306	Developing the Corporate Services Directorate Business Plan 2022-2023.	The Corporate Services Business Plan details positive actions for all the community through the delivery of internal structures. However, there are some specific actions which will directly positively impact on people living in the rural areas. Capital project delivery is an objective with the Corporate Services directorate and some of the proposed projects identified as needed will be delivered within rural areas.
307	Revising and reviewing the Council's Disability Action Plan 2023-2027.	<p>The Council's Evidence and Research Team have provided information in relation to the social and economic needs of people within the Newry, Mourne and Down District. This sets out information including that related to population, multiple deprivation, access to services, economy, income and transport, housing, crime and health wellbeing.</p> <p>Having considered this information, there is nothing to suggest that the implementation of the Disability Action Plan will have adverse impact upon people in rural needs differently from people in urban areas. The actions detailed within the Council's Disability Action Plan 2023-2027 will have a positive impact of all residents of the district, regardless of where they live.</p>
308	Revising and reviewing the Council's Equality Action Plan 2023-2027.	<p>The action plan recommends key areas of activity and details positive actions, positive action measures have been set out under the five principles of the equality and diversity in the Local Council's Framework.</p> <p>There is nothing to suggest that the implementation of the Equality Action Plan 2023-2027 will have an adverse impact upon people in rural areas differently from people in urban areas.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
309	Developing the Irish Language Strategy 2023-2027.	There is nothing to suggest that the implementation of the Irish Language Strategy will have an adverse impact upon people in rural areas differently from people in urban areas.
310	Developing the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund.	Successful applicants to the fund are likely to be advantaged by it but it is an open and competitive process to which rural businesses are equally eligible to apply.
311	Developing the Enterprise Regeneration and Tourism Directorate Business Plan 2022-2023.	The Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Directorate Business Plan details positive actions for all the community. However there are some specific actions which will directly positively impact on people living in the rural areas such as the delivery of the Rural Development Programme.
312	Developing the Fleet Renewal Policy.	No social and economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the Council in relation to the policy.
313	Developing the Fleet Telemetry System Policy.	No social and economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the Council in relation to the policy.
314	Revising guidelines and associated procedure in relation to the offer and acceptance of gifts to Council.	No social and economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the Council in relation to the policy.
315	Developing an Ill Health Retirement Policy.	No social and economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the Council in relation to the policy.
316	Developing an interim policy on the issue/collection of wheeled bins.	It is not anticipated the policy will impact on people in rural areas differently than people from urban areas.
317	Developing the Neighbourhood Services Directorate Business Plan 2022-2023.	The Neighbourhood Services Directorate Business Plan details positive actions for all the community of the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area regardless of where they live within the district.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
318	Reviewing the regeneration of Newry City through investment in a theatre/conference facility.	The 2021 Outline Business Case Public Consultation Survey for the Newry City Centre Regeneration programme included an opportunity to respond on rural needs. These responses related to access to parking and rural to city accessibility (access to services and transport), and balance between rural and city investment (economy).
319	Developing nonstandard pay provision for staff.	No social and economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the Council in relation to the policy.
320	Revising and updating Council's Performance Improvement Plan 2022-2023.	<p>Progress in delivering the Performance Improvement Plan 2021-22 has informed the 'supporting actions' and 'measures of success' which underpin the 2022-23 objectives and seek to have a positive impact across all areas of the district.</p> <p>'Supporting actions' have been developed to address the needs and issues which have been identified, in order to deliver positive outcomes for rural areas:</p> <p>Performance Improvement Objectives 1 and 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for community clean ups; and • Slieve Gullion Forest Park to renew 'Green Flag' status. <p>Some objectives are underpinned by 'supporting actions' and 'measures of success' which will have indirect positive outcomes for rural areas. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has parks, open spaces and community trails in rural areas; • Economic development programmes can be accessed by businesses and individuals in rural areas; • Community clean ups are supported across the district, in rural and urban areas; • The Financial Assistance Scheme can be accessed by all communities, including those from rural areas; and • The Planning Service is open to all stakeholders and customers across both rural and urban areas.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
321	Revising and reviewing Council's Performance Improvement Policy.	<p>Effectively mainstreaming the Performance Improvement Policy will support the implementation of key plans and strategies across the organisation, including the Corporate Plan, Performance Improvement Plan and Directorate Business Plans.</p> <p>These plans are the front facing documents of the organisation and have been developed using a robust and reliable evidence base which will have considered the social and economic needs of local communities across the district, including rural areas. The Performance Improvement Policy should therefore be regarded as an enabler to support the delivery of key plans and strategies and deliver services which improve the quality of life for all residents in rural and urban areas across the district.</p>
322	Revising policy and associated procedure in relation to the erection of commercial/ advertising signage on council land and property by third parties.	No social and economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the Council in relation to the policy.
323	Developing and managing car parks.	<p>The Council's Evidence and Research Team have provided information in relation to the social and economic needs of people within the Newry, Mourne and Down district. This sets out information including that related to population, multiple deprivation, access to services, economy, income and transport, housing, crime, and health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Having considered this information, there is nothing to suggest that the implementation of the proposal to increase the number of car parks at which there is a parking tariff and/or a time restriction will have an adverse impact upon people in rural areas differently from people in urban areas.</p>
324	Revising and reviewing the collections development policy 2022-2025.	No social and economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the Council in relation to the policy.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
325	Revising and reviewing Council's museum loans policy and procedures.	No social and economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the Council in relation to the policy.
326	Revising the Smoke Free Policy.	No social and economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the Council in relation to the policy.
327	Developing a Special Leave Policy.	No social and economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the Council in relation to the policy.

OTHER PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

Reporting Period 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>328 Proposal for St. Mary's Primary School, Saintfield to discontinue with effect from 31 August 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter.</p>	<p>The Sustainable Schools Policy, 2009 (a policy which is the foundation of Area Planning proposals) was assessed against the Rural Development Council rural proofing checklist (Striking the Balance, Annex 1) and no adverse impact was identified. The Sustainable Schools Policy recognises the needs of rural communities and this is reflected in the lower enrolment threshold for rural primary schools, the accessibility criterion which provides guidance on home to school travel times and the criterion strong links with the community also recognises the central place a school has for many communities (rural and urban). Throughout each stage of the development proposal consultation period (four weeks for stakeholders, four weeks for affected schools and eight weeks public objection period) consultees had the opportunity to provide additional information, including rural issues, for consideration. At each stage, consultation responses were analysed, giving due regard to rural needs in line with the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. The Development Proposal, and the decision were demonstrably made with the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 in mind. The decision, the case for change, and supporting documentation, are available on the Department of Education website.</p>
<p>329 Proposal to establish a co-educational, voluntary grammar school in Downpatrick through the amalgamation of De La Salle High School, St. Mary's High School and St. Patrick's Grammar School with effect from 1 September 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter.</p>	<p>The Sustainable Schools Policy, 2009 (a policy which is the foundation of Area Planning proposals) was assessed against the Rural Development Council rural proofing checklist (Striking the Balance, Annex 1) and no adverse impact was identified. The Sustainable Schools Policy recognises the needs of rural communities and this is reflected in the lower enrolment threshold for rural primary schools, the accessibility criterion which provides guidance on home to school travel times and the criterion strong links with the community also recognises the central place a school has for many communities (rural and urban).</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>Throughout each stage of the development proposal consultation period (four weeks for stakeholders, four weeks for affected schools and eight weeks public objection period) consultees had the opportunity to provide additional information, including rural issues, for consideration. At each stage, consultation responses were analysed, giving due regard to rural needs in line with the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. The Development Proposal, and the decision were demonstrably made with the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 in mind. The decision, the case for change, and supporting documentation, are available on the Department of Education website.</p>

The Education Authority

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>330 Revising the Digital School Admissions Policy.</p>	<p>The intention of the admissions system update is to enhance user experience in response to feedback from the main stakeholders of parents, schools and Education Authority staff.</p> <p>Feedback was received in the form of Rate It survey responses completed by parents and schools at the end of the admissions process. Opinions of the current system were collated via review of social media feedback and also schools and parent forums.</p> <p>Previous screenings considered the rural needs aspect and the possibility that people rurally may have less access to a computer or broadband.</p> <p>Information sessions were held in libraries to provide necessary guidance as well as provide availability to the internet and computers, allowing parents to complete their application online at the library. As a contingency the paper application forms were still available upon request by the Education Authority.</p> <p>Again, a digital first not digital only approach is being taken.</p> <p>The previous mitigations around language, accessibility, rural needs and literacy levels will continue to be rolled out.</p>
<p>331 Restructure of the Education Authority's Communications Team.</p>	<p>There is no evidence of an impact on rural needs.</p> <p>This is a functional restructuring and not geographical.</p> <p>The main changes and impacts for staff are therefore, in the main, likely to be about function/task rather than location.</p>
<p>332 Delivery of Online Transport Applications for students attending Further Education Colleges.</p>	<p>This project has its origins as a key part of the Digital Transformation Service's role to promote the "Digital First" agenda but that remains accessible for those who need alternatives.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>In 2018, the Education Authority launched an online application process for home to school transport. Applications for Further Education transport however remained paper-based except for a limited system operated by Southern Regional College. Further Education students had to complete and submit a paper form to their local Education Authority Transport Office which would then manually assess eligibility, assign a mode of transport and communicate the outcome of applications in writing.</p> <p>These policies will apply to all those who reside in rural communities including children and young people and their families, staff and schools.</p> <p>According to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, 37% of the population lives in a rural setting.</p> <p>Northern Ireland Population - Parents/Students:</p> <p>In the event that staff have no access to the internet either at their place of work or home, support will be made available, and a paper copy will be provided.</p> <p>The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs report entitled “Key Rural Issues, Northern Ireland 2020” indicates that broadband speeds and availability, though improving, are still much lower in rural than in urban areas, due in part to the disparity in infrastructure costs. This issue is United Kingdom wide, but appears to be particularly pronounced in Northern Ireland, due to how the rural population is distributed. Average download speeds, data usage and coverage of superfast broadband are all reduced in rural compared to urban areas.</p> <p>According to an Ofcom report in December 2019 more people can now get faster broadband in Northern Ireland, but some rural areas are still behind towns and cities for coverage. The report also reveals more work is needed to improve services in rural areas, where some customers experience slower speeds than those in towns and cities.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>Ofcom will shortly publish new plans to promote further investment in fibre networks - including in rural areas.</p> <p>As the application process is moving to a digital platform it could have an impact on those who live rurally.</p> <p>There is a dedicated transport helpdesk that operates between July - October each year which will assist any queries in relation to completing the Further Education process. A paper copy will be provided upon request to those who cannot access the form online.</p> <p>Assistance will be offered from each Further Education College for students on completion of online application process or request to a paper copy.</p>
333 Review of the Website Service and Restructure of the Website Team.	<p>There is no evidence of an impact on rural needs.</p> <p>This is a functional restructuring and not geographical.</p> <p>The main changes and impacts for staff are therefore, in the main, likely to be about function/task rather than location.</p>
334 Education Welfare Service Transformation Project.	<p>The Education Welfare Service Transformation Project was introduced as a response to reports from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (2004 & 2014) and the Public Accounts Committee (2014), which concluded that there was a need for greater efficiency and effectiveness across the service as well as the implementation of a consistent model of delivery.</p> <p>The following six key areas were identified, along with the associated work to regionalise and continuously improve aspects of the service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of a more preventative and proactive model of delivery; • Career Progression and Professional Development - considering service structure and the development of specialist roles; • Developing an Outcomes Based Accountability Framework;

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing consistent policy, standards and guidance; • Working collaboratively with pupils, parents and wider partners to provide accessible and visible services; and • Ensuring appropriate information technology and office infrastructure. <p>It is recognised that more than one third of young people from Northern Ireland live in communities that have been defined as rural. The service will be configured to ensure equity of access across all areas.</p> <p>The proposed staffing changes do not significantly impact on those staff in rural areas.</p> <p>The new model seeks to provide equality of access across Northern Ireland and the specialist areas identified will work at both regional and local level to ensure this happens. This will allow for any specific rural concerns to be identified and reacted to quickly.</p>
335 The provision of Information Sessions on the Special Educational Needs Framework for Parents.	<p>Seven information sessions will be offered to provide information about the new Special Educational Needs Framework to parents who may have concerns about their children's progress in school. These sessions are intended to provide some basic information about identification, assessment, and provision of support for those children and young people who experience difficulties in learning.</p> <p>Certain people living in rural areas can experience difficulties in accessing public services due to distance and/or access to good quality internet connectivity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A consideration to offer both in-person and online sessions; and • Plan to offer specific sessions to those groups for whom language and literacy may exist as a barrier to accessing public services. <p>We have given consideration to those living in rural areas by offering an online session which will mitigate</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>against the likelihood of having to travel significant distances. For those families impacted negatively by intermittent or low-quality broadband internet connection, we have arranged for two sessions in each Education Authority locality in an attempt to spread the geography of the in-person sessions as equally as possible across the region.</p> <p>Overall, these sessions should have a positive impact on the targeted families living in rural areas.</p>
336 Transferred Redundancy Procedure for Principals and Vice Principals in Controlled Schools.	<p>There is a greater propensity for schools in rural areas to be considered for school reorganisation. The procedure does not address the impact of the school reorganisation on the rural area. The income level of the school leadership posts would allow notable travel to work distances, accordingly Principals and Vice Principals employed in Controlled Schools subject to reorganisation may not necessarily reside in the rural area in which the school is situated. However, if a Principal or Vice Principal did reside in the rural area where their school was subject to closure, the introduction of the procedure would have a positive impact in relation to rural needs since it would facilitate transfer to a school leadership position, which would not be the case without this procedure.</p>
337 Vocational Driver Licence Checking Procedure.	<p>Existing licence check procedures are being standardised and updated, so the requirement to produce a driving licence to a line manager for checking is not a new or additional activity.</p> <p>No rural impacts have been identified.</p>
338 Flexible Working Policy for Teachers, Vice Principals and Principals.	<p>This is a Department of Education wide Teachers' Negotiating Committee Policy and therefore access to rural information on teachers across the sector is not freely available. This policy does not withdraw any previous rights or privileges linked to this. Flexible working can only yield positive outcomes for those who need it for any matter of reason including reasons linked to geographical location.</p> <p>There are no anticipated negative rural impacts.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	There is scope for additional positive impact, via enhanced empowerment and awareness of schemes available to support work life balance.
339 Pilots Row Youth & Community Centre.	<p>Desktop review suggests that the small Education Authority workforce at Pilots Row Youth and Community Centre all come from within the city.</p> <p>Children and young people using the Youth Service all come from the immediate vicinity.</p> <p>Following screening, it was anticipated that there should be no rural impact.</p>
340 Northern Ireland Supply Teacher Register.	<p>The Northern Ireland Supply Teacher Register project aims to provide digital solutions in matching teacher provision for roles available. In terms of rural needs this extends to children and young people who reside in rural communities and schools in those locations.</p> <p>This online web-based method of registering on the Northern Ireland Supply Teacher Register and booking a supply teacher has been in place for 18 years. The procurement of a new solution and the added benefits and features has been guided by a cross section of all relevant stakeholders.</p>
341 Online Payment Solution for Schools (Education Information Solutions Programme).	<p>The project will initially provide online payment facility to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursery schools; • Primary schools (including reception classes); and • Special education schools. <p>It is not envisaged that living in a rural area should disadvantage the use of the online payment system by key stakeholders.</p> <p>Every school in Northern Ireland has access to the internet.</p> <p>If rural broadband is lacking for some parents, it will be possible to make payments to the online payment system via use of Paypoint services within local shops.</p> <p>The Education Authority will ensure payment can be facilitated via use of Paypoint terminals in publicly</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	accessible places including local shops for those who may have limited or no access to the internet and/or the necessary banking facilities.
342 Off-System Recruitment Campaign for Direct Catering Service Mobile Team.	<p>There is a potential impact on the reach of information technology connectivity, for areas where signal is poor. However, this will be mitigated by varying forms of publicity/advertisement including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio and all Education Authority social media platforms will extend reach; • Department for Communities - reach, direct mailshot to anyone on Universal Credit; and • Job Centres.
343 Appealing Transport Assistance on Grounds of Exceptional Circumstances - Guidance Documentation.	<p>The Department of Education Policy for Home to School Transport has a positive impact on people living in rural areas as the criteria allows for assistance for transport for primary aged pupils living more than two miles from their nearest suitable school and three miles for post primary aged pupils. This guidance will provide additional support for those living in rural areas and wishing to appeal a decision of being refused transport due to exceptional circumstances such as bullying, joint/split custody.</p> <p>The digital transport application process has been successfully rolled out for applications for Home to School Transport (May 2015) this guidance will sit in support of the digital transport application process. Submissions via paper form are currently offered in for transport assistance applications and appeals processes as an option but there continues to be low uptake.</p> <p>Feedback received from parents/students and schools from both online processes stated that they preferred the option to apply online for transport assistance and submitting appeals for transport assistance.</p> <p>If anyone has access issues, the Transport Service will provide advice and support to ensure contingencies are in place and if needs be a paper copy will be provided as alternative.</p> <p>Paper-based application forms will be made available in certain circumstances.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>344 Appealing Transport Assistance on Grounds of Refused Admission to Nearest Suitable School - Guidance Documentation.</p>	<p>The Department of Education Policy for Home to School Transport has a positive impact on people living in rural areas as the criteria allows for assistance for transport for primary aged pupils living more than two miles from their nearest suitable school and three miles for post primary aged pupils. This guidance will provide additional support for those living in rural areas and wishing to appeal a decision of being refused transport due to refused admission to nearest suitable school on the grounds that the probability of a number of suitable schools being located within the qualifying distance will be reduced and therefore increase the potential for school selection based on parental choice.</p> <p>The purpose of the assessment is to determine whether responsibility for assisting a pupil with home to school transport lies with the parent or with the Education Authority.</p> <p>In the event that parents have no access to the internet either at their place of work or home, support will be made available, and a paper copy will be provided which can be requested via the Transport Appeals Inbox or by telephoning the Education Authority's Transport Helpdesk.</p> <p>As the application process is moving to a digital platform it could have an impact on those who live rurally.</p> <p>The digital transport application process has been successfully rolled out for applications for Home to School Transport (May 2015) this guidance will sit in support of the digital transport application process. Submissions via paper form are currently offered in for transport assistance applications and appeals processes as an option but there continues to be low uptake.</p> <p>Feedback received from parents/students and schools from both online processes stated that they preferred the option to apply online for transport assistance and submitting appeals for transport assistance.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>If anyone has access issues, the Transport Service will provide advice and support to ensure contingencies are in place and if needs be a paper copy will be provided as alternative.</p> <p>Paper-based application forms will be made available in certain circumstances.</p>
345	<p>Appealing Transport Assistance on Grounds of Road Safety - Guidance Documentation.</p> <p>The Department of Education Policy for Home to School Transport has a positive impact on people living in rural areas as the criteria allows for assistance for transport for primary aged pupils living more than two miles from their nearest suitable school and three miles for post primary aged pupils. This guidance will provide additional support for those living in rural areas and wishing to appeal a decision of being refused transport due to road safety.</p> <p>The circumstances in which the Education Authority will make arrangements for transporting a child to and from school or provide assistance for such arrangements are set out in the Department of Education's Circular 1996/41 - School Transport (18 September 2009).</p> <p>As outlined in Paragraph 8 of Circular 1996/41 the Education Authority has the discretion to provide assistance in cases falling outside of the eligibility rules which it considers to be exceptional in nature.</p> <p>It is the legal responsibility of every parent to ensure that their child/children receive a fulltime education that meets their needs.</p> <p>As outlined in Paragraph 8 of Circular 1996/41 the Education Authority has the discretion to provide assistance in cases falling outside of the eligibility rules which it considers to be exceptional in nature.</p> <p><i>'The application of the eligibility rule relating to distance may not always be appropriate and it is for the Education Authority to consider any case which is thought to be outside the provisions in the preceding paragraphs. Such cases considered by the Education Authority should be by their very nature exceptional.'</i></p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>The digital transport application process has been successfully rolled out for applications for Home to School Transport (May 2015) this guidance will sit in support of the digital transport application process. Submissions via paper form are currently offered in for transport assistance applications and appeals processes as an option but there continues to be low uptake.</p> <p>Feedback received from parents/students and schools from both online processes stated that they preferred the option to apply online for transport assistance and submitting appeals for transport assistance.</p> <p>If anyone has access issues, the Transport Service will provide advice and support to ensure contingencies are in place and if needs be a paper copy will be provided as alternative.</p> <p>Paper-based application forms will be made available in certain circumstances.</p>
346	<p>Appealing Transport Assistance on Grounds of Distance - Guidance Documentation.</p> <p>The Department of Education Policy for Home to School Transport has a positive impact on people living in rural areas as the criteria allows for assistance for transport for primary aged pupils living more than two miles from their nearest suitable school and three miles for post primary aged pupils. This guidance will provide additional support for those living in rural areas and wishing to appeal a decision of being refused transport due to distance on the grounds that the distance from their doors to the school doors is over two miles in primary and over three miles in post-primary due to inconsistencies in Land and Property services' data regarding private routes and/or new ownership of commercial land in situ of the walking network, for example.</p> <p>As outlined in Paragraph 2.2 of Circular 1996/41: To determine those pupils who should receive transport assistance, the Education Authority should have regard to "walking distance" as defined in Paragraph 3(6) of</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>Schedule 13 to the 1986 Order i.e., two miles in relation to a pupil under 11 years of age and three miles for older pupils measured by the nearest available route.</p> <p>The term “walking distance” should not be interpreted as an injunction upon parents that their child must walk to school. The term is applied to a route once it has been established by the Education Authority that it can be walked.</p> <p>The purpose of the assessment is to determine whether responsibility for assisting a pupil with home to school transport lies with the parent or with the Education Authority.</p> <p>In the event that parents have no access to the internet either at their place of work or home, support will be made available, and a paper copy will be provided which can be requested via the Transport Appeals Inbox or by telephoning the Education Authority’s Transport Helpdesk.</p> <p>As the application process is moving to a digital platform it could have an impact on those who live rurally.</p> <p>The digital transport application process has been successfully rolled out for applications for Home to School Transport (May 2015) this guidance will sit in support of the digital transport application process. Submissions via paper form are currently offered in for transport assistance applications and appeals processes as an option, but there continues to be low uptake.</p> <p>Feedback received from parents/students and schools from both online processes stated that they preferred the option to apply online for transport assistance and submitting appeals for transport assistance.</p> <p>If anyone has access issues, the Transport Service will provide advice and support to ensure contingencies are in place and if needs be a paper copy will be provided as alternative.</p> <p>Paper-based application forms will be made available in certain circumstances.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
347 Restructure of the Information Governance Service.	Rural impacts have been considered and there are no anticipated social and economic impacts from this structure to people living in rural areas. Base locations will be agreed with staff member as far as possible to accommodate a location that suits, in line with business needs.
348 Digitalisation of Parental Payments.	Rural needs impacts of the parental payment were taken into consideration at the stage of screening the policy, the move to digital forms should not have any impact on rural needs, this evidence was gained from the two major digitalisation programmes undertaken by the Education Authority recently - online applications for schools in primary and post primary. Evidence showed that the large majority of people applied online without any issue. We will continue to monitor this going forward through calls to the helpdesk.
349 Interim Policy for the Provision of Services and Information in Ulster-Scots.	<p>The Education Authority's Youth Service Regional Assessment of Need 2017-2020 highlighted that young people living in rural areas face particular barriers. More than one third of young people from Northern Ireland live in communities that have been defined as rural. In Newry, Mourne and Down more than half of all young people, in Mid Ulster almost two thirds of young people and in Fermanagh and Omagh almost three quarters of all young people live in rural areas. For many children and young people, living in a rural community presents many challenges. There is a lack of facilities, such as cinemas or clubs, which their peers in urban areas take for granted. This isolation from services is often exacerbated by a lack of transport options and hidden poverty.</p> <p>The interim policy is designed to support Ulster-Scots speakers, across all of the region, in interacting with the Education Authority and accessing our services and information.</p> <p>In recognition of the demographic profile of Northern Ireland, public consultation on the interim policy includes</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>virtual stakeholder sessions to enable stakeholders from across all of Northern Ireland to participate.</p> <p>The interim policy relates to how the Education Authority delivers and makes its corporate services accessible across Northern Ireland.</p>
350 Interim Policy for the Provision of Services and Information in Irish.	<p>The Education Authority's Youth Service Regional Assessment of Need 2017-2020 highlighted that young people living in rural areas face particular barriers. More than one third of young people from Northern Ireland live in communities that have been defined as rural. In Newry, Mourne and Down more than half of all young people, in Mid Ulster almost two thirds of young people and in Fermanagh and Omagh almost three quarters of all young people live in rural areas. For many children and young people, living in a rural community presents many challenges. There is a lack of facilities, such as cinemas or clubs, which their peers in urban areas take for granted. This isolation from services is often exacerbated by a lack of transport options and hidden poverty.</p> <p>This policy will positively impact those living in rural areas wishing to access the Education Authority's information and services in Irish.</p> <p>In recognition of the demographic profile of Northern Ireland, public consultation on the interim policy includes virtual stakeholder sessions to enable stakeholders from across all Northern Ireland to participate.</p> <p>The interim policy relates to how the Education Authority delivers and makes it corporate services accessible across the region.</p>
351 Corporate Staff Canteen Relocation.	<p>It is proposed to close the canteens in corporate buildings as there is a significant decline in the number of staff using the canteens since the pandemic and the introduction of agile working arrangements. The seating area within the canteens will remain open for staff to use throughout the working day. The corporate canteen staff are being relocated to school canteens.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>In meeting with the corporate canteen staff face-to-face to discuss relocation, management was able to identify any equality issues and take action to mitigate these issues. Care has therefore been taken to ensure the relocation has minimised or no impact on current day to day work-life balance and commitments. All employees impacted have been offered a position in a school meal kitchen at a school of their choice near their home. Travel expenses will be paid if additional travel is required. Alternative transport arrangements have been made at the Education Authority's cost where necessary. Any staff member who has a reasonable adjustment in place will continue to have this in place. Any staff member who comes forward who needs a reasonable adjustment on the basis of a disability will be supported in line with the Education Authority's Managers Guidelines and Disability Employment Support Service.</p> <p>The catering staff based in corporate canteens, are in agreement to be relocated to a nearby school meal kitchen in order to maintain and utilise their skill set (catering based). In many cases the staff are returning to the location they worked at during the Education Authority's response to COVID-19 so there is some previous experience of this relocation.</p>
352 Plan of Arrangements for Special Educational Provision Website.	<p>Service users will be accessing the website from both rural and urban areas. Rural stakeholders are more likely to experience challenging access to broadband. Rural schools will likely have infrastructure in place to mitigate challenging access to broadband but parents may not. A PDF version of the plan will be available at launch and forms part of the consultation process. Users can request a "hard copy" to be posted. In addition, they can request an email with PDF attached for them to download and read.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
353	Reduction of Leadership Training.	Pausing of the 'Game Changing People' Leadership trainings. As part of the Education Authority's 22/23 Savings Plan agreed by the Board in January 2023, the Education Authority is required to pause training in leadership development delivered by the Organisational Development and Learning Team until 31 March 2023. The objective is to save at least £105,000 in costs by 31 March 2023. The Game Changing People Programmes are aligned to the Education Authority's Game Changing People Model. It is anticipated that it is unlikely that this process will have an impact based on rural need.
354	Education Authority Recruitment Pause 22-23.	The particular services/posts experiencing the recruitment pause have not yet been decided upon and needs and experiences in relation to rural needs for those posts and service users will be taken into consideration when the process of deciding on which posts to pause is being applied so as to mitigate or remove impact. It is important to note that this is a short-term slowing down or pausing of recruitment rather than a moratorium. There is unlikely to be any long-term impact.
355	School Crossing Patrols.	<p>School Crossing Patrols are provided based on assessed need and may therefore be established at rural schools where they meet the minimum threshold outlined in approved School Crossing Patrol Guidance which is based on Road Safety Guidelines. The majority of schools, however, operate without a School Crossing Patrol service.</p> <p>The Education Authority directs schools and parents to Road Safety advice available on the Department for Infrastructure's website to mitigate any suspension of School Crossing Patrol due to recruitment suspension. Parents remain primarily responsible for their child's journey to school regardless of whether a School Crossing Patrol is on duty and will have to accompany them or assure themselves their child is able to cross the road safely at the designated point where a School</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>Crossing Patrol would have operated or the closest pedestrian crossing where available.</p> <p>The Education Authority will encourage schools to promote road safety guidance to parents; particularly at sites where live recruitment has been paused and particularly in rural areas where there may be no alternative pedestrian crossings/safe routes.</p>
356	<p>Essential Travel Only for Corporate Staff.</p> <p>There is unlikely to be any impact in terms of rural needs.</p>

Invest Northern Ireland

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
357 Ambition to Grow Programme.	<p>Invest NI has launched a new grant scheme to support businesses to increase employment levels and generate new sales from customers outside Northern Ireland. The scheme will provide grant support to 37 eligible companies to help them create 3+ new full time permanent positions within the business as well as assisting them with the costs of targeting customers outside Northern Ireland, technical development activities, as well as upskilling existing and new employees.</p> <p>It is designed to attract a spread of applications from throughout all areas of Northern Ireland. We do not believe that there are barriers to delivery in rural areas and there is no evidence of any specific rural needs or disadvantage at this stage.</p>
358 The Insights Hub Portal.	<p>This is an online portal providing access to market and consumer intelligence for the Food and Drink industry in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Food and Drink companies are located across Northern Ireland and are not disproportionately located in rural areas. However, where businesses in this sector are in these areas, we would anticipate a positive impact.</p> <p>The delivery of the service to clients is via a digital portal which can be accessed from their own premises, so it does not require attendance at the client premises or attendance at events.</p> <p>We do not envisage any barriers to rural businesses.</p>
359 City and Growth Deals.	<p>City and Growth Deals are an agreed Northern Ireland Executive priority and represent an investment opportunity of £1.2 billion capital support secured jointly through the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive.</p> <p>Invest NI, working on behalf of the Department for the Economy, is now the recognised Investment Decision</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>Maker across the Innovation Projects under the City & Growth Deals Programme.</p> <p>The projects which Invest NI are considering are innovation-based projects which cover investments to support economic development and research based opportunities and are focused on businesses and developing infrastructure that business will access.</p> <p>Invest NI's partnership role in City & Growth Deals is to provide the link and access to industry.</p> <p>It is critical that industry's voice is heard on these projects, to help shape their development and delivery and to ensure they remain industry relevant, future proofed and complementary to one another, helping to drive productivity and competitiveness across Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Additionally, it is the Deal Owner (local councils) who have selected the projects. They have been developed after their own reviews and assessment of the type of projects that can offer the best benefit to the specific region. This assessment includes rural needs analysis and the final list of chosen projects is the result of the council's deliberations and decision.</p> <p>The makeup of the specific projects has once again been decided upon by the Deal Owners, which includes the type of support being offered, the infrastructure being developed and the party who can access the services being offered. Invest NI's role is to help ascertain, in partnership with the government department responsible for funding (the Department for the Economy in this case), that the project offers value for money.</p>
360	<p>Complementary Fund.</p> <p>The Complementary Fund was established to complement the City & Growth Deal Programme, by providing further investment into projects that could provide demonstrable local benefit, preferably aligned to local economic strategies.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>The projects which Invest NI are considering are innovation-based projects which cover investments to support economic development and research-based opportunities and are focused on businesses and developing infrastructure that business will access.</p> <p>Invest NI's role in the Complementary Fund is to provide the link and access to industry. It is critical that industry's voice is heard on these projects, to help shape their development and delivery and to ensure they remain industry relevant, future-proofed and complementary to one another, helping to drive productivity and competitiveness across Northern Ireland.</p> <p>It is the Project Owner (local councils) who select the projects according to their assessments of the type of projects that can offer the best benefit to the specific region. This assessment includes a rural needs analysis. The Department of Finance has then taken the decision as to which projects are to receive support.</p>

The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Board

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>361 Learning and Development Centre Cookstown Phase Two.</p>	<p>Development of facilities.</p> <p>The Learning and Development Centre, Cookstown, Phase two was approved at the end of February 2020, the budget for Phase two is approximately £42.6 million.</p> <p>Phase two constructions commenced in May 2022 with an anticipated completion date of May 2024.</p> <p>Consideration given to accessibility to remote site during construction, in particular for long-term unemployed and trainees.</p> <p>Various engagement events held 2022-2023 with Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service employees during the construction phase.</p> <p>There will be significant opportunities for partner organisations to use the site for both joint training and their own training needs. There will also be opportunity for fire and rescue services from the Republic of Ireland to use the training facilities.</p> <p>Once complete and operational, the local commercial overnight accommodation will be used to support residential training. Discussions are ongoing in regards to consideration of use of student accommodation at Loughry College (Approx. one kilometre away).</p> <p>Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service current business plan includes objectives for public use and integration of Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service facilities. The potential for beneficial access and use by the public will be developed at a later stage in the project. There will be a Trim Trail around the site which may be accessed by the public.</p> <p>A Rural Needs Impact Assessment was carried out on 7 March 2019 and the impact was found to be a positive one on rural communities.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>362 Property Asset Management Plan 2022-2023.</p>	<p>Management of facilities.</p> <p>Developing - The Property Asset Management Plan supports the management of assets more economically.</p> <p>Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service completed refurbishments at Pomeroy, Carrickfergus and Carnlough fire stations.</p> <p>New build business case has been commenced for Fintona and Newtownstewart in 2022/23. Cushendall replacement fire station is currently at Stage 3 - detailed design and works should commence on site October 2024.</p> <p>Welfare facilities were upgraded at Kilkeel and Whitehead Fire Station.</p> <p>Developing and implementing systems relating to building management systems, energy metering, boiler conversions, water metering and installation of cavity wall insulation to improve levels of energy consumption at various sites.</p> <p>Solar Photovoltaic has been installed at Carnlough Fire Station in 2022-23.</p>

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
363	Affordable Warmth Policy & Process Guide.	The Housing Executive administer all Affordable Warmth grant applications which are received directly from the local councils. The qualifying criteria is the same for each household regardless of where they live. The property must be in the private sector and the household income must be less than £23,000.
364	Succession and Assignment Review Process.	<p>This policy is equally accessible to customers from rural and urban areas as complaints or challenges can be submitted via a range of mediums. All complaints or challenges can be received investigated and responded to in the same manner irrespective of where they originate from.</p> <p>After consideration there are no specific rural needs identified in relation to allowing customers from rural areas access to a succession and assignment review or complaints process.</p>
365	Attendance Management Policy.	The policy applies to all employees regardless of whether they live/work in rural or urban areas.
366	Disciplinary Policy.	The policy applies to all employees regardless of whether they live/work in rural or urban areas.
367	Property Certificates Policy.	<p>There are three broad aspects to consider when determining the potential rural impact of the Property Certificates Policy. The first is the availability of Property Certificates to persons for properties in rural areas. The second is the adequacy and equitability of application methods. The third is the cost of a Housing Executive Property Certificate.</p> <p>In examining these issues it is considered that there is no differential impact on people in rural areas and that the policy treats people from rural areas in an equitable way.</p>
368	Lead Pipe Replacement Policy.	The requirement for lead pipe removal is determined on a property-by-property basis across the entire portfolio, irrespective of location. It is largely driven by Northern Ireland Water's lead pipe mains replacement programme.

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369	Carbon Monoxide Detectors Policy.	The requirement for carbon monoxide detection is resultant on the fuel source(s) used to provide heat within a home. This is determined on a property-by-property basis across the entire portfolio, irrespective of location.
370	Lifts and Lifting Equipment Maintenance Policy.	The requirement for lift and lifting equipment maintenance is determined on a property-by-property basis across the entire portfolio, irrespective of location.
371	Oil Spillage Remediation Policy.	The need for oil remediation services is determined by the occurrence of spillage events and are responded to on a property-by-property basis across the entire property portfolio, irrespective of location.
372	Septic Tank Maintenance Policy.	The requirement for septic tank maintenance is determined on a property-by-property basis across those houses that require it, irrespective of location.
373	Electric Vehicle Charging Policy.	The policy is for houses with dedicated private driveways. This may be more likely in rural areas, however there are a number of driveways at Housing Executive houses in urban areas too and therefore no differentiation is envisaged.
374	Asbestos Management Policy.	Asbestos management is determined on a property-by-property basis across the entire portfolio, irrespective of location.
375	Legionella Water Hygiene Policy.	<p>All properties/tenancies are treated the same and no difference will be made to the advantage of urban properties over rural properties, same will apply.</p> <p>This is a technical policy which applies to both rural and urban areas. Our recent risk assessment contract has concentrated on non-domestic properties regardless of location.</p> <p>Public health issues are the main priority, and therefore the needs of the people are treated equally.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
376	Transitional Arrangements for the implementation of Proposal 15 of Fundamental Review of Allocations - reduction in offers from three to two.	The Housing Selection Scheme is a region-wide scheme and operates consistently across rural and urban areas. This implementation approach will not operate any differently in rural areas, nor will it result in any differential access to the waiting list or service provision to those applicants waiting for a home in rural areas. Any differential approach would involve moving away from the objective of allocating social housing based on the highest housing need.
377	Implementation approach and transitional arrangements for the implementation of Proposal 5 of Fundamental Review of Allocations - greater choice of areas for social housing applicants.	This policy is applied equally across rural and urban areas. It is a key feature of the Housing Selection Scheme that applicants may choose areas where they wish to live: this reflects applicants' employment, social or support needs, and the local geographies of Northern Ireland. Housing is allocated on the basis of this choice of area, combined with objective housing need. Restricting applicants' choice of area (for example, by 'ring-fencing' rural or urban area so that only those within it may choose it, or by requiring evidence of a local connection to a town or village of choice), may mean that those in greatest need are less likely to be housed, and that homes are instead allocated to those in lower levels of need.
378	Capability Policy.	The policy applies to all employees regardless of whether they live/work in rural or urban areas. The Housing Executive employs approximately 3000 staff across Northern Ireland including staff from both rural and urban areas.
379	Grievance Policy.	The policy applies to all employees regardless of whether they live/work in rural or urban areas. The Housing Executive employs approximately 3000 staff across Northern Ireland including staff from both rural and urban areas.
380	Rural Needs Policy and Procedure.	The policy is designed to positively impact on rural households as it seeks to ensure that all policies, strategies, plans and services pay 'due regard' to rural needs.

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381	Powers of Entry on Land.	Powers of entry on land is carried out in accordance with legislative requirements regarding service of notices. The only area that could give rise to a potential differential impact for some rural applicants would be the communications channels used during the process. However, in this instance, communications are carried out by standard letter and notices are served by standard post so an equitable service can be provided for all regardless of their geographical location. Communications may subsequently be carried out by email or telephone at the landowner/occupier's request but it is not the default mode.
382	Management of Lone Working Policy.	The Practical Guidance Control Measures for lone working apply generally whether staff are working in rural or urban locations, with the exception of the Lone Working devices which rely on a mobile signal, these may be less suitable if working in a remote rural area. In this instance, staff are advised to be accompanied by a colleague.
383	Electrical Safety Policy.	The requirement for an Electrical Safety Policy is determined on a property-by-property basis across the entire Housing Executive portfolio, irrespective of location.
384	Gas Safety Policy.	The requirement for a Gas Safety Policy is dependent on the home or property having gas appliances. This is determined on a property-by-property basis across the entire portfolio, irrespective of location.
385	Land and Regeneration Services Transaction Approvals.	This policy and procedure is an entirely internal one to the Housing Executive, which sets out how to obtain approvals for Land and Regeneration Services business/transactions at the relevant level of authority within the organisation. It is exclusively administrative and does not directly involve the people in rural areas who may be a party to the transaction being approved.

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386	Transfer of Housing For All to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.	This proposal is solely to recommend the transfer of Housing For All functions from the Department for Communities to the Housing Executive. There is no differential impact as it involves the transfer of all functions (rural and urban) relating to Housing For All.
387	Control of Substances Hazardous To Health Policy.	The Housing Executive will, so far as is reasonably practicable, provide a safe place of work to all employees, contractors, visitors and other persons. This applies if our staff are from a rural area or are working in a rural area, and the provisions of this policy enable fair and equitable treatment for all irrespective of geographical location.
388	Rent increase proposal for 2023/24.	The proposal to increase Housing Executive rents would be applicable to tenants located in both rural and urban locations and based on the attributes of the property rather than the location.
389	Control of Vibration at Work Policy.	The Housing Executive will, so far as is reasonably practicable, provide a safe place of work to all employees, contractors, visitors and other persons. This applies if our staff are from a rural area or are working in a rural area, and the provisions of this policy enable fair and equitable treatment for all irrespective of geographical location.
390	Corporate and Business Plan 2022/23 - 2024/25.	With such a high level document it is unlikely that we could identify barriers to the delivery of fair outcomes for rural communities. Any barriers to the delivery of fair outcomes in relation to our various housing functions should be identified through the Rural Needs Impact Assessments of new and revised strategies, policies and plans.
391	Personal Protective Equipment Policy.	This is a policy to promote the correct and proper use of personal protective equipment of Housing Executive staff and will have no influence on their rural needs. All staff will be treated on a fair and equitable way irrespective of their geographical location.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>392 Reasonable Adjustments Policy.</p>	<p>Whilst the policy will be applied consistently and processes will be the same for employees that live in rural areas as urban it is possible that there may be different considerations based on where an employee lives e.g. if a redeployment is recommended there may be fewer viable options for an employee that lives in a rural area. If home working is part of a recommendation, this may be dependent on the employee having access to a home broadband connection of a certain strength.</p> <p>Whilst this may mean circumstances and considerations are different for employees in rural areas, the policy does not alter the Housing Executive's duty to consider reasonable adjustments for employees with a disability. The policy provides a consistent process for reasonable adjustments to be considered on a case by case basis.</p> <p>The Housing Executive can consult or seek assistance from organisations such as access to work who can assist disabled employees in rural areas for example with transport/equipment.</p> <p>The issue around redeployment can potentially be mitigated by the facility to work from home.</p> <p>Where a reasonable adjustment involves redeployment to an alternative role, the Reasonable Adjustment Panel will first seek to identify a suitable role at the same substantive grade as the employees' role. If it is not possible to identify a role at the same grade and the employee is redeployed to a role at a lower grade the Housing Executive will apply pay protection. Pay protection will be for a period of three years in line with the Organisational Change Policy. This is of particular relevance to staff working in rural areas as a suitable role may be more difficult to find.</p> <p>There is an appeal mechanism in the policy for anyone that is not satisfied with the outcome of the process and if the employees'/applicants' location is a factor in this, this can be considered at appeal.</p>

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393	Land Asset Management Strategy & Action Plan 2023-2026.	The four key priorities identified under the strategy and the approach taken to delivering on these priorities and the associated action plan are equally applicable in rural and urban and will result in a consistent and equitable approach to the management of the Housing Executive land asset whether it is located in rural and urban. Under this approach, people in rural areas will benefit equitably from the opportunities for regeneration and social benefit that derive from the maximised use of our land asset.

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
394	Review of Social Media Policy.	This policy outlines Libraries NI's overall approach to the use of corporate Social Media. No rural needs were identified.
395	Review of Partnership Policy.	This policy sets out Libraries NI's approach to partnership work. No rural needs were identified.
396	Review of Digital Inclusion Policy.	This policy sets out how Libraries NI will provide access to information and communications technology facilities and skills in all libraries including those in rural areas. No rural needs were identified.
397	Review of Freedom of Information Policy.	This policy sets out Libraries NI's commitment to ensuring an open and transparent approach in responding to information requests and compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000. No rural needs were identified.
398	Review of Smoke Free Workplace Policy.	This policy sets out Libraries NI's compliance with The Smoking (Northern Ireland) Order 2006. No rural needs were identified.
399	Review of Procurement Policy.	This policy sets out the framework for procurement activity in Libraries NI. No rural needs were identified.
400	Review of Adoption Leave Policy.	This policy provides a clear framework and application process for Libraries NI staff. No rural needs were identified.
401	Review of Anti-Fraud Policy.	This policy confirms that Libraries NI has a zero tolerance towards fraud and sets out details of responsibilities regarding its prevention. No rural needs were identified.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
402	Review of Code of Conduct for Board Members.	This review provides a clear framework within which Libraries NI's Board Members are expected to conduct themselves. No rural needs were identified.
403	Review of Conflicts of Interest Policy.	This policy provides a clear framework for managing actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest in a consistent and transparent manner. No rural needs were identified.
404	Review of Room Hire Policy.	This policy sets out the conditions that need to be met to facilitate the use and/or hire of library premises. No rural needs were identified.
405	Development of Job Transfer Policy.	This policy ensures that organisational objectives can continue to be met while affording employees with the opportunity to request a lateral transfer, to develop and enhance their skills to support career progression and personal development. No rural needs were identified.
406	Development of a Hybrid Working Policy.	This policy allows approved employees to split their time between attending the workplace and in an agreed remote working location(s). No rural needs were identified.
407	Review of Reading and Reader Development Policy.	This policy which sets out Libraries NI's approach to the provision of reading and reader development activities as a core service. No rural needs were identified.
408	Review of Stock Policy.	This policy outlines how library stock will be provided in a range of formats to meet the needs of communities in Northern Ireland. No rural needs were identified.
409	Review of Sponsorship Policy.	This policy sets out Libraries NI's approach to commercial sponsorship. No rural needs were identified.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
410	Review of Gifts and Hospitality Policy.	<p>This policy provides a clear framework for managing the treatment of offers of gifts or hospitality in a consistent and transparent manner.</p> <p>No rural needs were identified.</p>

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
411	Implementation of Six Monthly Assurance Statement of Internal Control And Risk Management.	Tourism NI incorporates compliance with the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 in their Six Monthly Assurance Statement of Internal Control And Risk Management.
412	Development of a prospective new Rural Tourism Capital Fund.	Collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to scope a new £ multi-million Rural Tourism Capital Fund and support on pre-development and market testing activity and to support objectives as part of the Rural Policy Framework.
413	Development of a new Northern Ireland Tourism Strategy.	Tourism NI provided input to a Rural Needs Impact Assessment as part of the development of a new Northern Ireland Tourism Strategy being led by our parent Department, the Department for the Economy.

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
414	Road Traffic Collision Investigation Service Instruction.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
415	Stalking and Harassment.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
416	South Armagh Review.	<p>The objective of the implementation of recommendations in this review is to ‘increase confidence and support for policing in South Armagh in the interests of community safety’ and ensure alignment of the policing model with standard organisational practice. Key benefits expected are improved visibility, improved accessibility, improved responsiveness and improved community focus.</p> <p>Improvement will be assessed as part of the measurement framework for the South Armagh Review implementation to assess if positive change has been made, for example measuring improvement in visibility through increased use of beat and cycle patrols across the area and improved accessibility through events and drop in clinics with the local community.</p> <p>District Command continue to keep regularly informed on community needs and perspectives through a range of stakeholder meetings and local accountability meetings, including the Policing and Community Safety Partnership. The Independent Advisory Group will provide further community perspective on the policing style and delivery, and provide critical feedback on the implementation, maximising co-design and accountability. Steps have been taken throughout the process to address any potential impact on Section 75 groups. Whilst this policy will affect a large number of people, it is not focused on any one group and any changes have been considered against principles and guidelines.</p> <p>No rural needs identified.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
417	Career Break and Unpaid Leave.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
418	Extension of Service.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
419	Gifts and Gratuities.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
420	Risk Assessment.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
421	Social Media.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
422	Disclosure.	The new policy was not influenced by rural needs.
423	Annual Leave.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
424	Service Vetting.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
425	Professional Development Review Standard Operating Procedure.	The new policy was not influenced by rural needs.
426	Major Incident.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
427	Operation PLATO IMMARCH response plan.	The new plan was not influenced by rural needs.
428	Sports Credit Guidance.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
429	Interface Protocol between Health and Social Care Trusts and Police Service of Northern Ireland.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
430	Information and Communications Services System Support Allowance.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
431	Police Support Units - Personal Protection Equipment.	The new policy was not influenced by rural needs.
432	Biometrics Retention.	The new policy was not influenced by rural needs.
433	Adult Safeguarding.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
434 Sharing victim and witness details with Home Office Immigration Enforcement.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
435 Substance and Alcohol Misuse.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
436 Information Security Service Instruction.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
437 Appropriate Personal Relationships and Behaviours in the Workplace.	The new policy was not influenced by rural needs.
438 Use of Personal Mobile Devices on duty.	The new policy was not influenced by rural needs.
439 New and Expected Parents.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
440 Review of the Media Service Instructions.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
441 Police Search.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
442 DNA and Fingerprint Elimination Databases.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
443 Hate Crime.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
444 Prison aircraft assisted escape - Operation Pailou.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
445 Priority Simulator - Local Policing Plan Consultation.	The new plan was not influenced by rural needs.
446 Internal Verification Guidance.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
447 Integrity Board.	The new policy was not influenced by rural needs.
448 Eye Care.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
449 Meal Expenses.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
450 Personal Protection Weapons.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.
451 Investigations.	The revised policy was not influenced by rural needs.

Public Health Agency

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
452 Youth Engagement Services.	<p>In planning the Youth Engagement Service the Public Health Agency considered a number of strategies, reports, evaluations and held Stakeholder Engagement Events.</p> <p>A number of social and economic needs were identified for those living in rural areas such as poor accessibility and connectivity to the Service.</p> <p>Access to key services can be a marker of disadvantage for people in rural communities, particularly for those living in more remote areas and for those without private transport. In rural areas more than an hour from Belfast, the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's Multiple Deprivation Measure indicates that access to key services by public transport is particularly poor - while for others, journeys made by public transport may simply be impractical due to a combination of journey length and remote location.</p> <p>The importance of accessibility has always been at the forefront of planning the Youth Engagement Services to ensure that the service is accessible to all potential service users. This has been improved over the years by offering a range of opening hours throughout the week, including drop-in at various times especially after school. Some services offer weekend and evening opening.</p> <p>Young people were also found to have difficulty in accessing transport that would enable them to avail of Youth Engagement Services. This has been addressed by the availability of the outreach option which is mainly available in rural locations. This is often found within a school setting and delivered outside of teaching times including afterschool's and lunchtime options. This will ensure rural young people, within the age range, attending the school will have an opportunity to access Youth Engagement Services and at the same time reduce other barriers to participation such as poor Wi-Fi and limited access to electronic devices.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>The Public Health Agency will endeavor to work closely with the providers to consider the best options within each Youth Engagement Services to deliver long term Outreach services to reach rural young people within the limited resource available. This could be a blended approach of utilising schools and/or identifying a specific community to work long term with.</p> <p>Travel and access to public transport in rural areas during the winter months and during inclement weather can on occasions cause some difficulties. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic Youth Engagement Services have adapted ways of delivering the service as face-to-face was not possible for a prolonged period of time. Youth Engagement Services established a blended approach for young people to access the service through digital platforms including Facebook, WhatsApp and Zoom which increased options for young people to participate. The Public Health Agency is also minded that not all young people have access to phones and tablets, so is not a viable option for all rural or urban young people.</p> <p>The Public Health Agency will continue to request and collate information relating to quarterly progress monitoring reports and Impact Measurement Tool to ensure a geographical accessibility to the Youth Engagement Services in both rural and urban settings.</p>
453 Self-Harm Intervention Programme.	<p>Although the Self-Harm Intervention Programme service is open to all people across Northern Ireland, the ability to obtain a referral and subsequent access to the Self-Harm Intervention Programme service following referral may be reduced/hindered in rural areas due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency service access; • Affordability of travel; • Reduced access to public transport; • Poor internet connectivity; and • Childcare and caring responsibilities.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>The onset of the pandemic, necessitated the usage of online/virtual delivery options which will be retained in any future model. The future service model will actively incorporate the usage of online/virtual delivery options for those who experience difficulty attending face-to-face appointments which will help negate the potential barriers to service access that can arise for rural dwellers due to travel cost concerns and/or reduced access to public transport. Although internet connectivity could remain an issue for rural service users but telephone access to the service will also be supported when required to enable access.</p> <p>The future Self-Harm Intervention Programme model will seek to expand its referral pathways from primary care to avoid disadvantaging people who live far from Emergency Departments. The new service will expand referrals made by General Practitioners based multidisciplinary teams (as these teams become more embedded across all practices) and consider the feasibility of accepting referrals from General Practitioners in practices where no multidisciplinary teams yet exist which will improve service accessibility for both rural and urban service users.</p> <p>Service delivery will be through community based services in non-mental health settings in local areas to reduce stigmatisation, promote engagement, reduce travel needs and associated costs. Self-Harm Intervention Programme appointments will also be offered on a flexible basis to ensure service users have the choice of day time or evening appointments to further improve accessibility. Improving service access will also address issues of isolation evidenced within rural areas.</p>
454	<p>Early Intervention Support Service - Regional Family Support Services Across Northern Ireland.</p> <p>In planning the Early Intervention Support Service the Public Health Agency considered a number of reports and undertook comprehensive stakeholder engagement.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>A lack of service provision and difficulty accessing services due to transport issues were identified in a number of rural areas.</p> <p>The locations and geographic spread for each Early Intervention Support Service was agreed based on local need, emerging need and gaps in service provision. The Early Intervention Support Service will benefit children, young people and families in rural areas within the geographic areas covered by Early Intervention Support Service by increasing access to an Early Intervention Support Service when required and address areas of previous unmet need.</p> <p>The focus of Early Intervention Support Service providers in addressing the needs of children, young people and families is to work collaboratively with Family Support Hubs and partners from the community and voluntary sectors and others working in related areas such as drugs and alcohol, mental health etc. to provide family support for children, young people and families with emerging vulnerabilities.</p> <p>Travel to rural areas in winter months and during inclement weather can on occasions cause some difficulties. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic Early Intervention Support Service have adapted ways of delivering the service as face-to-face visits were not possible for a prolonged period of time. All Early Intervention Support Service have the necessary technology to offer the Early Intervention Support Service using a blended approach of face-to-face visits and virtual sessions on Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Virtual sessions will continue to be used to offer support to families on occasions when home visiting cannot be offered as an option.</p>

The Sports Council for Northern Ireland

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
455	Revising of Complaints Procedure.	<p>This is an external facing procedure, which outlines how complaints should be made to Sport NI.</p> <p>Sport NI recognises it has no adverse impact on people in rural areas.</p>
456	Development of an Environmental Climate Change Policy.	<p>This is both an external and internal policy.</p> <p>The implementation of the policy will lead to improved measures to protect the environment, climate change and sustainable development. Sport NI will also ensure that it operates within the confines of any environmental policies and direction set by the Northern Ireland Executive and the Department for Communities.</p> <p>Sport NI is satisfied that this policy has no likely potential to impact people in rural areas or their social or economic needs. Sport NI is satisfied that the due regard duty has been fully considered.</p> <p>The policy will present an overall positive impact for all the people living in Northern Ireland including people in rural areas. This policy sets out Sport NI's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint and taking actions to determine stewardship of the environment for future generations. The development and implementation of this policy will ensure Sport NI adheres to the Programme for Government Outcomes Delivery Plan 2018, which highlights the importance of environmental sustainability, specifically Outcome 2 "We live and work sustainably - protecting the environment".</p> <p>Not adhering to environmental policies may have negative impacts for certain rural communities, but across the board there is no impact whether rural or urban that outweighs the other.</p>
457	Development of an Access to Information Policy.	<p>This is an internal policy.</p> <p>The policy applies to access to information, sharing and secure management of data gathered and collected for the general population gathered by Sport NI during</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>the course of the organisation's work. It relates to access, sharing and secure management of information held by Sport NI in order to ensure compliance with relevant legislation.</p> <p>Sport NI is satisfied that the Access to Information Policy has no likely potential to impact people in rural areas or their social or economic needs. Sport NI is satisfied that the due regard duty has been fully considered. This policy is unlikely to impact adversely on those living in rural areas as its aim is to improve policy and procedures to ensure that all data gathered and held by Sport NI is managed in line with legislation and is only used for the purposes for which it was gathered.</p>
458 Development of a Menopause Policy.	<p>This is an internal policy applicable to employees only and has no adverse impact on staff from rural areas.</p> <p>Sport NI want to create an environment where women feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for reasonable adjustments at work. This policy aims to make managers aware of their responsibility to understand the menopause and related issues for staff.</p>
459 Revision of the Procurement Policy.	<p>This is an internal policy, adopted to ensure that Sport NI adheres to the Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy. Sport NI is satisfied that the Procurement Policy has no likely potential to impact people in rural areas or their social or economic needs. Sport NI is satisfied that the due regard duty has been fully considered.</p>
460 Development of a Records Management Policy.	<p>This is an internal policy to ensure legislative compliance and good practice, a review of the Records Management Policy has been completed. This involved considering legislative and policy changes required to the Sport NI policy and procedures, as a result of the UK exit from the European Union. This review is to ensure that Sport NI is fully compliant with the law while ensuring good practice and procedures to ensure that</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>all data held by Sport NI is stored and used appropriately for the purposes for which it was gathered.</p> <p>Sport NI is satisfied that the Record Management Policy review has no likely potential to impact people in rural areas or their social or economic needs. Sport NI is satisfied that the due regard duty has been fully considered.</p>
461 Revision of Travel and Subsistence Policy Review.	<p>This is an internal policy, adopted from the Northern Ireland Civil Service Policy, applicable to employees only and has no adverse impact on staff from rural areas.</p> <p>This policy considers reimbursement of travel and expenses for staff in carrying out their duties, in line with current His Majesty's Revenue and Custom/Civil Service guidance.</p>
462 Review and revision of the Physical, Document and Information and Technology Security Policy and Procedures.	<p>Sport NI is satisfied that the Physical, Document and Information Technology Security Policy and Procedures review has no likely potential to adversely impact people in rural areas or their social or economic needs. Sport NI is satisfied that the due regard duty has been fully considered.</p>
463 Development of The Sports System Investment Programme - Governing Bodies.	<p>The Sports System Investment Programme is a one-year (2023-24) investment into recognised governing bodies of sport, replacing the current governing body investments. It aims to build on both membership, participation and workforce, by increasing underrepresented groups, including those from rural communities, as well as a quality experience. Corporate Plan cornerstone four is a key deliverable of the Sports System Investment Programme for Governing Bodies which targets participation, development and retention in sport and physical activity in rural communities. As part of this programme, governing bodies of sport focus on both growth and sustaining participation opportunities, increasing diversity across rural communities.</p> <p>This programme invests in the development of greater access to sport and physical activity via clubs, after</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>school settings and local leisure facilities in rural areas. The projects build capacity, create learning and training opportunities. They have also supported females, underrepresented groups, and coaches in rural communities to become talent coaches. They have invested in digital platforms to support rural communities as well as creating opportunities in rural communities to increase participation and retain new club members.</p>
<p>464 Implementation of The Performance Environment Transition Programme.</p>	<p>The Performance Environment Transition Programme investment was developed in line with Programme for Government targets and aims to benefit individuals from both rural and urban communities.</p> <p>It is a one-year (2022-23) investment programme into recognised governing bodies of sport, which aims to build upon investment in high performance programmes to deliver targets at major international competitions at World, Olympic/Paralympic, European and Commonwealth level.</p> <p>The programme offers investment to governing bodies of sport to support their performance programmes, throughout their performance pathways. This includes athletes, workforce of coaches, officials and volunteers. The Governing Body performance programmes includes athletes and performance support personnel from across both rural and urban areas in Northern Ireland, offering opportunities for athletes, coaches and volunteers to work towards international sporting success.</p> <p>This performance environment is fed from athletes, coaches and workforce from the wider sporting system and club environment so accessibility for rural communities is critical at these stages.</p>
<p>465 Delivery of training courses at Sport NI's National Outdoor Training Centre, Tollymore National Outdoor Centre.</p>	<p>Tollymore National Outdoor Centre is located in a rural area, and the two closest villages are Kilcoo (approximately two miles west) and Bryansford (approximately one mile east).</p>

<p>Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.</p>	<p>Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.</p>
	<p>The Centre provides a range of training, which includes training regarding sustainability of the local environment, use of local facilities and awareness of local environmental issues.</p> <p>Tollymore National Outdoor Centre is the National Centre for all of Northern Ireland and provides courses to individuals from rural and urban areas.</p> <p>A large number of its skills and leadership courses focus on and provide information on sustainability of the local (rural) area.</p>

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

	Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
466	<p>Over 90% of the Trust's 115 policies in the reporting period were clinical or technical in nature and have had no bearing on rural needs. For the other 6% of policies, rural needs were considered as per the explicit advice in the staff guidance on writing a policy. It was deemed that whilst rural needs were considered, a rural needs assessment was not required.</p> <p>Those non-clinical and non-technical policies assessed the potential impact of: the relocation of some Genitourinary Medicine clinical activity from Royal site to Crumlin Road Health Centre as a result of the opening of extra clinical accommodation, the Use of Close Circuit Television within Muckamore Abbey Hospital and the Procedure for the Search of Patients, their Belongings and the Environment of Care with Mental Health and Learning Disability Inpatient facilities (including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service & Iveagh).</p> <p>As such, no rural impact assessments were undertaken in the period under consideration.</p>	

Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
467 Service Delivery Plan for the Northern Health and Social Care Trust Phase 9 April-June 2022.	<p>For the purposes of analysis of this service delivery plan, rural areas have been classified by whether they are within a 20 or 30 minute drive-time from the centre of a settlement containing at least 10,000 usual residents. This assessment for rural needs concentrates on services being created, services being delivered remotely or virtually to accommodate social distancing by use of broadband or mobile technology or existing services still being provided but where the location of these services continues to be changed. Access to services is relevant in terms of economic cost, availability of public transport and broadband/internet/mobile communication access.</p> <p>The use of blended models of service delivery utilising virtual delivery in combination with face-to-face appointments as detailed in the service delivery plan offer choice to service users and minimise adverse impact in respect of access to services.</p>
468 Connect North Link Worker Service.	<p>Enhanced holistic social and wellbeing supports for people living with or affected by cancer, mental health issues, dementia, and other long term condition(s) or a palliative care diagnosis in the Northern Trust Area. Connect North have invested in an electronic information portal to host a unified and accessible electronic directory where providers have responsibility for promoting and maintaining their own information about services and supports they offer thus optimising link worker capacity. A digital front door to this directory allows members of the public to directly access information about services and supports available with an option to self-refer. For those who aren't digitally connected or suffer poor connection due to geography this digital front door can be accessed by supportive services to provide signposting or referral into Connect North. On receipt of referral contact with the client is via telephone, face-to-face or virtual based on the clients' preference, providing equitable access to information and supports.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>469 Northern Health and Social Care Trust Homecare/Northern Regional College Project.</p>	<p>This project offers up to twenty students fixed term employment placement opportunities. Positive rural needs impact in respect of the clients of domiciliary homecare service - service enables people to continue to live at home and in the community.</p> <p>Potential negative rural needs impact in respect of students who live in rural locations and ability to travel as part of their internship placement to people's homes to deliver domiciliary care service.</p> <p>The Homecare Service have locality offices in eight areas to facilitate a Trustwide Domiciliary Care service. This enables placement of students who wish to avail of this opportunity in a locality that is closest to their home address.</p> <p>In addition, where students do not drive or have access to transport, then steps are taken to pair the student and the associated work delivery with another domiciliary care worker who does have their own transport.</p>
<p>470 Temporary Closure of Ardrath House, Magherafelt.</p>	<p>Service users of this facility were required to relocate to alternative residential placement during the period of closure. The current area of placement, Magherafelt, has a population size of 8,819 people which is in excess of the definition of rural for this proposal.</p> <p>However the alternative placement meant relocation to a rural area for all or some of the service users. This impacts upon their families who may wish to keep in contact e.g. accessibility, availability and cost of transport. Consultation with service users and their families to identify preferred placement locations - impact re transport, and cost of same, minimised through this process.</p> <p>Staff of this facility required to relocate to alternative place of employment during the period of closure. Staff may reside rurally and therefore experience social and/or economic difficulties in respect of their new place of employment e.g. accessibility, transport availability, cost of transport. There was consultation with Trade</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>Unions and staff and application of Human resources Management of Change Framework to identify preferred alternative employment locations and excess travel costs to be reimbursed to staff.</p>
<p>471 Acute Maternity Services Transformation Considering the Options paper.</p>	<p>The definition of rural applied is in excess of 20 and 30 minute drive times from Antrim, the proposed location for elements of both the options shortlisted (Consultant-led births move to Antrim site with provision of intrapartum care for an additional 600-700 births per annum under option 3 and move all births to Antrim site with provision of intrapartum care for an additional 900 births per annum under option 4) and Coleraine (Development of a Freestanding Midwifery Unit in Causeway for approximately 200-300 women suitable for low intervention midwifery led care and birth under option 3). This definition is better able to distinguish between those who are most impacted by additional travel times caused by proposed changes to services. It should be noted that the service under consideration is not currently provided within rural communities but provided inside a hospital environment. The benefits of enhancing these services would be experienced by both rural and urban dwellers.</p> <p>Access to high quality antenatal and postnatal services are critical for women living in our communities. These proposals preserve and enhance the range of scheduled antenatal and postnatal care in Causeway Hospital. The only change in terms of access is that around 600-900 women will make a single additional journey to the centre of their choice to give birth to their babies and, if there is an urgent concern during the pregnancy, then women are required to attend Antrim Foetal Maternal Assessment Unit.</p> <p>Impacts related to limited availability of public transport, cost of transportation to alternative provision location, limited provision of community transport, choice of level of service delivery for births and social impact of potential lack of family support network during the time of giving birth and immediately afterwards.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>472 Delivery of online social groups for autistic young people and adults.</p>	<p>Due to the impact of COVID-19 these sessions are delivered online.</p> <p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To deliver a weekly online social group for autistic individuals aged twelve to seventeen tailored to the needs and wishes of the group; and • To deliver a weekly online social group for autistic adults developed around special interests/themes. <p>Positive impact: Use of online social groups should have a positive impact upon people who reside in rural areas economically as these can take place at home removing the need for travel to groups, and the associated transport and parking cost. Additionally public transport can be difficult for some autistic individuals therefore providing these social groups in a person's own home can also reduce anxiety and stress that can be associated with public transport and attending new areas/venues.</p> <p>Negative impact: Inability to access online social groups due to lack of, or poor connectivity, to mobile/broadband services.</p> <p>The online social groups are a pilot project over the two year period to determine suitability and identify any issues for rural dwellers.</p>
<p>473 Access Employment Ltd. Vocational Training.</p>	<p>Access Employment Ltd. Vocational Training provides an alternative to day centre services by enabling people to meet and interact and participate in activities in an alternative setting. It encourages people with a disability to participate in everyday life.</p> <p>The Trust's proposal to invest in this existing service enables the continuation of service to those marginalised with a learning disability from the rural catchment area of the Larne and Glens locality. It has a positive impact on the social needs of rural dwellers by social inclusion through participation in community based activities.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>It is a fundamental premise of day opportunities provision that service users make their own travel arrangements to attend the service.</p> <p>Differential impacts in respect of service users who reside rurally are likely to relate to the availability and cost of transport provision including both public and community transport. Please note that this is a continuation of a service already in place with a change in contract provision reflecting a change in funding streams only. Current service users are able to attend and access the service.</p>
474 Compass Advocacy Network Vocational Training Community Based Day opportunities.	<p>Potential service beneficiaries may reside in rural catchments across Ballymoney; Moyle; Ballymena and Coleraine catchment and additional referrals. It has a positive impact on the social needs of rural dwellers by social inclusion through participation in community based activities.</p> <p>It is a fundamental premise of day opportunities provision that service users make their own travel arrangements to attend the service.</p> <p>Differential impacts in respect of service users who reside rurally are likely to relate to the availability and cost of transport provision including both public and community transport. Please note that this is a continuation of a service already in place with a change in contract provision reflecting a change in funding streams only. Current service users are able to attend and access the service.</p>
475 MENCAP Northern Ireland Vocational Training Community Based Day opportunities.	<p>Potential service beneficiaries reside in rural catchments across Mid Ulster and Antrim. It has a positive impact on the social needs of rural dwellers by social inclusion through participation in community based activities.</p> <p>It is a fundamental premise of day opportunities provision that service users make their own travel arrangements to attend the service. MENCAP provides accessible vocational opportunities aligned to the</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>service user's choice and home locality - this means that public and community transportation is likely to be more readily available and in place aligned to service user choice and vocational opportunities.</p> <p>Differential impacts in respect of service users who reside rurally are likely to relate to the availability and cost of transport provision including both public and community transport. Please note that this is a continuation of a service already in place with a change in contract provision reflecting a change in funding streams only. Current service users are able to attend and access the service.</p>
<p>476 Triangle Housing Association Limited Vocational Training Community Based Day opportunities.</p>	<p>Triangle Housing Association Limited Vocational Training provides an alternative to day centre services by enabling people to meet and interact and participate in activities in an alternative setting. It encourages people with a disability to participate in everyday life.</p> <p>Triangle Housing Association Limited Vocational Training provides accessible vocational opportunities aligned to the service user's choice and home locality - this means that public and community transportation is likely to be more readily available and in place aligned to service user choice and vocational opportunities.</p> <p>Potential service beneficiaries may reside in rural catchments across Mid Ulster and Antrim. It has a positive impact on the social needs of rural dwellers by social inclusion through participation in community based activities.</p>
<p>477 Superstars Cookstown Vocational Training Community Based Day opportunities.</p>	<p>This is a specialist community based day service in Cookstown town centre for adults with a learning disability across Magherafelt and Cookstown localities in a vocational training café facility; production facility; performing arts activities and social evening and weekend activities. Potential service beneficiaries may reside in rural catchments across Mid Ulster and Antrim. It has a positive impact on the social needs of</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>rural dwellers by social inclusion through participation in community based activities.</p> <p>Differential impacts in respect of service users who reside rurally are likely to relate to the availability and cost of transport provision including both public and community transport. Please note that this is a continuation of a service already in place with a change in contract provision reflecting a change in funding streams only. Current service users are currently able to attend and access the service.</p>
478 Social Inclusion Navigator Role for People with Physical and Sensory Disabilities within the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.	The Service is offered free of charge across all of the Trust area. Staff visit service users in their own home regardless of location within the Trust. This service maximises opportunities for social inclusion for people in this client group and also considers the economic needs of people residing rurally by delivering the service to people in their own homes.
479 The Award, Monitoring, Review and Governance Arrangements for the Provision of Acute Services by Independent Service Providers.	Reduction of waiting lists in gastroenterology, dermatology, rheumatology, ear, nose and throat, diagnostics and endoscopy by transfer of patients to independent sector providers. Transfer of delivery location in this way may have an economic impact on people living rurally. Similar impact on all patients anticipated regardless of residential location. Specific differential impacts in respect of patients who reside rurally relate to the availability and cost of transport provision including both public and community transport.

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>480 Derriaghy Centre Transport Policy - An Individual Assessment of Transport Support Needs.</p>	<p>The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has considered the limited availability of transport in rural areas alongside the economic cost of travel to and from Derriaghy Mental Health Day Care in order to address any obstacles to find person centred solutions to accessing this type of social care service.</p> <p>The exploration of locally based services will also be considered to ensure travel time is kept to a minimum.</p> <p>A personalised individual approach to the assessment of transport needs is likely to impact positively on those living in rural areas. The introduction of the policy will bring a more consistent approach to the identification of need and the targeting of resources as a result.</p> <p>Consideration has been given to the accessibility of Derriaghy Centre to those in rural locations within the catchment area, e.g. cost and availability of transport.</p> <p>An individualised approach to assessing transport needs will help to address any particular needs given the individual circumstances including rural location. Transport time will also be considered and availability of similar services closer will always be explored.</p>
<p>481 The Future Provision of Trust Urgent and Emergency Care Services: Ards and North Down Area.</p>	<p>Access to services in terms of economic cost, availability of public transport, speed of transport in the event of an emergency. Consideration has been given to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including, broadband/internet/mobile communication access.</p> <p>The Trust is cognisant of the need to consider and mitigate any potential adverse impact. The Trust's proposal will be kept continually under review. This approach has been assessed as an ongoing assessment to monitor the impact of proposed option on an ongoing basis to ensure that the impact is not more significant than initially anticipated. See consideration</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>and mitigating measures for potential impact on people in rural areas below:</p> <p>The Trust will engage with frontline staff as well as key partners, service users and carers to ensure that the proposal is representative of and includes the valuable input of those who use its services as part of its communication strategy.</p> <p>The proposal provides an integrated and emergency care model that is in line with strategic direction.</p> <p>The proposal will create an Urgent Care Centre on the Ulster Hospital site, co-located with the Emergency Department.</p> <p>As a consolidated service, the service would have extended opening hours and be more sustainable.</p> <p>The Urgent Care Centre would be staff by highly skilled clinicians from a Multi-Disciplinary team, including Emergency Nurse Practitioners, Autonomous Nurse Practitioners, First Contact Physiotherapists, and Senior Medical staff.</p> <p>Consolidation of all three services on one site would enable the service to meet demand for minor injuries due to enhanced capacity.</p> <p>Enhanced diagnostic and imaging capabilities enable no restrictions on criteria by age for example more complex cases and very young children will not be required to attend another site to access or complete their care.</p> <p>The model would provide an alternative pathway for service users with urgent but non-life threatening conditions.</p> <p>The Trust continues to develop its Travel Plan to try to meet the challenges of vehicle flow, access and car parking. This includes consideration of the provision of additional car parking spaces.</p> <p>The Trust recognises that this service proposal may impact on staff in terms of relocation to a new work site.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>The Trust will put robust mitigating measures in place, adopting the principles of the Trust's Management of Change Human Resource Framework. Staff's individual and specific circumstances will be considered and, where adverse impact is identified, the Trust will take steps to mitigate its effects, such as the availability of retraining opportunities and eligibility for excess travel allowance payments.</p> <p>The Trust's proposal will be kept continually under review following potential implementation. Monitoring will be via monitoring of Urgent and Emergency Care Centre/Minor Injuries Service and Emergency Department activity for example the number of patients accessing the service, referral pathways utilised from service, ongoing recruitment, ongoing discussions with staff regarding career progression opportunities, expansion of current scope of practice for specialist nurses and work life balance considerations.</p> <p>Patient and staff experience satisfaction questionnaires, complaints and compliments will be reviewed and monitored. The Trust will also consider the feedback from South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust Communication and Engagement Plans around the proposal, including potential service user/public engagement and consultation events.</p> <p>Mitigation has been built into the proposal in respect of persons in rural areas who need to use our services.</p>

Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.		Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
482	New proposal for the future provision of Inpatient Dementia Services.	A Rural Needs Impact Assessment has been carried out, the Trust continues to consider the needs of people living in rural areas and to implement mitigating measures where possible such as virtual access to family/carers through use of online meeting platforms or alternatives to video calls depending on access to technology/broadband e.g. telephone calls and multidisciplinary teams contributing to delivery of care.
483	New proposal for the future delivery of Emergency General Surgery at Daisy Hill Hospital, Newry.	A Rural Needs Impact Assessment has been carried out, the Trust continues to consider the needs of people living in rural areas and to implement mitigating measures where possible. The changes to Emergency General Surgery remains under review and the Trust commits to monitoring for any potential adverse impact on our Service Users. The Trust will also continue to engage with stakeholders as part of the formal and informal consultation.
484	Re-tendering for provision of a Good Morning - Evening service. A free telephone/visual enabled technology befriending and alert service for older people and isolated vulnerable adults residing within the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council area and the Newry and Mourne council area of the Southern Trust.	A Rural Needs Impact Assessment has been carried out and found the service may be more appropriate for individuals living in rural areas who are more likely to experience loneliness and isolation. Whilst the service may be delivered in a central location, the provider will be contacting older people and isolated/vulnerable adults in their own homes, the service user will not have to travel to access the service, therefore it will have no adverse impact on those living in rural areas.

Western Health and Social Care Trust

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>485 Temporary Suspension of Emergency General Surgery at South West Acute Hospital, Enniskillen.</p>	<p>The Trust initiated a project in September 2021 in order to work towards a sustainable Emergency General Surgery service. This was in response to challenges to the delivery of a safe and sustainable general surgery service and address the particular challenge in maintaining 24/7 rotas to meet professionally mandated standards of care.</p> <p>This position changed at the beginning of October 2022 when the Trust experienced a number of critical staffing changes, which meant that the 24/7 rota for Emergency General Surgery at the South West Acute Hospital could not be sustained after December 2022. This resulted in an unplanned and temporary change to Emergency General Surgery services at the South West Acute Hospital from 5 December 2022.</p> <p>The South West Acute Hospital delivers services to people primarily in rural areas. The focus of this temporary unplanned change is in the location of Emergency General Surgery services and how service users and their family/carers living in rural areas across the Trust may be impacted by increased travelling times. The Emergency Department at the South West Acute Hospital will continue to operate as normal seeing the vast majority of patients who would have previously attended.</p> <p>Consideration has been given to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including, for example, access to service in terms of economic cost, availability of public transport and broadband/internet/mobile communication access. The Trust is cognisant of the need to consider and mitigate any potential adverse impact. The Trust has focused on communication of the temporary change prior to the public consultation.</p> <p>The Trust developed a contingency plan with pathways in place to provide safe emergency treatment of general surgery patients at Altnagelvin Hospital, Craigavon Hospital and Sligo Hospital.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>The alternative hospitals may not be easily accessible from rural locations for those without private transport. Those living in rural locations will likely require more effort, time, and resources to access them than those in an urban area. Mitigating measures may be required to ensure needs of those in rural areas are addressed and that those being supported are not adversely affected by the proposed service change and associated out-workings.</p> <p>In summary impacts are likely to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited availability of public transport; • Cost of transportation to and from alternative provision location; • Limited provision of community transport; and • Social impact of potential lack of family support network during the time required for the emergency general surgery and immediately afterward. <p>The public consultation process began in January 2023 targeting local populations across the seven Fermanagh and Omagh District Electoral Areas. The main objective of the consultation is to identify if an alternative viable means of delivering the service can be identified. We will use the consultation process to outline key facts to inform the public and listen to alternative proposals. Public consultation events and virtual events will provide rural communities the opportunity to learn more about the reasons for the temporary change, the steps taken to keep all patients safe, and for people to give feedback on viable alternative means to deliver this service. This approach will give people ways to access information on the consultation and to provide views and responses.</p> <p>The Trust will review the Rural Needs Impact Assessment following the public consultation. The Project Board will review qualitative and quantitative data, including the patient experience. This will be reviewed to monitor impact and feedback on the issue of additional travel for patients and their families.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>Eligible service users can avail of the Hospital Travel Costs Scheme - a scheme which helps people on a low income or income-based benefits who may be entitled to reclaim travel expenses for hospital treatment.</p> <p>The Trust accept this will be a concerning time for the local population and that they will be worried about how safe the alternatives identified will be. The Trust is confident that we can plan and operate the new and temporary arrangements to deliver safe pathways of emergency care with the support of our partners in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service and at the Southern Trust.</p>
486 Link to Wellbeing Project	<p>This project will aim to create a link from Western Health and Social Care Trust orthopaedic surgery waiting lists to potentially up to 24 Community and Voluntary Sector organisations through a Social Prescribing approach. A pre-rehabilitation wellbeing programme will be delivered in partnership with local Community and Voluntary Sector groups. The wellbeing programmes will aim to improve self-management of the orthopaedic condition, reducing the adverse health impact for the service user as they wait for surgery. It will maximise physical, mental and emotional wellbeing to promote recovery post-surgery. It will also help reduce the social isolation and loneliness experienced by many on the waiting list due to the physical limitations of their condition that reduces their ability to socialise.</p> <p>Those living rurally experience disadvantage in terms of isolation, poor transport network, poor internet access and social and economic disadvantage. These programmes will be running face-to-face but can also be incorporated in an online format if necessary. Transport will be provided as required in order to ensure individuals can attend programmes in their areas, meaning cost and availability of public transport should not be an issue.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
<p>487 Operational Guidelines for the Specialist Dementia and Older People's Community Mental Health Team.</p>	<p>These guidelines provide an outline of the Specialist Dementia and Older People's Community Mental Health Team principles and key services provided. They give clarity regarding the role and function of the Specialist Dementia and Older People's Community Mental Health Team to staff, service users, carers and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Any service user who cannot attend an outpatient clinic because of its location and their frailty will be offered a home visit or a telephone appointment. Also the service is currently piloting virtual clinics in community centres some of which are in rural areas. If these are successful the service will roll out across other rural areas.</p>

Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health and Social Care Trust

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
488 Corporate Risk Management Strategy and Policy.	<p>The aim of the policy is to support the Trust in managing its risks as effectively as possible by understanding and embedding the principles of effective risk management throughout the organisation. This ensures that the Trust meets both its moral and legal obligations, and ensures the safeguarding of patients, the public, its employees and assets as far as is reasonably practicable. No rural needs were identified, and there is nothing in the analysis of data to indicate that staff or patients in rural areas would be disproportionately impacted by the policy.</p>
489 Hot Works Policy.	<p>The policy aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define hot works and the control measures that are required to be implemented to ensure the works are carried out safely, so as not to cause harm to anyone or damage to property; • Ensure staff are protected by assessing the risks from hot works processes and applying the necessary control measures, so far as reasonably practicable; • Ensure suitable and sufficient risk assessments are completed for all hot works tasks carried out by the Trust, or on behalf of the Trust; • Set out clear roles and responsibilities associated with statutory legislation; • Adherence to applicable health and safety legislation; • Clarify arrangements for reporting of issues or incidents relating to hot works; and • Ensure that this policy and associated documentation is clearly communicated and freely accessible. <p>No rural needs were identified, and there is nothing in the analysis of data to indicate that staff or patients in rural areas would be disproportionately impacted by the policy.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
490 Legionella Policy.	<p>The policy establishes a framework for the safe intake, storage and distribution of clean water within the Trust and to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures are in place to assess the risk of bacterial contamination and ensure that corrective actions identified in risk assessments are implemented, so as to either eliminate or adequately manage and control the inherent risk; • Any operational changes, redesign of facilities or buildings, or change in their use, consider associated risk from exposure to bacteria; • Effective control procedures are implemented and maintained for each premises under the direct control of the Trust; • Clear lines of communication are maintained and that individual responsibilities within the control programme are defined and adequately resourced; • All precautionary measures are regularly monitored to maintain their effectiveness and that a continuing programme of awareness is maintained; • Results are recorded and that defects in the written scheme of control (defect/action process) are acted upon; • Appropriate action is taken in the event of an outbreak of Legionellosis or Pseudomonas; and • Free and easy access to the most current version of the policy and ensure arrangements are in place for archiving revised policies. <p>There is nothing in the analysis of data to indicate that staff or patients in rural areas would be disproportionately impacted by the policy. No rural needs were identified and the policy will have no differential impact for service users in rural areas.</p>
491 Body Worn Video Policy.	<p>There is nothing in the analysis of data to indicate that staff or patients in rural areas would be disproportionately impacted by the Body Worn Video Policy. No rural needs were identified and the principle</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	of introducing body worn video will have no differential impact for service users in rural areas. The aim of the policy is to ensure compliance with legislation and strategic direction and to establish procedures, planning and safe use of Body Worn Video devices throughout the Trust. The policy is designed to protect staff, service users and the public from risk whilst safeguarding the welfare of patients, carers and members of the public.
492 Personal Protective Equipment Policy.	The policy sets out the requirements for the correct selection, fitment and use of Personal Protective Equipment. No rural needs were identified, and there is nothing in the analysis of data to indicate that staff or patients in rural areas would be impacted disproportionately by the policy.
493 Protocol to manage potential holding of derogation list category 2 calls to allow emergency ambulance crews to finish as close to their scheduled shift end time as possible.	The protocol is designed to help the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service emergency crews to finish shifts as close to their rostered time as possible. The aim is to reduce the number of emergency crews working beyond their rostered finish times at the end of a shift. It will improve service planning and provision by reducing compensatory rest time before the start of a following shift for crew members finishing late. This will improve cover and enhance patient response, as well as improving staff welfare, work-life balance and morale. No specific rural needs were identified, and there is nothing in the analysis of data to indicate that staff or patients in rural areas would be impacted disproportionately by the policy.
494 Operational Road Risk and Fleet Safety Policy.	The objective of the policy is to ensure a standardised approach in driving standards/development within the Trust, and enhance driving standards in line with best practice, training and legislation. No rural needs were identified, and there is nothing in the analysis of data to indicate that staff or patients in rural areas would be impacted disproportionately by the guidance. The policy will benefit staff, irrespective of where they live or work.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
495 Gifts and Hospitality Policy.	<p>This policy is intended to provide advice to Trust staff, other personnel and third parties who, in the course of their day to day work or as a result of their employment, either receive offers of gifts and hospitality or provide gifts and hospitality to others on behalf of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service with the aim of ensuring that Trust employees and appointees are not put in a position in which risks or apparent risks may conflict with progression of business activities.</p> <p>All decisions by Trust staff on the provision or acceptance of gifts and hospitality must be able to withstand both internal and external scrutiny. They must be defensible as being in the direct interest of the organisation, as being proportionate to that interest and within limits that are acceptable to the Trust Board.</p> <p>It aims to protect employees and appointees under the Bribery Act 2010 which states it is an offence to receive or offer a bribe (including certain levels of gifts and hospitality).</p> <p>No rural needs were identified, and there is nothing in the analysis of data to indicate that staff or patients in rural areas would be impacted disproportionately by the policy.</p>
496 Identification and Management of Frequent Callers Policy.	<p>The identification and management of frequent callers to the emergency services offered by the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service is essential for the Trust to fulfil its obligation to identify and safeguard vulnerable people. In addition there are a range of individuals who make frequent or persistent calls to 999 services which do not relate to a health or social care need and which may be considered to be impinging on ensuring ambulance services are provided to those who need them. No rural needs were identified, and there is nothing in the analysis of data to indicate that staff or patients in rural areas would be impacted disproportionately by the policy.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
497 Concerns, Complaints and Compliments Policy.	<p>The purpose of this policy and supporting procedure is to ensure robust complaint management and accountability arrangements are in place in accordance with the Trust's governance arrangements and the Department of Health's "Guidance in Relation to the Health and Social Care Complaints Procedure". No rural needs were identified, and there is nothing in the analysis of data to indicate that staff or patients in rural areas would be impacted disproportionately by the procedures.</p>
498 Statutory and Mandatory Training Policy.	<p>This policy sets out the definition for statutory and mandatory training and the arrangements in place to enable the Trust to meet its obligations.</p> <p>The objectives of this policy are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce risks to our service users, staff, visitors and the public; • Comply with the law; • Support staff in carrying out their duties safely and efficiently; • Maintain competence to the required standards; • Provide a systematic approach to the provision and monitoring of mandatory training for all staff; • Ensure that a systematic approach is in place to review recommendations for proposed mandatory training; • Ensure acceptable governance arrangements are in place regarding the provision of and attendance/ completion of training; and • Outline responsibilities for managers and staff members to comply with the requirements of this policy. <p>No rural needs were identified, and there is nothing in the analysis of data to indicate that staff or patients in rural areas would be impacted disproportionately by the policy.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
499 Surveillance/Closed-Circuit Television Camera Policy (excluding Body Worn Video).	<p>The objective of this policy is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all Closed-Circuit Television installations for the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service are planned, risk assessed and researched in order to comply with standards, codes of practice and General Data Protection Regulation regulations; • Detail the corporate responsibility to the safety of staff and set down the roles and responsibilities of all personnel; • Provide clarity and transparency for the justification and rationale for installing Closed-Circuit Television on the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service premises (this includes vehicles and body worn cameras); • Provide assurances that any installation of recording equipment is primarily for the safety and protection of staff, patients and visitors as well as crime prevention, detection and asset protection; and • Formally record and detail the information that will be collected, stored and subsequently destroyed, as well as the time frames for holding information and reasons why. <p>No rural needs were identified, and there is nothing in the analysis of data to indicate that staff or patients in rural areas would be impacted disproportionately by the guidance.</p>
500 Fire Safety Procedure.	<p>The purpose of the Fire Safety Procedure is to support the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service in improving fire safety and making it as effective as possible by setting out the arrangements for effective fire safety management throughout the organisation. This ensures that the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service meets both its moral and legal obligations, and ensures the safeguarding of patients, the public, its employees and assets as far as is reasonably practicable.</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>The Fire Safety Procedure will be supported by a number of other documents covering other aspects of fire safety management such as personal emergency evacuation procedures, Fire Warden Standard Operating Procedures and a Fire Log Book, providing a framework that enables the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service to manage fire safety effectively, discharge its duties appropriately, and progress the successful delivery of both corporate and directorate aims and objectives.</p> <p>No rural needs were identified, and there is nothing in the analysis of data to indicate that staff or patients in rural areas would be impacted disproportionately by the guidance.</p>
501 Risk Assessment Procedure (Health and Safety Procedure).	<p>The purpose of the Risk Assessment Procedures is to support the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service in managing its health and safety risks as effectively as possible by understanding and embedding the principles of effective health and safety risk management throughout the organisation. This ensures that the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service meets both its moral and legal obligations, and ensures the safeguarding of patients, the public, its employees and assets as far as is reasonably practicable. The procedure provides the framework that enables the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service to manage its health and safety risks effectively and discharge its duties appropriately.</p> <p>No rural needs were identified, and there is nothing in the analysis of data to indicate that staff or patients in rural areas would be impacted disproportionately by the guidance.</p>
502 Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Assessment Procedure (Health and Safety Procedure).	<p>The purpose of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Assessment Procedure Assessment Procedures is to support the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service in managing its health and safety risks as effectively as possible by understanding and embedding the</p>

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service.
	<p>principles of effective health and safety risk management throughout the organisation. This ensures that the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service meets both its moral and legal obligations, and ensures the safeguarding of patients, the public, its employees and assets as far as is reasonably practicable. The procedure along with the Risk Assessment Procedure, provides the framework that enables the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service to manage its health and safety risks effectively and discharge its duties appropriately.</p> <p>No rural needs were identified, and there is nothing in the analysis of data to indicate that staff or patients in rural areas would be impacted disproportionately by the guidance.</p>

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