

## Appendix I - Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) Template

### SECTION 1 - Defining the activity subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

#### 1A. Name of Public Authority

Department of Health

#### 1B. Please provide a short title which describes the activity being undertaken by the Public Authority that is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

Consultation on a prototype Regional Obesity Management Service for Northern Ireland.

#### 1C. Please indicate which category the activity specified in Section 1B above relates to.

Developing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Adopting a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Implementing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Revising a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Designing a Public Service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Delivering a Public Service	<input type="checkbox"/>		

#### 1D. Please provide the official title (if any) of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service document or initiative relating to the category indicated in Section 1C above.

Prototype Regional Obesity Management Service for Northern Ireland.

#### 1E. Please provide details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service.

The key objective of the ROMS is to achieve a significant risk reduction in the burden of obesity-related co-morbidities among the group of patients targeted in the service. It is intended that this will be achieved by facilitating significant and sustained weight reduction in the individuals and improvement in their long-term health.

**1F. What definition of 'rural' is the Public Authority using in respect of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?**

Population Settlements of less than 5,000 (Default definition).

Other Definition (Provide details and the rationale below).

A definition of 'rural' is not applicable.

*Details of alternative definition of 'rural' used.*

*Rationale for using alternative definition of 'rural'.*

*Reasons why a definition of 'rural' is not applicable.*

## SECTION 2 - Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

**2A. Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?**

Yes  No  If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **2E**.

**2B. Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.**

Specialist obesity management services are not currently commissioned in Northern Ireland, and therefore are not currently available. This consultation is seeking views on the Department's plans to introduce a prototype Regional Obesity Management Service for NI. The prototype ROMS service will run for an initial period of two years, and will include the provision of both preventative measures and active multidisciplinary weight loss strategies, including, where appropriate, weight loss medication and bariatric surgery (weight loss surgery).

This service will be a new regional service, and as such it will impact positively on all those who use it, who currently have no access to such services within NI. This includes people living in rural areas. As it is a prototype designed to test the service model before further roll out, services will be based in limited locations in Northern Ireland during the testing period. These are yet to be determined, with decisions to be made based on capacity and capability of existing hospital sites, and following the views shared during this initial consultation. This may mean that some individuals (living in both rural and urban settings) may find it more difficult to physically access these services than others, due to distance and requirement to travel for care. However, as the service will be provided on the basis of clinical assessment, those living in rural areas will have the same right to access the services as others living in non-rural areas.

**2C. If the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently from people in urban areas, please explain how it is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently.**

It is not intended that there should be a differential impact on people living in rural areas in terms of clinical access to the service – while the prototype service may be based in a limited number of locations, it will be a regional service available to everyone in Northern Ireland on the basis of clinically assessed need. However, it is recognised that individuals living in rural areas may be more likely to have difficulty accessing a regional service due to reduced access to public transport connections compared to those living in urban areas. Internet access may also be relevant in relation to virtual clinics or service delivery.

**2D. Please indicate which of the following rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to primarily impact on.**

Rural Businesses	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education or Training in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Health or Social Care Services in Rural Areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Poverty in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deprivation in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Crime or Community Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agri-Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please state)	<input type="text"/>

**If the response to Section 2A was YES GO TO Section 3A.**

**2E. Please explain why the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is NOT likely to impact on people in rural areas.**

### SECTION 3 - Identifying the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

**3A. Has the Public Authority taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?**

Yes  No  If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **3E**.

**3B. Please indicate which of the following methods or information sources were used by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.**

Consultation with Rural Stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>	Published Statistics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Consultation with Other Organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Research Papers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Surveys or Questionnaires	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Publications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Methods or Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below).			<input type="checkbox"/>

**3C. Please provide details of the methods and information sources used to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including relevant dates, names of organisations, titles of publications, website references, details of surveys or consultations undertaken etc.**

Census 2021

DAERA publication – Key Rural Issues, Northern Ireland 2022 (referencing NISRA midyear population estimates 2020, Travel Survey NI 2017-19)

**3D. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified by the Public Authority?**

According to NISRA's 2020 mid-year estimates of population, more than a third (36%) of Northern Ireland's (NI) population lives in a rural area. Despite similarities in many aspects of urban and rural life, there are also challenges which tend to be more pronounced in rural areas outside of Belfast. Difficulties with access to services, and issues with connectivity, social and digital, tend to have a disproportionate impact on rural dwellers.

While traditionally rural areas may have had much poorer internet access due to broadband availability, this has improved in recent years, with investment in digital infrastructure narrowing the urban/rural gap in broadband availability considerably. In 2022, 82% of rural homes in NI had access to superfast speeds, with almost two thirds (65%) of NI rural households having access to a full-fibre connection.

Some individuals living in rural settings may find it more difficult to physically access HSC services than others, due to distance and requirement to travel for care. Data from the Travel Survey NI (2017-19) revealed that just 18% of rural dwellers live within a 3 minute walk of the nearest bus stop, compared with 40% of those living in urban areas – with 10% of rural dwellers living a 44 minute or longer walk to their nearest stop. Distances to railway stations tend to be even longer for rural dwellers. The frequency of public transport services also differs greatly between urban and rural areas.

**If the response to Section 3A was YES GO TO Section 4A.**

**3E. Please explain why no steps were taken by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?**

## **SECTION 4 - Considering the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas**

### **4A. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.**

This is a new prototype that will provide a new regional service that has to date not been available in NI. It will therefore have a positive impact on all those who access it, from both rural and urban areas.

It is recognised that, as the service will be provided in limited locations during the testing phase, this may have an impact in terms of physical accessibility (due to public transport links etc). However, as the locations have not yet been agreed, it is not possible to determine the full extent of this (for example, if a service is provided in the South West Acute Hospital in Enniskillen, this might prove more accessible for some rural populations in Fermanagh than if the service was provided in a Belfast hospital). However, it is recognised that rural populations have reduced or poorer access to public transport options, which may create difficulties in accessing a regional obesity management service, regardless of location. This will be more fully considered during the service design phase.

To mitigate some of this impact, it may be possible to consider virtual options as part of the prototype service model, which may increase accessibility for those living in rural areas given the recent improvement in broadband access. However, it is recognised that there may be issues relating to accessibility of internet provision for a small proportion of the rural population. This will be more fully considered following the consultation at the stage when key elements of the service delivery model are being designed.

Following this consultation, it will be necessary to evaluate location options for the prototype service. At this stage it may be appropriate to reconsider the social and economic needs of people in rural areas, depending on the locations identified and selected. This will include consideration of accessibility for those attending a surgical site, including transport and accommodation, as well as those attending clinics for review or treatment. As above, this will be more fully considered during the service design phase.

## SECTION 5 - Influencing the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

**5A. Has the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, been influenced by the rural needs identified?**

Yes  No  If the response is **NO GO TO Section 5C.**

**5B. Please explain how the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, has been influenced by the rural needs identified.**

Based on the needs identified above, the Department will ensure that the needs of rural populations will be considered during the service design phase following this initial consultation. This will include accessibility in terms of transport and internet access.

A number of consultation questions also relate to accessibility, e.g. regarding travelling for services. The post consultation analysis will consider responses to these questions in conjunction with other available evidence, and use this to inform the service design phase.

If the response to Section **5A** was **YES GO TO Section 6A.**



**5C. Please explain why the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or the delivery of the Public Service, has NOT been influenced by the rural needs identified.**

## SECTION 6 - Documenting and Recording

**6A. Please tick below to confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained by the Public Authority and relevant information on the Section 1 activity compiled in accordance with paragraph 6.7 of the guidance.**

I confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained and relevant information compiled.

<b>Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:</b>	Taryn McKeen
<b>Position/Grade:</b>	Deputy Principal
<b>Division/Branch</b>	Elective Care and Cancer Policy Directorate / ROMS Team
<b>Signature:</b>	Taryn McKeen
<b>Date:</b>	20/10/2023
<b>Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:</b>	Catrina O'Connor
<b>Position/Grade:</b>	Principal
<b>Division/Branch:</b>	Elective Care and Cancer Policy Directorate / ROMS Team
<b>Signature:</b>	<i>Catrina O'Connor</i>
<b>Date:</b>	02/11/23