

Rural Needs

Annual Monitoring Report

1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025



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

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Department of

**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

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Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Ministerial Foreword..... | 3 |
| DAERA Overview | 5 |
| Glossary | 6 |
| GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS..... | 7 |
| Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs | 8 |
| Department for Communities..... | 18 |
| Department for the Economy..... | 27 |
| Department of Education | 35 |
| Department of Finance | 37 |
| Department of Health..... | 41 |
| Department for Infrastructure..... | 46 |
| Department of Justice..... | 58 |
| The Executive Office | 61 |
| Public Prosecution Service | 70 |
| DISTRICT COUNCILS..... | 71 |
| Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council | 72 |
| Ards and North Down Borough Council..... | 75 |
| Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council | 83 |
| Belfast City Council | 87 |
| Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council..... | 88 |
| Derry City and Strabane District Council | 92 |
| Fermanagh and Omagh District Council..... | 95 |
| Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council..... | 98 |
| Mid and East Antrim Borough Council..... | 112 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Mid Ulster District Council..... | 115 |
| Newry, Mourne and Down District Council | 120 |
| OTHER PUBLIC AUTHORITIES | 124 |
| The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools | 125 |
| The Education Authority | 127 |
| Invest Northern Ireland | 140 |
| The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Board..... | 144 |
| The Northern Ireland Housing Executive..... | 146 |
| The Northern Ireland Library Authority | 153 |
| The Northern Ireland Tourist Board | 156 |
| Police Service of Northern Ireland..... | 157 |
| Public Health Agency..... | 159 |
| The Sports Council for Northern Ireland..... | 166 |
| Belfast Health and Social Care Trust..... | 174 |
| Northern Health and Social Care Trust..... | 176 |
| South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust | 181 |
| Southern Health and Social Care Trust | 185 |
| Western Health and Social Care Trust..... | 186 |
| Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health and Social Care Trust..... | 189 |

Ministerial Foreword

I am pleased to publish the eighth Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report, covering the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. This report sets out the Rural Needs Impact Assessments undertaken during the reporting year by the 37 public authorities currently listed in the Schedule to the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (the Act).



The Act provides a legislative framework requiring those listed public authorities to give due regard to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans and designing and delivering public services. At its core, the Act seeks to promote fair and equitable consideration of rural circumstances in public decision-making.

This report provides a transparent account of the information submitted by public authorities detailing their compliance with the due regard duty. It also summarises how rural needs have been considered as part of the policy-making process by those listed public authorities during the reporting year.

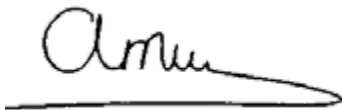
The effectiveness of the Act relies on the availability and use of robust, high quality rural evidence. To strengthen this evidence base, I recently launched a Rural Data Hub, which brings together Census 2021 data in a single, accessible platform designed to support rural analysis. The Hub enables users to develop bespoke area profiles at low geographies and to produce interactive and downloadable rural urban comparisons, supporting more informed policy development and service delivery.

Effective implementation of the Act also depends on ongoing guidance, training and support. My Department continues to play a central role in supporting public authorities to meet their statutory obligations by providing comprehensive guidance, delivering training, and maintaining accessible online resources.

Rural areas are home to approximately 36% of our people and make up over 80% of Northern Ireland's land mass. They make a vital contribution to Northern Ireland's economy, society and culture. However, distinct and often complex challenges remain, including issues relating to social isolation, transport, housing and access to services. My officials continue to champion the Act and raise its profile to ensure that these challenges are recognised and addressed wherever possible.

In line with Section 1(3) of the Act, my Department commenced a review of the Schedule in July 2024. This review provides an opportunity to ensure the list of public authorities subject to the Act remains appropriate and comprehensive. Work is ongoing to progress the recommendations and associated legislative processes, which are expected to result in a significant expansion in the number of public authorities brought within the scope of the Act.

I commend the commitment of public authorities that have contributed to this report. I also wish to acknowledge the important role played by Rural Needs Co-ordinators, whose work is critical to the effective implementation of the Act. They act as the key point of contact for rural needs within the public authorities, support completion of annual returns, promote awareness of the Act, and engage with my Department to share learning and best practice.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Muir', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Andrew Muir MLA

Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

DAERA Overview

The Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 remains a key legislative tool for improving outcomes in rural communities. It places a statutory duty on public authorities to give due regard to the social and economic needs of rural dwellers when carrying out their functions and making decisions. By embedding rural considerations into policy, service development and design, the Act promotes fairer and more inclusive treatment for those living in rural areas.

Rural areas often encounter distinct challenges influenced by location, population density, and limited access to essential services. Factors such as remoteness, dispersed populations, and demographic differences can shape how policies affect these communities. As a result, it is crucial for public authorities to carefully consider how their functions and services can be tailored to meet the needs of rural populations effectively.

The Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report documents public authorities' rural needs impact assessments. This increases transparency and enables stakeholders to assess the extent to which rural needs are addressed by public authorities. Since the Act's introduction in 2017, the number of rural needs impact assessments completed by public authorities has increased significantly, indicating higher levels of awareness and participation.

DAERA continues to provide support to public authorities, including tailored training and resources. During the reporting period, classroom training sessions were delivered for Rural Needs Co-Ordinators, ensuring they are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to fulfil their roles. Additionally, several awareness sessions were held within DAERA and public authorities to reinforce understanding of the Act.

Support also includes practical guidance for conducting rural needs impact assessments, engaging with stakeholders, and provision of an extensive selection of online resources available through the DAERA website. Resources include guides, templates, rural statistics and access to the rural research hub.

The Rural Needs Network met twice during the reporting period offering a valuable platform for collaboration and knowledge exchange among public authorities. These meetings included a rural needs impact assessment workshop delivered by the Rural Community Network and also a presentation from the office of the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland.

Glossary

| | |
|-------|--|
| BT | British Telecom |
| CCTV | Closed Circuit Television |
| CVO | Commander of the Royal Victorian Order |
| DAERA | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs |
| e.g. | For example |
| GB | Great Britain |
| GP | General Practitioner |
| i.e. | That is to say |
| LGBT | Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, |
| Ltd | Limited |
| NI | Northern Ireland |
| NIHRC | Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission |
| MOT | Ministry of Transport |
| OBE | Order of the British Empire |
| PhD | Doctor of Philosophy |
| US | United States |
| VE | Victory in Europe Day |

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

Reporting Period 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025

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 (Northern Ireland) 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 | Revision of the policy surrounding the application of welfare during transport legislation to animals travelling to shows and the operation of the single animal exemption. | There is no evidence that those attending shows with non-farmed animals who come from a rural area would be impacted negatively compared to people living in an urban area attending the same shows. The policy changes will apply equally to all those travelling to shows regardless of their locality. Consequently, there is no evidence to suggest that this revised policy will impact negatively on people in rural areas. |
| 2 | Implementing the annual uplift of marine licensing fees for the financial year 2024-25. | The annual uplift to fees is to ensure that the value of the fees remains constant and negates the inflationary/ deflationary effects of the previous financial year. The cost of a marine licence is a small percentage of the overall cost of most projects in the marine area. The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs therefore concluded that the annual uplift of marine licensing fees is unlikely to impact on people in rural areas. |
| 3 | Adopting the Marine Plan for Northern Ireland. | No issues or impacts have been identified. The Marine Plan for Northern Ireland does not impact any differently on people in rural areas or their social and economic needs compared to people in urban areas. The Marine Plan for Northern Ireland is a framework for consistent and evidence-based decision-making regarding activities and uses that take place in the marine area, as well as their impact on the marine environment, people and other marine activities and uses. Through the management of marine resources, it benefits everyone in 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 (Northern Ireland) 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>4 Developing the Irish Sea Demersal Fisheries Management Plan.</p> | <p>The Irish Sea Demersal Fisheries Management Plan is being developed with due regard to rural needs as the fishing and seafood processing industries are generally considered to be predominately rural based. The measures outlined in the Fisheries Management Plan have been identified and developed to ensure continued sustainability and profitability throughout the various demersal fisheries in Northern Ireland, which will have positive impacts upon those involved in the fishing industry. This plan will ultimately support the people in those rural communities that these industries employ.</p> |
| <p>5 Implementing the Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme 2024-25.</p> | <p>All programmes delivered under the Tackling Poverty and Social Isolation Framework are 100% rural. The Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework 2016 provides the basis for the Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme 2024-25 and the updated draft Programme for Government adds considerable weight to the need to ensure rural communities are properly catered for. The revised Programme for Government identifies a priority of tackling anti-poverty to build a strong society and tackle disadvantage. Additionally, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs' paper <i>Key Rural Issues Northern Ireland 2023</i> identifies some of the key issues currently affecting rural communities.</p> <p>The scheme provided grants to rural community and voluntary organisations to address identified rural poverty or social isolation issues.</p> |
| <p>6 Proposals to revise marine licensing fees.</p> | <p>No issues or impacts have been identified as the proposals to revise marine licensing fees do not impact differently on people in rural areas or their social and economic needs compared to people in urban areas. The impacts are likely to be on developers and organisations wishing to undertake activities in the marine and coastal area. As such, it is anticipated that the potential impact of the review will be low on rural populations.</p> <p>The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs analysed the public register of marine licenses for the financial year 2023-24 and other data supplied by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. During this period 23 marine licenses were awarded, seven of</p> |

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|---|--|---|
| | | which were for activities off the coast, in what could be described as rural areas. These activities were largely undertaken by public bodies, and no specific rural need was identified. |
| 7 | Implementing the Fisheries Act 2020 (Scheme for Financial Assistance) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024. | The fishing, aquaculture and seafood industries are generally considered to be rural based. This scheme of financial assistance has been developed with the needs and views of those industries included throughout the process and will support the people in those rural communities that those industries employ. |
| 8 | Implementing the addition of XL bully dogs to the Dangerous Dogs list. | This new policy will impact all XL bully dog owners whether they live in a rural or urban area. The legislation aims to protect the general public from attacks by XL bully dogs regardless of whether they live in rural or urban areas. There is no specific impact foreseen on rural communities. |
| 9 | Implementing the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs' Farm Support and Development Programme Communications Strategy. | No issues or impacts have been identified as the aim of the Farm Support and Development Programme Communications Strategy is to build and maintain positive engagement between the programme, its constituent workstreams, and stakeholders (internal and external). The Communication Strategy and its Communication Plan will be timely and targeted at all active farm businesses and land managers and therefore will address the rural needs identified. The strategy will be regularly reviewed to ensure that these needs continue to be effectively addressed. |
| 10 | Amending the Direct Payments to Farmers (Cross-Compliance) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024. | This is an amendment to legislation and the majority of applicants come from rural areas. It will not have any significant impact on the social and economic needs of the population in rural areas |
| 11 | Amending the Hops Certification Regulations 1979. | This amendment will consolidate existing enforcement legislation, making technical amendments which update legislative references so that new EU rules can be enforced in Northern Ireland. It is expected that the Hops Amendment Regulations will have no impact on industry and therefore no specific impact on rural areas. |

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|---|---|---|
| 12 | Implementing the Milk Marketing Board (Residuary Functions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995, amended by the Milk Marketing Board (Residuary Functions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2002. | The 1995 Regulations, as amended by the 2002 Amendment Regulations, will be implemented to disperse the Northern Ireland Milk Marketing Board's residual funds to benefit those relevant in the production of milk in Northern Ireland. Therefore, it is likely that the people in rural areas will stand to benefit from the distributed legacy assets. However, the legacy assets are relatively small. As such, it is unlikely that this will have a major material impact upon those in rural areas. |
| 13 | Implementing the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2024-25. | <p>No issues or impacts have been identified as the aim of the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme is to support the sustainability and growth of rural businesses. In many cases the provision of a small capital grant through the scheme will create employment opportunities in rural areas.</p> <p>The scheme is one of a series of initiatives delivered through the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework in 2024-25 all of which help in tackling rural poverty and social isolation.</p> |
| 14 | Implementing Rural Support 2024-27. | <p>The Rural Support charity, through a three year contract, delivers on the aims and objectives of the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework by assisting in tackling rural poverty and social isolation and helping to improve the quality of life for farmers and farm families. In particular, Rural Support continue to develop and deliver innovative approaches to tackling key economic, social, and health and wellbeing issues prevalent in the farming and rural community.</p> <p>Programmes delivered under the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework are 100% directed to rural projects.</p> |
| 15 | Revising the Operational Protocol for assessing ammonia and air pollution impacts on the natural environment. | Socioeconomic rural needs are considered and the process is designed to encourage agricultural development through the use of best available techniques and mitigation measures. |

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| 16 | Developing the Proposed Ammonia Strategy. | The reductions in ammonia emissions arising from the measures in the Proposed Ammonia Strategy will have a positive impact for all residents of Northern Ireland, both rural and urban, through reducing the level of air pollution. |
| 17 | Implementing the Prohibition on Sale and Supply of Single-Use Vaping Products. | No issues or impacts have been identified as the proposals to ban a single use plastic product do not impact differently on the social and economic needs of people in rural areas compared to people in urban areas. Various alternative products remain available to all. |
| 18 | Bathing Waters Review. | A rural needs impact assessment indicated that there will be minimal impact on rural communities. A positive effect is anticipated through the promotion of rural tourism. |
| 19 | Proposed amendments to The Environmental Protection (Disposal of Polychlorinated Biphenyls and other Dangerous Substances) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2000. | It is not anticipated that amendment of The Environmental Protection (Disposal of Polychlorinated Biphenyls and other Dangerous Substances) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2000 will have any significant impact on either rural or urban dwellers. |
| 20 | Developing the Pilot Horticulture Programme- A workstream within the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs' Sustainable Agriculture Programme. | No issues and/or impacts have been identified as the pilot horticulture programme is applicable, irrespective of location, to any applicant who meets the programme's eligibility criteria. |
| 21 | Implementing the Waste sampling for Materials Facility sites in Northern Ireland. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 22 | Revising the Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster Plan. | The plan is likely to impact positively on people in rural areas as it welcomes members from all communities from both rural and urban backgrounds. This promotes understanding and friendship between rural and urban children and young people. It brings people together at educational and social events, helping to address the issue of rural and social isolation and loneliness. |

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| 23 | Revising the Northern Ireland Regional Food Programme. | The programme encourages all sectors of the agri-food industry to work together and provides financial assistance for eligible additional activities. The programme provides additional leverage and financial support for these not-for-profit representative bodies to work together. It is likely to impact positively on people in rural areas as it draws applications from both rural and urban backgrounds which promotes understanding and friendship between both rural and urban populations. |
| 24 | Developing the Farming for Sustainability Scheme - Knowledge. | Farming for Sustainability is a Knowledge Transfer scheme aimed at providing farm businesses with the technical knowledge required to adapt to and benefit from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs' Sustainable Agriculture Programme. This scheme is likely to impact positively on rural areas as it provides farm businesses with technical knowledge on a number of levels. |
| 25 | Revising the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025. | The proposed changes to legislation do not change the outcome of site designation or classification, it is solely to define the role of the Secretary of State within the process. Therefore, the social and economic needs of the people in rural areas are not relevant to this policy change. |
| 26 | Adopting the Round 4 Industry Noise Action Plan 2023-28. | The rural needs impact assessment findings were that the plan will not impact rural communities as it solely relates to the Belfast Agglomeration, which is an urban area. |
| 27 | Developing the draft Regulations on Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases for Northern Ireland. | All rural needs impacts were considered but it was deemed that the draft regulations apply equally to rural and urban areas. |
| 28 | Draft Regulations on Ozone Depleting Substances for Northern Ireland. | All rural needs impacts were considered but it was deemed that the draft regulations apply equally to rural and urban areas. |
| 29 | Developing the Northern Ireland draft Climate Action Plan 2023-27. | The overarching rural needs impact assessment for the draft Climate Action Plan has been completed with the information supplied through individual rural needs impact assessments of the policies and proposals contained within the draft. |

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| | <p>Climate Action Plans that have been completed by relevant departments (i.e. policies and proposals within the draft Climate Action Plan are submitted by lead departments and therefore it is their responsibility to complete rural needs impact assessments on their policies/proposals). Some proposals are at an early stage of development and have not yet reached the stage of completing a rural needs impact assessment, however this is an ongoing process and will be updated as required. The Rural Community Network was commissioned to support development of an overarching Climate Action Plan level which considered interactive and cumulative impacts of policies and proposals. At this stage it is not possible to determine all rural impacts and how they may differ from urban dwellers, there is potential for positive as well as negative impacts and appropriate mitigations have been identified and will be considered as policies and proposals are further developed.</p> |
| 30 | <p>Delivering the Shared Island Bioeconomy Demonstration Initiative 2024.</p> <p>The rural needs impact assessment found that the impact on rural communities should be positive in nature, leading to more innovative and sustainable ways to maintain their business, overcome challenges and develop new skills, all of which will be to the benefit of rural communities in Northern Ireland.</p> |
| 31 | <p>Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Budget 2024-25 Allocations.</p> <p>This sets out the rural needs impact assessment of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Budget 2024-25 allocations. The 2024-25 Budget allocations either directly or indirectly support the following four key policy proposals in the department - Climate Change, Green Growth, Future Agricultural Policy (which is now referred to as the Sustainable Agriculture Programme) and Rural Policy Framework. The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs' Budget for 2024-25 has the potential to have a notable impact on rural communities across Northern Ireland, with both challenges and opportunities emerging from the department's funding allocations.</p> |

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| 32 | Revising the Climate Change (Carbon Budgets 2023-37) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024. | All rural needs impacts were considered but it was deemed that the regulations apply equally to rural and urban areas. |
| 33 | Revising the Climate Change (2040 Emissions Target) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024. | All rural needs impacts were considered but it was deemed that the regulations apply equally to rural and urban areas. |
| 34 | Developing the Third Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme. | All rural needs impacts were considered but it was deemed that the programme applies equally to rural and urban areas. |
| 35 | Developing the Northern Ireland Executive's draft Green Growth Strategy. | This draft Executive Strategy has been developed and will be delivered across the Northern Ireland Civil Service departments. Specific policies and plans that emerge from this draft strategy will also be subject to rural needs impact assessments as appropriate. Addressing climate change and achieving a carbon neutral society will require unprecedented changes which will affect every aspect of our lives, our economy, environment, and society. Impact forecasting is complex as impacts will depend on policy choices, the economy, technological development, consumer preferences, interest rates and incomes etc. At this stage it is not yet possible to specify the actual impacts that could arise as part of this draft strategy. Both positive and negative impacts are expected. |
| 36 | Implementing the Environmental Protection (Single-use Vapes) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024. | All rural needs impacts were considered but it was deemed that the regulations apply equally to rural and urban areas. |
| 37 | Implementing the Environmental Protection (Wet Wipes containing plastic) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025. | All rural needs impacts were considered but it was deemed that the regulations apply equally to rural and urban areas. This policy will apply to all citizens in Northern Ireland equally irrespective of where they live. |

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| 38 | Implementing the Beef Sustainability Package - Suckler Cow Scheme. | The Suckler Cow Scheme is likely to have a positive impact on people in rural areas. The scheme will provide a financial incentive to beef farmers to improve breeding management practices which will in turn drive improvements in financial and environmental performance. |
| 39 | Developing the Rethinking Our Resources: Measures for Climate Action and a Circular Economy in Northern Ireland. | The social and economic needs of people in rural areas in relation to these proposals do not differ from the social and economic needs of people in urban areas. The consultation was open to everyone, regardless of their location. In addition, our modelling has been conducted using the Rural Deprivation Index to ensure nuances in rural location have been considered. |
| 40 | Developing the Separate Collection of Food Waste from Households - The Food Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015. | As the application of this policy does not make any differentiation between rural and urban areas, The Food Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 will not include any rural exemptions. |
| 41 | Developing the Diverting Biodegradable Waste from Landfill Policy. | <p>The proposal may require changes to collections of food and garden waste from households and producers of non-household municipal waste. This will apply equally across all people in Northern Ireland, however potential issues have been identified with the collection of biowaste from households in some rural areas.</p> <p>If implemented, this new proposal will apply to all businesses, local government and reprocessors involved in the waste management sector in Northern Ireland, regardless of location. Everyone will have an opportunity to comment on the forthcoming proposal and to influence the proposed measures and actions outlined.</p> <p>Different collection methods have recently been trialled in both rural and urban areas with mixed results. Typically, urban and very urban households have less requirement for the collection of garden waste than suburban and rural areas. Rural businesses and other non-household waste producers may face increased collection costs or increased rates.</p> |

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| | <p>Operational decisions around waste collections remain for the local councils to decide. The proposed consultation should help the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and councils to work together to find solutions which address any potential rural needs impacts.</p> <p>The relative costs of waste collections are typically higher in more rural areas therefore councils with a higher proportion of rural households may be impacted if proposals to include more frequent food waste collections are implemented.</p> <p>Rural businesses and other non-household waste producers may face increased collection costs or increased rates. The proposed consultation will be open to everyone, regardless of their location. In addition, our modelling has been conducted using the Rural Deprivation Index to ensure nuances in rural location have been considered.</p> |
| 42 Developing the Sustainable Agricultural Programme Carbon Footprinting Project. | The Carbon Footprinting Project is likely to have a positive impact on people in rural areas. The Carbon Footprinting Project will provide each farm business in Northern Ireland with a baseline whole farm carbon footprint. The project will also provide a detailed monitoring, reporting and verification procedure for agricultural carbon emission reductions and sequestration at both a national and a business level. |
| 43 Implementing the Farm Sustainability (Transition Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025. | The changes being introduced by this regulation in respect of the Sustainable Agriculture Programme and the fact that Farm Sustainability Transition Programme is an agricultural support payment means that the regulations will predominantly benefit people from rural areas rather than people from urban areas. |
| 44 Public Consultation on the Introduction of Mandatory CCTV Coverage in Slaughterhouses in Northern Ireland. | The introduction of mandatory CCTV coverage in Slaughterhouses in Northern Ireland will not make any difference between rural and urban needs. |

Department for Communities

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| <p>45 Private Tenancies Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 - Section 11 Regulations for certain circumstances where a longer notice to quit period cannot be given (Notice to Quit exceptions).</p> | <p>The introduction of longer notice to quit periods will positively affect most tenants, particularly in rural areas where there may be less choice and availability of rental properties. These longer periods can however only come into operation when regulations on exceptions are introduced.</p> <p>In this context, it is noted that rural pensioners are almost twice as likely to be in relative or absolute poverty as their urban counterparts. It is also noted that survey evidence suggests that cases of anti-social behaviour may be lower in rural areas.</p> |
| <p>46 Private Tenancies Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 - Section 7 Restriction of the Frequency of Rent Increases.</p> | <p>Commencing the order to restrict the frequency of rent increases to once in a 12-month period will positively affect all private rented tenants whether living in rural or urban areas by providing a more manageable trajectory to manage housing costs while also allowing landlords to increase rent to meet costs.</p> |
| <p>47 Increasing the Northern Ireland Co-Ownership Housing Association (Co-Ownership) Property Value Limit from £190,000 to £195,000.</p> | <p>The Property Value Limit is the cap on the value of a property that can be purchased through Co-Ownership, the department's main delivery partner for intermediate housing for sale (a type of affordable housing). The purpose of increasing the Property Value Limit is to help mitigate the adverse impact of increased property values and rising construction costs and help to ensure that people on low incomes can access a suitable pool of intermediate housing in both rural and urban areas. 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.</p> |

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|---|--|--|
| 48 | Transfer of the Landlord Registration Scheme from the department to local councils (Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council acting as host council). | The transfer of the Landlord Registration Scheme is intended to benefit all tenants in the private rented sector by increasing landlords' compliance with registration and to educate and inform landlords of their responsibilities and legislative requirements. A positive impact is expected in rural areas as the levels of compliance with registration in these areas are markedly lower than in urban areas. |
| 49 | Increase the registered rents determined by the rent officer and held on the rent register by introduction of The Registered Rents (Increase) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025. | The primary consideration in terms of social and economic needs relevant to the proposed rent increase would be the affordability of any increase. This proposed rent increase would be equally applicable to tenants located in both rural and urban locations. |
| 50 | Review of the Architecture and the Built Environment Policy. | The department has committed to undertaking a review of the Architecture and the Built Environment Policy for Northern Ireland. There will likely be themes relevant to rural communities including access to green spaces, designing out-crime, design and layout of housing, planning of neighbourhoods, heritage assets, biodiversity and protection and/or enhancement of native species, flora & fauna, tourism, heritage assets, sustainable development and active travel. As part of the initial policy review, stakeholder questionnaire surveys were issued to all local councils, professional bodies and interest groups right across Northern Ireland. An Inter Departmental Steering Group has been established, and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs are represented at this. A rural needs impact assessment has been completed. |
| 51 | Budget allocation for the Discretionary Rates Support Grant Funding. | There is a possibility that the policy to reduce this discretionary budget will impact on people in both rural and urban areas. The department's methodology on the Rates Support Grant includes adjustment of population to address sparsity in a local government district, by taking the following step: application of mid-year population density data with a 25 percent weighting and private household data with a 75 percent weighting, making an adjustment of the proportion that waste collection expenditure is to total expenditure. |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 52 Development of an Integrated Advice Partnership Fund. | <p>The department launched an Integrated Advice Partnership Fund in November 2024 to improve the uptake of free, independent regulated debt advice through a collaborative partnership approach which is being administered by local councils.</p> <p>A rural needs impact assessment was completed and there is no evidence to suggest that the social and economic needs of those in rural areas in need of free independent regulated debt advice differs from the social and economic needs of those in urban areas.</p> |
| 53 The making of “The Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024”. | <p>These new regulations provided permanent legislation for councils to hold meetings by remote or hybrid means. Provision initially existed from the Coronavirus Act 2020 which enabled councils to have this flexibility during the pandemic.</p> <p>The ability of councils to hold remote or hybrid meetings will have a positive impact on councillors and the communities they serve, either rural or urban, as it allows greater accessibility for councillors to conduct their work.</p> |
| 54 The Social Security (State Pension Age Claimants: Closure of Tax Credits) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 (S.R. 2024 No. 119). | <p>These regulations will apply equally to all those claimants, who as a result of the closure of Tax Credits will move to either Universal Credit or Pension Credit regardless of whether they live in a rural or urban environment.</p> |
| 55 The State Pension Debits and Credits Revaluation Order (Northern Ireland) 2024 (S.R. 2024 No. 198). | <p>No rural needs were identified.</p> |
| 56 The State Pension Revaluation for Transitional Pensions Order (Northern Ireland) 2024 (S.R. 2024 No. 199). | <p>No rural needs were identified.</p> |
| 57 The Occupational Pensions (Revaluation) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024 (S.R. 2024 No. 200). | <p>The order is highly technical. No adverse rural impact is expected.</p> |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 58 | The Social Security (Income and Capital Disregards) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025 (S.R. 2025 No. 24). | As the regulations make no distinction between rural and urban dwellers, no rural needs were identified. |
| 59 | The Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payments, Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance (Claims and Payments) (Amendment and Modification) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025 (S.R. 2025 No. 73). | No rural needs were identified. |
| 60 | The Emergency Fuel Payment Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025. | These regulations allow for a one-off Emergency Fuel Payment (also known as the Pension Age Fuel Support Payment) of £100 to be made to all Northern Ireland Pensioners who are not in receipt of Pension Credit or other means tested benefits - in order to mitigate against the impacts of the recent Winter Fuel Payment changes. No rural needs were identified. |
| 61 | The Emergency Fuel Payment (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025. | These regulations make a small number of technical amendments to correct errors contained within the original instrument. No rural needs were identified. |
| 62 | The Universal Credit (Administrative Earnings Threshold) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024. | <p>Regulation 97 of the Universal Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 sets out the circumstances in which work search and work availability requirements may not be imposed on Universal Credit claimants i.e. when a person has a certain level of earnings. This is known as the Administrative Earnings Threshold.</p> <p>These regulations amend the Administrative Earnings Threshold whereby work search and work availability requirements for persons and couples may be switched off.</p> <p>No rural needs were identified.</p> |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 63 | The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 64 | The Pension Protection Fund and Occupational Pension Schemes (Levy Ceiling) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025 (S.R. 2025 No. 38). | No rural needs were identified. |
| 65 | The Guaranteed Minimum Pensions Increase Order (Northern Ireland) 2025 (S.R. 2025 No. 52). | The order is a routine, annual order that is purely technical in nature. No rural needs were identified. |
| 66 | The Social Security Revaluation of Earnings Factors Order (Northern Ireland) 2025 (S.R. 2025 No. 53). | No rural needs were identified. |
| 67 | The Welfare Supplementary Payment (Extension) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 68 | The Welfare Supplementary Payment (Universal Credit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 69 | The Welfare Supplementary Payment (Universal Credit) (Social Sector Size Criteria) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025. | No rural needs were identified. |

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| <p>70 2025-2026 annual up-rating of pensions and benefits.</p> <p>The relevant legislation is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025 (S.R. 2025 No. 36). • The Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern Ireland) 2025 (S.R. 2025 No. 64). • The Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Conditions and Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025 (S.R. 2025 No. 66). • The Social Security Benefits Up-rating Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025 (S.R. 2025 No. 67). | <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 2025, irrespective of whether they reside in a rural or urban area.</p> <p>No rural needs were identified.</p> |
| <p>71 The Housing Benefit and Universal Credit Housing costs (Executive Determinations) (Modification) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025.</p> | <p>The statutory rule specifies the Local Housing Allowance rates which are used to calculate the Housing Benefit and Universal Credit housing element for tenants renting from private landlords. These annual regulations have the same impact on those who live in rural areas as they will on those who live in urban areas as Local Housing Allowance rates for each area are based on local area rents.</p> |
| <p>72 The Social Security (Infected Blood Capital Disregard) (amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024.</p> | <p>These regulations have a beneficial impact on any recipients of means-tested benefits who live in rural areas in the same way as those who live in urban areas and who meet the criteria for the indefinite capital disregard.</p> |

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| 73 | The Statutory Maternity Pay (Compensation of Employers) Amendment Regulations 2025. | The policy relates to small employers regardless of their geographical location. No rural needs were identified. |
| 74 | The Occupational Pension Schemes (Funding and Investment Strategy and Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 (S.R. 2024 No. 90). | The department considers this policy to be largely technical in nature. No rural needs were identified. |
| 75 | The Occupational Pension Schemes (Collective Money Purchase Schemes) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 (S.R. 2024 No. 136). | These amendments are considered technical in nature. No rural needs were identified. |
| 76 | The Social Security (Genuine and Sufficient Link to the United Kingdom) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 77 | Cessation of funding for the Employment Support Scheme. The Employment Support Scheme was closed to new entrants on 30th September 2006 and replaced by Workable (Northern Ireland). | The option to cease funding for Employment Support makes no distinction between rural and urban dwellers and will be applied equally to the remaining cohort of Employment Support, regardless of whether they live in a rural or urban area. The social and economic needs of people in rural areas, in relation to this policy, are considered to be the same as those for urban dwellers. It was determined there will be no difference in the impact on people living in rural areas. |
| 78 | 2023-24 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 of Northern Ireland. A business case and rural needs impact assessment were completed and no adverse rural impacts found. |

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| 79 | New public libraries policy to replace the Delivering Tomorrow's Libraries (2006) Policy. | It is anticipated that the new libraries policy will not bring significant change to Libraries Northern Ireland's current service delivery model, nor impact the services offered by public libraries. The new policy will be underpinned by Libraries Northern Ireland's legal duty to 'provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service for persons living, working or studying in Northern Ireland.' |
| 80 | The Northern Ireland Football Fund. | <p>The Northern Ireland Football Fund is a super programme consisting of three different strands: Performance, Grassroots, and the National Football Training Centre.</p> <p>The social and economic needs of people in rural areas may vary for each strand. To ensure the social and economic needs of people in rural areas are correctly captured, each strand is required to complete its own investigation and analysis.</p> <p>A rural needs impact assessment was completed on the Performance Strand during 2024-25 and no adverse rural impacts found.</p> |
| 81 | Development of a new arts policy as part of the Heritage, Culture and Creativity Programme. | The arts policy will impact across multiple policy areas including jobs, health, education and tourism. Whilst the policy remains under development a rural needs impact assessment has been completed and concluded that, whilst a number of issues were identified and considered, the policy itself will not impact differently in rural areas and will in general seek to improve access and opportunities for all and address any barriers that prevent engagement and participation in the arts including for those in rural areas. |
| 82 | Review of the Northern Ireland Museums policy as part of the Heritage, Culture and Creativity Programme. | The policy will aim, amongst other things, to drive participation and engagement with accredited national and local museums, including for people living in or near rural settlements. The policy will recognise the accessibility issues that rural dwellers face and will encourage and promote the importance of outreach work, focusing on those who may be suffering some form of exclusion. The museums policy will also underscore the opportunities and benefits associated |

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| | with museums working with local communities to drive local interest, participation and a sense of ownership of local heritage. |

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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 83 | Development of Sponsorship Policy. | A rural needs impact assessment was completed when reviewing this policy, and a full assessment against relevant guidance was carried out. (with the aid of a rural needs contact within Tourism NI). |
| 84 | Development of Complaints Policy. | A rural needs impact assessment was completed when reviewing this policy, and a full assessment against relevant guidance was carried out (with the aid of a rural needs contact within Tourism NI). |
| 85 | Development of Unacceptable Behaviour by Customers Policy. | A rural needs impact assessment was completed when reviewing this policy, and a full assessment against relevant guidance was carried out (with the aid of a rural needs contact within Tourism NI). |
| 86 | Development of an English for Speakers of Other Languages Policy. | The English for Speakers of Other Languages Policy will be implemented across the whole of Northern Ireland. It is not considered that individuals residing in rural areas will be more affected/impacted than those who reside in urban areas. |
| 87 | Development of Further Education (Student Support) (Eligibility) (Amendment etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024. | <p>There are no issues identified regarding the social and economic needs of people in rural areas. There are further education college campuses across Northern Ireland covering a wide geographic spread.</p> <p>Those in rural areas have access to the more rural/ local college campuses and are treated in the same way as those in urban areas by the regulations being amended. The amending regulations do not contain any rural specific indicators or targets and there already exists parity in the way that students in rural and urban areas are treated and assessed for student support. The amending regulations being assessed here will not change that parity.</p> |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 88 | Development of Further Education (Student Support) (Eligibility) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025. | There are no issues identified regarding the social and economic needs of people in rural areas. There are further education college campuses across Northern Ireland covering a wide geographic spread. Those in rural areas have access to the more rural/local college campuses and are treated in the same way as those in urban areas by the regulations being amended. The amending regulations do not contain any rural specific indicators or targets and there already exists parity in the way that students in rural and urban areas are treated and assessed for student support. The amending regulations being assessed here will not change that parity. |
| 89 | Development of Good Jobs Employment Rights Bill Consultation. | The public consultation exercise was widely publicised and distributed broadly across a large number of representative bodies and groups. It is important to note that the consultation exercise, in and of itself, did not alter existing policy or legal provisions. |
| 90 | Development of Potential enhancement of the enforcement powers of the Employment Agency Inspectorate by introducing in law, the use of Labour Market Enforcement Undertakings & Labour Market Enforcement Orders. | This policy change would apply to the Employment Agency Inspectorate and employment agency businesses only, and, as such, there is no impact on individuals in rural areas or any part of Northern Ireland. |
| 91 | Development of Amend the Agency Workers Regulations 2011 to remove a legal loophole relating to Pay between Assignment Contracts - also known as the 'Swedish Derogation'. | This policy concerns the removal of a legal loophole and clarification/statement of rights to pay parity (after 12 weeks) for all agency workers and, as such, there is no differential impact on people in rural areas. |
| 92 | Development of Introduction of 'Information Sharing Gateways' between Employment Agency Inspectorate and other limited, prescribed regulatory bodies. | This policy will affect the Employment Agency Inspectorate and other Northern Ireland based regulatory bodies only. It will not, therefore, affect private individuals in rural areas or any part of Northern Ireland. |

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| 93 | Development of Amend the 2005 Conduct Regulations to require employment businesses to issue agency workers with a 'Key Information Document' prior to the agreement of terms. | This policy change will apply to all employment businesses and agency workers and, as such, there is no differential impact on people in rural areas. |
| 94 | Development of Proposal to extend the holiday pay calculation reference period for workers from 12 weeks to 52 weeks. | This policy relates to the calculation of rates of holiday pay entitlements only and, as such, there is no differential impact on people in rural areas. |
| 95 | Development of the Proposal to introduce the concept of 'personal liability' in the offence of failure to notify the department of larger scale redundancies (more than twenty employees). | This policy will only impact Northern Ireland employers who are legally required to notify Department for the Economy of redundancies which would exceed twenty or more employees. This policy is to ensure compliance with the legal requirement and has no differential impact on those living in rural areas. |
| 96 | Development of the Introduction of the requirement for 'Prescribed Persons' to report annually on disclosures received and actions taken. | The policy will only impact on bodies and persons defined as 'Prescribed Persons' and will not affect the social or economic needs of people living in rural areas. |
| 97 | Development of Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 - developing a policy. | The policy will introduce a new employment right which will apply equally across Northern Ireland, regardless of whether the worker or business is based in a rural or urban area. |
| 98 | The department proposes to implement a Protection from Redundancy (Pregnancy and Family Leave) policy and related Bill & Regulations in Northern Ireland. | A public consultation has been undertaken, and a public response will be published mid-2025. The policy will impact equally upon those in rural and urban areas. The impact will not be adverse in nature but provide a minimum level of statutory employment rights and safeguards. The rural needs impact assessment did not identify any negative impact for those from rural communities. |

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| 99 | Development of Proposals to reform existing rights and entitlements of employees to flexible working. | The policy will impact equally upon those in rural and urban areas. The impact will not be adverse in nature but provide a minimum level of statutory rights and safeguards. |
| 100 | Development of Proposed amendments to Northern Ireland Paternity Leave entitlement. | <p>These policy changes relate to paternity leave entitlement (taken in single weekly block or combined two weeks, taken with 52 weeks of birth/adoption, reduce notice requirement to 28 days for each period and introducing paternity leave as a day one right).</p> <p>These policy amendments will impact equally upon those in rural and urban areas and provide minimum level of statutory employment rights and safeguards.</p> |
| 101 | Development of Proposal for the introduction of Carer's Leave to help support carers to balance their employment and caring responsibilities and recognise the specific needs of unpaid carers in work. | The policy will impact equally upon those in rural and urban areas. The impact will not be adverse in nature but provide a minimum level of statutory rights and safeguards. |
| 102 | Development of Amendments to Schedule 1 to the Industrial Tribunals and Fair Employment Tribunal (Constitution and Rules of Procedure) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020. | <p>The regulation makes technical changes only and does not change the substance of the existing domestic legislation. Any impact will be minimal and affect those in rural and urban areas equally.</p> <p>No rural needs were identified.</p> |
| 103 | Development of Proposal for the introduction of Neonatal Care Leave and/or Pay (subject to various qualifying conditions) to help support working parents whose baby/babies have spent a prescribed period in neonatal care. | <p>A public consultation has been undertaken, and a public response will be published mid-2025. The policy will impact equally upon those in rural and urban areas.</p> <p>The impact will not be adverse in nature but will provide a minimum level of statutory employment rights and safeguards.</p> <p>The rural needs impact assessment did not identify any negative impact for those from rural communities.</p> |
| 104 | Development of Offshore Renewable Energy Action Plan: Consultation on the Strategic | The Offshore Renewable Energy Action Plan sets out the steps for delivery of offshore wind in Northern Ireland which includes putting into place the relevant |

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| Environmental Assessment, Environmental Report and Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment. | processes and policies to enable the deployment of offshore wind. At this stage in development the Offshore Renewable Energy Action Plan is not likely to have any impact 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. |
| 105 Implementation of Onshore Petroleum Licensing Policy in Northern Ireland. | <p>Due to the geological conditions, we know that the areas most likely to experience onshore petroleum exploration will be rural e.g. Glens of Antrim, Fermanagh, Lough Neagh. The rural needs impact assessment considered the findings of independent research into the economic, environmental and social impacts of onshore petroleum exploration and production. These potential impacts on local communities and the rural environment were factors in choosing the preferred policy option i.e. introducing a moratorium and eventual legislative ban on exploration and production of all forms of onshore oil and gas in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Any impacts from implementing this policy option and stopping onshore petroleum exploration and production cannot be measured at this stage although we expect that it could have longer term benefits on the environment and the aspects of the rural economy such as tourism and agri-food.</p> |
| 106 Development of Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme additional £2.5m funding package (£2.295m capital grant funding and £0.205m resource funding). | <p>An estimated 1000 households could benefit by installing insulation measures through this additional Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme funding.</p> <p>However, the households and installers are Northern Ireland wide and the cost of the insulation measures will not be affected in rural areas.</p> <p>The rural needs impact assessment did not identify any negative impact for those from rural communities.</p> |

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| 107 | Policy development with regards to providing support for consumers to transition from fossil fuel heating systems to low or zero carbon heating systems. | <p>It is not envisaged that Low Carbon Heat Support will have an effect on the social needs of rural people. However, there may be an economic impact on rural areas should households participate and take advantage of potential future funding made available.</p> <p>The consultation process conducted in 2024 and 2025 will help to support policy development in this area.</p> |
| 108 | Development of the Efficiency Programme - including Energy Efficiency Capital Grant. | The Efficiency Programme including the Energy Efficiency Capital Grant will be available to Large/Small Medium Enterprise (wider business base) businesses that meet the eligibility criteria. This includes businesses in rural and urban environments across the regional geographical landscape who can all avail of grant support for implementing energy efficiency measures within their buildings. |
| 109 | Development of The Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan for Central Government. | The Energy Management Strategy was developed to consider what opportunities there are within the Government Estate to improve energy use and make cost savings from within its buildings and assets and therefore has no influence on either the rural or urban populations within Northern Ireland, with neither impacted or affected by its key objectives and recommendations. |
| 110 | Development of a policy to provide additional funding for 51 Postgraduate Award studentships in 2024-25. | The rural needs impact assessment considered the implementation of funding an additional 51 PhDs in 2024-25. While students are subject to residency/nationality eligibility criteria, this is limited to countries rather than locations within countries. Therefore, individuals residing in rural areas will not be more affected / impacted than those who reside in urban areas. |
| 111 | Development of policy to support the funding of Postgraduate Award studentships from 2026-27. | The rural needs impact assessment considered the implementation of a preferred policy option for the Postgraduate Award Scheme, which will be available to all prospective PhD research students. While students are subject to residency/nationality eligibility criteria, this is limited to countries rather than locations within countries. Therefore, individuals residing in rural areas will not be more affected / impacted than those who reside in urban areas. |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 112 | Development of policy to ensure continued functioning of the US-Ireland Research and Development Partnership Programme. | <p>The rural needs impact assessment considered the ongoing functioning of the US-Ireland Research and Development Partnership Programme, a tri-jurisdictional university science partnership between the US, Ireland and Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The science developed under the US-Ireland Partnership is mostly basic, fundamental science which is generally far from commercialisation potential so there will be no immediate direct impact on the general public in rural or urban areas unless they are employed with the projects.</p> <p>There is a possibility that projects funded under the Energy and Sustainability theme by the Department for the Economy might have a longer-term impact on rural needs in a positive way. Both universities here claim they have an economic impact across all areas, rural or urban.</p> |
| 113 | Development of policy to ensure continued funding of the Collaborative Research Support Fund for 2025-27. | <p>The rural needs impact assessment considered as part of the Economic Appraisal for continued funding of the Collaborative Research Support Fund from 2025-27 was found not to have an impact on rural needs.</p> <p>Northern Ireland Contact Points supported through the Collaborative Research Support Fund for 2025-27 are based in the two universities but are regional and outward looking, therefore organisations/entities based in rural areas would not be disadvantaged as the Northern Ireland Contact Points support is open to all potential applicants across all areas of Northern Ireland.</p> |
| 114 | Development of Consultation on increasing the degree of socialisation of electricity distribution network reinforcement costs in Northern Ireland. | <p>The policy will reduce charges to individual customers or businesses for network reinforcement connection costs, which can be a barrier to electricity network connections and uptake of low carbon technologies and renewable generation. Because of their location on less robust areas of the electricity distribution network rural customers are more likely to be exposed to high reinforcement costs than urban dwellers.</p> <p>Higher socialisation of distribution electricity network reinforcement connection costs is likely to reduce a barrier to rural customers and businesses installing low carbon technologies, locating in rural areas and installing renewable generation in rural areas.</p> |

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| 115 | Development of a Joint Department for the Economy and the Department of Education Careers Action Plan. | The Careers Action Plan will cover citizens in all areas of Northern Ireland including adults and young people. Department for the Economy Careers Service services that will be developed within the plan focus on strengthening the Careers Ecosystem, reforming careers delivery, improving quality and consistency, special educational needs provision, provision of a careers portal and parental awareness raising. These areas will be developed to include citizens of all geographical areas including rural areas. |

Department of Education

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 116 Proposal to make amendments to the pension rules of the Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme to increase member contributions - The Teachers' Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025. | No rural impacts were identified. The amendments are being applied to Teachers' Pension Scheme members regardless of location. The policy does not change or impact disproportionately anything in relation to people living in rural areas. |
| 117 Implementation of the Department of Education Resource Budget 2024-25. | The draft Programme for Government 2024-27 supports the delivery of high-quality education for all children and champions better support for children and young people, especially those with special educational needs, so that all children are happy, learning and succeeding. This applies to all children in Northern Ireland including children in the rural communities. |
| 118 Consideration of Proposed Financial Provisions Bill clause in relation to costs associated with delivery of the Doctorate in Educational, Child & Adolescent Psychology. | The policy is purely technical in nature and does not affect the public, either directly or indirectly. |
| 119 Review of Free School Meals / Uniform Grant Eligibility Criteria. | Analysis carried out for the review showed that in 2022-23, 18% of pupils living in a rural area were entitled to free school meals, compared to 34% of pupils living in an urban area. It could therefore be concluded that any changes in free school meals entitlement will, overall, be likely to impact rural dwellers less than urban dwellers. All options considered as part of the policy review would apply to all pupils, irrespective of whether they live in a rural or urban area. |
| 120 Special Educational Needs Reform Agenda - Delivery Plan 2025-30. | The Programme for Government 2024-27 supports the delivery of high-quality education for all children and champions better support for children and young people with special educational needs. This applies to all children with special educational needs in Northern Ireland including children in rural communities. |

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| | <p>A rural needs Impact assessment has been completed on the special educational needs Reform Agenda and Delivery Plan.</p> <p>Issues relating to the different Section 75 groups and to multiple identities were considered. There is no evidence of pupils in rural areas being likely to be differentially impacted in comparison to those in urban areas by the special educational needs Reform Agenda and Delivery Plan.</p> <p>In relation to social and economic factors, there is a correlation between those pupils who are entitled to free school meals, the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure and special educational needs. The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure is an area-based relative measure which is based on distinct domains of deprivation including income; employment; health and disability; education & training; access to services; living environment and crime and disorder.</p> <p>There is also consideration needed for those pupils with complex and multiple disabilities and educational needs.</p> <p>Data from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency indicates that when free school meal entitlement is used as a proxy for deprivation children with special educational needs are twice as likely to be entitled to free school meals, however the differences are minimal between rural and urban areas.</p> <p>Given that there are minimal differences between rural and urban areas within this measure of deprivation this does not indicate areas of concern for children with special educational needs in rural areas, compared to urban areas, in terms of their social and economic needs.</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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 121 | Development of Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 122 | Supplementary Public Policy Consultation on Maximum Capital Value. | Assessed within the context of application of the wider taxation design and pre-existing mitigations within the rating system to provide financial relief to ratepayers. This is a revision of wider taxation policy to regularise the rating of domestic property. Some of those properties will be located in rural areas. The policy will apply in rural areas but has application regardless of a property's location (rural, urban or mixed). |
| 123 | An amendment to fire safety standards in 'The Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 (as amended)'. | The proposed technical changes are designed to have a positive impact on the occupant (particularly domestic resident) and firefighter safety in buildings. There is no evidence that the proposed amendments would have a disproportionate impact on people in rural areas compared to urban areas. |
| 124 | Second call relating to PEACEPLUS Investment Area 2.4 - Smart Towns and Villages. | The Smart Towns and Villages initiative was specifically designed to address digital exclusion in rural areas, where broadband access and digital literacy are significantly lower than urban counterparts. The programme adopts a social innovation-led approach to maximise Information and Communications Technology potential in rural communities. During development, rural needs were assessed through socio-economic profiling and stakeholder engagement, ensuring that mobile digital hubs and mentoring programmes would be prioritised in rural locations. This will enable rural citizens to access online services, remote work opportunities, and participate in the digital economy. |
| 125 | Funding announcement (March 2025) of €46,190,355 of PEACEPLUS funding under Investment Area 4.2 Rural Regeneration and Social Inclusion. | This funding directly targets rural communities in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. The programme was informed by rural needs impact assessments that highlighted gaps in coordination capacity, access to services, and community infrastructure. The design includes tailored support for family hubs, green infrastructure, and social farming |

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| | -activities proven to benefit rural populations. The programme ensures inclusive access by focusing on marginalised rural groups and aims to reduce rural isolation through community-led service delivery. |
| 126 Delivery of the €40m PEACEPLUS - Change Maker Funding Programme. | The Change Maker Programme includes in-person support events and capacity-building activities that were shaped by rural stakeholder consultations. The programme delivery model ensures rural representation in decision-making and prioritises rural community organisations for funding and support. Rural needs were considered through the inclusion of flexible engagement formats (e.g. local workshops, mobile outreach) to overcome geographic and transport barriers. The programme also supports rural leadership development and aims to embed peacebuilding in rural contexts. |
| 127 The implementation of the Pay Award 2023. | 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 or not they reside in a rural location. |
| 128 Chapter 8.32 Starting Pay on Appointment and Recruitment and Retention Policy. | Consideration was given to any impacts of the 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 or not they reside in a rural location. |
| 129 Development and launch of the Neurodiversity: Northern Ireland Civil Service Line Manager's Toolkit. | The toolkit was not influenced by rural needs as the toolkit applies to all staff and aims to equip line managers to better support neurodivergent colleagues and create welcoming, supportive and neuro-inclusive workplaces. It applies to all staff regardless of whether they live or work in rural or urban areas. |
| 130 Development and implementation of the Northern Ireland Civil Service Apprenticeship Policy and Guidance. | The policy was not influenced by rural needs as it provides a framework to assist all Northern Ireland Civil Service departments to develop and implement apprenticeship schemes; ensuring a consistent approach and high quality offering with a view to |

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| | | increasing the entry routes into a career in the Northern Ireland Civil Service and remove barriers to employment in the Northern Ireland Civil Service for those from under-represented groups regardless of whether they live or work in rural or urban areas. |
| 131 | Development and launch of a Civil Service (Northern Ireland Civil Service) Inclusive Language Guide. | The guide was not influenced by rural needs as it applies to all staff regardless of whether they live or work in rural or urban areas and aims to help colleagues understand the important role language plays in creating an inclusive workplace. |
| 132 | Development and launch of the Northern Ireland Civil Service Guide: Supporting Carers. | The guide was not influenced by rural needs as it applies to all staff with caring responsibilities regardless of whether they live or work in rural or urban areas, with a view to ensuring they are aware of the support available to them and to improve line manager's understanding of the needs of carers and how they can support them in our workplace. |
| 133 | Revision of Hybrid Working Policy. | As part of the policy review, it was recognised that while the Hybrid Working Policy is intended to apply equally to people living in rural areas as in urban areas, the positive impacts may be greater for rural dwelling employees, as statistics show that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees from rural areas typically commute longer than urban workers; and • Significant improvement in broadband and full-fibre availability and average download speeds facilitated via Project Stratum. |
| 134 | Revision of Recruitment Advertising Policy. | As part of the policy review, it was recognised that the proposed policy revision had the potential to impact people in rural areas differently. Given the differences in broadband connectivity between rural and urban communities, it was considered that the proposed policy change had the potential to negatively impact on rural communities as the outworkings of the revised policy would see a potential increase in the use of digital channels for recruitment advertising, including the use |

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| | | <p>of the Northern Ireland Civil Service recruitment website as the default source for all Northern Ireland Civil Service recruitment opportunities. It was considered that this potential negative impact of the policy proposal was offset by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department for the Economy’s Project Stratum, the overarching objective of which was to extend access to high speed broadband coverage in Northern Ireland by increasing provision in areas which were poorly served, with rural premises being the primary beneficiary of this project; and • The high level of individual access to smart phones and laptops which provides greater access to online content, including online recruitment advertising. |
| 135 | Development of the Northern Ireland Civil Service People Strategy. | <p>This strategy was not influenced by rural needs at a programme level as it applies to all staff regardless of whether they live or work in rural or urban areas. However, it is recognised that some of the resulting policies, strategies, guidance etc. will need to take rural needs into consideration at a project level.</p> |

Department of Health

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| 136 | Implementation of the Commencement of provisions relating to 'Acts of Restraint' within the Mental Capacity Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. | The policy team concluded that there have been no differential impacts identified to those in rural areas as compared to those in urban areas and as a result there is no further development, adoption or revision required in relation to the implementation of this policy. |
| 137 | Implementation of the Department of Health Resource Budget 2024-25. | The policy team acknowledged that in certain circumstances, people in rural areas may experience more difficulties in accessing healthcare services. This is usually due to living in more remote locations where travel distances to GPs, dentists, pharmacies and other healthcare services are greater than in urban areas. They noted however, that the impact of these factors can be mitigated by appropriate scheduling of appointments, online consultations where possible, home visits, patient transport provision, outreach services and prescription deliveries. |
| 138 | Development of the Safe and Effective Staffing Legislation. | The policy area concluded that it was not anticipated that the legislation would impact rural areas differently. However, greater emphasis on workforce planning and the measuring and recording of staffing levels may draw attention to shortages in geographical or occupational areas and allow for bespoke remedies. |
| 139 | Change to the Firefighters' Pension Schemes and Compensation Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 - Survivors' Benefit and Correction of the Public Service Pensions Revaluation Orders (Northern Ireland) for 2021 and 2022. | The policy team concluded that the policy would impact on firefighters regardless of where they live in Northern Ireland and would therefore have no differential impact or implications to people in rural areas as compared to urban areas. |

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| 140 Change to legislation on the Proposal to make several amendments to the pension rules of the Health and Social Care Pension Scheme Regulations - The Health and Social Care Pension Schemes (Amendment No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025. | The policy team concluded that there have been no differential impacts identified to those in rural areas as compared to those in urban areas and as a result there is no further development, adoption or revision required in relation to the implementation of this policy. |
| 141 Development of the regional Sexual Health Action Plan, setting strategic direction for sexual health improvement. | The policy team undertook stakeholder engagement and from this feedback they have included actions within the action plan that aim to assess access of services and other issues, that they will need to consider when implementing the action plan. The policy team have identified physical access to sexual health services and provision of services in proximity to rural areas may be an issue and identified that this could be mitigated with the development of online services to expand access to services. The policy team will consider the needs and implications for rural communities throughout the implementation of the action plan and as required. |
| 142 Change to the Proposal to make amendments to the pension rules of the Health and Social Care Pension Scheme Regulations to increase member contributions and miscellaneous amendment - The Health and Social Care Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025. | The policy team concluded that there have been no differential impacts identified to those in rural areas as compared to those in urban areas and as a result there is no further development, adoption or revision required in relation to the implementation of this policy. |
| 143 Application to close GP Practice Branch Surgery in Aghadowey. | The policy team has identified that a cohort of patients who are considered older and/or have a disability/ long standing illness or infirmity may be adversely affected. Alternative GP arrangements have been put in place with a request for these GP Surgeries to provide additional disabled parking and a community transport system established to provide accessible |

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| | vehicles to take patients to and from GP appointments for a reduced fee. The policy area will work with the GP practice to mitigate as far as possible any impact on the patient population who use the surgery. |
| 144 Change to the Northern Ireland Firefighters' Pension Schemes - The Firefighters' Pension Schemes and Compensation Scheme (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024. | The policy team concluded that there have been no differential impacts identified to those in rural areas as compared to those in urban areas and as a result there is no further development, adoption or revision required in relation to the implementation of this policy |
| 145 Development of the Publication of the Minister of Health's strategic vision for the remainder of the 2022-27 mandate - Three Year Health Service Plan. | The policy team concluded that there have been no differential impacts identified to those in rural areas as compared to those in urban areas and as a result there is no further development, adoption or revision required in relation to the implementation of this policy. |
| 146 Development of the Valuing Medicines: A Strategy for the Sustainable Use of Medicines in Northern Ireland - draft. | The policy team concluded that there have been no differential impacts identified to those in rural areas as compared to those in urban areas and as a result there is no further development, adoption or revision required in relation to the implementation of this policy. |
| 147 Implementation of the Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. | The policy team concluded that location of premises, whether urban or rural, is not relevant as the provision is only for those with a reason to be on premises and location of premises may not be an indicator of the surrounding population. They identified that the policy would apply to listed Health and Social Care Trust hospital premises in both rural and urban areas and will benefit all those requiring free period products while on the premises. |
| 148 Selection process for local Government representatives for shadow Area Integrated Partnership Boards. | The policy team concluded that there have been no differential impacts identified to those in rural areas as compared to those in urban areas and as a result there is no further development, adoption or revision required in relation to the implementation of this policy. |

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| 149 | Development of the 'Bereaved NI' - Northern Ireland Bereavement Network website. | The policy team concluded that there have been no differential impacts identified to those in rural areas as compared to those in urban areas and as a result there is no further development, adoption or revision required in relation to the implementation of this policy. |
| 150 | Development of the Procurement of Hearing Aid User Support Service to empower service users in the use of hearing aids. | The policy team acknowledged that older people and people with disabilities may have difficulty in accessing the service due to the location of venues and knowledge of the service due to lack of broadband. As a mitigation for this, home visits can be accommodated for those living in rural areas and distribution of promotional material in accessible formats will also be undertaken. The policy area will monitor the project closely to ensure service user data is captured to develop the program to the needs of the service users. |
| 151 | Development of the Provision of an Advocacy Service for Deaf Adults. | The policy team concluded that the provision of service is specifically designed to be accessed by service users in rural areas. There will be provision for remote access to the service and consideration of transport links forms part of the process for scheduling meetings and the advocate can travel to the service user if required. The policy area will monitor the project closely to ensure service user data is captured to develop the program to the needs of the service users. |
| 152 | Development of the Health and Social Care Children's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework (The Framework). | The policy team concluded that it was not anticipated that The Framework would impact rural areas differently. However, implementing The Framework may draw attention to gaps in geographical or service areas and allow for bespoke remedies. |
| 153 | Development of the Application to close Branch Surgery in Glen Road Surgery, 1a Norfolk Parade, Belfast. | The policy team acknowledged that in certain circumstances, people in rural areas may experience more difficulties in accessing healthcare services. This is usually due to living in more remote locations where travel distances to GPs, dentists, pharmacies and other healthcare services are greater than in urban areas. The policy team will work with the relevant practice to try and mitigate as far as possible any impact on the patient population who live in rural areas and attend a |

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| | branch which is closing. The impact of these factors can be mitigated by appropriate scheduling of appointments, online consultations where possible and considering patient transport provision. |
| 154 Development of the Health and Social Care Pathology Blueprint Programme. | The policy team concluded there would be no impact on social and economic needs of people in rural areas. |

Department for Infrastructure

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 155 | Development of Northern Ireland Active Travel Network Delivery Plan. | <p>The department will identify the needs of rural dwellers by consulting with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Stakeholders; and • Other organisations <p>The department will consider all rural needs identified from this consultation.</p> |
| 156 | The Assisted Rural Travel Scheme Budget 2024-25. | <p>The department identified the needs of rural dwellers affected by this policy using the methods and information sources below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dial-a-Lift statistics from 2023-24 received from the Partnerships as part of the administration of grant; • Survey of members who avail of the Assisted Rural Travel Scheme which is only available on Dial-a-Lift services (Department for Infrastructure 2022-23 - Unpublished); • Community Transport User Survey (Department for Infrastructure 2022-23 - Unpublished); • Evaluation of Assisted Rural Travel Scheme (Department for Infrastructure March 2023 - Unpublished); • <i>Key Rural Issues, Northern Ireland 2022</i> (Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs); • Transport for older people in rural areas research (Centre Ageing Research and Development in Ireland 2010 Ahern and Hine); • <i>Benefits of Community Transport Social Return on Investment Report</i> (Gauge Northern Ireland 2014); and • <i>Evaluation of Fermanagh Community Transport</i> (September 2022). |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | <p>The department identified that the effect of this policy would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on vulnerable groups within rural areas including direct financial implications and access to goods and services; • Impact of removal of a key transport accessible option for those who are rurally isolated or do not have access to other transport options; • Impact of loss of grant funded transport services and potential loss of associated group hire services to rural communities; • Potential job losses within rural communities; • Loss of volunteering opportunities; and • Further disadvantage to people in rural areas as the lack of mainstream public transport services (compared to urban areas) means they will have less opportunity to obtain a travel concession via their entitlement to a SmartPass. <p>The department considered all the rural needs identified and mitigated them by funding The Assisted Rural Transport Scheme at £560K for 2024-25.</p> |
| 157 Dial-a-Lift Budget 24-25 Allocation. | <p>The department identified the needs of rural dwellers affected by this policy using the methods and information sources below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant Application forms from Rural Community Transport Partnerships 2024-25; • Dial-a-Lift statistics from 2023-24 received from the Partnerships; • Survey of users of the Assisted Rural Travel Scheme which is only available on Dial-a-Lift services (Department for Infrastructure Jan 2023 - Unpublished); • Survey of users of Community Transport services including Dial-a-Lift (Department for Infrastructure Oct 2023 - January 2024 Unpublished); • <i>Key Rural Issues</i>, Northern Ireland 2022; |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport for older people in rural areas research (Centre Ageing Research and Development in Ireland 2010 Ahern and Hine); • <i>Benefits of Community Transport Social Return on Investment Report</i> (Gauge Northern Ireland 2014); • <i>Evaluation of Fermanagh Community Transport</i> (September 2022); and • <i>The Travel Survey for Northern Ireland In Depth Report 2021</i>. <p>The department identified that the effect of this policy would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on vulnerable groups within rural areas; • Impact of the reduction of a key transport option for those who are rurally isolated or do not have access to other transport options; • Loss of volunteering opportunities; • Impact of lack of transport affecting voluntary or community groups who support people in rural areas; and • Impact on other statutory authorities and their programmes. <p>The department considered all the rural needs identified and although the level of funding awarded has been reduced, the amount available recognises the importance of the scheme and will enable the scheme to continue and provide a service to those in rural areas.</p> |
| 158 Consideration of the Department's 2024-25 Budget outcome, for both resource and capital spending. | <p>The department identified the needs of rural dwellers affected by this policy using the methods and information sources below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Department for Infrastructure Budget 2023-24 Consultation Report</i>; • Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency 2021 Census data; • <i>The Department for Infrastructure Audit of Inequalities 2022</i>; |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Anti-Poverty Strategy Expert Advisory Panel Report;</i> • <i>The Gender Strategy Expert Advisory Report;</i> • <i>THE TRANSPORT TRAP - How transport disadvantages poorer people;</i> • <i>The relationship between transport and loneliness - Sustrans.org.uk;</i> • <i>The impact of public spending changes in Northern Ireland - Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission;</i> • <i>Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee publications;</i> • <i>AGE NI Lived Experience 2021;</i> • <i>OUTstanding in your field: Experience of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people in rural areas;</i> • <i>Northern Ireland Rural Women’s Network;</i> • <i>Funding water infrastructure in Northern Ireland - Northern Ireland Audit Office; and</i> • <i>Institute of Engineers.</i> <p>The department also launched an Equality Impact Consultation on its budget outcome and this consultation was available to all citizens.</p> <p>The department identified that the effect of this policy would, where cost reductions need to be applied, impact on people in rural areas.</p> <p>For areas where service cuts have been outlined, these will likely require appropriate consultation with stakeholder groups and individual rural needs impact assessments to be completed specific to those areas.</p> |

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| 159 | Development of Department for Infrastructure Business Plan 2024-25. | <p>The business plan does not, in itself, represent any material change to policy but, rather, aims to co-ordinate and consolidate the various activities planned by the business areas within the department in order to provide a strategic overview of the work across the department and facilitate ongoing progress monitoring throughout the year.</p> <p>Those areas of proposed policy change and actions contained within the business plan will likely require appropriate consultation with stakeholder groups and individual rural needs impact assessments to be completed specific to those policies. This will be completed by the business area responsible for the relevant action.</p> |
| 160 | Technical Guidance Note 6 - Delivery of construction schemes for flood alleviation, infrastructure, improvement-refurbishment-drainage improvements. | <p>The department took no steps to identify social and economic needs of people in rural areas.</p> <p>The policy enables the delivery of construction schemes which will alleviate flooding, the final outcome will have a positive impact on the recipient community either urban or rural if the works are viable by decreasing the risk of flooding.</p> |
| 161 | Development of Driver & Vehicle Agency Ministry of Transport vehicle test booking - (short notice urgent appointments to allow customers to tax their vehicles). | <p>The department took no steps to identify social and economic needs of people in rural areas.</p> <p>No steps were taken to identify social and economic needs of people in rural areas, as the revised policy will benefit those who live in rural areas. An MOT appointment will allow for a vehicle to be legally taxed and therefore ensure people from rural areas are socially and economically mobile.</p> |

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| 162 | Proposed consultation and subsequent legislative amendments to Non-recognition of ex-NI/ex-GB European Economic Area Driving Licences. | <p>The department took no steps to identify social and economic needs of people in rural areas.</p> <p>No steps were taken to identify social and economic needs of people in rural areas, as the revised policy will apply equally to all ex-NI/ex-GB licence holders who return to live in Northern Ireland with a European Economic Area driving licence, whether they settle in a rural or urban location.</p> <p>However, the public consultation stage, provides the representative bodies (including those representing rural areas) an opportunity to comment on, shape and influence the formulation of the policy in its final form. All responses received will be considered.</p> |
| 163 | Proposing the Newry Southern Relief Road scheme. | <p>The department identified the needs of rural dwellers affected by this policy using the methods and information sources below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Consultation events and periods 6 Nov-22 Dec 2017, 15 Nov 18-21. These events included the use of questionnaires; • Landowner meetings - these have been conducted on an ongoing basis in the lead up to consolation events and upon request; • Stage 3 Preferred route Public Consultation event and period - Feb 2019 and 17 June-23 Aug 2019. This event also included the use of questionnaires; and • Community Information Event 16 Oct-19 Oct 23. <p>At each of the public events the impact on the council owned sports pitch was deemed to be of high concern with numerous comments received and questions answered.</p> <p>Numerous statutory bodies have been consulted at various stages of scheme development such as the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, the Department for Communities, the Department for Infrastructure, Agri-Food and</p> |

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| | <p>Biosciences Institute, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, Down Armagh Rural Transport Partnership Ltd, Down Gaelic Athletic Association to name a few.</p> <p>Continuing consultation through stakeholder engagement with all the affected parties to discuss impact/ accommodation works to inform scheme development. A publication of the draft statutory orders and public information event will be held during January 2025 with a 6-week consultation period.</p> <p>The department identified the proposed scheme will cause varying degrees of socio-economic impacts to those adjacent and along its route. The impacts will range from significant to slight in relation to numerous items, detailed in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, including noise and vibration, air quality, visual impact.</p> <p>Through private and public meetings with the community the department has and will continue to try and mitigate, in a manner appropriate to impact, as far as practically possible with measures such as;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acoustic/visual barriers; • Landscape planting; • Alternative access arrangements; • Re-alignment of rural roads to ensure connectivity to lands, properties and businesses; and • Retention of connection to where practically possible to active and sustainable transport modes. | |
| 164 | <p>Technical Guidance Note 3 - Providing guidance related to the department's maintenance of Accommodation Bridges.</p> | <p>The department took no steps to identify social and economic needs of people in rural areas. It should have no bearing in terms of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.</p> |
| 165 | <p>A 5 Week Temporary Suspension of the Strangford Ferry.</p> | <p>The department identified the needs of rural dwellers affected by this policy by consultation with rural stakeholders.</p> |

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| | <p>The department recognised the social and economic impact in suspending the ferry service at any time. However, the department mitigated impacts particularly for foot only passengers i.e. students and people who are travelling to Strangford or Portaferry only. Those making onward journeys can avail of the public transport facilities. Vehicle owners can use the longer road network to reach their destinations.</p> |
| <p>166 Review and update of Department for Infrastructure Transport and Roads Asset Management Policy and Procedure Guide Road Service Policy and Procedure Guide (RSPPG) E067 - 'The Development Control Manual'.</p> | <p>The department took no steps to identify social and economic needs of people in rural areas.</p> <p>It should have no bearing in terms of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.</p> |
| <p>167 Review of Trust Ports Policy.</p> | <p>The department took no steps to identify social and economic needs of people in rural areas.</p> <p>The department will undertake a consultation on the policies within the Review of Trust Ports which will include rural representatives. Should any such needs be identified this form will be reviewed and changes made where appropriate.</p> |
| <p>168 Consideration of the Department for Infrastructure's 2025-26 Draft Budget outcome, for both resource and capital spending.</p> | <p>The department identified the needs of rural dwellers affected by this policy using the methods and information sources below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Department for Infrastructure Budget 2024-25 Consultation Report;</i> • Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency 2021 Census data; • <i>The Department for Infrastructure Audit of Inequalities 2022-26;</i> • <i>The Anti-Poverty Strategy Expert Advisory Panel Report;</i> • <i>The Gender Strategy Expert Advisory Report;</i> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>THE TRANSPORT TRAP - How transport disadvantages poorer people;</i> • <i>The relationship between transport and loneliness - Sustrans.org.uk;</i> • <i>The impact of public spending changes in Northern Ireland - Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC);</i> • Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) publications; • <i>AGE Northern Ireland Lived Experience 2021;</i> • <i>OUTstanding in your field: Experience of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people in rural areas;</i> • Northern Ireland Rural Women’s Network; and • Funding water infrastructure in Northern Ireland - Northern Ireland Audit Office. <p>The department identified that the effect of this policy would, with an improved financial position for 2025-26, the department anticipates that this funding should allow for improved levels of services to essential road maintenance and flood risk management. It should also allow Translink and Northern Ireland Water to receive increases from 2024-25 opening positions. Therefore, considering the overall position it is anticipated that the improved financial position will have an improvement to services for people living in rural areas. In addition, an improved capital position can deliver positive change and can create foundations for a more productive and prosperous economy, therefore anticipating an improvement for people living in rural areas.</p> <p>Although no decisions have been taken by the Minister on the distribution of the department’s budget, this assessment is based on a scenario following the outcome of the draft budget. Decisions will be made following agreement on the final budget by the Executive and consideration of this and any further screening.</p> |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| <p>169 Assisted Rural Travel Scheme Budget 2025-26.</p> | <p>The department identified the needs of rural dwellers affected by this policy using the methods and information sources below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dial-a-Lift statistics for Apr-Nov 2024 received from the Partnerships as part of the administration of grant; • Assisted Rural Transport Scheme statistics for Apr-Oct 2024 received from the Partnerships as part of the administration of Assisted Rural Transport Scheme funding; • Survey of members who avail of the Assisted Rural Travel Scheme which is only available on Dial-a-Lift services (Department for Infrastructure 2022-3 - Unpublished); • Community Transport User Survey (Department for Infrastructure 2022-23 - Unpublished); • Evaluation of Assisted Rural Travel Scheme (Department for Infrastructure March 2023 - Unpublished); • <i>Key Rural Issues, Northern Ireland 2024</i> (Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs); • <i>Transport for Older People in Rural Areas Research</i> (Center for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland 2010 Ahern and Hine); • <i>Benefits of Community Transport Social Return on Investment Report</i> (Gauge NI 2014); and • <i>Evaluation of Fermanagh Community Transport</i> (September 2022). <p>The department identified that the effect of this policy would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on vulnerable groups within rural areas including direct financial implications and access to goods and services; |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of removal of a key transport accessible option for those who are rurally isolated or do not have access to other transport options; • Impact of loss of grant funded transport services and potential loss of associated group hire services to rural communities; • Potential job losses within rural communities; • Loss of volunteering opportunities; and • Further disadvantage to people in rural areas as the lack of mainstream public transport services (compared to urban areas) means they will have less opportunity to obtain a travel concession via their entitlement to a SmartPass. <p>The department considered all the rural needs identified and mitigated them by funding The Assisted Rural Transport Scheme at £560K for 2024-25.</p> |
| 170 Technical Guidance Note 25: To update the departments guidance for The Practical Application of Strategic Planning Policy for 'Development in the Proximity to Reservoirs'. | <p>The department took no steps to identify social and economic needs of people in rural areas.</p> <p>The aim of this policy, which is technical in nature, it should have no bearing in terms of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.</p> |
| 171 Consultation on Developer Contributions for Wastewater Infrastructure. | <p>The department identified the needs of rural dwellers affected by this policy using consultation on this policy, including via a Citizen Space survey, is intended to gather views to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural and other areas which may be relevant to this issue.</p> <p>The department will undertake a consultation on this policy and all responses received will be considered. Should any rural needs or issues be identified then mitigations will be considered and where practical the policy will be reviewed and changes made where appropriate.</p> |

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| 172 | Technical Guidance Note 34 - Guidance on Handling Flood Map Challenges - Fluvial and Coastal processes. | The department took no steps to identify social and economic needs of people in rural areas. |

Department of Justice

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 173 Consultation on provisions within the Crime and Policing Bill, specifically, a new offence of Child Criminal Exploitation and introduction of civil preventative orders to prevent child criminal exploitation conduct from occurring. | Rural needs impact assessment completed and no rural needs identified. |
| 174 Statutory Rule - Extending Live Links (Audio and Video Conferencing System) Provisions for Courts and Tribunals SR 2024 No.173. | Rural needs impact assessment completed and no rural needs identified. |
| 175 Statutory Rule - Extending Live Links (Audio and Video Conferencing System) Provisions for Courts and Tribunals; SR 2025 No. 61. | Rural needs impact assessment completed and no rural needs identified. |
| 176 Legislative Provisions within the Justice Bill 2022 -for the use of Audio and Video Conferencing Systems ("Live links") within Courts and Tribunals in Northern Ireland. | Rural needs impact assessment completed and no rural needs identified. |
| 177 Consultation on proposals for The Establishment of a Statutory Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses of Crime (Proposal One), and Criminal Justice Organisations to provide or publish statistical victim information, including evidence of Victim Charter compliance (Proposal Two). | Rural needs impact assessment completed and no rural needs identified. Anticipate positive impact on people in 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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 178 | Consultation on Pre-Trial Independent Legal Representation and Third-Party Material. Disclosure applications; proposed legislative provisions enabling pre-trial Independent Legal Representation for complainants in serious sexual offences cases; and enhancing the protections relating to disclosure applications in serious sexual offences for inclusion in a Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill. | Rural needs impact assessment completed and no rural needs identified. Anticipate positive impact on people in both rural and urban areas. |
| 179 | Consultation on Enabling Access to Justice Programme Delivery Plan. | Rural needs impact assessment completed and no rural needs identified. |
| 180 | Review of the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 Codes of Practice - Police and Criminal Evidence Codes A to H and new Code I. | Rural needs impact assessment completed and no rural needs identified. |
| 181 | Consultation on the draft Planning Fees (Deemed Planning Applications and Appeals) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024. | Rural needs impact assessment completed and no rural needs identified. |
| 182 | Consultation on draft Police Pension (Amendment No 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024. | Rural needs impact assessment completed and no rural needs identified. |
| 183 | Consultation on Vehicle Seizure, Storage and Disposal Statutory Charges Review. | Rural needs impact assessment completed and no rural needs identified. |

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| 184 | Amendment to The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 to prevent a charge of murder or manslaughter being “no billed” where a defendant is charged, within the same proceedings, with the offence of causing or allowing a child or vulnerable adult to die. | Rural needs impact assessment completed and no rural needs identified. Anticipate positive impact on people in both rural and urban areas. |
| 185 | Post Office (Horizon System) Offences Bill - Extension of provisions of Bill to Northern Ireland. | Rural needs impact assessment completed and no rural needs identified. |
| 186 | Court Security - amendment of provisions of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2004 to extend the number of buildings where there is an obligation to provide court security. | Rural needs impact assessment completed and no rural needs identified. |

The Executive Office

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| <p>187 The development of a new Programme for Government.</p> | <p>During the consultation process, seven in-person public consultation events were held throughout Northern Ireland, alongside ten online public consultation events to ensure that the events were as accessible to as many people as possible, including to those in rural communities. In addition to this, an effort was made during the consultation process to engage with a range of groups, including those in rural areas.</p> <p>While there were fewer responses to the dedicated consultation for the draft impact assessments on the draft Programme for Government, there were overlapping findings with the consultation on the draft Programme for Government, including an appetite from stakeholders for the voices and needs of those living in rural areas to be adequately reflected.</p> <p>Survey responses were mixed; eight respondents felt the draft Programme for Government would have a positive impact on the needs of people living in rural areas, seven felt it would have a negative impact, and five felt there would be no impact.</p> <p>Among written responses, comments included a desire to see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the needs of rural citizens incorporated into all priorities; • a more thorough understanding in the rural needs impact assessment of rural communities' needs around housing, poverty, employment, tourism, transport, environmental pollution, service provision, and especially around healthcare; and, • due regard for rurality including rural proofing, and consideration of issues around regional balance. <p>Revisions to the programme following consultation include the addition of the Executive's commitment to deliver a new Rural Policy Framework, an updated commitment on the Western Transport Corridor,</p> |

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| | <p>acknowledgement of the regional benefits from Further Education colleges, ongoing support for agri-food and fishing sectors, and more detail on the forthcoming draft Climate Action Plan. The consultation report, revised rural needs impact assessment and the revised Programme for Government post-consultation can be found on the Northern Ireland Executive website.</p> <p>The Programme for Government aims to improve wellbeing for all, including the needs of people living in rural areas. This is a high-level strategic programme and therefore, individual policy areas will also work along with their stakeholders and delivery partners to address the social and economic needs of their target groups, e.g. the specific needs of those living in rural areas, through separate equality impact assessments and rural needs impact assessments.</p> |
| <p>188 To implement the Executive Office’s statutory duty under Section 50 of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 to establish (by regulations) an independent office to be known as the “Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner. Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025 were made on 8 April 2025.</p> | <p>A full rural needs impact assessment was carried out by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs when the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (the Act) was made. After consideration of all aspects of the legislation it was decided that a further full rural needs impact assessment is not required as everyone should benefit from the outcome of this new policy as it will implement the statutory commitment in the Act to establish a Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner who will oversee and report on the operations of the Act. Climate change has become a global issue, and policies and actions are urgently needed to mitigate the impact of climate change on future generations.</p> <p>The impact will be no different to rural communities as to the impact on Northern Ireland as a whole.</p> |
| <p>189 Development of a Refugee Integration Strategy and Delivery Framework.</p> | <p>The policy is intended to deliver the best outcomes for refugees and asylum seekers no matter where they live here. While the numbers of refugees in rural areas are lower than urban areas, it is important that joined up support services are available to all.</p> |

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| <p>190 Provision of free period products (implementing the s2 arrangements arising from the Period Products (Free Provision) Northern Ireland Act 2022.</p> | <p>The social and economic needs of people in rural areas may differ from those of urban areas. Any differences identified through steps detailed in section 3C in the rural needs impact assessment will be addressed as required. Locations where free products will be provided will take account of the population and needs within rural areas.</p> <p>The Private Members Bill which resulted in the Period Products (Free Provision) Act Northern Ireland 2022 makes the Executive Office responsible for ensuring universal provision of free period products across the whole of Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Steps to implement the legislation within the parameters of the Act, must meet the needs of both rural and urban populations.</p> <p>The public consultation provided an opportunity for those in both rural and urban areas to indicate what products they want, and where these should be located. The results of the consultation then shaped the design of the service which was put in place by May 2024.</p> <p>The scheme has been delivered through provision of free period products in all static and mobile public libraries in Northern Ireland. This ensures access to products within 2 miles to approximately 90% of the population.</p> <p>The scheme will continue to be monitored, and steps taken to address rural needs as required.</p> |
| <p>191 Executive Office's Spending Plans 2024-25.</p> | <p>Information was gathered via stakeholders during the main 'Executive Office Spending Plans 2024-25 Equality Impact Assessment consultation and the 2024-25 consultation on the rural needs impact assessment for the Executive Office's Spending Plans 2024-25'. The information returned in these consultations was used to ensure that due regard was paid to rural needs impacts when making budget allocations.</p> <p>Ensuring fair rural outcomes forms part of the review process of the Executive Office budgeting cycle.</p> |

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| | <p>The Executive Office is in close contact with councils and Arm's Length Bodies and the review of delivery mechanisms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councils, the Executive Office programme and community organisations can tailor any delivery to that which they consider is best suited to their own area, rural or otherwise. For example, online delivery can be used as a component of programme delivery; and • The District Council Good Relations Fund and the Central Good Relations Fund, Ending Violence Against Women and Girls and the Minority Ethnic Development Fund do not differentiate between rural and urban areas during the application process. |
| 192 Together: Building a United Community Strategy - Central Good Relations Funding Programme. | <p>Throughout each financial year, the Executive Office is in continuous engagement with stakeholders to gather feedback on what is and isn't working well within the programme.</p> <p>The Central Good Relations Fund team attend funding forums across Northern Ireland which has had a positive impact on reach and access, allowing more rural communities to access sessions where perhaps travel distance and time inhibited them previously when forums had been delivered in person.</p> <p>Contact details are also published online to facilitate any queries or raising of issues relating to the programme.</p> <p>There is engagement with key stakeholders including Community Relations Council and Council Good Relations Officers when applications open to utilise their local knowledge and actively target under-represented groups including those in rural communities.</p> <p>An extensive mailing list has been developed over the duration of the programme which ensures all groups are notified of upcoming programme launches or any other information which may be of interest.</p> <p>The Central Good Relations Fund governance structures, stakeholder engagements, and</p> |

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| | <p>assessment processes all seek to ensure critical good relations need is met and the programme is accessible to all.</p> <p>Analysis of applications and funding awards in-year aids the programme to understand and improve the distribution of funding and helps ensure the programme continues to reach areas where funding is needed most and identify any issues affecting uptake.</p> <p>Further analysis includes looking at available data (e.g. Police Service of Northern Ireland hate crime statistics) to identify areas of need as well as discussions with each council Good Relations Officer.</p> <p>Welcome statements are used to encourage applications from areas where there have been lower levels of submissions or an increased level of hate crimes.</p> <p>Transport costs, volunteer expenses and residential costs are funded as part of the programme which can be critical for attracting more rural groups.</p> <p>There has been evidence provided in published academic reports linking deprivation in some areas to anti-social behaviour amongst young people which negatively affects community relations. In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests invisible barriers and segregation exists in many rural communities, and while not always as apparent as the interface areas in large population centres, such as Belfast and Derry/ Londonderry, they can have an equally negative impact on communities.</p> <p>The Executive Office continues to work to address gaps in good relations funding provision. The ongoing engagement and review processes have led to changes in the conditions of funding to engage with rural groups and ensure they have access to funding. Additionally, the provision of small grant funding of up to £1,500 through the programme has provided small, low-capacity rural groups with an opportunity to access funding.</p> |

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| <p>193 Together: Building a United Community Strategy.</p> | <p>The review of the Together: Building a United Community Strategy included a reflection on the needs of modern society, including those who live in rural settings.</p> <p>Stakeholders highlighted a lack of rural delivery, often down to a lack of capacity, either venues to host good relations projects or poor transport links to get to venues.</p> <p>Rural communities expressed that they are more likely to be single identity and organisations felt it was therefore more challenging to meet the criteria of funding programmes. The development of specific programmes targeting rural areas would ensure that those living in rural areas have equal opportunity to access good relations services.</p> <p>Recommendations from the Together: Building a United Community review are currently under Ministerial consideration.</p> |
| <p>194 Planned Interventions Programme.</p> | <p>Updates applied to the Planned Interventions Programme guidance documentation to encourage uptake in rural areas. The Planned Interventions Programme targets interface areas or areas where there is the potential for severe unrest. These areas are not solely in urban areas. Where a group from a rural area has identified a clear need for good relations work, which does not satisfy the requirements of this programme, other funding programmes are available to allow these groups to access funding.</p> <p>The programme governance structures, stakeholder engagement, and co-design processes all seek to ensure critical need for intervention is met, and that the programme is accessible to all.</p> <p>Interfaces need not be limited to physical peace walls in urban areas. To encourage uptake in rural areas this has been clarified in the guidance documentation for the programme. The guidance has been further updated</p> |

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| | <p>to encourage applications from areas where young people are travelling to interfaces, which provides scope for applications from rural communities where young people are travelling to urban interfaces.</p> <p>Transport costs are covered under funding and whilst value for money is a key aspect in the evaluation of applications, it is recognised that rural applicants may have higher transport costs.</p> |
| 195 District Council Good Relations Programme. | <p>The District Council Good Relations Programme is a match funded programme, which aims to support local solutions to local good relations issues.</p> <p>The Executive Office provide strategic input to the programme and oversight of annual Good Relations Action Plans for all councils. Decisions around specific project funding are a matter for individual councils.</p> <p>Aside from the clear rural/urban split in terms of council areas, council's undertake regular Good Relations Audits to identify areas of need and Council Good Relations Officers work with local groups to ensure delivery takes place across all council areas.</p> <p>Councils are also afforded flexibility within the Programme, allowing funding to be reallocated throughout the year to address emerging needs.</p> <p>Councils are also required to record information regarding programme availability for rural & urban participants to ensure an equitable distribution of resource.</p> |
| 196 Together: Building a United Community Camps Programme. | <p>The Together: Building a United Community Camps Programme is one of the seven headline actions of the wider Together: Building a United Community Strategy, delivered by the Education Authority in partnership with The Executive Office. Good relations learning is at the heart of every Together: Building a United Community camp, which provide opportunities for young people from all backgrounds to come together, try new experiences, have fun, and build longer term relationships.</p> |

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| | <p>The Camps Programme is a merit-based programme open to children and young people in all locations across Northern Ireland where a Camp is taking place. Successful Camps must be run on a cross-community basis and focus on ensuring correct variance of both Catholic and Protestant participants. Proposals are also strongly encouraged to include participants from other communities including ethnic minority communities and those of different racial backgrounds.</p> <p>The Together: Building a United Community Camps governance structures, stakeholder engagements, and assessment processes all seek to ensure critical good relations need is met and the programme is accessible to all.</p> <p>Engagement with key stakeholders including Department of Education, Education Authority and Council Good Relations Officers is carried out when the applications open to utilise their local knowledge and actively target under-represented groups including those in rural communities.</p> <p>Transport costs are covered under funding and whilst value for money is a key aspect in the evaluation of applications, it is recognised that rural applicants may have higher transport costs due to geographical isolation of young people and facilities and this is taken into consideration.</p> |
| 197 The implementation of the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls - Change Fund (<i>AP1 in Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Delivery Plan 2024-26</i>). | <p>The co-design process ensured that the development of the Strategic Framework and its Foundational Action Plan was a collaborative process and stakeholders' input has been key to the development of the Strategic Framework which was issued for public consultation.</p> <p>The issues identified directly link to the Strategic Framework and its Delivery Plan including the Change Fund.</p> <p>In general, the issues identified by rural stakeholders reflected those of urban or regional stakeholders. One issue identified as potentially more prevalent in rural areas</p> |

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| | <p>was in relation to property rights where the family home is also the main source of income, for example on a farm.</p> <p>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>Task group sprint research which is intended to be carried out on key areas of focus early in the implementation of the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls 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> <p>The Strategic Framework aims to ensure that women and girls feel and are safe everywhere in our society.</p> <p>The Change Fund itself is designed to ensure reach of Ending Violence Against Women and Girls prevention work right across all council areas. We are reviewing the impact of the Change Fund after an initial 16 month learning period and any differential impacts on rural and urban areas which emerge from that, or which are identified during our task group sprint on rural needs will be factored into decisions about the fund going forward.</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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 198 | Implementation of the Public Prosecution Service's Policy for Prosecuting Cases of Stalking. | <p>No geographical distinction is made when deciding on whether or not to prosecute any criminal offence. Any subsequent court proceedings are typically conducted in the court area within which an offence has been committed.</p> <p>It is considered that application of this policy will have no impact (positive or negative) on rural needs.</p> |
| 199 | Development of the Public Prosecution Service's Policy for Prosecuting Cases of Non-Fatal Strangulation (for public consultation). | <p>No geographical distinction is made when deciding on whether or not to prosecute any criminal offence. Any subsequent court proceedings are typically conducted in the court area within which an offence has been committed.</p> <p>It is considered that application of this policy will have no impact (positive or negative) on rural needs.</p> |
| 200 | Implementation of the Protocol between the Public Prosecution Service and the Service Prosecuting Authority for determining whether offences committed by armed forces personnel subject to Service law should be dealt with within the civilian or military justice systems. | <p>The only geographical distinction made in respect of the protocol is where the conduct is alleged to constitute or form part of a pattern of offending which includes conduct that occurred outside Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Where prosecutions are directed by the Public Prosecution Service, any subsequent court proceedings are typically conducted in the court area within which an offence has been committed.</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 2024 - 31 March 2025



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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 201 | Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025-2026 (Draft for Consultation). | In the development of this plan rural needs were considered and it was concluded that its delivery would not have an adverse effect on people living in rural areas. |
| 202 | Grant Funding Policy. | The policy considered potential rural needs and it was concluded that there was a positive impact for people living in rural areas. |
| 203 | Health and Safety Policy. | Rural needs have not influenced this policy as it sets out the council's approach to the management of health and safety responsibilities and applies equally to staff across the organisation. |
| 204 | Leisure Grant Aid Programme. | The programme was covered by the overall Grant Funding Policy and no adverse rural impact was identified. |
| 205 | Take a Seat Initiative. | The initiative was covered by the overall Grant Funding Policy and it is available to all businesses in the Borough including those located in rural areas. |
| 206 | Community Development Grant Aid Programme. | The programme was covered by the Overall Grant Funding Policy and no adverse rural impact was identified. |
| 207 | School Uniform Re-use Scheme. | It was concluded that this scheme has a positive impact on people living in rural areas. |
| 208 | Draft Love Living Here Delivery Plan 2030. | No adverse impact was identified for people living in rural areas. |
| 209 | Social Supermarket and Family Support Programme. | Consideration was given to people living in rural areas and it was concluded that there is a positive impact. |
| 210 | Community Festival Grant Fund. | The initiative was covered by the overall Grant Funding Policy and it was concluded that this initiative does not disproportionately impact people living in rural areas. |
| 211 | Irish Language Bursary Grant Programme. | The programme was covered by the Overall Grant Funding Policy and no adverse rural impact was identified. |

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| 212 | Mrs Joan Christie CVO (Commander of the Royal Victorian Order) OBE (Order of the British Empire) Legacy Bursary Scheme. | The scheme is covered by the overall Grant Funding Policy and it was concluded that people living in rural areas are not disproportionately affected. |
| 213 | Arts and Heritage Grant Aid Programme. | The scheme falls under the overall Grant Funding Policy and no rural needs were identified. |
| 214 | Waste Harmonisation Project - Supply and Delivery of 1801 Wheeled Bins & Wheelie Boxes. | It was concluded that there was no adverse impact for rural areas for this project as all households in the council are receiving the exact same service. |
| 215 | Climate Change Action Plan. | The Climate Change Action Plan does not differentiate between areas of the Borough so does not adversely impact rural residents or areas. |
| 216 | Temporary Festive Recycling Centre Arrangements. | A refuse lorry was deployed at a designation location for three days over the Christmas period to assist with increased demand. There was no identified adverse impact for residents in rural areas. |
| 217 | Review of Recycling Centre Opening Hours. | No disadvantage to rural areas was identified and no mitigation measures were required at design or delivery stage. |
| 218 | Labour Market Partnership Action Plan and Multiply Programme. | A positive impact in relation to rural needs with due regard being implemented through rural needs impact assessment (including by the funding department), through ongoing engagement with staff when delivering this programme. |
| 219 | Work Experience Programme 2024-25. | The work experience programme was considered for rural needs and no adverse impact was identified. |
| 220 | Digital Readiness Assessment Pilot Programme. | A positive impact in relation to rural needs with due regard being implemented through rural needs impact assessment, through ongoing engagement with staff when delivering this programme. |
| 221 | Business Merchandising Support Programme. | A positive impact in relation to rural needs with due regard being implemented through rural needs impact assessment, through ongoing engagement with staff when delivering this programme. |

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| 222 | Phase 2 Business CCTV Programme. | A positive impact in relation to rural needs with due regard being implemented through rural needs impact assessment, through ongoing engagement with staff when delivering this programme. |
| 223 | Green for Business Programme. | Rural needs were taken into account and no adverse impact was identified as this was open to all small and medium enterprises across the whole borough. A targeted social media campaign, and in person sessions were delivered for those businesses that registered an interest and attracted businesses from both rural and urban areas seeking to report on their carbon emissions to begin a pathway to carbon reduction. |
| 224 | Sister Cities Youth Exchange Programme 2024-25. | A positive impact in relation to rural needs with due regard being implemented through rural needs impact assessment, through ongoing engagement with staff when delivering this programme. |
| 225 | Ask Mentor Programme. | A positive impact in relation to rural needs with due regard being implemented through rural needs impact assessment, through ongoing engagement with staff when delivering this programme. |
| 226 | Invest NI Sub-Regional Plans Local Economic Partnership and Action Plan. | A positive impact in relation to rural needs with due regard being implemented through rural needs impact assessment, through ongoing engagement with staff when delivering this programme. |
| 227 | Enterprise Support Service Future Funding. | A positive impact in relation to rural needs with due regard being implemented through rural needs impact assessment, through ongoing engagement with staff when delivering this funding programme. |

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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 228 | Development of 2024-25 Tourism Events Programme. | The development of the policy was not influenced by rural needs. |
| 229 | Implementation of a Performance Improvement Plan. | No rural needs identified. |
| 230 | Request to use McKee Clock - Bangor. | No rural needs identified. |
| 231 | Implementation of the display of King Charles Portrait. | No rural needs identified. |
| 232 | Delivery of the Labour Market Partnership Action Plan 2024-25. | <p>Through the rural needs impact assessment social needs were identified. Rural areas can have higher proportions of individuals facing barriers to employment due to factors like limited transport, digital exclusion, or a lack of relevant local opportunities. Upskilling projects can directly address these barriers.</p> <p>Rural areas often have a higher proportion of individuals who are economically inactive or long-term unemployed due to factors like limited access to services, lack of transport, or caring responsibilities. The Labour Market Partnerships core objective to support these groups naturally extends to rural residents.</p> |
| 233 | Adoption of a Community Halls Pricing Policy. | The implementation of the policy was not influenced by rural needs. |
| 234 | Implementation of a Lands Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 235 | Implementing an Events and Festivals Fund 2023-24. | The implementation of the policy was not influenced by rural needs. |
| 236 | Implementing Growth Events Fund. | The implementation of the policy was not influenced by rural needs. |
| 237 | Development of the Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy. | 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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 238 | Adoption of Elected Member Learning, Training and Development Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 239 | Implementation of the Business Continuity Plan. | <p>The rural needs impact assessment identified that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural areas, by their nature, involve greater distances to travel from ambulance or fire stations to incident locations; • It's less "operationally or financially feasible" to deploy emergency resources in areas where demand is lower, meaning fewer bases or vehicles are stationed directly within rural communities; • Poorer road networks, narrow roads, and a lack of local knowledge for ambulance staff can also contribute to delays; and • Longer response times, particularly for critical incidents, can significantly worsen patient outcomes. <p>If the incident is in an identified rural area, senior management team will contact Community First Responder Schemes who can provide immediate aid in rural settings before an ambulance arrives.</p> |
| 240 | Adoption of a Social Media Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 241 | Development of a Budgeting Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 242 | Notice of Motion - That this council notes the importance of this borough as the birthplace of the Ulster-Scots community. | No rural needs identified. |
| 243 | Notice Of Motion - Official Language Strategy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 244 | Amendment to Ards and North Down Borough Council Flags Policy 2021. | The implementation of the 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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 245 | Development of Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2024-28. | No rural needs identified as this is a strategic plan. |
| 246 | Development of Good Relations Action Plan 2024-25. | The implementation of the policy was not influenced by rural needs. |
| 247 | Adoption of an Inventories Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 248 | Adoption of a Purchasing and Payments Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 249 | Notice Of Motion -Rename Bangor Marine Gardens to Queen Elizabeth II Marine Gardens. | No rural needs identified. |
| 250 | Notice Of Motion - That this council considers the erection of a permanent memorial of Queen Elizabeth II at the redeveloped Marine Gardens. | No rural needs identified. |
| 251 | Implementation of 2024-25 Tourism Events Programme. | The implementation of the policy was not influenced by rural needs. |
| 252 | Implementation of a Climate Adaptation Plan. | The council's Local Development Plan (an action in the Climate Adaption Plan) will identify and allocate sites for housing, employment, and mixed-use development, prioritising integration with public transport, cycling, and walking. The plan aims to reduce emissions and cost of rural travel by promoting sustainable development and active travel links. |
| 253 | Development of Ards and North Down Borough Council Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25. | The implementation of the policy was not influenced by rural needs. |
| 254 | Request to use Council land - Peace vigil at McKee Clock Arena. | No rural needs identified. |
| 255 | Displaying King Charles III Portrait. | 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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 256 Delivery of Ards and North Down Borough Council PEACEPLUS Co-Designed Local Authority Action Plan. | <p>The rural needs impact assessment identified rural areas face several key challenges that impact their well-being and development. These include geographic isolation, which limits access to essential services like healthcare, education, and leisure, compounded by lower population densities making service provision less viable and reducing social interaction. Limited public transport further exacerbates isolation, especially for those without cars.</p> <p>Socio-economically, rural areas often contend with deprivation, fewer job opportunities in some sectors, and an ageing population due to young people moving away. Maintaining and upgrading vital community infrastructure such as halls and recreational facilities also presents difficulties.</p> <p>Furthermore, the legacy of the conflict continues to subtly affect social cohesion and the use of shared spaces in rural communities. Finally, digital connectivity remains a hurdle, impacting education, business, and overall social inclusion due to historical issues with broadband access.</p> |
| 257 Ards and North Down Borough Council Safeguarding Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 258 Implementation of a Scheme of Delegation. | No rural needs identified. |
| 259 Delivery of Ards and North Down Policing and Community Safety Partnership Action Plan 2024-25. | The implementation of the policy was not influenced by rural needs. |
| 260 Notice of Motion - Renaming of Portavogie Square. | The policy may affect the rural area of Portavogie, which hosts the annual Tide and Turf event as part of Ards and North Down Borough Council's Autumn Food Festival', in 2023, it attracted around 11,000 visitors. The name may not effectively promote it as a welcoming, shared space for residents and visitors. Conducting an equality impact assessment and incorporating the rural needs assessment will inform the policies impact on tourism, social and economic needs in the area. |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 261 | Implementing changes to Standing Orders. | No rural needs identified. |
| 262 | Implementing a charge for UKV1 Property Inspection. | No rural needs identified. |
| 263 | Request to use Council Land - Ward Park. | No rural needs identified. |
| 264 | Development of Village Plans. | The village plans are aimed in rural areas only. The engagement process for village plans involves extensive public consultation, including workshops, community groups, local schools, and online surveys. This ensures that residents and businesses have a strong voice in shaping their village's future, fostering a sense of ownership and community spirit. |
| 265 | Installation of Artwork on a derelict area within Comber. | No rural needs identified. |
| 266 | Adoption of a Grants Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 267 | Development of Ards and North Down Borough Council Artificial Sports Pitch Replacement Strategy. | The rural needs impact assessment identified positive social impacts. The strategy focuses on replacing artificial sports pitches in rural areas to ensure they are safe, accessible, and well-maintained. This is expected to enhance the quality of sports facilities, improve accessibility for the community, and increase customer satisfaction. Additionally, it aims to reduce maintenance issues, positively affecting health and well-being. |
| 268 | Implementation of an Advertising and Sponsorship Policy. | The policy relates to advertising and sponsorship opportunities connected to all council's physical sites (rural and urban), including leased and rented spaces, publications, websites, vehicles, services and appropriate events, campaigns or initiatives. The policy suggests that there may be less opportunities in rural areas than in urban and will seek additional opportunities to address this. |
| 269 | Adoption of Letters to Heaven Initiative. | No rural needs identified. |
| 270 | Use of Land request - vigil in the grounds of Castle Park. | 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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 271 | Development of a Leisure Strategy. | The rural needs impact assessment identified positive social and economic needs. The strategy aims to increase leisure opportunities for those in a rural setting. Initiatives to enhance physical activity access by recruiting diverse activity providers, establishing Getting Active and Staying Active sites in rural community centres, engaging local leisure champions, exploring a mobile unit for leisure opportunities in underserved areas, and promoting the use of natural spaces for various activities. |
| 272 | Adoption of a Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 273 | Implementation of a Grassland Management Strategy 2024-32. | The rural needs impact assessment identified positive social impacts by providing good quality outdoor spaces in all areas of the borough particularly in rural areas |
| 274 | Implementation of Community Development Running Costs 2025-26 form. | No rural needs identified. |
| 275 | Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour. | No rural needs identified. |
| 276 | Implementation of a Community Festival Fund 2025-26. | The Community Festival Fund will create a positive and measurable impact on the local community and/or economy in both rural and urban areas. |
| 277 | Revision of a Smoking Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 278 | Revision of a Document Control Policy Corporate health and safety. | No rural needs identified. |
| 279 | Revision of a Fire Safety Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 280 | Revision of Legionella and Asbestos Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 281 | Adoption of Prohibition Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 282 | Development of Bangor Visitor Information Centre Outreach. | 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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 283 | Implementation of VE DAY Commemoration Grants 2025. | Implementation of VE DAY Commemoration will create a positive and measurable impact on the local community and/or economy in both rural and urban areas. |
| 284 | Implementation of a Celebration Display Bed Policy. | Celebration Display Beds are designated for charities and organisations to showcase and promote various anniversaries, events, and significant tourist attractions as outlined in the policy. This policy is only applicable to specific areas however any charity or organisation throughout the borough can apply. |
| 285 | Implementation of an In Bloom Grants Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 286 | Ards and North Down Borough Council Events Toolkit. | No rural needs identified. |
| 287 | Implementation of a Good Relations Strategy 2025-28 and Action Plan 2025-26. | <p>Building a supportive mindset that values diverse backgrounds and enhances community cohesion, ensuring that divisions do not restrict opportunities and that all areas are approachable.</p> <p>Promoting the usage of communal spaces that are welcoming to everyone and guaranteeing a secure environment where individuals can navigate freely without fear.</p> <p>Minimising hate crimes, fostering safe surroundings, and honouring cultural diversity through shared respect and understanding. No differential impact on areas.</p> |
| 288 | Adopting a Learning, Training and Development Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 289 | Adoption of a Talent Continuity Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 290 | Introducing a Workforce Planning Strategy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 291 | Development of Policing and Community Safety Partnership Strategy 2025-28 and Action Plan 2025-26. | The programme involves a series of activities carried out in collaboration with the Police Service of Northern Ireland and local councils. Its aim is to enhance community trust in the rule of law and foster a culture of lawfulness within the community. No differential impacts on area. |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 292 | Implementing Policing and Community Safety Partnership Small Grants. | Applications from rural areas are encouraged to address and raise awareness of the various types of hate crimes and incidents, along with their impact on both victims and perpetrators. It's important to encourage victims to report hate crimes. |
| 293 | Implementation of a Dementia Safeguarding Scheme. | The technology that is used in this scheme is Near Field Communication rather than quick response codes. These will work better within rural areas, as they do not rely on wi-fi or internet data to work. |
| 294 | Implementation of Ballyholme Yacht Club & Watersports Centre Redevelopment. | No rural needs identified. |
| 295 | Revision of Standing Orders. | No rural needs identified. |
| 296 | Revision of Ards and North Down Borough Council Grievance Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 297 | Use of land request - Ward Park, Bangor. | No rural needs identified. |
| 298 | Implementing Ards and North Down Mind, Body, Business, Small Grants Scheme Policy. | No differential impacts on area. |

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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 299 | Development of a Business Continuity Policy. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 300 | Request to hold a Charity Music Concert in Lurgan Park. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 301 | Revision of a Corporate Health and Safety Policy. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 302 | Development of a Corporate Plan. | <p>The Corporate Plan will have a positive impact on people in rural areas, as the council will deliver services and activities across the following five main priorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Wellbeing; • Economic Growth; • Environment & Place; • Service Delivery; and • Staff, Leadership and Resources. <p>Services and activities relating to the five main priorities will be delivered across the entire borough, including villages, small towns and rural areas.</p> <p>The Access to Services domain is particularly relevant to rural areas; this measures the extent to which people have poor physical and online access to key services. The borough has nine Super Output Areas (10% of the total 87 Super Output Areas in the borough) in the top 100 most deprived in Northern Ireland on the Access to Services domain, each of these are defined as rural on the default Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency classification.</p> <p>The Access to Services domain consists of three indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service-weighted fastest travel time by private transport; |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. | |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service-weighted fastest travel time by public transport; and • Proportion of properties with broadband speed below 10Mb/s. <p>The borough has areas within the top 100 most deprived in Northern Ireland in relation to each of these three indicators. For example, Bannside Super Output Area in the borough is the second most deprived Super Output Area in Northern Ireland in terms of proportion of properties with broadband speed below 10Mb/s.</p> <p>Our Corporate Plan highlights social and economic key statistics relevant to the entire borough inclusive of both rural and urban areas. These statistics have been referenced under each priority.</p> <p>All strategies, plans, projects, and services detailed in the council's departmental business plans will need to be rural needs impact assessed in order to ensure that the council's statutory duty to promote rural needs is fully considered.</p> | |
| 303 | Request to hold a Cultural Event in Solitude Park. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 304 | Revision of the Disability Action Plan. | To ensure our plan has fully considered the needs of the rural community we involved those living in rural areas during the consultation process and received responses regarding the impact on disabled people living in rural areas. Many of these comments related to areas beyond the council's remit. Others were shared with the Community Planning Team. |
| 305 | Revision of the Dog Control Enforcement Policy. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 306 | Revision of the Equality Action Plan. | The council involved those living in rural areas during the consultation process, to ensure our plan has fully considered the needs of the rural community. There were comments on community transport affecting disabled people living in rural areas and these were shared with the Community Planning Team. |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 307 | Revision of the Environmental Health Quality Management Policy. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 308 | Implementation of the Environmental Improvement Scheme - Gilford. | Access to and within Gilford is critical to all town users, rural and urban. The improvements will make the town more welcoming and user friendly and in return enhance the social and economic well-being of those who live in this rural area. |
| 309 | Implementation of the Environmental Improvement Scheme - Markethill. | Access to and within Markethill is critical to all town users, rural and urban. The improvements will make the town more welcoming and user friendly and in return enhance the social and economic well-being of those who live in this rural area. |
| 310 | Implementation of the Environmental Improvement Scheme - Rathfriland. | Access to and within Rathfriland is critical to all town users, rural and urban. The improvements will make the town more welcoming and user friendly and in return enhance the social and economic well-being of those who live in this rural area. |
| 311 | Implementation of the FE McWilliams Refurbishment. | It has been recognised that there is a need for more integrated transport provision to the gallery. However, the provision of public transport and linkage of the gallery to rural locations is the responsibility of Translink, provider of public transport in the region. |
| 312 | Revision of the General Enforcement Policy. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 313 | Development of the Legal Fees Policy. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 314 | Development of the Northern Ireland Centenary Stones Policy. | The Northern Ireland Centenary Stones commemorate 100 years of Northern Ireland. No rural needs were identified. |
| 315 | Development of the Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 316 | Revision of the Remote Meetings Protocol. | Members, officers and residents living in rural areas will benefit from being able to access meetings online. |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 317 | Revision of the Risk Management Policy. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 318 | Revision of the Smoking Policy. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 319 | Revision of the Street Trading Policy and Procedure. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 320 | Implementation of the Tak£500+ Participatory Budgeting Project 2023-24. | <p>Tak£500+ is the name the community planning partnership working group selected for the Participatory Budgeting Project. In considering the social and economic needs of people living in rural areas it was acknowledged that access to the digital infrastructure and public transport can be more challenging for those living in rural areas. As a result, the following mitigations were implemented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the three voting events is held in a rural setting; • The names and numbers of the Participatory Budgeting Working Group are published in all promotional documents; and • An online event was also held for those who could not travel to the in-person events. <p>The project evaluation for the previous Tak£500+ process in 2022-23 mapped the addresses of voters and project applications. The definition of rural used was anywhere outside the main urban centres of Craigavon, Portadown, Lurgan, Banbridge, Armagh and Dromore. The report highlighted that the overall rural/urban split of voters was 64% rural and 36% urban.</p> <p>Across all applications (successful, unsuccessful and withdrawn) there was a slightly higher percentage from urban areas (55%) compared to rural (45%).</p> |

Belfast City Council

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 321 | Introduction of a kerbside recycling scheme for the collection of glass from additional households in outer Belfast. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 322 | Development and implementation of the Belfast Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 323 | Delivery of a Social Supermarket Support Fund. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 324 | Development of a draft Changing Places Toilets Policy. | The Changing Places Toilet Policy applies across the entire area of Belfast City Council and aims to address the inequalities experienced by disabled people. Therefore, this policy will have a positive impact on people throughout the council area, including rural areas. |
| 325 | Development of the Language Strategy Action Plan 2024-26. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 326 | Implementation of the Little York Street-Little Patrick Street Public Realm/ Placemaking Project and Lancaster Street Improvement Works. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 327 | Regeneration Framework. | No rural needs were identified. |
| 328 | Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme. | No rural needs were identified. |

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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 329 | Planning Rathlin Sound Festival 2024. | <p>At planning stage, the organisers considered income levels, religion, cultural habits, education, family structure, and the population density of the surrounding area and borough. The cost of services, travel expenses, local income levels, interest rates, relevant legislation, and unemployment rates were also considered.</p> <p>Given the borough's predominantly rural geography, events were developed to encourage increased social interaction and community engagement.</p> |
| 330 | Planning Ballymoney (Main Street) Environmental Improvement Scheme. | Following a consultation process no rural needs have been identified. |
| 331 | Review and development of a Street Trading Policy. | <p>No specific rural needs were identified during the development of the policy.</p> <p>However, it was noted that rural areas may be designated as potential street trading locations in the future. Should this occur, careful consideration will be given to the needs of rural communities, including access to goods and services, as well as the potential benefits and challenges associated with introducing a new trading activity.</p> |
| 332 | Planning Northern Ireland International Airshow 2024. | <p>At planning stage, the organisers considered income levels, religion, cultural habits, education, family structure, and the population density of the surrounding area and borough. The cost of services, travel expenses, local income levels, interest rates, relevant legislation, and unemployment rates were also considered.</p> <p>Given the borough's predominantly rural geography, events were developed to encourage increased social interaction and community engagement.</p> |
| 333 | Rescinding parking charges in Ballycastle. | The council considered the impacts of displacement parking in residential areas, economic costs to rural boat owners, Ballycastle and Rathin Island residents, and staff working in local businesses against the |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | increased turnover of spaces which would provide economic benefits for local businesses. This resulted in an Elected Members decision to rescind introducing car parking charging. |
| 334 Draft Disability Action Plan. | <p>In developing the action plan, the council consulted with disabled individuals, including those living in rural areas, to ensure the proposed actions were relevant and inclusive. The council recognised that rural residents often travel longer distances for work and social interaction, face limited public transport and internet access and may experience isolation due to a lack of local services. Additionally, increased migration to rural areas can change community dynamics, further highlighting the need for tailored support.</p> <p>To encourage participation from rural communities, the council offered accessible options such as free-post, telephone, and online submissions.</p> <p>Targeted outreach strategies combined digital and traditional formats such as newspapers, phone consultations, and information at civic centres to improve access. Rural organisations were directly engaged, and additional provisions were made to support people with disabilities, ensuring they had the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the consultation.</p> |
| 335 Accessibility Household Recycling Centres consultation. | No rural needs have been identified. |
| 336 Planning Christmas Parades & Switch On Events. | <p>The organisers identified the need for individuals from rural areas to have the same access to the events. Using feedback from previous events and by consulting with key stakeholders they identified longer travel distance, reduced opportunities for socialisation, unemployment levels and additional economic costs.</p> <p>These factors were considered during planning and events developed to encourage increased social interaction, including free car parking and the provision of free family activities. Events were also held in rural areas spread across the borough.</p> |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 337 | Implementing a Redundancy Policy. | No rural needs have been identified. |
| 338 | Implementing an Annual Leave Policy. | No rural needs have been identified. |
| 339 | Reviewing Recruitment Advertising. | No rural needs have been identified. |
| 340 | Revision/update of the Council's Statement of Community Involvement in Planning. | <p>Planning applications impacting rural areas may be decided at Planning Committee meetings, with residents encouraged to engage in the Council's Development Plan processes. Efforts were made to ensure inclusive participation for rural residents by accommodating limited internet access, poor transport, and service barriers. Measures were incorporated so rural residents could contribute via post, phone, online, through a representative, or via virtual workshops.</p> <p>To improve rural awareness and communication, targeted outreach strategies were employed, including both digital and traditional formats such as newspapers, phone consultations, and materials at civic centres. Rural organisations were directly engaged, and special provisions provided for vulnerable groups through easy read materials, sign video services, and officer-led consultations. These measures supported rural voices to be heard and their unique needs to be considered throughout all planning and consultation activities.</p> |
| 341 | Reviewing a Grant Funding Policy. | <p>Through sustained engagement with rural stakeholders and elected representatives, key impacts aligned with the council's strategic objectives were identified. In response, targeted funding interventions were offered to address the needs of both rural and urban communities.</p> <p>Programmes supported a diverse range of themes, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Social Development; • Sport and Wellbeing; • Community Safety; |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good Relations; • Culture and Arts; • Community and Sports Infrastructure; • Business Enterprise; and • Environmental Enhancement. <p>Rural initiatives included the Small Settlements Regeneration Program, Rural Business Investment Scheme, and Rural Broadband Scheme. These interventions have significantly contributed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing quality of life in rural areas; • Tackling rural poverty and social isolation; • Supporting education, training, and youth development; • Improving community safety and social interaction; and • Promoting cultural engagement, networking, and collaboration. |

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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 342 | Review of Fees for Civil Marriage and Civil Partnership Solemnisation Ceremonies. | This policy is not intended to impact people differently in rural areas. The fees policy will apply to all applicants regardless of where they live or where the ceremony takes place. |
| 343 | Development of the Citizen Recognition Policy. | This policy is based on merit and is not related to whether or not the perspective nominee for an award lives in a rural or urban area. |
| 344 | Development of the Newtownstewart Regeneration Framework. | This framework applies to the rural town of Newtownstewart which has a population of circa 1500 people. Newtownstewart is as an important service centre catering for its resident population and a wide rural area. As a rural town, the primary beneficiaries will be the local rural residents, business owners and visitors to the town. In drafting the Newtownstewart framework document, research was undertaken to develop locational and contextual understanding of the rural town which included a review of all relevant policy (local development plans, local growth plans, relevant local action plan, and a review of census information). The council also undertook an extensive community engagement hosting two public engagement events which were attended by residents, local business owners and other key stakeholders. Council officers met regularly with representatives from the local businesses and heritage group and 2000 Centre and also receive feedback from local elected representatives. |
| 345 | Review of the Entertainment Licensing Policy. | The statutory framework imposes requirements on both applicants and the councils in relation to what is required. There is no differential treatment in regard to rural and urban areas. |
| 346 | Proposed introduction of the Time Management Software in Leisure facilities. | The proposed arrangements are for all staff working in leisure facilities regardless of whether they live/work in rural or urban areas. |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 347 Development of the Good Relations Action Plan 2025-26. | <p>The programmes in the Good Relations Action Plan are open to all eligible groups and organisations that meet the eligibility criteria including those in rural areas. The design of the grant aid programmes, wherein each district electoral area will receive a proportionate allocation of funding should mean that people in rural areas will benefit equitably. Other programmes will also benefit the rural areas e.g. those delivered through the local growth plans and the cultural quarter programme. In designing the programme, feedback was considered from the Rural Area Partnership in Derry and other rural groups, as well as from Elected Members, Local Community Group Partnerships and previous beneficiaries.</p> |
| 348 Development of the Corporate Plan and Improvement Plan 2024-25. | <p>This plan will assist the council in delivering it's mission of delivering "improved social, economic and environmental outcomes for everyone".</p> <p>The three improvement objectives have positive benefits for rural communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assist a return to healthy lifestyle history and re growing participation in high quality leisure, sports and physical activity; • To create a greener cleaner more attractive district; and • To deliver improved customer satisfaction by improving customer support services and processes. <p>The improvement objectives identified in this plan were subject to a public consultation exercise. No rural issues raised.</p> |
| 349 Review of the Corporate Health and Safety Policy. | <p>This is primarily a policy that applies to staff and does not impact differently on staff who live or work in rural areas. Consideration was given to the need to ensure safety for staff who may be lone working in a rural area. Provisions to ensure they are protected are included in the Council's Lone Working Policy and in the general safe systems of work and associated risk assessments carried out for all staff.</p> |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 350 | Development of the Safeguarding Policy (Children and Young People). | This policy will apply to all individuals who engage with council staff and services, irrespective of the location in which they access those services. |
| 351 | Development of the Treasury Management Policy and Investment Strategy 2025-26. | No direct impact on rural needs. |
| 352 | Implementation of the Annual Directorate Delivery Plans. | Rural needs are reflected as appropriate in Directorate Delivery Plans based on the Corporate and Improvement Plan |
| 353 | Review of the Temporary Street Trading Policy. | The policy is not intended to impact people in rural areas. Applications for temporary licences relate to events taking place in the urban areas of Derry and Strabane. |
| 354 | Development of the Dual Language Street Signs Policy. | The policy recognises the importance of townland names for rural communities and has developed a policy which allows rural dwellers to request dual language road signage which includes the relevant townland name in which the road is situated. The policy also allows for the provision of different languages to be used in the case of long roads which are normally found in rural areas. |
| 355 | Review of arrangements for Council/Committee Meetings. | This proposal is aimed at improving democratic participation for all Elected Members. It is noted that members in rural areas may benefit more from virtual meetings through greater reductions in travel time and better time management. |
| 356 | Review of the Hybrid Working Pilot Policy and Guidance. | <p>The policy recognises the benefits when considering personal commuting and lunchtime costs. Commuting costs may be higher for those staff living in rural areas. In addition, one of the primary components of the carbon footprint of work relates to travel - using hybrid working arrangements, managers and staff can help to reduce both their own and the organisation's environmental footprints.</p> <p>The hybrid working arrangements will be offered to all staff working in suitable service areas regardless of whether they live/work in rural or urban areas.</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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 357 | Revising the Data Protection Policy. | The council has not found any specific social or economic impacts on residents, staff, customers, or suppliers in rural areas, as the revised Data Protection Policy does not create differential effects between rural and urban locations. The policy will be implemented consistently, irrespective of area. |
| 358 | Revising of the Corporate Health and Safety Policy. | There are no identifiable social or economic considerations for the council to note, as this policy does not have a different impact on individuals in rural areas compared to those in urban areas. The obligations set out in this policy apply equally to all council employees, including agency workers employed by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, Elected Members, and other third parties. The policy will be applied consistently, regardless of location. |
| 359 | Revising the Funding Allocation Model for Festive Lighting Plan. | The council did not assess separate social or economic needs for people in rural areas because the plan is not expected to affect rural residents differently from urban residents. The plan is intended to deliver equivalent positive outcomes across both rural and urban communities. |
| 360 | Implementing a Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25. | Implementation of the plan will generate equally positive outcomes for both rural and urban communities. The plan ensures that both rural and urban communities experience improved quality of life, enhanced service provision, and increased opportunities for participation and prosperity. The plan is designed to benefit all residents, ensuring equity in service delivery, support, and opportunities regardless of geographic location. |
| 361 | Adopting Fermanagh & Omagh District Council Heritage Plan. | The plan will have the same positive impact on those in rural and urban areas. The plan positively supports growth and change throughout the Fermanagh and Omagh district area, providing more opportunities for economic growth, community engagement, preservation of local heritage, collaboration, educational opportunities and social cohesion. |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 362 | Delivering Fermanagh Lakeland Forum Redevelopment. | <p>The redevelopment project will not impact differently on those in rural areas compared to those in urban areas.</p> <p>The redevelopment project aims to ensure that both rural and urban communities experience enhanced service provision, increased opportunities for participation and increased access to facilities. The aim of making the facilities more accessible is expected to result in increased participation and/or increased quality of experience for all users. The Fermanagh Lakeland Forum redevelopment is designed to benefit all service users, ensuring equity in service delivery, support, and opportunities regardless of their geographic location.</p> |
| 363 | Delivering Fermanagh Lakeland Forum Interim services. | <p>The public service will not impact differently on people in rural areas compared to those in urban areas. This interim services during the Fermanagh Lakeland Forum Redevelopment will be based on the current provisions of the leisure centre and aims to provide a continued service for the public where possible, minimizing the impact for those in rural areas.</p> <p>Residents and users in rural areas will be able to avail of structured interim outreach programmes which will be delivered in community centres and other civic buildings throughout the period of redevelopment.</p> |
| 364 | Revising the Asset Acquisition and Disposal Policy. | <p>The policy will establish a transparent and consistent approach to the acquisition and disposal of council owned land, buildings and facilities. It will impact upon people in rural areas in a positive manner by ensuring that they have the same access to acquisition or disposal opportunities as their counterparts in the urban areas. The council has not considered issues in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas as the policy will not impact differently on people based in rural areas compared to those in urban areas.</p> |
| 365 | Revising Menopause Policy. | <p>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.</p> |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 366 | Revising Domestic Violence and Abuse 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. |
| 367 | Revising a Dignity at Work 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. |
| 368 | Revising Wellbeing Risk Assessment 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. |
| 369 | Revising Conflict of Interest 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. |
| 370 | Revising Grievance 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. |
| 371 | Revising Managing Attendance 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. |
| 372 | Revising Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedure. | 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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 373 | Implementing the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2024-25. | The Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 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. Rural needs was given due consideration through the screening exercise undertaken by the council. The programme provides targeted support to businesses within rural areas only. |
| 374 | Delivery of the Labour Market Partnership Action Plan 2024-25. | Lisburn and Castlereagh Labour Market Partnership developed an Action Plan for 2024-25 which is based on the current labour market landscape across the council area. Therefore, both rural and urban dwellers will benefit collectively from a range of programmes that will address skills shortages, boost employability skills of our residents and assist local employers to address labour supply shortages in the area. The programmes are designed based on the labour market statistics of the council area and the programmes are open to all residents of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council regardless of their rural or urban location. |
| 375 | Delivery of the Multiply Programme 2024-25. | The Multiply Programme which was delivered by the Lisburn and Castlereagh Labour Market Partnership will not impact people in rural areas differently, it will have a positive impact collectively, as both rural and urban dwellers will reap the benefits from improved labour market conditions. |
| 376 | Development of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council Business Development Collaborative 2024-25. | <p>Activities are potentially available to benefit businesses, regardless of rural or urban location.</p> <p>All Lisburn and 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 has not been particularly influenced, as</p> |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | <p>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> |
| 377 Development of Enterprise Lisburn Castlereagh Programme 2024-25. | <p>In developing the annual plan for the Enterprise Lisburn Castlereagh 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 and Castlereagh Council area, including in rural areas.</p> |
| 378 Development of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council International Trade Programme 2024-25. | <p>Location/rurality is not a factor in deciding whether an applicant's business will be supported through the International Trade Programme.</p> <p>However, Lisburn and Castlereagh 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 consider any rural-specific factors that are relevant to the programme.</p> |
| 379 Development of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council Investment Programme 2024-25. | <p>All business support initiatives in the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council area recognise the need for balanced and equitable support across the district, including the need to support employment and business growth 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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | <p>The overall operation of the investment programme has not been particularly influenced by rural needs, as participation is open to eligible businesses regardless of location. However, staff are aware of the need to ensure the programme is well promoted and that there are no barriers to information or participation for businesses located in rural areas.</p> |
| <p>380 Development of Tourism Marketing and Communications 2024-25.</p> | <p>Whilst the campaigns will promote the rural and urban areas of Lisburn and 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>381 Delivery of the Tourism Major and Minor Events Funding Programme 2024-25.</p> | <p>The Tourism Major and Minor Events Funding programme is aimed at supporting third party event organisers to stage events in the Lisburn and Castlereagh Council area and in turn generate economic benefits. These events will bring varying numbers of visitor trips, bed nights, and tourism revenue to the area.</p> <p>The annual Tourism Major and Minor Events Funding programme will have a positive impact on the local rural business community and the council area as a whole.</p> <p>The synopsis of the programme has been identified in Section 2B of the rural needs impact assessment, fully considering the needs of the rural population. There have been no detrimental impacts identified.</p> |
| <p>382 Developing Familiarisation Trips during 2024-25.</p> | <p>The Familiarisation Trips proposed for tour operators will have a positive impact on the local rural business community and the Lisburn and Castlereagh Council area as a whole.</p> <p>Considering that almost half of the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council district is rural, the</p> |

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| | <p>regeneration of the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council area 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 Familiarisation Trips will benefit the local rural population and visitors to the area. The project will contribute towards the council's overall strategic objective of increasing economic development in the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council area for the benefit of all citizens.</p> <p>The synopsis of the programme has been identified in Section 2B of the rural needs impact assessment, fully considering the needs of the rural population. There have been no detrimental impacts identified.</p> |
| 383 Appointment of a consultant to develop a Business Case and Associated Traffic Study for Carryduff Public Realm. | <p>The overall aim of the scheme is to create a vibrant and attractive urban setting for residents and visitors with a focus on creating a landscape which could attract investment into area. This could lead to increased trading opportunities by attracting more footfall, boost sales and benefit existing businesses, residents and visitors. These opportunities could benefit people in both rural and urban areas.</p> |
| 384 Development of the Orientation & Walkability Strategy - Wayfinding Project. | <p>The Wayfinding Plan will not primarily impact differently on people in rural areas. It will have a neutral impact as the entry points to the city centre affect rural and urban dwellers equally.</p> |
| 385 Undertake a Feasibility Study for Blaris to Hillsborough Greenway. | <p>This project will have an equally positive impact on rural and urban dwellers, providing opportunities to promote rural tourism and create alternative and safe active travel routes for the public between Blaris Greenway and Hillsborough.</p> |
| 386 Appointment of an On-Street Residential ChargePoint Scheme. | <p>This project will provide electric vehicle charging infrastructure for residents in rural and urban areas who don't have access to a driveway/off-street parking. This project will have an equally positive impact on rural and urban dwellers, providing infrastructure across the council area to charge electric cars.</p> |

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| <p>387 Delivery of the Annual Lisburn Light Festival and Light Trail 2024-25.</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 rural and urban dwellers equally.</p> <p>The overall 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 and Castlereagh area will benefit from the Christmas Programme. The Light Festival is advertised widely across the council area and the reach of the light festival goes beyond the council area.</p> <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; the 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 and Castlereagh City Council area and neighbouring council areas will benefit from the Christmas Programme.</p> |
| <p>388 COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Improvement Schemes in rural villages (Annahilt & Maghaberry). • Traffic Calming Measures in rural villages (Glenavy & Aghalee). | <p>The programme is funded through the Department for Communities, Department of 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> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigation House Access Path. • Greenway Enhancement Schemes in rural villages (Drumbeg & Union Locks). • Rural Investment Fund. • Shopfront Schemes (to include Rural and Heritage Small Settlements). | <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; and • Improvements that enhance walking, cycling and other associated facilities within the scheme area. <p>The council has previously developed the 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 organized at the time to inform the final plans.</p> <p>The council's communities team are developing village plans through a consultation process in order to inform environmental improvements.</p> <p>Statistics from the Census 2021 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. This is because the programme is focusing specifically on small settlements which happen to be situated in rural areas.</p> |
| <p>389 Delivery of the Annual City Centre Events Programme.</p> | <p>The programme will not primarily impact on people in rural areas differently, it will have a neutral impact as the programme is delivered for the benefit of rural and urban dwellers equally.</p> <p>All residents of the Lisburn and Castlereagh Council area will benefit from the Annual Events Programme.</p> |
| <p>390 Implementation of the Vacant Shop Improvement Scheme.</p> | <p>The scheme will not primarily impact on people in rural areas differently, it will have a neutral impact as the programme is delivered for the benefit of city centre dwellers and rural dwellers equally.</p> |

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| 391 Supply of Marquees for a range of outdoor events during 2024-25. | The hire of marquees across the council area to deliver events in the city centre as well as small settlements could lead to increased trading opportunities by attracting more footfall, boost sales and benefit existing businesses, residents and visitors across these areas. These opportunities could benefit people in both rural and urban areas. |
| 392 Delivery of the Urban Investment Fund. | The fund will not primarily impact on people in rural areas differently, it will have a neutral impact as the project is delivered for the benefit of rural and urban dwellers equally. |
| 393 Development of the Destination Royal Hillsborough Belfast Region City Deal. | <p>The social and economic needs of people in rural areas identified by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a sense of place and social cohesion where rural people want to live, work and visit, including Out of State visitors, thereby enhancing the profile of the region; • Contribution to the rural economy through supporting employment involved in the construction and operation of the proposed facilities over its lifetime; • Provision of sport, leisure and recreational opportunities that promote better mental and physical health and well-being outcomes in rural areas; • Creation of opportunities for young people living in rural areas to develop by providing opportunities for physical, emotional and mental development through activities undertaken in the proposal e.g. employment and training opportunities through the social enterprise café and Courthouse and Fort walking tours and events, operation and maintenance of the forest trails etc; and • Promotion of equality and lifetime opportunities through the creation of an attractive, shared space that is accessible and can be enjoyed by all Section 75 groups in rural areas. |

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| | <p>Issues were also considered in relation to the social and economic needs such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase Gross Value Added in the predominately rural region associated with additional direct, indirect and induced visitor expenditure of £3.9m per annum over the life of the project; • Long term rural job creation: The proposed project it is estimated could generate significant new operational jobs in the tourism sector as highlighted in the Belfast Regional City Deal Industrial Strategy which will generate additional wages in the regional economy. Estimates are that approximately 18 full time equivalent additional long-term jobs could be created generating direct, indirect and induced Gross Value Added of £662,733 per annum over the life of the project; and • Rural job creation estimated to be around 181 full time equivalent temporary construction jobs during the construction period, utilising 'social clauses' in the construction contracts by September 2027. |
| 394 Development of the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council Interim Fleet Replacement Plan 2025-32. | <p>Maintaining a fit for purpose fleet is crucial to provide a service to all properties in a fair and equitable manner.</p> <p>Mitigation measures are in place for householders who have difficulty presenting their kerbside waste containers for collection and those with additional disposal needs, e.g. due to larger families, medical conditions, children in nappies etc. These apply to all households including those in rural areas.</p> |
| 395 The procurement and maintenance of hanging baskets. | <p>Social and economic needs are given due consideration through the rural needs impact assessment undertaken by the council.</p> <p>Those living in Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and visitors to the council's area will benefit from the pleasing aesthetic and improved mental well-being experienced when viewing natural beauty while the wider environmental improvements will be felt by all. The provision of the hanging baskets is designed to</p> |

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| | <p>positively impact those in all areas. Monitoring and evaluation of provision is ongoing to ensure needs are met across the council area and our service is continually improving.</p> |
| <p>396 Aghalee and Seycon Park changing facility capital project build of changing pavilion.</p> | <p>Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council owned/managed buildings and changing facilities are intended for everyone to enjoy. This includes residents, employees, and visitors to the district.</p> <p>Communities can access facilities which are convenient to them, without having to travel into another community. The council recognises the need for creating accessible places for everyone to experience sporting activities</p> <p>Where opportunities arise, the council will explore new ways to accommodate these. There are no additional rural needs identified for either site. There is an element of ongoing monitoring and evaluation of provision in an effort to ensure needs are being met across the council area and our service is continually improving.</p> |
| <p>397 Refurbishment of play parks.</p> | <p>The play parks are expected to benefit all individuals irrespective of background or circumstances including people in all age brackets, as well as those with disabilities and those with dependents who live in the council area.</p> <p>It is hoped that these communities can access events which are convenient to them, without having to travel into another community. The council's Community Plan 2017-2032 has been given due consideration when developing this Shared Prosperity Fund-Community and Place, along with engagement by the council's Senior Management Team with Heads of Service and Elected Members. This also included contact with and feedback from local communities, both urban and rural. No additional rural needs identified, there is an element of ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure needs are being met and our service is continually improving.</p> |

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| <p>398 Installation of Trim Trail.</p> | <p>The Trim Trail is expected to benefit all individuals irrespective of background or circumstances including people in all age brackets, as well as those with disabilities and those with dependents who live in the council area. It is hoped that these communities can access events which are convenient to them, without having to travel into another community.</p> <p>The Council's Community Plan 2017-32 has been given due consideration when developing this Shared Prosperity Fund-Community and Place, along with engagement by the council's Senior Management Team with Heads of Service and Elected Members. This also included contact with and feedback from local communities, both rural and urban.</p> <p>No additional rural needs identified, there is an element of ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure needs are being met and our service is continually improving.</p> |
| <p>399 Delivery of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council Calendar of Events June-December 2024.</p> | <p>The calendar of events is expected to benefit all individuals irrespective of background or circumstances including people in all age brackets, as well as those with disabilities and those with dependents who live in the council area. The events will take place between June 2024 and December 2024 and there will be a wide range of activities to ensure inclusivity throughout the council areas. These events are open to all residents with something in each District Electoral Area.</p> <p>Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council calendar of events is designed to positively impact those in all areas but in particular rural settings as it aims to ensure that those living in rural communities don't have to travel far to attend events. It is hoped that these communities can access events which are convenient to them, without having to travel into another community.</p> <p>No additional rural needs identified, the calendar includes accessible events for all. There is an element of ongoing monitoring and evaluation at each event in an effort to ensure needs are being met and our service is continually improving.</p> |

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| 400 Delivery of the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council Infrastructure Policy Events. | <p>Community and outside organisations events are intended for everyone to enjoy. This includes residents and visitors to the district.</p> <p>Events delivered by groups and outside organisations will particularly benefit certain groups whose needs have been taken into account, in terms of accessibility. Many events have been designed with particular groups in mind, for example they are suitable for those within the local community. No additional rural needs identified for either site. There is an element of ongoing monitoring and evaluation of provision in an effort to ensure needs are being met across the council area and our service is continually improving.</p> |
| 401 Delivery of the Community Investment Fund Phase 3 (2024-25). | <p>The scheme proposed will have a positive impact on the local rural business community and the Lisburn and Castlereagh Council area as a whole.</p> <p>Considering that almost half of the Lisburn and Castlereagh district is rural, the regeneration of the Lisburn and Castlereagh area, is a key priority for the council whom over the next 10 years will continue to invest in regeneration initiatives.</p> <p>The council's Community Plan 2017-32 has been given due consideration when developing this Community Investment Fund along with engagement by the council's Senior Management Team with Heads of Service and Elected Members during July and August 2020 with a view to the consideration of measures that would assist recovery from the Covid-19 Pandemic. There was a comprehensive review of the Phase 1 and Phase II pilot extension which was presented to the Corporate Services Committee in February 2024. This informed the decision to agree the recommendations for the implementation of this Phase 3 programme. This also included contact with and feedback from local communities, both rural and urban.</p> <p>The subsequent list of activities/projects that was compiled by urban and rural stakeholders across the</p> |

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| | <p>District Electoral Areas ensured that each District Electoral Area would benefit from relevant activities/ projects and that in the main these should be quick delivery, short-term projects of (relatively) low value. The necessity of this approach, it was considered, would deal with local concerns as well as continue to address Covid 19 and pro-actively support communities going forward.</p> |
| <p>402 Development and approval of the Good Relations Action Plan 2024-25 for Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Good Relations Project Support Fund 2024-25.</p> | <p>Rural communities tend to be more socially isolated on a number of platforms. Often characterised by access to amenities such as school, shops, public transport, medical care, broadband or mobile coverage and cohesion. There can be a lack of confidence and people can experience lack of self-esteem and suffer from mental health and poverty.</p> <p>Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council has considered the impact of poverty and social isolation on vulnerable groups in rural areas and how living in rural areas can exacerbate the effects of poverty and social isolation. The council has also recognised a need for more new and innovative approaches to dealing with the issues in rural areas which take account of particular circumstances which people in rural areas face. This action plan therefore offers the opportunity, to reduce inequality and broaden community engagement with the ultimate objective to provide better access to community needs whilst improving community links and networks.</p> <p>The programme has been shaped on the needs of local residents and will be open to all residents within the seven District Electoral Areas.</p> <p>As previously stated the social and economic needs of rural dwellers is significantly different to those who live on the urban suburbs. One of the main issues is financial poverty, accessing key services and lack of digital services. This action plan aims to bring residents together and increase their access to services and opportunities for personal development.</p> |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | <p>This action plan has taken account of the needs of people in rural areas in relation to financial poverty and social isolation by providing for the development of measures aimed specifically at alleviating such impacts especially among vulnerable groups of people in rural areas through the diverse range of programmes being offered.</p> <p>The programmes will be promoted widely, including to rural residents, so they are encouraged to apply.</p> <p>Participation will be analysed to ensure there is a spread of beneficiaries from both rural and urban areas. If there is lower than expected take-up from rural areas, this will be explored and addressed for future programmes.</p> |
| 403 Implementation of the Do It Yourself and Technical Assistance Fund. | <p>Rural communities tend to be more socially isolated on a number of platforms. Often characterised by lack of amenities such as school, shops, limited public transport, limited access to medical care and cohesion. More often there is a lack of confidence and many folk experience low self-esteem and suffer from mental health and poverty. Digital poverty together with poor/ weak broadband coverage is a key factor affecting rural communities.</p> <p>In developing the programme, we have been mindful of the importance/significance of local community facilities to the lives of people living in rural areas who may find it challenging to access services in urban areas due to issues with transport, cost, time, poverty, age or disability.</p> <p>This is a grant scheme to support adaptations to enable groups to upgrade community facilities and therefore improve opportunities making facilities more accessible and inclusive for the local community. This is likely to benefit people in rural areas who tend to rely heavily on their local community facilities due to the relative inaccessibility of provision in urban centres. Upgrading local facilities or undertaking professional assistance to</p> |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | <p>explore future viability of facilities aims to enable rural community groups who are successful to provide more/ enhanced services can make a significant impact on addressing rural needs by offering services that are not duplicated in the surrounding area whereby encouraging community engagement and improve connectivity.</p> |
| <p>404 Letting of Grove Activity Centre to Live Life Social Enterprises.</p> | <p>This letting implements the Acquisition and Disposal of Land and Property Assets Policy. The implementation of the policy in this instance does not have an impact on people 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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 405 Implementation of the annual Science Summer School initiative for 2024-25. | <p>is an activity being carried out with pupils within Mid and East Antrim borough. The activities will not have any impact on people in rural areas.</p> <p>The schools already have in place mitigation measures to facilitate the participation of young people from rural areas, e.g. bus services.</p> |
| 406 Implementation of the Science, technology, engineering and mathematics Interventions Programme (April–Sept 2024). | <p>This is an activity being carried out with pupils within Mid and East Antrim. The activities will not have any impact on people in rural areas.</p> <p>As the programme is being delivered to schools, the schools already have in place mitigation measures to facilitate the participation of young people from rural areas, for example bus services, etc. All post primary schools in Mid and East Antrim invited to participate will receive workshops in school.</p> <p>In the cases of workshops being delivered at the Braid and Larne Leisure Centre, transport will be provided for the school and the events will be completed on time to allow pupils to return to school on time to get the school bus home.</p> |
| 407 Development of the Policy and Procedures for the Provision & Management of Automated External Defibrillators. | <p>Mid and East Antrim Council is committed to working with partners to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for its population, and to reducing health inequalities. It has developed this policy to support actions within the Community Plan and to take forward implementation of the Community Resuscitation Strategy for Northern Ireland within the borough using a multi-agency partnership approach. This policy is not likely to impact people in rural areas more or less than people of urban areas.</p> |
| 408 Revision of the delivery model for physical activity for those Mid and East Antrim citizens living with cancer. | <p>Revision of the delivery model for physical activity for those Mid and East Antrim citizens living with cancer. This review is to ensure not only a continuity of service to those living with cancer but to have a more effective and efficient service by having more staff trained and able to deliver physical activity to those living with cancer.</p> |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | | The change in the service delivery model for physical activity for those living with cancer is not likely to impact people in rural areas more or less than people in urban areas. |
| 409 | Revision of the Indoor Leisure Pricing Review 2025-26. | <p>The revision of the indoor leisure pricing sets out the framework of pricing structure and concession pricing for council owned and directly managed leisure centre facilities within the context of the overarching corporate principles set out in the Corporate Pricing Policy Framework.</p> <p>This policy reviews the indoor leisure pricing policy for 2025-26 which will apply equally to both rural and urban service users, therefore, no specific rural needs were identified.</p> |
| 410 | Development of the MEAqua Development plan for 2024-27. | Development of the MEAqua Development plan for 2024-27 that will implement measures to improve the service equally to both rural and urban service users, therefore, no specific rural needs were identified. |
| 411 | Development of the Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25. | <p>Development of the annual performance improvement plan for 2024-25 to maintain and improve our local areas – Improvements to playparks (Clough), improved provision for outdoor recreation (Carnfunnock Country Park, Phase 1 of the Cullybackey to Galgorm Greenway, and Carnlough, Glynn and Portglenone Multi Use Games Areas/kickabouts), and the Neighbourhood Tourism Scheme (participants may be rural).</p> <p>We will reduce our environmental impact and improve sustainability - up to 4000 trees may be planted in rural areas, and environmental community engagement sessions are tailored to the receiving community group, which can have a rural or urban focus.</p> |
| 412 | Development of the Corporate Plan 2024-28. | As this is a high-level strategic plan there are no objectives that will directly impact rural communities. However, there are some which may indirectly impact rural communities by achieving objectives that have been set, people in rural communities may be positively impacted although they may not have been specifically targeted. |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 413 | Development of a Tourism, Arts and Culture Interim Plan for 2024-27. | The Tourism, Arts and Culture Interim Plan Core Focus and Product Development have been outlined, the impact that this will, once delivered, be positive and beneficial to people in rural areas. Increasing visitor numbers and in turn, visitor spending will benefit the local economy. |
| 414 | Delivering the Dry Recycling Waste Harmonisation Service. | <p>The purpose of the strategy is to introduce a standardised comingled household dry recycling service to all householders within the Mid and East Antrim borough.</p> <p>This is a standardised comingled dry recycling collection service with the aim of providing a simpler recycling model for the residents of the borough. An identical service will be implemented to rural and urban domestic properties within the borough.</p> |
| 415 | Development of a Tree strategy. | <p>Rural areas will benefit from tree planting in appropriate places, tree maintenance for health and safety and community engagement around trees and woodland. Any increased tree cover will have a positive impact on both rural and urban areas where appropriate.</p> <p>The strategy will further develop the opportunities for both rural and urban communities to get involved in tree planting initiatives, enjoy improved air quality or where applicable experience additional access to woodland areas.</p> |

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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 416 Development of Bellaghy Bawn Writers Residency. | Mid Ulster District Council has considered rural needs in relation to the development of Bellaghy Bawn Writers Residency by ensuring that associated improvements to the village will create a sense of cohesion and physically improve the journey from Bellaghy Bawn to Seamus Heaney Home Place. The Council have identified that the public realm improvements will have a positive impact on the local rural community and create a renewed sense of pride in this rural village. |
| 417 Development of an Active Travel Masterplan for Mid Ulster District Council Area. | Mid Ulster District Council has considered rural needs in relation to active travel routes/facilities by addressing the current low level of connectivity across the district both within rural settlements and between the district's main urban settlements. The council is keen to develop and promote the important tourism resources in rural areas by promoting the green infrastructure we have available to us in the district. This plan will highlight the potential to develop safe active routes in rural areas for visitors and tourists alike to use. It will also provide the opportunity for potential regeneration in rural areas. |
| 418 Implementation of an updated Adult Safeguarding Policy. | Mid Ulster District Council has considered the needs of residents particularly those living in rural areas by considering safeguarding considerations in relation to access to broadband, travel times/costs, the location of hospitals/care facilities and the overall general rural population makeup of the Mid Ulster District Council area. |
| 419 Implementation of a Corporate Events Programme. | The council have considered rural needs in relation to the Corporate Events Programme by anticipating that there will be positive outputs for people residing in rural areas. Events taking place in rural areas such as Ballyronan and Maghera positively impact rural areas as smaller populations mean that events bring together a larger proportion of the community, fostering stronger bonds and a greater sense of belonging. Local businesses in rural areas often benefit greatly from events due to increased footfall. Events in rural areas |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | are also designed to be accessible thus promoting inclusivity and ensuring that all community members can participate and enjoy the event. |
| 420 Implementation of a Conacre Agreement for lands in Conyngham Street, Moneymore. | Mid Ulster District Council has considered the needs of rural residents via asset management to make the best use of resources ensuring that our focus is always on excellence; and that our land and property assets are configured through an Asset Management Plan to meet the needs of our rural and urban communities. Mid Ulster District Council seeks to safeguard the needs of rural communities, to promote a fair and inclusive rural society by considering the needs of our rural dwellers when reviewing, managing and transacting land and property. |
| 421 Disposal of McIlwaine Hall, 91 Main Street, Aughnacloy. | Mid Ulster District Council has considered the needs of rural residents via asset management to make the best use of our resources ensuring that our focus is always on excellence; and that our land and property assets are configured through an Asset Management Plan to meet the needs of our rural and urban communities. Mid Ulster District Council seeks to safeguard the needs of rural communities, to promote a fair and inclusive rural society by considering the needs of our rural dwellers when reviewing, managing and transacting land and property. |
| 422 Implementation of Meadowbank Sports Arena: Replacing the Indoor Hockey Pitch Surface. | Mid Ulster District Council have ensured that rural people will be impacted positively by ensuring that the Pitches & Recreational Spaces Strategy has primarily focused on addressing the social needs of rural populations, particularly ensuring equitable access to sports facilities comparable to those available in urban areas. |
| 423 Developments at Mid Ulster Sports Arena (the installation of a new eight-lane running track and a synthetic 3G infill pitch, fully floodlit). | Mid Ulster District Council have ensured that rural people will be impacted positively by ensuring that the Pitches & Recreational Spaces Strategy has primarily focused on addressing the social needs of rural populations, particularly ensuring equitable access to sports facilities comparable to those available in urban areas. |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 424 | Development of Cookstown Place Shaping Plan. | Mid Ulster District Council have ensured that rural people will be impacted positively by this plan by enabling the rural population to support their provincial towns through visiting, working, shopping and socialising. This Place Shaping Plan projects and related initiatives will be delivered over the next fifteen years which will have a positive impact on Cookstown and those who utilise, it as a commercial centre; this includes our rural citizens. |
| 425 | Development on an updated Customer Service Policy. | Mid Ulster District Council has considered the needs of rural customers by ensuring that rural citizens are afforded the same rights of access as urban customers. Consideration in policy development was given to how services are to be offered for access across the district. |
| 426 | Potential acquisition of 4 Drumearn Road, Orritor, Cookstown. | Mid Ulster District Council has considered the needs of rural residents via asset management to make the best use of resources ensuring that our focus is always on excellence; and that our land and property assets are configured through an Asset Management Plan to meet the needs of our rural and urban communities. Mid Ulster District Council seeks to safeguard the needs of rural communities, to promote a fair and inclusive rural society by considering the needs of our rural dwellers when reviewing, managing and transacting land and property. |
| 427 | Delivery of Annual Festive Lighting Laser Projections within the Town Centres. | Mid Ulster District Council has considered the needs of rural residents via this programme by ensuring that it has been extended to Maghera which is a rural settlement whose social and economic offer will be boosted during the Christmas period by the addition of a festive lights display. |
| 428 | Implementation of fly tipping prevention via the Litter Enforcement Strategy. | Mid Ulster District Council has considered the needs of rural residents in relation to Fixed Penalty Notices for fly tipping by encouraging compliance across the whole district and will impact both rural and urban areas. Many incidents of environmental crime such as fly tipping occur in rural areas. |

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| 429 | Play area at Hillcrest, Moygashel. | Mid Ulster District Council has considered the needs of rural residents via asset management to make the best use of our resources, ensuring that our focus is always on excellence; and that our land and property assets are configured through an Asset Management Plan to meet the needs of our rural and urban communities. |
| 430 | Development of Hunters Park Recreation Grounds in Bellaghy. | Mid Ulster District Council has considered the needs of rural residents through consultation with local groups and individuals who were provided with the opportunity to put forward their ideas and suggestions. Comments will be taken on board and input in the final design. As part of the development, it is hoped that people living in rural areas will have greater access to outdoor recreation opportunities. |
| 431 | Disposal of Lands at Moneyhaw Road. | Mid Ulster District Council has considered the needs of rural residents via asset management to make the best use of resources ensuring that our focus is always on excellence; and that our land and property assets are configured through an Asset Management Plan to meet the needs of our rural and urban communities. Mid Ulster District Council seeks to safeguard the needs of rural communities, to promote a fair and inclusive rural society by considering the needs of our rural dwellers when reviewing, managing and transacting land and property. |
| 432 | Implementation of Community Planning Investment Programme (Physical Activity). | Mid Ulster District Council has considered the needs of rural residents as part of this Sport NI Funding Programme. It is hoped that people living in rural areas will have greater access to physical activities. |
| 433 | Development of a Volunteering Policy. | The design of this policy has been influenced by the rural needs identified by addressing any potential barriers to rural participation and addressing this via practical elements of the policy via ensuring; reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses for volunteering, this includes travel costs, that volunteering opportunities will be available in rural council settings as well as in urban settings and finally that there will be a range of opportunities provided for rural people who wish to volunteer. |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 434 | Traad Point revitalised to become Mid Ulster Nature Reserve and Biodiversity Eco Site. | This development has taken into consideration the needs of the local rural people through an assessment of needs and, from this, identified that the opportunities to develop and enhance Traad Point has the potential to contribute to rural communities through the investment in, and provision of, quality outdoor activities as well as biodiversity and improve the health (mental and physical) and wellbeing (including social inclusion) of local people. |
| 435 | Rates Estimates 2025-26. | The overall aim was to set out the budgets for the 2025-26 year to all for the delivery of the Council's Corporate and Improvement Plan and implementation of the decisions of the Council. The development of the rates estimates for the 2025-26 financial year considered the needs of all residents including rural rate payers by assessing impacts on service design and delivery throughout all areas of our predominantly rural district. |

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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 436 | Development of the Active and Healthy Communities Business Plan 2024-25. | The Active and Healthy Communities Business Plan details positive actions for all the community, with specific actions identified which will directly positively impact on people living in rural areas. An example includes actions and priorities identified in the Council's Age Friendly Strategy. |
| 437 | Revision of the Biodiversity Strategy. | While the strategy has been developed for all the district, the council acknowledges that many of the dedicated sites are located in rural areas across the district. |
| 437 | Revision of the Biodiversity Strategy. | While the strategy has been developed for all the district, the council acknowledges that many of the dedicated sites are located in rural areas across the district. |
| 438 | Development of the Chief Executive's – Corporate Services Department Business Plan 2024-25. | There are some specific actions which will directly positively impact on people living in 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. |
| 439 | Development of the Corporate Plan 2024-27. | <p>The council has identified the following key actions which take account of rural needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement the Local Development Plan; • Update existing masterplans and village plans in line with the emerging Local Development Plan; • Implement a Small Settlement Regeneration Scheme in partnership with government departments; • Continue to progress the Mournes Gateway Project as part of the Belfast City Region Deal, investment programme, and other major tourism capital projects throughout the district; • Implement the Mourne Gullion Strangford United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation Global Geopark Masterplan 2020-23 and Business Plan 2021-25; |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to implement our Active Travel Masterplan, Play Strategy and Community Trails Development Plan; • Establishing an Open Spaces Strategy; and • Supporting the implementation of electric vehicle charging points. |
| 440 | <p>Revision of the Development Naming, Postal Numbering and Erection of Nameplates Policy.</p> <p>No social or economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the council in relation to the policy.</p> |
| 441 | <p>Development of the Digital Transformation Strategy 2030.</p> <p>No social or economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the council in relation to the policy.</p> |
| 442 | <p>Delivery of a Public Service - Publication of Validation Checklist.</p> <p>No social or economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the council in relation to the policy.</p> |
| 443 | <p>Development of the Assessment of the Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25.</p> <p>Some objectives are underpinned by supporting actions and measures of success which will have an indirect positive outcome for rural areas.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic development programmes can be accessed by businesses and individuals in rural areas; • Community cleanups are supported across the district in rural and urban; • Tree planting schemes undertaken within rural areas; and • The younger, less polluting cars and cars with alternative fuel sources that the council orders for use within its fleet will be used to carry out services across the district including rural areas. |
| 444 | <p>Development of the Council's Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Directorate Business Plan 2024-25.</p> <p>The Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Directorate Business Plan details positive actions for all the community. However, there are some specific actions which will positively impact people living in the rural areas.</p> |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | | Examples include rural regeneration schemes and administration of the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Micro Business Development Grant. |
| 445 | Revision of the Financial Assistance Policy. | No social or economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the council in relation to the policy. |
| 446 | Revision of the Fleet Policy. | Due to rural access and infrastructure, the policy takes into consideration the size and type of vehicles required for effective service delivery in rural areas |
| 447 | Revision the Fraud Policy. | No social or economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the council in relation to the policy. |
| 448 | Development of a Fraud Response Plan. | No social or economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the council in relation to the policy. |
| 449 | Revision of the Gaming and Amusement Policy. | No social or economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the council in relation to the policy. |
| 450 | Development of an Information Technology Strategy. | This will have a positive impact for digital customers in rural areas providing reliable systems that ensure online services are available and accessible, with minimal downtime and maximum efficiency. |
| 451 | Development of a Legionella Management Policy. | No social or economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the council in relation to the policy. |
| 452 | Proposed Notice of Motion seeking to revise the council's current proposal related to Newry Civic Centre. | No social or economic needs specific to people in rural areas were identified by the council in relation to the policy. |
| 453 | Development of the Raising Concerns Policy. | No social or 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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 454 | Development of the Council's Sustainability and Environment Directorate Business Plan 2024-25. | This is an overarching plan for the directorate which outlines actions and priorities to be delivered. Specific rural actions and priorities will be identified in the service plans. |

OTHER PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

Reporting Period 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025



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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| <p>455 Development Proposal 706 Tummery Primary School to discontinue with effect from 31 August 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter. Development Proposal 707 St Dympna's Primary School, Dromore will increase its admission and enrolment numbers with effect from 1 September 2025, 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 (2009) 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>456 Proposal to discontinue St John the Baptist Primary School, Roscor with effect from 31 August 2024, 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 (2009) 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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | <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> |
| <p>457 Proposal To Discontinue St Eugene’s Primary School, Tircur with effect from 31 August 2022*, Or As Soon As Possible Thereafter.</p> <p>*Implementation dates, as determined by the Education Minister, can vary from the Development Proposal dates.</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 (4 weeks for stakeholders, 4 weeks for affected schools and 8 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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 458 | Revision of the Education Authority's Flexi-Time Scheme and Policy. | It is anticipated that this policy will impact positively upon rural stakeholders. The policy will be delivered in a consistent manner with a focus on 'hours of work (rather than location of work)'. Flexi-time will be applicable irrespective of work base and should be of benefit to employees in rural areas. During the development of this policy, the Education Authority considered the needs of employees and rural stakeholders. In addition, the implementation of the policy, and impacts, will be reviewed regularly with any feedback or concerns informing future revisions. |
| 459 | Revision of the Education Authority's Time Off In Lieu Policy. | The purpose of the Time Off In Lieu Policy is to create a consistent and flexible approach to working arrangements that enables employees and the Education Authority to manage fluctuations in work requirements that are not accommodated through normal flexible working practices. As a result, it is anticipated that the Time Off In Lieu Policy will have a positive impact for employees in rural areas. Whilst there is no anticipated negative impact upon rural dwellers, the policy will be reviewed regularly, with any feedback or concerns informing future revisions. |
| 460 | Revision of the Education Authority's Non-Teaching Flexible Working Policy. | The policy provides Education Authority employees with opportunities to balance the demands of their personal lives with their work responsibilities and as a result should impact positively for rural stakeholders and employee within rural areas. To ensure that rural employees have the same opportunities as urban based colleagues, opportunities will be promoted to everyone regardless of their current working arrangements or their current base location. In addition, the implementation of the policy going forward will be monitored regularly to ensure there is no underrepresentation of those in rural areas. |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 461 | Development of a Graduate Placement Scheme. | It is anticipated that the scheme should not adversely impact upon rural stakeholders. The scheme will be implemented on a phased approach and will be monitored to ensure that rural applicants and appointees are not underrepresented. |
| 462 | Development of a One Targeted Operating Model. | To ensure that the needs of rural employees were considered, consultation meetings were organised to take place face-to-face and online. In addition, going forward, impacted staff will not be asked to move location and will be entitled to apply for a range of flexible working arrangements such as family friendly policies, agile working and job sharing. |
| 463 | Special Educational Needs Annual Reviews – Development of Online Parent Portals. | It is anticipated that this decision will impact positively upon rural stakeholders, including schools and people with parental responsibility. The use of parental portals and online processes for schools should simplify procedures and make the system more efficient. For any rural stakeholder with broadband issues – all schools in Northern Ireland have access to high-speed broadband and can be utilised for this process, and it will remain possible to submit paper/hard copy parental views. The implementation of this decision will be reviewed regularly, with any feedback or concerns informing future revisions. |
| 464 | Implementation of the Savings and Sustainability Programme. | This relates to the overarching programme approach being taken on Savings and Sustainability for the Education Authority. As such, the decision was taken for each individual saving and sustainability measure to be assessed to include a rural needs impact assessment to identify any possible mitigations needed to offset any adverse rural needs impact. |
| 465 | Development of an Online Room Booking System. | It is anticipated that the new booking system should have a positive impact upon rural stakeholders, including employees. To mitigate any potential negative impacts on rural stakeholders, training has been made available to complete and can also be done within Education Authority offices or schools. Support |

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| | materials have been made available and communicated to employees. Additionally, if internet connection is lost staff can call Customer Services who can book a room on their behalf. The implementation of this decision will be reviewed regularly, with any feedback or concerns informing future revisions. |
| 466 Developing a Full Cost Recovery model for Schools (Transport). | Following the rural needs impact assessment, it is not anticipated that the decision will impact negatively upon rural stakeholders. The needs of rural stakeholders (including schools) were considered, and as a result, it was identified that schools in different rural areas were being charged different amounts for services like transport to events, swimming classes, etc. Until now, there was no consistency of approach for the recovery of costs (across Northern Ireland). The decision will ensure that schools will now be aware of the costs that will be incurred, as well as ensuring that these costs will be consistently applied to all schools for all bookings. The implementation of this policy will be monitored and reviewed to ensure consistency of approach, with any feedback or concerns informing future revisions. |
| 467 Development of a Unified Customer Experience for Admissions, Transport, Free School Meals and Special Educational Needs. | It is not anticipated that the programme will impact negatively upon rural stakeholders but rather will provide a seamless experience across all Education Authority digital services. To ensure that rural stakeholders do not face any negative impacts, a 'digital first' not 'digital only' approach is being taken. Additionally, mitigations including digital clinics being held in libraries (to provide guidance) as well as the availability to computers, allowing parents to complete their application online. Paper application forms are also still available upon request. The implementation of this programme will be monitored and reviewed to ensure consistency of approach, with any feedback or concerns informing future revisions. |

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| 468 | Development of a Scheme of Management of Controlled Schools. | It is not anticipated that this will result in an adverse impact for rural stakeholders, as the Scheme of Management sets out procedures and guidelines for managing the school, and the functions to be exercised by the Board of Governors and the Principal. Following engagement, it is acknowledged that broadband issues may exist in rural areas, however, alternative options to accessing the schemes are available – e.g. requesting hard copies, options to use terminals in libraries or schools, etc. Engagement took place online and face-to-face. |
| 469 | Introduction of an Education Case Management System. | The introduction of an Education Case Management System should impact positively upon rural stakeholders, through the provision of a seamless ‘Single Source of Truth’ system. Whilst adverse impact is not anticipated, through engagement, it has been recognised that a ‘digital first’ not ‘digital only’ approach should be taken to ensure that rural stakeholders are not impacted adversely. Additionally, feedback from users and rural stakeholders will be monitored to ensure that any issues or challenges are addressed in future revisions. |
| 470 | Development of a Teacher Professional Learning Project. | Following assessment, it has been determined that the implementation of the Teacher Professional Learning project should impact positively upon rural stakeholders. The solution will be available through schools (where all schools in Northern Ireland have good broadband access), as well as being available off the Education Authority Network on any smart enabled device – allowing teachers to access it from anywhere. Education Authority staff will liaise with the supplier and schools to ensure the solution is available in all rural areas. |
| 471 | Selection of Education Authority School Governors (Reconstitution of Controlled and Maintained Schools Boards of Governors). | Whilst the decision to reconstitute does not rest with the Education Authority, the Education Authority delivers certain elements of the reconstitution programme independently and these will impact upon rural stakeholders – namely the publicity campaign and the arrangements to consider applications. Following assessment, it has been determined that the publicity |

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| | <p>campaign and the application process will have no adverse impact on rural stakeholders. In rural areas, there is a higher proportion of the Education Authority Governors appointed to schools that are not managed by the Education Authority as the managing authority (usually the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools) and, as a result, the Education Authority works collaboratively with Council for Catholic Maintained Schools to encourage and support applications for these schools in rural areas. Going forward, the Education Authority, along with the Department of Education and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools will monitor applications and adjust the campaign accordingly if any rural impacts occur that have not been anticipated.</p> |
| 472 Development of an Education Library Management System. | <p>Following assessment, it has been determined that the process will have no adverse impact upon rural stakeholders, largely due to previous work and mitigations put in place e.g. ensuring there is access to good quality broadband and access to suitable Information Technology equipment in all schools. Whilst the project will be implemented across all school sectors, feedback from users and rural stakeholders will be monitored to ensure that any issues or challenges are addressed in future revisions.</p> |
| 473 Period Products (Free Provision). | <p>The implementation of the Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) by the Education Authority should have positive impacts for rural stakeholders. The implementation goes beyond seeking to make provision for those in financial difficulty, but rather to make products and provisions available free of charge and accessible by all persons who need to use them. All schools, Education Authority youth settings, Education Otherwise Than In A Schools Centres and public buildings will have products available regardless of their location. Consultation and engagement took place with young people, and staff, within rural areas aimed at making products more accessible as well as ensuring that products were reflective of needs and preference.</p> |

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| 474 | Introduction of Digital Forms for Human Resource Services. | The introduction of digital forms should have no adverse impact upon rural stakeholders, rather it should improve data accuracy, make working practices more efficient and sustainable as well as ensuring quicker processing time. Whilst the forms are being made available digitally, for any individual in rural areas with difficulty accessing information online – a ‘digital first’ approach is being taken, rather than ‘digital only’. Feedback from users and stakeholders will be monitored to ensure that any issues or challenges are addressed in future revisions. |
| 475 | Development of a Centralised Child Protection Case Management Solution. | The project aims to provide a centralised electronic records management system and as a result has been assessed as being unlikely to result in an adverse impact for rural stakeholders, largely due to previous work and mitigations put in place e.g. ensuring there is access to good quality broadband and access to suitable information technology equipment in all schools. Additionally, going forward, the delivery of a Child Protection case management system will be supported via the Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools project which will ensure provision of connectivity, accessibility tools and languages support to all staff and students in rural schools – rather than having to wait on support or interpreters. |
| 476 | Implementation of the TranSend Migration Project. | Whilst the project is technical in nature, i.e. replacing the Fleet Management System, the Education Authority has put in place mitigations to ensure that any impact upon rural stakeholders is minimised. For example, training will be available to all staff online, or within classroom (face-to-face) situations upon request. |
| 477 | Proposed School Discontinuance – Area Planning. | To mitigate any adverse impacts within rural communities, consideration will be taken on the potential for community use of the school building/sites, as well as available places in alternative schools in the locality. This information will all be placed within the Case for Change document. |

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| 478 | Risk Management Policy. | The Risk Management Policy and Framework forms part of the Education Authority's Corporate Governance Framework and has been assessed to not adversely impact upon rural stakeholders. However, the implementation of this policy will be reviewed regularly, and any feedback or concerns from rural stakeholders will inform future revisions. |
| 479 | Introduction of Security Operations Centre and Security Information & Event Management Technology. | Whilst the project is technological in nature, it is not anticipated that there will be any adverse impact upon rural stakeholders. However, mitigations have been introduced including the provision of training (if needed) and this can be completed in Education Authority Offices or schools, if broadband issues for stakeholders persist. |
| 480 | Development of a Finance and Fees Solution for Schools. | The solution is a financial management solution and should impact positively upon rural stakeholders (schools). Any adverse impact has been minimised for schools, largely due to previous projects such as ensuring there is access to good quality broadband and access to suitable information technology equipment. Furthermore, Education Authority staff will liaise extensively with schools and the supplier to ensure deployment of the solution is provided to rural areas with no detrimental impact. |
| 481 | Development of an online Staff Hub. | The development of an online staff hub was undertaken following a user experience review, including the needs of rural stakeholders. Whilst the development is not anticipated to impact negatively upon rural stakeholders, mitigations have been included to include the ability to request information and get personal advice / assistance via email, telephone and face to face contact from the Education Authority Services. Additionally, information will also be available in hard copy format and staff users will also have options, like libraries or schools, to use for computers and access broadband service. |

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| 482 | Provision of Weekend Music Workshops. | The workshops, related to the provision of musical educational weekend workshops with the Band and String Ensemble of the Royal Marines Band Service. The locations were all rural in nature and transport is available free of charge to participants, including those in rural areas, as well as there being no admission charge for workshop participants. In addition, instruments are also available for participants to use at no extra charge. Therefore, following assessment, it was deemed that the workshops should impact positively for participants from rural areas. |
| 483 | Procurement of a Cyber Security User Education Programme. | Whilst the aim of the programme is to improve confidentiality, integrity and availability of the Education Authority information, it is not anticipated that there will be any adverse impact for rural stakeholders. To further minimise the potential for adverse impacts to arise, training will be made available online – and this training will also be able to be accessed at any Education Authority Office of building via the online learning management system. |
| 484 | Education Authority Regional Assessment of Need 2025-29. | The Regional Assessment of Need will assist in reviewing the responsiveness of the service to regional and local needs and policy objectives, and as a result, should impact positively upon rural stakeholders. Positive impact should be felt in relation to health, societal and educational impacts on the most vulnerable and marginalised rural children and young people. To ensure that any potential adverse impacts (however unlikely) are minimised, mitigations include flexible opening times for centres, training and development opportunities as well as health and wellbeing support. |
| 485 | Review of the Information and Communication Technology Acceptable Use Policy. | The policy sets out a consistent, and modernised, policy relating to information technology usage and following assessment, it is not anticipated that the implementation will adversely impact upon any rural employee or stakeholder. Whilst no adverse impacts are anticipated there are further mitigations for rural stakeholders including hard copy/offline access, as well as localised training opportunities (upon request). |

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| 486 | Proposed pricing structure and rates for the Education Authority Specialist and Self-Catering Outdoor Learning Centres. | The Education Authority's Outdoor Learning Service provides residential and non-residential facilities largely based in rural areas. The proposed pricing structure, following assessment, is not anticipated to impact negatively upon rural stakeholders. Following engagement, it is acknowledged that the cost for engaging in our Outdoor Learning Service should not impact negatively on a young person's ability or opportunity to engage in outdoor learning. The effective costing strategy will also impact positively on rural schools/groups, who may experience higher transport costs. As always, feedback from users and stakeholders will be monitored to ensure that any unforeseen issues or challenges are addressed in future pricing structures. |
| 487 | Provision of Board of Governor Training through an Online Learning Platform. | It is not anticipated that the provision of online Board of Governor training will impact negatively upon rural stakeholders, due to mitigations already in place such as the provision of high-quality broadband in all schools and the provision of face-to-face training periodically throughout the year. |
| 488 | Transport Fleet Service Restructure. | When planning service/team restructures, the Education Authority considered how the proposed changes may impact upon individuals and communities in rural areas. As outlined, rural stakeholders may experience unique challenges however, these restructures aimed to ensure equitable access to services and jobs across all areas and locations. In addition, the development of enhanced digital or remote options should result in a reduction in the need to travel long distances. The impact upon rural stakeholders will be monitored regularly going forward, and any necessary adjustments will be made in response to unforeseen needs or challenges. |
| 489 | Catering Service Staff Restructure. | When planning service/team restructures, the Education Authority considered how the proposed changes may impact upon individuals and communities in rural areas. As outlined, rural stakeholders may experience unique challenges however, these restructures aimed to ensure equitable access to services and jobs across all areas |

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| | and locations. In addition, the development of enhanced digital or remote options should result in a reduction in the need to travel long distances. The impact upon rural stakeholders will be monitored regularly going forward, and any necessary adjustments will be made in response to unforeseen needs or challenges. |
| 490 Equality & Human Rights Service Restructure. | When planning service/team restructures, the Education Authority considered how the proposed changes may impact upon individuals and communities in rural areas. As outlined, rural stakeholders may experience unique challenges however, these restructures aimed to ensure equitable access to services and jobs across all areas and locations. In addition, the development of enhanced digital or remote options should result in a reduction in the need to travel long distances. The impact upon rural stakeholders will be monitored regularly going forward, and any necessary adjustments will be made in response to unforeseen needs or challenges. |
| 491 Leadership Staff Restructure. | When planning service/team restructures, the Education Authority considered how the proposed changes may impact upon individuals and communities in rural areas. As outlined, rural stakeholders may experience unique challenges however, these restructures aimed to ensure equitable access to services and jobs across all areas and locations. In addition, the development of enhanced digital or remote options should result in a reduction in the need to travel long distances. The impact upon rural stakeholders will be monitored regularly going forward, and any necessary adjustments will be made in response to unforeseen needs or challenges. |
| 492 Corporate Complaints Service Restructure. | When planning service/team restructures, the Education Authority considered how the proposed changes may impact upon individuals and communities in rural areas. As outlined, rural stakeholders may experience unique challenges however, these restructures aimed to ensure equitable access to services and jobs across all areas and locations. In addition, the development of enhanced digital or remote options should result in a reduction in |

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| | the need to travel long distances. The impact upon rural stakeholders will be monitored regularly going forward, and any necessary adjustments will be made in response to unforeseen needs or challenges. |
| 493 Business Case for the Occupancy Monitoring Project. | In developing these business cases, the Education Authority considered the needs of rural stakeholders, including recognising that suppliers and service users in rural areas may face unique challenges and barriers. Where possible procurement and projects will encourage inclusivity and accessibility for rural areas (e.g. remote or online delivery methods). In addition, the delivery and impact of the contracts will also be monitored regularly going forward to ensure that rural needs continue to be addressed. |
| 494 WorldPay Mail Order/Telephone Order Onboarding Business Case. | In developing these business cases, the Education Authority considered the needs of rural stakeholders, including recognising that suppliers and service users in rural areas may face unique challenges and barriers. Where possible procurement and projects will encourage inclusivity and accessibility for rural areas (e.g. remote or online delivery methods). In addition, the delivery and impact of the contracts will also be monitored regularly going forward to ensure that rural needs continue to be addressed. |
| 495 Commercial Insurance Business Case. | In developing these business cases, the Education Authority considered the needs of rural stakeholders, including recognising that suppliers and service users in rural areas may face unique challenges and barriers. Where possible procurement and projects will encourage inclusivity and accessibility for rural areas (e.g. remote or online delivery methods). In addition, the delivery and impact of the contracts will also be monitored regularly going forward to ensure that rural needs continue to be addressed. |
| 496 Motor Insurance Business Case. | In developing these business cases, the Education Authority considered the needs of rural stakeholders, including recognising that suppliers and service users in rural areas may face unique challenges and |

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| | barriers. Where possible procurement and projects will encourage inclusivity and accessibility for rural areas (e.g. remote or online delivery methods). In addition, the delivery and impact of the contracts will also be monitored regularly going forward to ensure that rural needs continue to be addressed. |
| 497 The Provision of Agency Workers Business Case. | In developing these business cases, the Education Authority considered the needs of rural stakeholders, including recognising that suppliers and service users in rural areas may face unique challenges and barriers. Where possible procurement and projects will encourage inclusivity and accessibility for rural areas (e.g. remote or online delivery methods). In addition, the delivery and impact of the contracts will also be monitored regularly going forward to ensure that rural needs continue to be addressed. |
| 498 Moving the Education Authority's Intranet Provider to Microsoft. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 499 Review of the Education Authority's Debt Management Policy. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 500 Development of a Funding Award Guidance for the Education Authority's Youth Service. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 501 Review of the Gifts & Hospitality Policy. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 502 Vacancy Control Procedure. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 503 Disability Redeployment Policy. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 504 Development of the Human Resource Helpdesk. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 505 Gender Considerations Guidance. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |

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| 506 | Improvements to Accessibility Tools. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 507 | Occupancy Monitoring Project. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 508 | Service User Survey for School Staff. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 509 | Management of Change Toolkit. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 510 | Tachograph Procedure for Transport Staff. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 511 | Efficiency Screening (1) Kitchen Network Efficiency. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 512 | Efficiency Screening (1) Savings and Sustainability. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 513 | Development of a Graduate Management Scheme Co-ordinator. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 514 | Development of the Irish Medium School Improvement Professional Post. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 515 | Business Service Restructuring. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 516 | Review of the Disability Employment Support Service. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 517 | Business Case for the Procurement of Forklifts. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 518 | Business Case for the Procurement of a Box Van. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 519 | Business Case for the Procurement of Mezzanine Racking. | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 520 | Business Case - Pay (1). | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |
| 521 | Business Case - Pay (2). | No impacts anticipated following rural needs impact assessment. |

Invest Northern Ireland

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| <p>522 Implementation of the Collaborative Growth & Cluster Programme.</p> | <p>The Collaborative Growth and Clusters Programme will be accessible to all businesses in rural and urban areas and applications will be submitted online.</p> <p>The programme has been designed for representatives of Northern Ireland Industry (including start-ups, entrepreneurs, academia, public sector, stakeholders, Venture Capitalist's etc.) who wish to collaborate on specific projects with defined economic outcomes.</p> <p>Therefore, representatives from any of these groups, regardless of their location in Northern Ireland, are welcome to apply to participate in Networks/Clusters funded under the Programme (provided that the projects that they are aligned to meet Invest NI's general intervention principles).</p> <p>Financial Assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The grant offered to eligible Networks and Clusters will be used for Facilitator/Cluster Manager costs, however such costs will be more influenced by sector/ experience in delivering similar projects rather than dictated by location; • The amount of grant offered to each Network/Cluster will be the same regardless of geographical location; and • The rate of grant offered to each Network/ Cluster will be the same regardless of geographical location. <p>The programme will have a mid-point evaluation carried out in 2027 and a full evaluation in 2034. During the evaluation process, levels of participation across Northern Ireland will be assessed and feedback from participants will be provided.</p> |

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| <p>523 Implementation of the Life and Health Science Business Navigator Programme.</p> | <p>The Business Navigator for Life & Health Sciences Programme will be accessible to all businesses in rural and urban areas.</p> <p>The programme has been designed for Life Science companies who are 2+ years established and are now working in the commercial sector as part of a scaling Small to Medium Enterprise and/or are key leadership team members within scaling Life Science Enterprises.</p> <p>Representatives from these groups, regardless of their location in Northern Ireland, are welcome to apply to the programme.</p> <p>Financial Assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The grant will be offered to eligible Life Science companies rather than dictated by their location; • The amount of grant offered to each participant will be the same regardless of geographical location; and • The rate of grant offered to each participant will be the same regardless of geographical location. <p>The pilot Life & Health Sciences Business Navigator programme will be reviewed post-completion to determine the effectiveness and success of the programme.</p> |
| <p>524 Implementation of the Go Global Programme.</p> | <p>Invest NI's policy is to increase the export intensity of all businesses across Northern Ireland in both rural and urban areas.</p> <p>Businesses who export tend to have higher productivity and as a result pay higher wages. Although not specifically targeted at rural businesses, the programme is open to all businesses across Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The programme aims to address the Economy Minister's key priorities of Good Jobs, Regional Balance and Productivity. Improved regional balance will obviously benefit rural areas.</p> |

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| <p>525 Development of the Invest Northern Ireland draft Budget and impact on related Business Strategy.</p> | <p>The rural needs impact assessment has considered the impact of Invest Northern Ireland’s proposed budget and provided a preliminary consideration of how budgetary constraints may impact on rural service users.</p> <p>While there will be an impact across Northern Ireland there will not be a disproportionately negative impact in rural areas.</p> <p>When carrying out a public consultation on our Business Strategy, (between October and November 2024), Invest NI engaged intensively with local and regional stakeholders across Northern Ireland. These included predominantly rural councils and business owners, as well as enterprise organisations located in rural areas.</p> <p>Invest NI, working with the Department for the Economy, are creating Local Economic Partnerships, which will consist of stakeholders and partners from Academia, Councils and Business, as well as local enterprise partners, including those resident in rural areas. These partnerships are providing valuable insights into the needs of rural areas and allowing us to develop informed and tailored solutions.</p> <p>Funding for these rural focused initiatives has been considered within the draft budget. Local Economic Partnerships have been provided with a budget of £45m and will consider all issues relevant to the future social and economic development of the areas in question.</p> <p>This could include, for example, issues such as infrastructure, business startups, specific sectoral constraints, skills and any geographical or population limitations.</p> <p>Local Economic Partnership’s will work within a wide term of reference to ensure all potential needs are considered.</p> <p>Invest NI has also introduced a geographical based target for the first time within its new Business Strategy, with the aim of better dispersal of business investment across Northern Ireland for the benefit of all our people.</p> |

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| | This aims to increase the number of investments supported by Invest NI outside the Belfast Metropolitan Area, to 65% in Year 3 of Invest NI's Business Strategy. |

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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| <p>526 Developing Critical Risk Management Policy.</p> | <p>The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service drew from various data sources to inform the development of the policy including; internal data, UK Fire and Rescue research and guidance, and public consultation feedback. This work aims to identify the different types of risks in the community and the areas where people are likely to be at greater risk of being involved in particular types of emergency incidents.</p> <p>For some types of emergency incidents, such as dwelling and other building fires, the greater concentration of higher risk is found in urban areas, however, there are also small areas of higher risk in some rural areas.</p> <p>For other types of emergency incidents, such as farming accidents and animal rescue the risk is greater in rural areas due to the nature of the incident.</p> <p>The large travel distances involved in responding to rural locations impacts those living in rural areas, waiting almost twice as long for fire service response, than those living in urban areas. Similarly individuals living in rural areas are harder to identify, locate and engage with to support prevention education.</p> <p>Over the course of the 5 year Critical Risk Management Plan the Service will improve intelligence led risk-based targeting of service provision to people and properties across rural and urban areas through the development of policies and procedures.</p> |
| <p>527 Developing a plan for a replacement Fire Station in Cushendall.</p> | <p>The proposed building will primarily be used for Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service operational call-outs and included as part of the design are welcome and accessible spaces including car-parking spaces, that will be able to be used by different community groups occasionally.</p> |

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| | <p>Consideration has been given to encourage tendering contractors to tackle long-term employment and trainees etc. via the use of “Social Value” in the competition process.</p> <p>Consideration has also been given to ensure no adverse environmental issues arise that could potentially affect the day-to-day lives of the rural people and their ability to enjoy a healthy life. Surveys including Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Pre-development Enquiry, Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology and Drainage and Flood Risk Assessment have been completed and actioned as required.</p> |
| 528 Implementing a plan – Opening of Learning and Development College Cookstown. | <p>Opening of the College in Cookstown resulted in the creation of a number of permanent support staff job opportunities as well as employment for local staff employed by cleaning and maintenance contractors.</p> <p>Numerous local businesses have benefited from the opening of the college over the past year. A Direct Award Contract was applied to award a local company the college catering contract. Local hotels are providing accommodation for trainee firefighters for the duration of their course. The trainees are also likely to be spending daily meal allowances within local eateries. In addition, local suppliers are also being utilised to provide the site with personal protective equipment.</p> <p>Several engagement days were held with local residents to show them round the site and answer any queries or questions that they had. This was extremely well received with neighbours to the site being reassured and advised of facilities such as the ‘trim trail’ that would be available for general use.</p> |
| 529 Revising the ‘Flexible Duty Rota System’ policy. | <p>A review of the policy identified Level 3 response Officers in Western Area Command were attached to Crescent Link (Derry/Londonderry). The creation of an additional Level 3 response point based in Omagh ensured improved officer cover and enables a larger catchment of officers for promotion.</p> |

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive

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| 530 | Implementation of Wayleaves and Easements Over Housing Executive Land Policy. | No specific rural needs were identified. The process to request for a wayleave, easement or code agreement over Housing Executive land in accordance with all legislative requirements is the same in both rural and urban areas. |
| 531 | Implementation of the amendment to House Sales Scheme – Sunningdale Gardens New Build Policy. | No specific rural needs were identified. The proposal is to amend the statutory House Sales Scheme to exclude the six pilot properties at Sunningdale Gardens, Belfast and to disapply the provisions of the House Sales Scheme to these properties. |
| 532 | Implementation of General Health and Safety Risk Assessment Policy. | No specific rural needs were identified. This policy applies to all Housing Executive employees regardless of whether they live/work in rural or urban areas. |
| 533 | Implementation of Title Rectifications Policy. | No specific rural needs were identified. This policy will not impact differently on people in rural areas and will be applied equally irrespective of location. |
| 534 | Development of Social Enterprise Plus Strategy. | There is a need to ensure that our rural communities have fair and equitable access to the support available through the Social Enterprise Plus Strategy. The actions and approaches included in this strategy will have a positive impact irrespective of geographical location and enable fair and equitable treatment for all. |
| 535 | Implementation of Title Deeds Handling Policy. | No specific rural needs were identified. This policy applies to all Housing Executive employees regardless of whether they live/work in rural or urban areas. |
| 536 | Review of Strategy - Daisyfield and Greenbrae Irish Traveller sites. | No specific rural needs were identified. The needs are the same for individuals within a rural area as those within an urban area with regards to identifying and operating Irish Traveller sites. |
| 537 | Implementation of Work at Height Policy. | No specific rural needs were identified. This policy applies to all Housing Executive employees regardless of whether they live/work in rural or urban areas. The Housing Executive will, so far as is reasonably practicable, provide a safe place of work to all employees, contractors, visitors and other people. |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 538 | Implementation of Control of Noise at Work Policy. | No specific rural needs were identified. This policy applies to all Housing Executive employees regardless of whether they live/work in rural or urban areas. |
| 539 | Implementation of House Sales Scheme – Wider Amendments Policy. | The social and economic needs of people in rural areas are the same as those for people in urban areas, which is to be afforded access to an affordable, sustainable and decent home, appropriate to their needs. The proposed amendments to the House Sales Scheme will help to retain social housing stock, against the context of increasing demand for public housing in both rural and urban areas, increasing demand for wheelchair/accessible accommodation. The amendments will reduce the financial risks to the landlord to sustain investment in existing stock. Therefore, the proposed amendments are not likely to differentially impact on people in rural areas and will bring positive impacts for social housing provision. |
| 540 | Implementation of incident Reporting and Investigation 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. Incident reporting and investigation provides learning outcomes to direct policy, risk assessments and training requirements. No specific rural needs were identified. This policy applies to all Housing Executive employees regardless of whether they live/work in rural or urban areas. |
| 541 | Implementation of Display Screen Equipment 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. No specific rural needs were identified. This policy applies to all Housing Executive employees regardless of whether they live/work in rural or urban areas. |
| 542 | Implementation of Placemaking through Community Planning Policy and Procedures. | Rural needs have been identified and have influenced the development of this policy. This policy sets criteria for when to engage in a project and when not to, and thus, where the Housing Executive will choose to focus its community planning |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | <p>resources. People in rural areas have a higher level need for the project criteria to be set and weighted to allow rural projects to be fairly assessed. Amendments can be made to the scoring matrix to add in factors that would more fairly reflect the circumstances for rural areas.</p> <p>The nature of each placemaking project will vary meaning the needs of people in rural areas will be case specific.</p> |
| 543 Implementation of Land Transfers to Housing Association Policy. | The Land Transfers to Housing Associations Policy puts in place an administrative process to guide the transfer of ownership of a piece of Housing Executive owned land to a registered housing association. The procedures contained within it are equally applicable and effective irrespective of the geographical location of the piece of land being transferred or the location of the housing association to which the land is being transferred. |
| 544 Implementation of Call Recording Policy, Procedures and Standards of Service. | No specific rural needs were identified. This policy applies to all Housing Executive employees regardless of whether they live/work in rural or urban areas. |
| 545 Implementation of Warranted Builders Communication Documents Policy. | No specific rural needs were identified. This policy will allow all applicants both rural and urban to have greater choice and protection when choosing a contractor to carry out much needed grant aided works in their home. |
| 546 Implementation of Land Disposals Policy. | No specific rural needs were identified. This policy applies to all Housing Executive employees regardless of whether they live/work in rural or urban areas. |
| 547 Implementation of Driving for Work and Workplace Transport Policy. | This is a policy to promote safe driving practices within the Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff and will have no influence on their rural needs. All staff will be treated in a fair and equitable way, irrespective of their geographical location. |
| 548 Development of Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy. | The Community Involvement Strategy and Community Cohesion Strategy has been merged into one composite document called Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy. |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | <p>People in rural areas have a social and economic need for equitable access to community support services through community cohesion and involvement projects. Issues identified in rural areas include access to internet/broadband/digital inclusion, geographical dispersion and gaps in communication and engagement within rural communities.</p> <p>The rural needs identified have influenced the policy. The delivery mechanisms that exist in rural areas will continue, namely the Rural Residents Forum, the re-introduction of the regional tier to the Housing Community Network, the existing engagement with the Rural Community Network, and the Housing Executive publications of Streets ahead and Rural Matters magazines which have circulation to rural customers, residents and groups. The Housing Executive will also continue to develop new groups in underrepresented locations.</p> |
| 549 Implementation of Signing and Sealing Policy. | This policy and procedure is an entirely internal one to the Housing Executive, which sets out how to carry out the administrative process for the signing and sealing of documents. This policy applies to all Housing Executive employees regardless of whether they live/work in rural or urban areas. |
| 550 Implementation of First Aid at Work Policy. | No specific rural needs were identified. This policy applies to all Housing Executive employees regardless of whether they live/work in rural or urban areas. |
| 551 Implementation of Manual Handling Policy. | <p>The Housing Executive will, so far as is reasonably practicable, provide a safe place of work for all employees, contractors, visitors and other persons.</p> <p>This applies if our staff are from a rural area or are working in a rural area.</p> |
| 552 Implementation of Revised Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. | This policy has no differential impact on people in rural areas. It is as relevant in a rural setting as it is in an urban setting. The procedures and reporting arrangements within the policy enable an equal standard of safeguarding care is applied regardless of whether a safeguarding concern is raised in a rural or urban area. |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 553 | Implementation of Rent Increase Policy. | All Housing Executive tenants, rural and urban, have their rent calculated under the Rent Scheme and are responsible for the payment of same. The primary consideration in terms of social and economic needs relevant to the proposed rent increase would be the affordability of any rent increase. Rural needs did not influence the overall proposal. The proposal to increase Housing Executive rents would be applicable to tenants located in both rural and urban locations and is based on the attributes of the property rather than the location. |
| 554 | Development of Community Safety Strategy 2025-30. | The majority of actions and approaches in this strategy will have a positive impact irrespective of geographical location and enable fair and equitable treatment for all. Rural needs influenced the policy, with mitigations being identified. It is recognised that there are issues with digital connectivity in some rural areas which could make some of the communication approaches in the new strategy less effective in rural areas. Additionally, with cutbacks in funding for support services the availability of certain programmes might also have an impact across all areas. Housing Executive staff will continue working with partner agencies to ensure that support services are available across the province, ensuring they are up to date with new support services or streams and will work with departments to these. It is intended to develop and improve digital communication channels and in addition to this, traditional communication channels with tenants will be maintained so that lack of internet access will not negatively impact e.g. local press, leaflets etc. Housing Executive staff will continue to work with tenants to communicate in an effective way, suitable for their needs. |
| 555 | Implementation of Housing Executive Land Acquisition Plan. | Housing Executive Land Acquisition has a dual purpose; to increase capacity of the Social Housing Development Programme and also to increase delivery in areas of acute housing need where compliance with the strategic guidelines has not been achieved. Housing Executive Land Acquisition therefore will be a targeted approach to identify sites where there is strong need, where |

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| | | the proposed mix will meet the housing need and the land should be within a sustainable location. Place shaping teams will have responsibility for ensuring site identification in areas of acute housing need, including within rural areas, and the most appropriate approach is selected to bring forward suitable sites. Housing Executive Land Acquisition can therefore help facilitate rural development by offering the potential to identify and acquire rural sites. The additional delivery of affordable housing can help meet the housing needs of rural people, contributing to their health and wellbeing. |
| 556 | Implementation of Housing Executive Risk Management Policy. | No specific rural needs were identified. This policy applies to all Housing Executive employees regardless of whether they live/work in rural or urban areas. |
| 557 | Implementation of New and Expectant Mothers Policy. | No specific rural needs were identified. This policy applies to all Housing Executive employees regardless of whether they live/work in rural or urban areas. |
| 558 | Implementation of health and safety in Construction 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. The same arrangements apply in health and safety in construction irrespective of location. |
| 559 | Development of Social Investments Strategy 2025-30. | Social Enterprise is organic in that it responds to requests which arise from social housing communities in any part of Northern Ireland. There is a standard assessment of all applications for funding. All requests for information and assistance are visited by a Social Investment staff member. The needs of each applicant will clearly dictate the help provided by the team. Where applicants come from a rural area Social Enterprise staff invariably make the applicants or groups aware of the need to link with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Rural Team, Community Safety Team, Community Cohesion teams and Community Involvement. The funding award scheme and its criteria are published |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | online and in Streets Ahead Magazine and are therefore available to all Housing Executive tenants and the wider public. All communities and individuals receive the same optimum service from the Social Enterprise team. |
| 560 Implementation of Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations Policy and Procedures for Handling Information Requests. | The legislation does not differentiate between rural and urban, so the same process applies. However, in some areas there may not be good internet access. Where there is no access to internet, Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations requests can be received verbally and responses issued through post. |

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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 561 | Review of Media Handling Policy. | <p>This policy ensures a consistent approach to working with the media in a way that achieves the objectives of Libraries NI.</p> <p>No rural needs were identified.</p> |
| 562 | Development of a Collections Development Policy. | <p>This policy provides a framework for how the resources held by Libraries NI are selected, curated, developed, preserved and managed to meet the needs of communities and individuals in Northern Ireland. The policy applies to all resources including electronic and physical formats.</p> <p>No rural needs were identified.</p> |
| 563 | Review of Opening Hours Policy. | <p>This policy sets out Libraries NI's approach to static library opening hours. Within the constraints imposed by available resources, account will be taken of libraries serving areas of substantial social need, designated rural libraries and/or libraries serving a specific demographic i.e. specialist, students/study, children, new communities.</p> <p>No rural needs were identified.</p> |
| 564 | Review of Vehicle Management Policy. | <p>This policy provides the framework whereby the operation of vehicles by Libraries NI is undertaken in a safe and legal manner.</p> <p>No rural needs were identified.</p> |
| 565 | Review of Use of Privately Owned Vehicles for Business Purposes Policy. | <p>This policy sets out Libraries NI's approach to the management of the use of privately owned vehicles for business use by employees.</p> <p>No rural needs were identified.</p> |
| 566 | Review of Assets Management Policy. | <p>This policy sets out Libraries NI's approach to the management and development of our physical assets.</p> <p>No rural needs were identified.</p> |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 567 | Review of Payment of Travel and Subsistence Expenses Policy. | This policy provides a framework for the management and settlement of legitimate expense claims incurred by employees and Board Members in the performance of their duties. No rural needs were identified. |
| 568 | Review of Customer Feedback Policy. | This policy provides a framework for the handling of customer feedback including complaints. No rural needs were identified. |
| 569 | Review of Data Protection Policy. | This policy sets out how Libraries NI will implement its commitment to protecting the personal information it holds. No rural needs were identified. |
| 570 | Review of Discipline Policy. | This policy provides a clear framework ensuring Libraries NI staff understand appropriate conduct, what constitutes misconduct, and that a fair and consistent process is available for managers to follow when dealing with discipline offenses. No rural needs were identified. |
| 571 | Development of a Reading and Reader Development Strategy. | This strategy is to foster a love of reading, to promote the benefits of reading and enhance the reading experience for people of all ages. No rural needs were identified. |
| 572 | Development of a Customer First Strategy. | The aim of this strategy is to provide customers with an inclusive, aspirational, unique physical and virtual library experience. No rural needs were identified. |
| 573 | Review of Safeguarding Policy. | This policy sets out Libraries NI's approach to safeguarding children, young people and adults when using library services and staff responsibilities. 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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 574 | Review of Managing Unacceptable Behaviour Policy – now renamed to Safe and Welcoming Libraries Policy. | This policy sets out Libraries NI's expectations in relation to customer behaviour and indicates customer behaviours that are unacceptable with an approach to managing these. No rural needs were identified. |
| 575 | Review of Filming Policy. | This policy sets out Libraries NI's approach to responding to requests to film in or around a library location. No rural needs were identified. |
| 576 | Review of Code of Conduct for Board Members. | The Code of Conduct provides a clear framework within which Libraries NI's Board Members are expected to conduct themselves. No rural needs were identified. |
| 577 | Review of Conflict of Interests 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. |
| 578 | Review of Hybrid Working Policy. | This policy provides information and the hybrid working arrangements, which, if permitted, allows employees to split their time between attending the workplace and in an agreed remote working location(s). No rural needs were identified. |
| 579 | Review of Policy on the Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection. | This policy defines the basis on which Libraries NI will seek to make appointments with the aim of ensuring that the most suitable person is appointed to the post. No rural needs were identified. |

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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 580 | A review of Tourism NI's Sponsorship Policy. | A rural needs impact assessment was carried out when reviewing this sponsorship policy, and a full assessment against relevant guidance was carried out. |
| 581 | A review of Tourism NI's Complaints Policy. | A rural needs impact assessment was carried out when reviewing this complaints policy, and a full assessment against relevant guidance was carried out. |
| 582 | A review of Tourism NI's Unacceptable Behaviour by Customers Policy. | A rural needs impact assessment was carried out when reviewing this Unacceptable Behaviour by Customers Policy, and a full assessment against relevant guidance was carried out. |

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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 583 | Revision of the Data Protection Service Instruction. | The revision of this service instruction was not influenced by rural needs. |
| 584 | Revision of the Unscrewed Aircraft Systems Service Instruction. | The revision of this service instruction was not influenced by rural needs. |
| 585 | Revision of the Child Protection Policy. | The revision of this policy was not influenced by rural needs. |
| 586 | Revision of the Bail Service Instruction. | The revision of this service instruction was not influenced by rural needs. |
| 587 | Development of the Digital Device Extraction Service Instruction. | The development of this service instruction was not influenced by rural needs. |
| 588 | Revision of the Health & Safety - Roles and Responsibilities Policy and Service Instruction. | The revision of the policy and service instruction were not influenced by rural needs. |
| 589 | Revision of the Community Resolution Notice Operational Guidance. | The revision of this operational guidance was not influenced by rural needs. |
| 590 | Revision of the Role Specific Physical Competence Assessments Service Instruction. | The revision of this service instruction was not influenced by rural needs. |
| 591 | Development of the Human Resources System Service Instruction. | The development of this service instruction was not influenced by rural needs. |
| 592 | Revision of the Freedom of Information Service Instruction. | Changes to Criminal Investigation Branch policy which may impact people within rural areas have been considered. For example, people may prefer to have it in hard copy or electronic form. Section 11 imposes certain duties if a requester expresses a preference for a particular means of communication such as a copy of the information; an opportunity to inspect the information; and a digest or summary of the information. Criminal Investigation Branch currently use a statutory |

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| | framework and must provide correspondence promptly to all requesters. This can be achieved via e-mail, post or text. In exceptional circumstances correspondence can also be made available to local police stations. |
| 593 Development of the Parental Bereavement Leave for Police Officers Standard Operating Procedure. | The development of this standard operating procedure was not influenced by rural needs. |
| 594 Development of the Parental Bereavement Leave for Police Staff Standard Operating Procedure. | The development of this standard operating procedure was not influenced by rural needs. |
| 595 Revision of the Interview Records for Non- Terrorist Crime Guidance. | The revision of this guidance was not influenced by rural needs. |
| 596 Development of the Special Leave for Police Officers Standard Operating Procedure. | The development of this standard operating procedure 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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 597 Retendering of Adult Step 2 Service. | <p>The rural needs impact assessment identified a number of rural needs that will be acknowledged within the design of the Adult Step 2 Service specification. These issues included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic needs; • Cost of living; • Wellbeing and equity of service access; • Access to transport; • Stigma of accessing support; and • Poor communication/technology due to rurality/remoteness such as mobile phone, broadband, internet and email access may not be available to access services online. <p>The above issues may affect individuals, families and carers of those who use alcohol and drugs. Rurality will be factored into the development of the specification for Adult Step 2 Services following consultation with networks serving rural areas. For example, option of peripatetic services to be considered, mix of online and face to face support bearing in mind that internet signal can be poor in rural areas.</p> |
| 598 Implementation of the Regional Workforce Development Training Service. | <p>The rural needs assessment for the Regional Workforce Development Training Service identified a number of rural issues that should be considered within the design of this service and implementation. These issues included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor communication/technology due to rurality/remoteness such as mobile phone, broadband, internet and email access may not be available to access to online training and education programmes; • 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 access to private transport where public |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | <p>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; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges with wifi/broadband connectivity for those living and working in rural locations who wish to connect to online workforce development training programmes. <p>Rurality of the workforce and equity of service access will be considered within the Regional Workforce Development Training Service specification and contract implementation. Through tender responses, organisations will be required to highlight how they will ensure services are accessible to those working in rural localities. Quarterly progress monitoring reports will collate information to ensure geographical accessibility to the service in both rural and urban settings.</p> |
| 599 Retendering of Youth Treatment Services. | <p>The following issues have been identified within the rural need's assessment for the Youth Treatment Service;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Needs (poverty); • Cost of Living, Wellbeing; • Meaningful Activity; • Access to Transport; • Stigma of accessing support; and • Poor communication/technology due to rurality/remoteness such as mobile phone, broadband, internet and email access may not be available to access services online. <p>The above issues may impact individuals, families and carers of those who use alcohol and drugs.</p> <p>Rural/urban population needs and equity of service will be factored into the development of the specification for Youth Treatment Services following consultation with networks serving such rural/urban areas. For example, option of peripatetic services to be considered, mix of</p> |

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| | <p>online and face to face support bearing in mind internet signal can be poor in rural areas.</p> <p>According to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation – A New Framework (2016) poverty and social isolation exist in both rural/urban areas however poverty and geographical isolation may increase a sense of social isolation among individuals who are seen as violating social norms (stigmatisation of substance use).</p> <p>Living in a rural area can also exacerbate the effects of poverty and social isolation for certain groups. For example, additional costs of living in a rural area such as higher fuel or transport costs can have a greater impact on people on low incomes while some groups such as young people or people with disabilities may experience greater difficulties accessing transport services in rural areas than in urban settings.</p> <p>This research and recommendations of this framework will be considered within the retendering of the Youth Treatment Service.</p> |
| 600 Retendering of the Problematic Parental Substance Use. | <p>The rural impact needs assessment has identified a number of issues that will be considered in the retendering of the Problematic Parental Substance Use Service. These issues include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Needs (poverty); • Cost of Living, Wellbeing; • Meaningful Activity; • Access to Transport; • Stigma of accessing support - Both existing service staff and families in receipt of the current service have reported stigma in rural areas as a significant issue as people in these areas are very private (Family Support qualitative reports 2023); and |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor communication/technology due to rurality/remoteness such as mobile phone, broadband, internet and email access may not be available to access services online. <p>The above issues may impact individuals, families and carers of those who use alcohol and drugs.</p> <p>The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's Multiple Deprivation Measures and associated research suggests that an individual's access to services can be a marker of disadvantage for some people in rural communities, particularly for those living in more remote areas and for those without private transport.</p> <p>In rural areas more than an hour from Belfast, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's Multiple Deprivation Measure indicates that access to 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>According to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs <i>Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation – A New Framework (2016)</i> poverty and social isolation exist in both rural and urban areas however poverty and geographical isolation may increase a sense of social isolation among individuals who are seen as violating social norms (stigmatisation of substance use).</p> <p>The framework also suggests that living in a rural area can also exacerbate the effects of poverty and social isolation for certain groups. For example, additional costs of living in a rural area such as higher fuel or transport costs can have a greater impact on people on low incomes while some groups such as young people or people with disabilities may experience greater difficulties accessing transport services in rural areas than in urban settings.</p> |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | <p>The Northern Ireland Health Survey First Results (2022) highlights the following datasets;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately four-fifths (79%) of those living in rural areas rated their health as good or very good compared with over two-thirds (70%) of those living in urban areas; and • Two-fifths (40%) of those living in urban areas had concerns about their own mental health in the past year (19% definitely), compared with over a quarter (28%) of those living in rural areas (11% definitely). <p>The rural needs identified through the rural need's assessment and the research and data sets presented above will be considered and factored into the development of the specification for Parental Substance Use Services following engagement with young people and adults who been in receipt of the service. For example, option of peripatetic services to be considered, mix of online and face to face support bearing in mind internet signal can be poor in rural areas.</p> |
| 601 Community Capacity Building and Grants and Mentoring Programme. | <p>The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs <i>Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation – A New Framework (2016)</i> recognises that those living in rural areas often experience poverty and social isolation differently to urban dwellers due to issues relating to geographical isolation, and lower population density. Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation provides a broad framework within which public sector organisations and the rural sector can work collaboratively to lever additional resources and develop/pilot new ways to help alleviate the effects of poverty and social isolation in rural areas, particularly among vulnerable groups.</p> <p>The Community Capacity Building and Grants and Mentoring Programme will benefit Community Development Practitioners' to build on community capacities to take collective action on health inequalities and the social determinants of health.</p> |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | <p>It will also improve access to community resources – supporting approaches focused on connecting people to community resources and opening up opportunities for social participation and social inclusion.</p> <p>The grant funded projects will also contribute to improving the health and wellbeing outcomes in rural areas and reduce health inequalities by enabling participation, empowerment and the growth of self-efficacy.</p> <p>Information obtained from previous performance reports for the Community Capacity Building and Grants and Mentoring Programme has been used to identify gaps in service provision to date, and been used to develop a bespoke section of the service specification (called Equality Measures) which places additional attention on ensuring closer equity of service delivery. Included in the Equality Measures section of the specification was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring imagery used to promote the service was reflective of all groups including rural groups; • Ensuring the location of venues was accessible to all groups including rural groups; and • Ensuring case studies used to demonstrate the impact of the service were reflective of all groups including rural groups. <p>The Public Health Agency will continue to monitor engagement with and uptake of the Community Capacity Building and Grants and Mentoring Programme in both rural and urban communities. In order to ensure that there is a good geographical spread the provider has been asked to map sessions and provide a breakdown of how many sessions have been delivered in each Health and Social Care Trust area. This will ensure that locations are easily identified and that there is a geographical spread and rural/urban balance.</p> <p>The Public Health Agency will continue to request information on their quarterly monitoring forms around</p> |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | <p>the geographical spread of sessions, accessibility of sessions and how the programme is being advertised. This will ensure that the provider considers these issues when they plan sessions and that needs are being met.</p> <p>The provider organisations will use both their own networks and links with Community, Voluntary and Statutory organisations to advertise and promote the Community Capacity Building and Grants and Mentoring Programme in both rural / urban areas. They will also be supported by Public Health Agency Lead Officers who will ensure information reaches their community development contract holders across the region.</p> |
| 602 | <p>Development of the Public Health Agency's Corporate Plan 2025-30.</p> <p>As the Public Health Agency takes forward the Corporate Plan and works to achieve each outcome, the actions, work and programmes will be screened individually through a rural needs impact assessment. It is at this more detailed level that the Public Health Agency will understand, identify and consider how the development of a policy, strategy, plan or public service will impact on people in rural areas.</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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| <p>603 Investing into the Sporting System, specifically Governing Bodies of Sport.</p> | <p>Sport NI considered an extensive body of research, data and insights that informed the programme design, for instance that children and young people from rural areas were least likely to say that they walked or cycled to school. This affects the health of 35% of children and young people who live in a rural community, and children and young people understand the importance of an active lifestyle to their overall general health and wellbeing. In addition, limited access to transport negatively affects individual ability to access sport and physical activity. Sport NI recognises females, living alone or in a rural area, retirement, have fair/poor emotional health and a greater susceptibility to inactivity and illness. Those from rural areas described the challenges they faced such as lack of choice of sports, transport issues and social isolation.</p> <p>The programme builds capacity in rural areas, creating learning and training opportunities. The governing bodies target both growth and sustaining participation opportunities, increasing diversity across rural communities. The programme has invested in digital platforms to support rural communities, minimizing the impact of transport challenges. The programme provided access to performance opportunities in rural communities. It supports females, underrepresented groups, and coaches in rural communities to become talent coaches. It retains and increases opportunities in disadvantage areas and rural communities and increases participants from rural/disadvantaged communities. The specific Equality Diversity and Inclusion strand of this programme grows the understanding of sport's governing bodies and specifically pertaining to overcoming rural issues and barriers.</p> |

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| 604 Investing into Disability Sport NI. | <p>Sport NI has considered the social and economic needs for disabled people in rural areas pertaining to physical activity and sport; specific to rurality, the following was considered and address through this investment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to address social isolation of disabled people; • The diversity of sporting and physical activity opportunities in rural areas; • The extension of reach in the West of the province; improved strategic engagement between organisations in rural areas; • Utilisation of the natural environment and coastal areas; • Improved volunteer capacity in rural areas; • Regularity in rural areas and reliance on transport from carers; • Requirements to have opportunities in rural areas advertised better; and • Improved availability of health and wellbeing services in rural areas. |
| 605 Investing into Special Olympics Ireland. | <p>Sport NI and Special Olympics Ireland recognise that there is a particular issue around social exclusion not only with people with an intellectual disability but also with people who reside in rural areas. This investment will aim to tackle social exclusion by providing sport health and education opportunities particularly in rural areas. Special Olympics Ireland to create new clubs which will cater for people in rural areas ensuring there is equal opportunity for all to benefit from the investment. This investment considered the social and economic needs of those people with learning disabilities living in rural areas, most specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to address social isolation; • The lack of diversity of opportunities; • Limited reach in the West of the province; |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for more strategic engagement between organisations; • The need to optimise the natural environment and coastal areas; • Limited volunteer capacity; • Lack of public transport and regularity; • Requirement to have opportunities in rural areas advertised better; and • Need for the availability of health and wellbeing services in rural areas. <p>Special Olympics Ireland contribute to addressing these needs by ensuring their programme of events, competitions and health and wellbeing initiatives are scheduled also in rural areas.</p> |
| 606 Developing the Disability Action Plan for 2025-26. | <p>The plan will benefit people with a disability all over Northern Ireland, including those disabled people who live in rural areas. The programmes contained within the plan will include projects specifically in rural areas.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of the all-out trekking project in Gosford Forest Park, providing outdoor opportunities in the natural environment for up to 150 disabled people annually; • Delivery through Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Council, an Inclusive Sport & Leisure Officer work programme, which includes a range of physical activity programmes, including inclusive cycling, wheelie active, disability sports clubs, inclusive gym, autism & sport, disability water sports & table tennis programmes plus summer schemes; • Supporting twenty-five member clubs, groups, and schools annually to effectively deliver participation and competition programmes to the disability community through the provision of training, education, and advice and through the organisation and support of community events; |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocating owners and operators to develop and manage sports facilities, stadia, and outdoor places, which are inclusive of disabled people. This includes advice and guidance on making their facilities more accessible and delivering training on providing sporting opportunities for people with a disability; • Advertising and promoting opportunities that are available in rural areas through the Active Living No Limits website; • Richhill Disability Services and Maghera Adult Centre and targeted service delivery in rural areas such as Omagh, Enniskillen, Magherafelt and Cookstown; and • The plan also provides volunteering opportunities for those in rural areas through training courses. It provides support to sporting venues on how to make their facilities more inclusive, ensuring people with a disability have equal opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity. <p>The action plan considered an extensive body of research data and insights pertaining to disabled people and rural areas with notable needs-based themes, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To address social isolation; • To provide diversity of opportunities in rural areas; • To address limited reach in the West of the province; • To offer strategic engagement between organisations; • To utilise the natural environment and coastal areas; • To build volunteer capacity in rural areas; • To address the lack of public transport and regularity in rural areas; and • Having opportunities in rural areas advertised better and to address the need for the availability of health and wellbeing services in rural areas. |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| | <p>Data was considered from our Corporate Plan rural consultation, from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Key Rural Issues, Northern Ireland, Sport NI's <i>Active Fit and Sporty Participation Survey</i>, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's <i>Continuous Household Survey</i>, <i>Children's Sport and Physical Activity Survey</i> etc.</p> |
| 607 Investing in Motorsport Safety. | <p>Sport NI recognises the benefits of investing in localised needs across rural areas and the social and wellbeing impacts from investing in sport and physical activity in rural communities. This investment targets a sport that is primarily held in rural areas. Motorsport events require safety measures in place to address and mitigate any potential risk highlighted as part of their event and venue risk assessment and insurance requirements. Enhancing safety standards will impact participants, spectators, residents and businesses. Promoting the highest safety standards will encourage participants and spectators to attend events, driving tourism and the associated economic benefits to the area. Given that most venues are in rural areas, this encourages people to come to these areas.</p> |
| 608 Investing in Your School Your Club. | <p>The investment was targeted at all schools with sports facilities and those from rural areas described the challenges they faced such as lack of choice of sports, transport issues and social isolation. These issues require consideration in relation to accessibility and travel time to sports and physical activity opportunities.</p> <p>The programme considered the rural needs identified through research, data, insights and consultation, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people from rural areas were least likely to say that they walked or cycled to school. Thirty-five percent of children and young people live in rural communities; • Females, living alone or in a rural area, retirement, fair/poor emotional health, and activity limited by illness are significantly associated with inactivity; |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those from rural areas described the challenges they faced such as lack of choice of sports, transport issues and social isolation; • 77.5% of children scored between ‘very poor’ and ‘below average’ in Fundamental Movement Skills proficiency. There was no difference between children attending urban and rural schools; • Children and young people understand the importance of an active lifestyle to their overall general health and wellbeing; • There is a need for increased promotion of the sport and physical activity options available in local communities, particularly in rural areas; and • There is a need for additional consideration for enhancing opportunities for those living in rural areas. |
| 609 Investing in Parkrun. | <p>This project, pertaining to rural needs, provides for a toolkit and training developed for all parkrun organisers on accessibility and inclusive volunteer deployment, funding of small promotional campaigns (flyers, community noticeboards) in rural villages, partnership work with disability sports and rural groups to tailor participation and support mechanisms. Events provide for transport solutions (e.g., ride share coordination, liaison with community transport services); venue audits for accessibility (surface, parking, ease of navigation); flexible scheduling and clear communication via online and offline channels. These considerations address the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs highlighted rural barriers around transport, connectivity, and access to services.</p> |
| 610 Developing the Women in Sport Engagement and Delivery Plan 2024-26. | <p>This plan incorporates policy amendments because of the rural needs identified including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant programme for rural sports club facilities to improve female access. • Investment in female-led coaching bursaries targeting rural coaches. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for transport support schemes to practices and competitions. • Pilot mentoring network connecting rural female athletes with peers and role models. • Inclusion of women’s sports measures in local development plans to track participation equity. • Infrastructure: developing female-friendly changing rooms and ensuring community hall access. • Timetabling: accommodating after-school practices and weekend sessions. • Coaching support: funding coach development and female role models. • Transport: organizing ride-share schemes or minibuses. • Outreach work: campaigns to challenge stereotypes and encourage participation. |
| 611 Developing the Racial Inclusion in Sport Engagement and Delivery Plan 2024-26. | <p>This plan delivers a range of actions but specific to ethnically diverse communities in rural areas, as a result of identifying rural needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for interpreter services in rural clinics and local government. • A mobile outreach pilot reaching minority communities in outlying villages. • Inclusion of rural ethnic representation in governance structures. • Targeted employment schemes aimed at migrants in agricultural roles. • Collaboration with grassroots ethnic organisations for culturally relevant community events. <p>Sport NI considered extensive research and specific Race and Racial Inequality research and stakeholder workshops with rural ethnic minority organisations,</p> |

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| | <p>and inputs from National Governing Bodies supporting refugees and migrant workers. Findings revealed: limited language services, scarce health outreach, cultural isolation, lower participation in local forums, and heightened economic precarity from employment in seasonal/agricultural roles.</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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| <p>612 Belfast Health Social Care Trust implementation of encompass system for electronic health care records.</p> | <p>The implementation of encompass is expected to produce a positive benefit to rural communities as it improves access to services. In particular, there will be a reduction in unnecessary appointments for assessment, review and reduced repeated interventions thereby reducing the need for travel and associated costs.</p> <p>Encompass' ability to collect and report on data, may make it easier to analyse health inequality data, and be useable for service development, re-design or improvements. Health inequalities between rural and urban populations will be better evidenced.</p> <p>The 'MyCare' App will be available to all Belfast Health and Social Care Trust service users regardless of where they live. This means that patients and service users and carers who use regional services delivered by Belfast Health and Social Care Trust can access their medical records and are more informed.</p> <p>The MyCare app will allow people to access information like medications, appointments and some test results. It is free to use, and it is optional.</p> <p>The Department for the Economy is leading on the delivery of Project Gigabit in Northern Ireland. This is part of the UK Government's £5 billion programme to enable hard- to reach communities to access lightening-fast gigabit capable broadband. Policy and implementation takes this into consideration.</p> |
| <p>613 Emotional Wellbeing Teams in School service delivered by Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.</p> | <p>The impact is deemed positive.</p> <p>The programme is part of the implementation of the Department of Education and Department of Health's 2021 Framework: Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education.</p> <p>To implement the framework the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust programme will integrate support from</p> |

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| | <p>the voluntary and community sector in local educational settings to enable effective, local early interventions. The goal is that children and young person's problems can be prevented and where they do happen the right care/support is provided at the right time in the right place - locally.</p> |
| 614 Implementation of the Closure of Muckamore Abbey Hospital. | <p>The impact is deemed positive.</p> <p>An integral aspect of the implementation of the Department of Health decision to close Muckamore Abbey Hospital is the resettlement of existing residents to their own local area. This means that the provision of care and support to service users and patients will be based around their own home Trust locality which will ensure there is greater community integration and closer links to family, carers and other established local community supports.</p> <p>The plan is for Belfast Trust to work in partnership with other Trusts across the region to resettle service users currently delayed in Muckamore Abbey Hospital into the community however as explained in 2B of the rural needs impact assessment, the impact will be a positive impact on people living in these rural areas.</p> <p>Each Trust's multidisciplinary team will be able to coordinate care and take ownership of the services provided to each of service users living within their Trust area. It is anticipated that services locally owned and operated will be better able to proactively deliver and react to the changing needs of this cohort of service users across Northern Ireland.</p> <p>In addition, the provision of local support provides additional benefits to the families of the current cohort of patients/service users in Muckamore Abbey Hospital as families / carers no longer will have to travel across Northern Ireland to hospital to visit and support their loved ones.</p> |

Northern Health and Social Care Trust

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| 615 | Revision of car parking management policy to reflect the introduction of the new regional enforcement contract. | <p>The social and economic needs of people in rural areas were considered including accessibility to services, availability of public transport, cost of transport, levels of poverty in rural areas and the onward ability to visit relatives in hospital.</p> <p>Mitigations included relate to exemptions for car parking charges for certain categories of patients and their next of kin. Also, under the terms of the new regional contract, the first four hours of parking will be free of charge.</p> |
| 616 | Revision of Traffic Management Policy on Antrim and Causeway Hospital sites on a time limited basis. | <p>Parking charges may create a barrier to accessing services to those with lower incomes who live in rural areas and residents of rural areas and the cost of parking may be a barrier for those visiting relatives.</p> <p>Mitigations include application 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>There are also agreed exemptions for car parking charges for certain categories of patients and their next of kin.</p> |
| 617 | Revising the provision of Family Support Services across the Northern Health and Social Care Trust. | <p>The main social and economic needs of people in rural areas identified relates to service accessibility, specifically the ability to travel, the cost of travel and the availability of public and/or community transport. From 2021 Census information there are 31,077 households within Northern Trust area where there is no car or van available, equating to 16% of households. In mitigation, the Family Support Service is designed to be delivered in the service users' own home, having a positive impact on the social and economic needs in rural areas, so there will be no need for travel associated costs in order to access the service.</p> |

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| 618 | Designing a public service to deliver outdoor garden spaces across Day Service sites for people with a learning disability and employees of the Northern Trust. | Positive impacts identified in relation to social needs of people residing in rural areas as the Trust provides transportation to day services and this public service design will promote social inclusion through participation in outdoor and community-based activities in a safe community. Staff wellbeing will be supported and promoted in respect of easy access to an outdoor space to avail of adequate rest breaks. Consultation with specific stakeholders was held. |
| 619 | Revising the Parkinson's Specialist Nurse Service Policy. | The main social and economic needs of people in rural areas identified relates to service accessibility, specifically the ability to travel, the cost of travel and the availability of public and/or community transport. From 2021 Census information there are 31,077 households within Northern Trust area where there is no car or van available, equating to 16% of households. This, coupled with the limitations on mobility arising from this medical condition, means that mitigating measures were considered during the revision of this policy, including provision of home visits for people who are not physically able to attend the clinic. Virtual or telephone clinics are also available as an option. |
| 620 | Revision of Rash Contacts and Viral Zoonotic Infections in Pregnancy Policy. | Women infected, especially in early pregnancy, with infections described may have to be referred to a regional fetal maternity assessment unit in Belfast for review. Potential social and economic needs impacts relate to service accessibility, access and availability of transport and potential economic cost of transport. Mitigations include assessment on an individual basis, with link to community or voluntary groups who could help with transport to Belfast and 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. |
| 621 | Implementation of encompass system for electronic health care records. | Consideration has been given to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including, access to service in terms of broadband, internet or mobile communication access. In mitigation, service |

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| | <p>users can continue interacting with healthcare services via traditional methods and appointment reminders can still be sent out through the post or via text messages, where requested. The service offered is supplementary to existing service provision and therefore there will be no loss of current services being offered.</p> <p>As a positive, due to the ability of people to manage their appointments and healthcare, the implementation of encompass is expected to reduce unnecessary appointments for assessment, review and reduce repeated interventions, reducing need for travel and associated costs.</p> |
| 622 Delivering Nurse Led Pre-operative Assessment Clinics in Whiteabbey Hospital for proposed surgery in Antrim Area Hospital. | <p>An economic need identified relates to the additional cost of travel to attend the service at Whiteabbey Hospital. At present, service users who are eligible for repayment of travel costs using the Hospital Travel Costs Scheme, can obtain this via the cash office at Antrim Area Hospital on the day of attending. A similar facility is available at Whiteabbey Hospital.</p> <p>There may be a potential economic and social impact on staff as a change in work location could result in longer travel times, expenses incurred as a result of additional travel costs or car parking charges, and impact on family life routines. These situations are addressed locally by the Trust to take consideration of work-related travel costs and consideration of redeployment options.</p> <p>The service will monitor the number of patients who advise they are unable to attend the Whiteabbey Hospital site and, where possible, conduct virtual clinics and telephone reviews.</p> |
| 623 Redesign of service for the delivery of treatment for cancer patients through a two stop model and Mobile Treatment Unit. | <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.</p> <p>Mitigations are in place, including the provision of transport for those who may require it and future</p> |

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| | <p>planning for a closer to home delivery option. Other mitigations include the consideration of provision of a mobile treatment unit to travel to locations closer to rural service users.</p> <p>For service users with identified clinical need the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service provides non-emergency patient transport services for dependent patients to get to routine appointments at hospitals.</p> <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>There is a volunteer driver scheme available of which cancer patients can avail.</p> |
| 624 Delivery of General Surgery in the Northern Trust including Emergency Surgery and planned Elective Surgery. | <p>There is an identified social need, relating to proximity to family support networks, due to the change to emergency general surgical services and location of planned elective care services. In mitigation, virtual visiting will be implemented to address contact with families and friends instead of travelling to visit and incurring costs, although this solution requires suitable and reliable internet or broadband connection.</p> <p>Availability and cost of transport is an identified barrier to access services and related economic need. In mitigation, the Trust is committed to offering local access to local patients for as many appointments as possible. The Trust will explore how pre-assessment and post-operative clinics can be provided locally, particularly for those patients who live rurally and do not have access to a car or public transport. Where possible, telephone and virtual clinics will be facilitated. The Trust will also operate a process which allows such patients the opportunity to arrange a more appropriate appointment time. For service users with identified clinical need, the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service provides non-emergency patient transport services for dependent patients to get to routine appointments</p> |

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| | <p>at hospitals. 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 will set up a Rural Transport Task Group, to engage with transport providers and other departments and the voluntary and community sector, to explore the availability and gaps in transport provision.</p> <p>The impact on redeployed staff in relation to a change of work location, increased travel and costs, will be managed by considering the availability of retraining opportunities, alternative redeployment options and eligibility for excess travel allowance payments.</p> |

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

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| <p>625 Implementation of the encompass Programme: November 2023 and ongoing through reporting period April 2024 – March 2025.</p> | <p>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 has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting and implementing encompass by applying the rural needs assessment tool throughout the implementation of the programme. In addition, patient, service users and staff experience satisfaction questionnaires, complaints and compliments are reviewed and monitored. The Trust will also consider the feedback from South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust Communication and Engagement Plans. Communication on the proposal will be provided in alternate languages as identified or requested and has been provided in alternate formats e.g. easy read.</p> <p>Mitigation has been built into the proposal in respect of persons in rural areas who may have challenges with regard to access to telecommunications/broadband and Wi-Fi.</p> <p>These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service users who may have difficulties can still call or write to the Trust to resolve queries; • All patients will be afforded equality of opportunity and will be treated with dignity and respect. Carers can be granted access to view portions of dependents My Care Record as per Health and Social Care Policy; and • There is the potential that the implementation of encompass will improve communication for patients and service users with sensory and accessibility needs, as service user information will be available to care teams across Health and Social Care organisations. <p>These mitigations apply to both rural and urban areas. The implementation will be kept continually under review.</p> |

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| <p>626 South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust - BT Payphone Services Contact Termination.</p> | <p>The termination of payphone services is scheduled for 14/08/24. Following the termination period, BT will coordinate the recovery of the payphones, resulting in the unavailability of these services. This may impact service users in rural areas who consequently have access to fewer payphone options. It should be noted that this termination applies only to South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust site payphones.</p> <p>The Trust has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting and implementing the proposal by applying the rural needs assessment tool throughout the implementation of the proposal.</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. Communication on the proposal will be provided in alternate languages and format as needed.</p> <p>However, the Trust is exploring an option to establish public access to Trust phones in each service area which will provide communication access for those who do not have access to a mobile phone or mobile communications in rural areas.</p> <p>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 on-going assessment to monitor the impact of the proposed option on an on-going basis to ensure that the impact is not more significant than initially anticipated.</p> |

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| <p>627 Implementation of The Hospital Parking Charges Act 2022 with the Introduction of the new Regional Enforcement Contract by South Eastern Trust.</p> | <p>The Trust has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting and implementing by applying the rural needs assessment tool throughout the implementation of the proposal.</p> <p>The Trust will explore technological solutions to control vehicle capacity to maintain access to healthcare services by those requiring a vehicle. This information will continue to be gathered from research/publications and by field/site visits to other UK jurisdictions.</p> <p>Potential Negative effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The general population may be encouraged by the legislation to drive to an appointment rather than use public transport putting parking resources under more pressure; and • Staff who currently choose to park in a public car park paying a public tariff may be displaced from parking on-site. <p>Potential Positive effect-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service users may be able to avail of the space created by the displacement of staff currently paying a public tariff in a public car park. |
| <p>628 Hospital at Home.</p> | <p>The Trust has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting and implementing by applying the rural needs assessment tool throughout the implementation of the proposal.</p> <p>Consideration has been given to the health, social and economic needs of people in rural areas including, broadband/internet/mobile communication access.</p> <p>Communication on the Hospital at Home Initiative will be provided in alternate languages, or easy read format, when a need is identified or requested.</p> <p>The Trust is cognisant of the need to consider and mitigate any potential adverse impact. The Trust's implementation of the initiative will be kept continually under review. This approach has been taken to allow the.</p> |

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| | <p>Trust to monitor the impact of the implementation on an on-going basis to ensure that it is not more significant than initially anticipated.</p> <p>Service users who require ongoing hospital based treatment are more likely to have lower incomes due to disruption to their earnings caused by ill health or disability and hospital car parking charges may add to the financial stress.</p> <p>The higher level of absolute poverty amongst rural pensioners, as well as the difficulty of accessing public transport, is acknowledged. Older service users are more likely to require hospital treatment more regularly as they age.</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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 629 | The design of a centralised Pre-operative Assessment Service. | A rural needs impact assessment has been carried out, the Trust has considered the impact and rural needs in line with the proposal. The demand for pre-operative services and staffing continues to rise, necessitating room for growth and expansion. This can be achieved via centralisation in a non-acute setting. The identified area includes adjoining space providing ample room for growth. |
| 630 | New contract with Goal Line Youth Trust for the provision of a short breaks youth club service. | 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. Service users in rural areas will be able to avail of the service to the same degree as service users in urban areas. |
| 631 | New contract with Bolster Afterschool Short Breaks for Children with Disabilities and Their Siblings through the provision of an "After the Bell" short Breaks Service. | 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. Service users in rural areas will be able to avail of the service to the same degree as service users in urban areas. |
| 632 | The development of a Standard Operating Procedure for vaccination of non-GP registered infants and children within the Southern Health and Social Care Trust Public Health Nursing Service. | 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, flexible scheduling with appointment venues and times to accommodate rural families, and reducing travel burdens (financial, waiting for public transport). |
| 633 | Change of provider for Early Year's Organisation Supported Daycare and Community Pathway services, namely to Sticky Finger's Imaginarium. | 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. Children/young people in rural areas will be able to avail of the service to the same degree as those in urban 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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 634 Introduction of Regional Automatic Number Plate Recognition Car Parking Management Solution to Hospital sites. | <p>Service users living in rural areas may be encouraged by this legislation to drive private cars to appointments as transport can present an issue for people living in rural areas, especially the elderly and disabled people due to geographical isolation, e.g. people living in rural areas may have to travel further to access public transport, there can sometimes be a lack of public transport, and timing of public transport may be an issue adding to the additional cost of living for people in rural areas with extra fuel/transport costs.</p> <p>Lack of internet availability/quality can be an issue in rural areas which can bring issues to staff and service users when booking a space online although tablets will be available onsite for this purpose. Statistics published on Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Issues website show that 93% and 99% of rural and urban areas respectively had coverage of superfast broadband in 2023.</p> <p>The Trust commits to monitoring for any potential adverse impact on our service users.</p> |
| 635 Reconfiguration of Rossneal Home Site as 6x bedded Children's Home. | <p>The distance between Chapel Road and the Rossneal site is 2.2 miles. This will have a minor impact on staff with additional time or costs with travelling to work. Service users will be further away from the L'Derry city centre however impact will be minor. Any rurality issues have been considered in accordance with childcare planning (locality planning that feeds into Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership) although there are no anticipated issues expected as procedure will remain the same.</p> |
| 636 Development of Allergy Status Documentation Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 637 Adaption of Administration of Urokinase for Central Venous Access Device Occlusion in Adults >18. | 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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
|---|---|--|
| 638 | Proposal for the Removal of set holiday closure practices in Drumcoo Day Centre, Enniskillen. | No rural needs identified. |
| 639 | Development of Direct Award Contract Guidance. | No rural needs identified. |
| 640 | Update of Endowment & Gift Funds – Establishment of Interim Superfunds. | No rural needs identified. |
| 641 | Development of Project Bank Account Procedure. | No rural needs identified. |
| 642 | Development of Regulation and Professional Registration Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 643 | Updating of Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Workplace Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 644 | Implementing the Learning at Work Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 645 | Extension of Working Longer Guidance - Retire and Return Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 646 | Development of Supporting Performance Improvement Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 647 | Update of Appraisal Policy for Doctors and Dentists. | No rural needs identified. |
| 648 | Implementing the Delivering Value Accelerated Doctors Banding Compliance Work Stream. | No rural needs identified. |
| 649 | Development of Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Management Policy. | 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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 650 | Update of Nursing and Midwifery Rostering Policy. | No rural needs identified. |
| 651 | Update of Refeeding Syndrome Guideline for Adult Inpatients. | No rural needs identified. |
| 652 | Implementing the Management of Adults with Dysphagia – Eating, Drinking and Swallowing. | No rural needs identified. |
| 653 | Delay of roll out of Care Opinion supported by investment available via the Public Health Agency. | No rural needs identified. |
| 654 | Re-tender for Short Stay Breaks for Young People. | No rural needs identified. |
| 655 | Update to the Guidance on the Principles & Practice surrounding the safe administration of preschool immunisations. | No rural needs identified. |
| 656 | Update of the Procedure for the Health Visiting Service Audit of Records. Health Visitors who are newly qualified, returning to practice or have trained outside Northern Ireland. Operational Guidance for Management of Health Visiting Service during periods of significant staff shortage/ service pressures. | No rural needs identified. |
| 657 | Implementation of the Key Worker Pathway - for health visitors and school nurses and family nurses working with children and young people subject to child protection processes. | No rural needs identified. |

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 (Northern Ireland) 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. |
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| 658 Development and Implementation of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Corporate Plan. | <p>The Corporate Plan delivers on the Trust Strategy, 'Our Strategy to Transform' which included a wide range of engagement and consultation to ensure consideration of stakeholders needs.</p> <p>The priority actions outlined include those relating to improving service delivery. It is recognised that rural communities have particular needs in respect of access to ambulance services. Consideration of this will be built into associated specific service delivery plans being developed.</p> |
| 659 Development and Implementation of Concerns, and Compliments Policy and Procedures. | <p>In undertaking screening of the policy consideration is given to statutory responsibilities including rural needs and whether there is any potential impact in this regard.</p> <p>The policy and procedures apply universally within Northern Ireland and no particular rural needs were identified.</p> |
| 660 Design of a Policy for Managing Allegations against People who work with children, Young People or Adults at Risk. | <p>In undertaking screening of the policy consideration is given to statutory responsibilities including rural needs and whether there is any potential impact in this regard.</p> <p>The policy and procedures apply universally within Northern Ireland and no rural needs were identified.</p> |
| 661 Development and implementation of the Regional Policy on Co-operation with Coroner's Investigations & Review of Engagement with the Coroner. | <p>In undertaking screening of the policy consideration is given to statutory responsibilities including rural needs and whether there is any potential impact in this regard.</p> <p>The policy and procedures apply universally within Northern Ireland and no rural needs were identified.</p> |
| 662 Development and Implementation of Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response Policy and Strategy. | <p>In undertaking screening of the policy consideration is given to statutory responsibilities including rural needs and whether there is any potential impact in this regard.</p> <p>Given this relates to delivery of corporate requirements in line with the Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies</p> |

| Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 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. |
|---|--|
| | Framework 2021, the policy and procedures apply universally within Northern Ireland and no rural needs were identified. |
| 663 Development and the Implementation of Risk Management Policy and Risk Appetite Statement. | In undertaking screening of the policy consideration is given to statutory responsibilities including rural needs and whether there is any potential impact in this regard. In respect of this policy no rural needs were identified. |
| 664 Development of Updated Reporting and Management of Adverse Incidents Policy. | In undertaking screening of the policy consideration is given to statutory responsibilities including rural needs and whether there is any potential impact in this regard. Given this is a corporate policy that relates to management of all incidents universally, no rural needs were identified. |
| 665 Development and Implementation of a Policy on Events Management. | In undertaking screening of the policy consideration is given to statutory responsibilities including rural needs and whether there is any potential impact in this regard. In respect of this policy no rural needs were identified. |
| 666 Development of Chaperone Policy. | In undertaking screening of the policy consideration is given to statutory responsibilities including rural needs and whether there is any potential impact in this regard. The policy is applied universally within Northern Ireland. In respect of this policy no rural needs were identified. |

ISBN: 978-1-83887-100-0

Date of Publication - April 2026



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

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Department o'

**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

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