

Appendix I - Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) Template

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

1A. Name of Public Authority.

Department of Education

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

Consultation on the draft Northern Ireland Curriculum Framework for schools

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

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

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

Curriculum Framework

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

The proposals for a new curriculum are part of the TransformED system wide programme for educational improvement. The Strategic Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum (June 2025) recommended that Northern Ireland needed a new curriculum that is purpose-led, knowledge-rich, continuous, coherent, specific, focused, flexible and inclusive. The proposals for a new Curriculum Framework apply to all children and young people with the aim of providing opportunities to promote equity and excellence for all, across all key stages of compulsory education in Northern Ireland.

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

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

Other Definition (Provide details and the rationale below).

A definition of 'rural' is not applicable.

Details of alternative definition of 'rural' used.

Rationale for using alternative definition of 'rural'.

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

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

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

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

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

The proposals for the new curriculum framework will apply equally for all children and young people including those in rural areas. No differential impact on children and young people is anticipated.

The policy will have positive impacts for all children and young people including those in rural areas.

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

Not applicable

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The need for the new curriculum was established by the Independent Review of Education (IRE) report (published December 2023) which provided a thorough, evidence-based consideration of fundamental issues impacting education in Northern Ireland.

The review made a range of proposals for progressive reform of the education system over the next 20 years, including several conclusions supporting the need for review of the current Northern Ireland curriculum, ensuring it remains aligned with international best practices while providing a knowledge rich and well-structured approach.

In response to IRE recommendations the Minister of Education commissioned a Strategic Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum which commenced in November 2024. The Strategic Review was tasked with making a series of policy recommendations regarding the purpose, design, specification, and implementation of the curriculum.

The Strategic Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum was published in June 2025 and contained 21 recommendations to inform the development, design, and implementation of a new curriculum framework. The proposals for a new curriculum framework are part of the TransformED Strategy, which is focused on whole systems transformation with other key areas of focus including; teacher professional learning; assessment and qualifications; school improvement and tackling disadvantage.

The Review (and earlier IRE review) assessed evidence from a range of sources including previous related reports on the Northern Ireland education system, data on the local system and international research as well as drawing from significant stakeholder engagement across Northern Ireland.

The full report of the Strategic Review can be accessed here: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/ni-curriculum-review>

The report on the Strategic Review was supported by a summary engagement report which can be accessed here: [Strategic Review Of The Curriculum - Summary Of Stakeholder And Analysis Of Recurring Themes](#)

This element is part of the ongoing review / development of a new curriculum framework. The consultation (16 June 2026 to 30 September 2026) for the new curriculum framework will include a range of further opportunities for specific stakeholder engagement across Northern Ireland.

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

The positive outcomes anticipated by the development and design of the new curriculum will apply equally to all children and young people in Northern Ireland. In taking forward this review no specific social or economic needs for people in rural areas have been identified.

The Strategic Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum did identify that in terms of the existing curriculum that there was “A lack of appropriateness for some young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN), learners in Irish-immersion contexts and some disadvantaged young people.”

Additional targeted workstreams are already underway including those focusing on Special Educational Needs and Irish-medium education (IME). Specifically, a Special Schools Curriculum will be developed in order to provide a needs-led framework that reflects the diverse developmental profile of pupils in special schools, supporting accessible and meaningful learning matched to each pupil's needs. In relation to IME, bespoke curriculum strands will be developed for Irish-medium schools, that provide a necessary extension to ensure that progression is articulated in ways that reflect immersion contexts. These workstreams will provide further opportunities to enhance equality of opportunity as implementation progresses.

The Department's assessment is that the new curriculum will provide equity of opportunity for all children and young people and will not impact differently on people in rural areas from those in urban areas. The curriculum will be available equally across all schools in urban and rural areas and be subject to regional delivery.

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

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

Not applicable.

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

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

The Department's assessment is that the new curriculum will provide equity of opportunity for all children and young people and will not impact differently on people in rural areas from those in urban areas. Should evidence emerge of any differential impacts these will be considered.

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

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

Yes

No

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

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

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

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

None were specifically identified which would influence the design or delivery of the new curriculum framework.

SECTION 6 - Documenting and Recording

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

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

Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:	Paul Wright
Position/Grade:	Deputy Principal
Division/Branch	Curriculum Reform Programme Management Team
Signature:	<i>Paul Wright</i>
Date:	17 April 2026
Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:	Donna Reid
Position/Grade:	Grade 7
Division/Branch:	Curriculum Reform Programme Management Team
Signature:	<i>Donna Reid</i>
Date:	10 June 2026