

## 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.

Review of Youth Work policy “Stronger Futures – A Northern Ireland Youth Work Policy Statement”.

#### 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.

Stronger Futures – A Northern Ireland Youth Work Policy Statement.

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

The policy sets a renewed strategic direction for youth services for ages 4–25. It aims to ensure that all children and young people have access to consistent, inclusive, needs-led youth services, regardless of geography or background.

**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 policy is likely to have positive impacts on children and young people in rural areas by:

- Addressing rural isolation as a barrier to participation.
- Improving access to local, inclusive youth services.
- Supporting shared use of buildings (schools, council facilities, community assets) to increase rural provision.

**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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Deprivation in Rural Areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rural Crime or Community Safety	<input checked="" 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 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 checked="" 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 policy was informed by:

- Youth voice engagement across Northern Ireland, including rural communities.
- Evidence from the review of Priorities for Youth.
- Research on barriers including rural isolation, poverty, digital harms, and emotional wellbeing.
- Consultation with youth providers, including those operating in rural areas.
- Data on youth service access, participation patterns, and geographical gaps.
- The ongoing requirement for EA to undertake an assessment of need across all Northern Ireland geographical areas.
- Cross-government evidence on rural deprivation and access to services.

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

The policy identifies several needs specific to rural young people:

- Rural isolation as a barrier to participation.
- Limited access to youth facilities and safe spaces.
- Transport barriers affecting attendance.
- Fewer opportunities for targeted or enhanced youth work.
- Higher vulnerability to emotional wellbeing challenges due to isolation.
- Need for shared facilities to ensure local access.
- Need for a sustainable volunteer workforce in rural communities.

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

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

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

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

The policy explicitly considers:

- The need for local, accessible youth services in rural areas to allow social interaction and building respect for others through the youth curriculum, for children and young people aged 4-25.
- The access to youth services in rural areas to improve social and economic benefits in the same way as applies to the services provided in urban areas, improving educational and employment outcomes, reducing crime and emotional health concerns through early intervention youth services.
- The importance of shared buildings to ensure provision where standalone facilities are not viable.
- The requirement for targeted youth work to help address rural isolation, poverty, and wellbeing.
- The need for a sustainable volunteer workforce, including in rural communities.
- Ensuring that youth services are consistent and constant, regardless of geography.
- Acknowledgement of participation barriers and the need for flexible delivery models.

## 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.**

Rural needs have directly shaped:

- The commitment to local and accessible services.
- The inclusion of rural isolation as a barrier requiring targeted intervention.
- The emphasis on shared facilities to increase rural provision.
- The focus on volunteer development, recognising rural reliance on volunteers.
- The design of universal, targeted and enhanced youth work to ensure equitable access.
- The requirement for evidence-based needs assessments that include rural voices.

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

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

## SECTION 6 - Documenting and Recording

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

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

<b>Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:</b>	Claire Dineley
<b>Position/Grade:</b>	Deputy Principal
<b>Division/Branch</b>	Youth Work Policy Team
<b>Signature:</b>	<i>Claire Dineley</i>
<b>Date:</b>	1 June 2026
<b>Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:</b>	Julie Humphries
<b>Position/Grade:</b>	Grade 7
<b>Division/Branch:</b>	Youth Work Policy Team
<b>Signature:</b>	Julie Humphries
<b>Date:</b>	2 June 2026