

## 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 Review of the Religious Education (RE) Syllabus for Northern Ireland

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

Developing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Adopting a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Implementing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Revising a	Policy <input 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.

Review of the Religious Education (RE) Syllabus for Northern Ireland

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

The Review of the Religious Education (RE) Syllabus aims to ensure that RE in Northern Ireland provides a clear, coherent and knowledge-rich framework from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4. The review seeks to support high-quality, inclusive teaching and learning by strengthening content, progression and pupils' understanding of a range of religious and non-religious worldviews.

**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 arising from the Review of the RE Syllabus will apply equally to all children and young people, including those in rural areas. No differential impact on children and young people in rural settings is anticipated.

The review has been informed by a wide range of evidence, including stakeholder engagement, consultation processes and research into best practice in Religious Education. This includes engagement with educators, churches and other key stakeholders, as well as children and young people. The Review Panel and Drafting Group have worked collaboratively to develop a revised syllabus that is knowledge-rich, coherent, inclusive and pluralistic. The review emphasises the importance of an approach to Religious Education that is objective, critical and reflective of the diversity of modern society, while recognising the central role of Christianity in Northern Ireland.

The consultation on the draft RE syllabus (June to September 2026) provides further opportunity for stakeholders to contribute to the development of the final syllabus prior to implementation.

As such, the revised RE syllabus is expected to support positive outcomes for all pupils, regardless of geographic location, 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.**

A range of methods and information sources have been used to inform the Review of the Religious Education (RE) Syllabus and to ensure that the needs of all learners, including those in rural areas, have been appropriately considered.

These have included extensive stakeholder engagement with teachers, school leaders, churches and representative organisations across Northern Ireland. This engagement provided valuable professional and community perspectives on the current RE provision and future priorities.

A public Call for Evidence formed a key part of the review process, enabling individuals and organisations to contribute views on the purpose, content and delivery of Religious Education. This was supplemented by targeted discussions and consultation activities with key stakeholders.

Specific engagement with children and young people was undertaken using age-appropriate and accessible methods across a range of educational settings. This ensured that the experiences and perspectives of pupils from diverse backgrounds, including rural communities, informed the development of the draft syllabus.

The Review Panel and Drafting Group also considered relevant research and evidence relating to Religious Education, including international approaches and best practice in curriculum design. This included a focus on ensuring that RE is knowledge-rich, coherent, inclusive and reflective of a pluralistic society.

Taken together, these methods have provided a robust and comprehensive evidence base to inform the development of the revised RE syllabus and to ensure that it is applicable and accessible across all school contexts, including those in rural areas.

This engagement included representation from a range of school types and geographic contexts, ensuring that the views and experiences of those in rural settings were appropriately reflected.

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

The review process did not identify specific social or economic needs unique to rural populations in relation to the delivery or content of Religious Education.

However, the evidence gathered highlighted the importance of ensuring that the RE syllabus is accessible, inclusive and relevant to all learners, regardless of their geographic location or school context. This includes supporting consistency in the quality of provision, clarity of content, and progression in learning across all settings.

The review also recognised the need for RE to reflect the diversity of contemporary society, while remaining sensitive to the cultural and community contexts in which schools operate, including rural communities. Ensuring that pupils have opportunities to engage with a range of religious and non-religious worldviews was identified as a key priority in supporting understanding, respect and critical thinking.

In line with this, the revised RE syllabus has been designed to provide a clear and structured framework that supports equitable access to high-quality learning for all pupils. The focus on a knowledge-rich and coherent curriculum is intended to support teachers in delivering RE effectively across a wide range of settings, including smaller or more geographically isolated schools.

Overall, the Department's assessment is that the Review of the RE Syllabus supports equity of educational opportunity and does not result in differential social or economic impacts for children and young people in rural areas.

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

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

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 revised RE syllabus will provide equitable educational opportunities for all children and young people and will not impact differently on those in rural areas compared with those in urban areas.

The syllabus will be implemented across all schools, ensuring consistent access to high-quality RE provision irrespective of location.

Consideration has been given to the accessibility and deliverability of the syllabus across all school contexts, including those in rural areas.

## 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.**



No specific rural needs were identified that would influence the design or delivery of the revised RE syllabus.

However, the review's emphasis on inclusivity, accessibility and clarity supports equitable delivery across all settings, including rural schools.

## 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>	Philip Galbraith
<b>Position/Grade:</b>	Deputy Principal
<b>Division/Branch</b>	Curriculum and TransformED Implementation Team
<b>Signature:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	24 June 2026
<b>Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:</b>	Johanna Lawther
<b>Position/Grade:</b>	Grade 7
<b>Division/Branch:</b>	Curriculum and TransformED Implementation Team
<b>Signature:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	26 June 2026