



Information compiled by Public Authorities under Section 3(1)(a) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

Name of Public Authority: Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Reporting Period: April 20 22 to March 20 23

The Trust is committed to promoting and upholding its duties in relation to the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 and will have due regard to rural needs in the development of all our policy and public service delivery decisions. The Trust is also committed to its reporting and monitoring obligations in accordance with Rural Needs Act (NI) (2016). The Trust has carried out the following activity to comply with, and mainstream, the duties outlined in this legislation.

- The Trust's Board and Senior Team are continually briefed to ensure ownership of the rural statutory duties at a strategic level.
- Guidance on rural needs is provided to Trust Board members as outlined in the [Regional Guidance for Board members](#)
- The Trust's Engagement, Experience, Equality and Employment Group (Quad EG), chaired by the Director of Operations, seeks assurance that the Trust is compliant with rural needs statutory requirements. Membership includes all divisional directors, non-executive directors, a service user representative who lives in a rural area and the Patient Client Council. The Quad EG reports directly to the Trust's Assurance and Improvement Group, then through to Trust Board.
- To ensure effective mainstreaming and monitoring of the "due regard" within the Rural Needs Act the Trust's mandatory policy development process includes a section on requirements relating to the Rural Needs Act as a requirement for staff to consider the social and economic needs of persons in rural areas when drafting a policy/proposal/plan or strategy.
- The Trust's Equality Unit provides support to colleagues across the Trust in relation to rural needs impact and advice and guidance is

provided on the Trust's Staffnet to raise awareness and support staff. One to one advice clinics are available upon request.

- During the reporting period the Northern Trust led on the development of a [Rural Needs Toolkit for Health and Social Care](#). The Trust and the other five HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland, in partnership with The National Centre for Rural Health and Care, Rural Services Network, Rural Community Network and the Nuffield Trust, have published a Rural Needs for Health and Social Care (NI) Toolkit to help those in the health and care sectors to address the needs of their rural populations when developing strategies, initiatives and service delivery plans. The toolkit assists health and social care staff to carry out better quality Rural Needs Impact Assessments by ensuring that they are better informed on the needs of people in rural areas in relation to health and social care. The toolkit was launched regionally on 10 October 2022 by Minister Swann and endorsed by Minister Poots.



"I applaud the Trusts for taking the lead in this initiative, and working closely with the Rural Community Network, Rose Regeneration Group and the Department of Health to create this valuable resource which, I have no doubt, will become a key tool for policy and decision-makers across the health and social care sectors to consider and improve outcomes for rural dwellers."

**Robin Swann MLA,
Minister for Health NI**



"As Minister for rural affairs in Northern Ireland I welcome the development of the Rural Needs Toolkit and I am confident that it will help healthcare professionals and policy makers understand better the particular needs of rural dwellers and lead to improvements in the delivery of health services in rural areas."

**Edwin Poots MLA
Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs**

- As part of a national project, Northern Trust is working in partnership with the Rural Community Network and Rathlin Island residents to pilot the Rural Needs Toolkit to support the wider health and wellbeing of islanders.
- The Trust's Senior Management Team and Trust Board has considered this Report before submission to DAERA.

The Trust is mindful that the level of 'regard' due will depend on the circumstances and, in particular, on the relevance of rural needs to the decision or function in question. The greater the relevance and potential impact for people in rural needs, the greater the regard required by the duty. In the table below, the Trust has provided detail on those policies which were considered as having a bearing on rural needs and therefore subject to a rural needs impact assessment. In preparing this monitoring template the Trust considered policies in respect of the social and economic needs of persons in rural areas and for the majority, no rural needs were identified. In the interests of openness and transparency, the Trust has provided the following hyperlinks to S75 equality screenings of Trust policies. Many of the Trust policies are clinical, internal or technical in nature and have no bearing on rural needs.

Screening Outcome Reports

The following information should be compiled in respect of each policy, strategy and plan which has been developed, adopted, implemented or revised and each public service which has been designed or delivered by the public authority during the reporting period.

<i>Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016¹.</i>	<i>The rural policy area(s) which the activity relates to².</i>	<i>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 service³.</i>
Service Delivery Plan for Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT) Phase 9 April – June 2022	Health and Social Care	For the purposes of analysis of this service delivery plan, rural areas have been classified by whether they are within a 20 or 30 minute drive-time from the centre of a settlement containing at least 10,000 usual residents. This assessment for rural needs

		concentrates on services being created, services being delivered remotely or virtually to accommodate social distancing by use of broadband or mobile technology or existing services still being provided but where the location of these services continues to be changed. Access to services is relevant in terms of economic cost , availability of public transport and broadband/internet/mobile communication access The use of blended models of service delivery utilising virtual delivery in combination with face to face appointments as detailed in the service delivery plan offer choice to service users and minimise adverse impact in respect of access to services.
Connect North Link Worker Service	Health and Social Care	Enhanced holistic social and wellbeing supports for people living with or affected by cancer, mental health issues, dementia, and other long term condition(s) (LTCs) or a palliative care diagnosis in the Northern Trust Area. Connect North have invested in an electronic information portal to host a unified and accessible electronic directory where providers have responsibility for promoting and maintaining their own information about services and supports they offer thus optimising link worker capacity. A digital front door to this directory allows members of the public to directly access information about services and supports available with an option to self-refer. For

		those who aren't digitally connected or suffer poor connection due to geography this digital front door can be accessed by supportive services to provide signposting or referral into Connect North. On receipt of referral contact with the client is via telephone, face-to-face or virtual based on the clients' preference, providing equitable access to information and supports.
NHSCT Homecare / Northern Regional College (NRC) Project	Health and Social Care	This project offers up to 20 NRC students, participating in the RQF Level II course, fixed term employment placement opportunities. Positive rural needs impact in respect of the clients of domiciliary homecare service – service enables people to continue to live at home and in the community Potential negative rural needs impact in respect of students who live in rural locations and ability to travel as part of their internship placement to people's homes to deliver domiciliary care service The NHSCT Homecare Service have locality offices in 8 areas to facilitate a Trustwide Domiciliary Care service. This enables placement of students who wish to avail of this opportunity in a locality that is closest to their home address. In addition, where students do not drive or have access to transport, then steps are taken to pair the student and the associated work delivery with another domiciliary care worker who does have their own

		transport.
Temporary Closure of Ardrath House, Magherafelt	Health and Social Care	Service users of this facility were required to relocate to alternative residential placement during the period of closure. The current area of placement, Magherafelt, has a population size of 8,819 people which is in excess of the definition of rural for this proposal. However the alternative placement meant relocation to a rural area for all or some of the service users. This impacts upon their families who may wish to keep in contact e.g. accessibility, availability and cost of transport. Consultation with service users and their families to identify preferred placement locations – impact re transport, and cost of same, minimised through this process Staff of this facility required to relocate to alternative place of employment during the period of closure. Staff may reside rurally and therefore experience social and/or economic difficulties in respect of their new place of employment e.g. accessibility, transport availability, cost of transport. There was consultation with TU/staff and application of HR Management of Change framework to identify preferred alternative employment locations and excess travel costs to be reimbursed to staff.
NHSCT Acute Maternity Services Transformation Considering the Options	Health and Social Care	The definition of rural applied is in excess of 20 and 30 minute drive times from Antrim, the proposed

paper		location for elements of both the options shortlisted (Consultant-led births move to Antrim site with provision of intrapartum care for an additional 600-700 births per annum under option 3 and Move all births to Antrim site with provision of intrapartum care for an additional 900 births per annum under option 4) and Coleraine (Development of a FMU in Causeway for approximately 200- 300 women suitable for low intervention midwifery led care and birth under option 3) This definition is better able to distinguish between those who are most impacted by additional travel times caused by proposed changes to services. It should be noted that the service under consideration is not currently provided within rural communities but provided inside a hospital environment. The benefits of enhancing these services would be experienced by both urban and rural dwellers. Access to high quality antenatal and postnatal services are critical for women living in our communities. These proposals preserve and enhance the range of scheduled antenatal and postnatal care in Causeway Hospital. The only change in terms of access is that around 600-900 women will make a single additional journey to the centre of their choice to give birth to their babies and, if there is an urgent concern during the pregnancy, then women are required to attend Antrim FMAU. Impacts related to:
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		• Limited availability of public transport • Cost of transportation to alternative provision location • Limited provision of community transport • Choice of level of service delivery for births • Social impact of potential lack of family support network during the time of giving birth and immediately afterwards
Delivery of online social groups for autistic young people and adults	Health and Social Care	Due to COVID these sessions are delivered online Aims - To deliver a weekly online social group for autistic individuals aged 12-17 tailored to the needs and wishes of the group. - To deliver a weekly online social group for autistic adults developed around special interests/themes. Positive impact: Use of online social groups should have a positive impact upon people who reside in rural areas economically as these can take place at home removing the need for travel to groups, and the associated transport and parking cost. Additionally public transport can be difficult for some autistic individuals therefore providing these social groups in a person's own home can also reduce anxiety and stress that can be associated with public transport and attending new areas/venues. Negative impact: Inability to access online social

		groups due to lack of, or poor connectivity, to mobile/broadband services The online social groups are a pilot project over the 2 year period to determine suitability and identify any issues for rural dwellers.
Access Employment Ltd (AEL) Vocational training	Health and Social Care	AEL Vocational Training provides an alternative to day centre services by enabling people to meet and interact and participate in activities in an alternative setting. It encourages people with a disability to participate in everyday life. The Trust's proposal to invest in this existing service enables the continuation of service to those marginalised with a learning disability from the rural catchment area of the Larne and Glens locality. It has a positive impact on the social needs of rural dwellers by social inclusion through participation in community based activities It is a fundamental premise of day opportunities provision that service users make their own travel arrangements to attend the service. Differential impacts in respect of service users who reside rurally are likely to relate to the availability and cost of transport provision including both public and community transport. Please note that this is a continuation of a service already in place with a change in contract provision reflecting a change in funding streams only. Current service users are able

		to attend and access the service.
Compass Advocacy Network (CAN) Vocational Training Community Based Day opportunities (NHSCT)	Health and Social Care	Potential service beneficiaries may reside in rural catchments across Ballymoney; Moyle; Ballymena and Coleraine catchment and additional referrals. It has a positive impact on the social needs of rural dwellers by social inclusion through participation in community based activities It is a fundamental premise of day opportunities provision that service users make their own travel arrangements to attend the service. Differential impacts in respect of service users who reside rurally are likely to relate to the availability and cost of transport provision including both public and community transport. Please note that this is a continuation of a service already in place with a change in contract provision reflecting a change in funding streams only. Current service users are able to attend and access the service.
MENCAP NI Vocational Training Community Based Day opportunities (NHSCT)	Health and Social Care	Potential service beneficiaries reside in rural catchments across Mid Ulster and Antrim. It has a positive impact on the social needs of rural dwellers by social inclusion through participation in community based activities It is a fundamental premise of day opportunities provision that service users make their own travel arrangements to attend the service. MENCAP provides accessible vocational opportunities aligned to

		the service user's choice and home locality – this means that public and community transportation is likely to be more readily available and in place aligned to service user choice and vocational opportunities. Differential impacts in respect of service users who reside rurally are likely to relate to the availability and cost of transport provision including both public and community transport. Please note that this is a continuation of a service already in place with a change in contract provision reflecting a change in funding streams only. Current service users are able to attend and access the service.
Triangle Housing Association Ltd Vocational Training Community Based Day opportunities (NHSCT)	Health and Social Care	Triangle Housing Association Ltd Vocational Training provides an alternative to day centre services by enabling people to meet and interact and participate in activities in an alternative setting. It encourages people with a disability to participate in everyday life. Triangle Housing Association Ltd Vocational Training provides accessible vocational opportunities aligned to the service user's choice and home locality – this means that public and community transportation is likely to be more readily available and in place aligned to service user choice and vocational opportunities. Potential service beneficiaries may reside in rural catchments across Mid Ulster and Antrim. It has a positive impact on the social needs of rural dwellers by social inclusion through participation in community

		based activities
Superstars Cookstown Vocational Training Community Based Day opportunities (NHSCT)	Health and Social Care	This is a specialist community based day service in Cookstown town centre for adults with a learning disability across Magherafelt and Cookstown localities in a vocational training café facility; production facility; performing arts activities and social evening and weekend activities. Potential service beneficiaries may reside in rural catchments across Mid Ulster and Antrim. It has a positive impact on the social needs of rural dwellers by social inclusion through participation in community based activities. Differential impacts in respect of service users who reside rurally are likely to relate to the availability and cost of transport provision including both public and community transport. Please note that this is a continuation of a service already in place with a change in contract provision reflecting a change in funding streams only. Current service users are currently able to attend and access the service.
Social Inclusion Navigator Role for People with Physical and Sensory Disabilities within the NHSCT	Health and Social Care	Service is offered free of charge across all of NHSCT. Staff visit service users in their own home regardless of location within Trust. This service maximises opportunities for social inclusion for people in this client group and also considers the economic needs of people residing rurally by delivering the service to people in their own homes.
The Award, Monitoring, Review and Governance Arrangements for the Provision of Acute Services by IS Providers	Health and Social Care	Reduction of waiting lists in gastroenterology, dermatology, rheumatology, ENT, diagnostics and endoscopy by transfer of patients to independent

		sector providers. Transfer of delivery location in this way may have an economic impact on people living rurally. Similar impact on all patients anticipated regardless of residential location. Specific differential impacts in respect of patients who reside rurally relate to the availability and cost of transport provision including both public and community transport.
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1. This information should normally be contained in section 1B of the RNIA Template completed in respect of the activity.
2. This information should normally be contained in section 2D of the RNIA Template completed in respect of the activity.
3. The information contained in sections 3D, 4A & 5B of the RNIA Template should be considered when completing this section.