

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.

Sport Northern Ireland

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.

Sport NI Equality Scheme action plan 2025/26

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

Sport NI Equality Scheme Action Plan 2025/26

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

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories. In our revised equality scheme for 2021 – 2026 we set out how Sport NI will continue to fulfil its Section 75 statutory duties.

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).

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Other Definition (Provide details and the rationale below).

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A definition of 'rural' is not applicable.

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Details of alternative definition of 'rural' used.

n/a

Rationale for using alternative definition of 'rural'.

n/a

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

n/a

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 Equality Scheme is designed to meet our S75 responsibilities but incorporates rural needs, in that it provides for all our equality actions mainstreamed through programmes within the Equality Scheme Action Plan 2025/26.

The Sport NI corporate plan sets the intent to mainstream equality through our programmes and projects, including rural needs (cornerstone four) and includes rural indicators, and each programme within the equality scheme action plan is rural needs impact assessed to ensure it considers the evidence and develops policy to consider rural needs.

The Equality Scheme action plan is ultimately designed to increase participation, volunteering and workforce in rural areas, measured by programme performance and a range of longitudinal research, such as the Continuous Household Survey.

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.

The Equality Scheme action plan aligns to the external facing programmes and projects within the SportNI 2025/26 business plan which supports the delivery of the corporate plan 2021-2026 outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** People adopting and sustaining participation in sport and physical activity.
- **Outcome 2:** NI Athletes among the best in the world.

These outcomes are underpinned specifically by four cornerstones:

- Building a positive and inclusive sports culture, recognising the rights of everyone to access and participate in sport.
- Retaining a duty of care to all those engaged in the Sporting System.
- Promoting wellness and well-being.
- Targeting sport in rural communities, in disadvantaged areas and with under-represented groups.

Outcome one particularly focuses on under-represented groups and rural isolation. We do not expect there to be any adverse impact on people from rural areas. Any impacts of this policy should be positive. Where there are real or perceived barriers, programmes are designed to understand and address these.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rural Crime or Community Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Agri-Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please state)	<input type="text" value="Sport participation and development opportunities"/>

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.

n/a

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Surveys or Questionnaires	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other Publications	<input checked="" 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.

In the Sport NI's Corporate Plan 'The Power of Sport' (2021/26), there was a significant consultation processes including several focus group meetings with organisations including those representing Rural Communities. The Corporate Plan Equality Impact Assessment, Sport NI reviewed academic and other sources pertaining to rural needs in NI and their experiences of sport including:

- (2016) Young People and Sport In NI: A response to the 2015 Young Life and Times and Kids Life and Times surveys, Sport NI.
- (2019) Education Authority Data
- (2019) Behan, Stephen, Belton, Sarah Jane, and Dublin City University, Ireland's Children Moving: Examining fundamental movement skills in Irish school children as a key component for physical literacy.
- (2016) OUTstanding in your field: Exploring the needs of LGB&T people in rural Northern Ireland, Rainbow Project.
- (2015) Marie H. Murphy, Niamh M. Murphy, Catherine Woods, Alan M. Neville, Aoife Lane, Prevalence and Correlates of Physical Inactivity in Community-Dwelling Older Adults in Ireland.
- (2020-2023) Youth Service Regional Assessment of Need
- 2019-20, Sport NI developed and undertook an open 'Participation Survey'; hosted on 'Citizen Space' and invited anyone involved in female sport or physical activity (both male and female), aged 16+ years, to respond to the survey. Subsequent to the survey, Sport NI facilitated a series of focus group sessions across Northern Ireland.

In addition, DAERA rural research and statistics has been incorporated as an evidence base to inform policy and programme design/ equality action plans: [Research and Statistics | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#). Each equality action or programme is rural needs impact assessed and considers this evidence.

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

There is extensive research and data from CHS, CSPPA, KLT/YPLT, EQIA, DAERA data etc. a summary example of just some findings are:

- Children and young people from rural areas were least likely to say that they walked or cycled to school.
- The lower population density in rural areas means that the distance between family homes and schools is larger, and for some young people it may therefore be unfeasible to walk or cycle to school, especially at post-primary level where some young people must travel significant distances to get to their school.
- 35% of children and young people live in a rural community.
- Females, living alone or in a rural area, retirement, fair/poor emotional health and activity being limited by illness are significantly associated with inactivity.
- Those from rural areas described the challenges they faced such as lack of choice of sports, transport issues and social isolation.
- Physical literacy is a cornerstone of Physical Activity involvement. 77.5% of children scored between 'very poor' and 'below average' in FMS proficiency. There was no difference between children attending urban and rural schools, but notably, when socioeconomic status is taken into account, the schools in middle and upper-class neighborhoods scored significantly higher.
- Children and young people understand the importance of an active lifestyle to their overall general health and wellbeing.
- Need for increased promotion of the sport and physical activity options available in local communities, particularly in rural areas - believed there are opportunities out there but people unsure where to look.
- Need for additional consideration for enhancing opportunities for those living 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?

n/a

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.

Cornerstone four in Sport NI Corporate Plan is a key deliverable for programmes and equality actions in targeting sport and physical activity in rural communities. These programmes including investment have the potential to develop greater access to sport and physical activity via clubs and in many instances after school settings or local leisure facilities. This will build capacity creating learning and training opportunities at both national and community level. Sport NI has considered the impact of the following on rural communities:

- Limited access to transport both private and public networks negatively affecting individual ability to access sport and physical activity.
- Opportunities for children in rural areas to engage in active travel is limited especially at post-primary level.
- Females in rural areas greater susceptibility to inactivity.
- Limited choice of sport and physical activity opportunities in rural communities, need to diversify.
- Need for wider promotion of the current sport and physical activity opportunities, acknowledgement that these exist but those living in communities not aware where they can find information.

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

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No

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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.

The equality action plan will further seek to realise equality outcomes through programmes and projects that have integrated equality. Many of which are protected by an Equality Diversity and Inclusion strand running throughout investment funds. The equality actions seek to grow the understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion within the sporting system and partners. Equality actions/programmes are designed to make equality (including consideration of rural needs) more central and support it through increased investment, whilst creating opportunities and environments that attract and retain participants in sport, members, spectators etc., develop a sustainable workforce (paid and unpaid), build athlete centered environments, share learning and work in ways that support trust, enable collaboration, and foster shared commitment to tackling inequality.

For example, the increased focus and investment supporting EDI programme, posts and initiatives is designed to increase opportunities for those living in rural communities. The actions will improve knowledge and insight into the nature and needs of inequalities faced by those living in rural communities and use the understanding of those people and communities to inform action and grow their representation across sport and physical activity including workforce.

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.

n/a

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.

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Signature:	<i>Ali Campbell</i>
Date:	22 05 25
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Date:	22.05.25