Community Planning Investment Programme 2025–26

A Guide to the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 for Public Authorities

*(Revised) April 2018*

Appendix 1 - Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA)

Template

The aim of the Community Planning Investment Programme is to increase participation in sport and physical activity by supporting local councils to deliver inclusive, community-based projects. These projects are co-designed to respond to local priorities and tackle barriers to participation, including those experienced by rural dwellers. The programme promotes social inclusion, health and well-being, and accessible, no-cost or low-cost physical activity, especially for underrepresented groups.

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

**Community Planning Investment Programme 2025–26 Business Case**

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.

Developing a Policy Strategy Plan

Adopting a Policy Strategy Plan

Implementing a Policy Strategy Plan

Revising a Policy Strategy Plan Designing a Public Service

Delivering a Public Service

x

x

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

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 Northern Ireland

1A. Name of Public Authority.

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

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N/A

*Reasons why a definition of ‘rural’ is not applicable.*

N/A

*Rationale for using alternative definition of ‘rural.’*

N/A

*Details of alternative definition of ‘rural’ used.*

Population Settlements of less than 5,000 (Default definition). Other Definition (Provide details and the rationale below).

A definition of ‘rural’ is not applicable.

X

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

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Rural residents often face different barriers than those in urban areas. These include:

* Limited proximity to leisure centres, parks, or organised clubs;
* Reduced public transport options;
* Higher levels of social isolation;
* Lower visibility of inclusive programmes.

CPI addresses these challenges by enabling local councils to fund delivery in-situ; i.e., in rural community centres; schools; or village hubs; and to remove participation costs. This approach recognises the different delivery mechanisms required for rural versus urban communities.

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 CPI programme will to positively impact rural dwellers by increasing access to sport and physical activity opportunities within their local areas. The funding is designed to enable councils to co-design initiatives with communities, targeting those typically underserved — including rural populations with limited access to formal sport infrastructure or transport. This investment supports wellbeing, inclusion, and social cohesion in rural settings by enabling the delivery of tailored, no-cost or low-cost programmes.

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

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

X

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

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

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N/a

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

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

Rural Businesses Rural Tourism Rural Housing

Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas Education or Training in Rural Areas

Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas Health or Social Care Services in Rural Areas

Poverty in Rural Areas Deprivation in Rural Areas

Rural Crime or Community Safety Rural Development

Agri-Environment

Other (Please state)

Social Inclusion in rural areas

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

* **Published statistics**: Sport NI used data from the *Continuous Household Survey (2022–24)* and *Experience of Sport by Adults in Northern Ireland (DfC, 2023/24)* to understand geographic disparities in participation, especially among rural residents.
* **Consultation with stakeholders**: Insight was gathered from local councils during the CPI pilot (2023–25), several of which represent rural districts (e.g., Mid Ulster, ABC). Consultation was also undertaken with rural stkeholdrs during th development of th corporate plaan.
* **Research & strategic reports**: The CPI is aligned to the *Active Living Strategy (2022)* and *Power of Sport (2021–26)*, both of which identify rural access as a key theme.
* **Monitoring and evaluation reports**: Pilot project feedback and PPEs provided first-hand evidence of rural need and response.
* **Web sources**: Information from [www.sportni.net](https://eu-west-1.protection.sophos.com?d=sportni.net&u=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuc3BvcnRuaS5uZXQv&i=Njc0NzQyYWQxZTNkZGQ0ZjM2YzEyYWFh&t=ckQzeHJVL3VaYllENFlhdkY2RXFCK2Ftd21BQ0hoejkvR2U3TG9uNXlNZz0=&h=c030b8d12ad9412f827baed99437b20a&s=AVNPUEhUT0NFTkNSWVBUSVZ9czSz0aAFmeA3G0rNZYZjPTj8jraG-3kEQQAmXf4ZJA), [www.communities-ni.gov.uk](https://eu-west-1.protection.sophos.com?d=communities-ni.gov.uk&u=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuY29tbXVuaXRpZXMtbmkuZ292LnVrLw==&i=Njc0NzQyYWQxZTNkZGQ0ZjM2YzEyYWFh&t=QkwyZDFpTmo5OEdOck5NaVJKZnpERnZ3VTZMNEs0WUhrdFEvc1NBTlRDVT0=&h=c030b8d12ad9412f827baed99437b20a&s=AVNPUEhUT0NFTkNSWVBUSVZ9czSz0aAFmeA3G0rNZYZjPTj8jraG-3kEQQAmXf4ZJA), and [www.daera-ni.gov.uk](https://eu-west-1.protection.sophos.com?d=daera-ni.gov.uk&u=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZGFlcmEtbmkuZ292LnVrLw==&i=Njc0NzQyYWQxZTNkZGQ0ZjM2YzEyYWFh&t=S3dSSWFhTGtiZjRCYmd1ck1ZaGUxbGpyMmNYV3NEMEFpVzVsQ3pvYldTZz0=&h=c030b8d12ad9412f827baed99437b20a&s=AVNPUEhUT0NFTkNSWVBUSVZ9czSz0aAFmeA3G0rNZYZjPTj8jraG-3kEQQAmXf4ZJA) informed planning.

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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.

Consultation with Rural Stakeholders Published Statistics Consultation with Other Organisations Research Papers Surveys or Questionnaires Other Publications

Other Methods or Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below).

x

x

x

x

X

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.

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

x

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?

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

N/A

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

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

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

* **Access to facilities**: Rural communities often lack proximity to sports centres, gyms, or structured club activity.
* **Transport and travel barriers**: Limited public transport makes it harder to engage in centralised physical activity provision.
* **Financial hardship**: Many rural households face cost-of-living pressures; travel and activity fees are unaffordable.
* **Social isolation**: Especially among older adults and carers, leading to negative health outcomes.
* **Lack of visibility or tailored provision**: Programmes often do not reach or reflect rural community preferences and needs.

These needs informed the design of CPI as a **place-based, low-cost, co-designed investment** that ensures rural dwellers are not disadvantaged and can access equitable physical activity opportunities.

The issues raised for people residing in rural areas included the followingrural-specific issues were identified and actively considered in the design of the CPI Programme:

* **Access to Facilities**: Many rural communities lack local leisure centres or structured club-based sport, limiting opportunities for participation.
* **Transport Barriers**: Rural residents often face poor public transport infrastructure, which restricts access to sport and physical activity programmes delivered in urban hubs.
* **Affordability**: Travel costs, registration fees, and equipment costs are key barriers in rural communities, particularly those affected by income deprivation.
* **Social Isolation and Health Inequality**: Older adults, carers, and people with disabilities in rural areas often experience higher levels of loneliness, inactivity, and preventable health issues.
* **Visibility and Relevance of Provision**: Many sport and activity programmes are not tailored to rural populations’ interests or circumstances, resulting in under-engagement.

These needs directly informed the programme’s low-cost/no-cost design and requirement for councils to co-design locally relevant, inclusive programmes that specifically consider rural demographics and geography. Delivery through local venues (e.g. community halls, schools, church halls) was encouraged to overcome structural barriers and enhance uptake.

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

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

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

The CPI programme has been explicitly shaped by the identified needs of rural communities in several key ways:

* **Place-based Delivery**: Councils are encouraged to deliver activities directly within rural communities to eliminate travel barriers and improve accessibility.
* **Co-design Requirement**: Councils must consult local communities to ensure the funded projects are responsive to rural needs and preferences.
* **Cost Barrier Reduction**: All CPI-funded activities operate under a no-cost or low-cost model, a direct response to affordability issues in rural (and deprived) areas.
* **Monitoring of Rural Impact**: Councils are required to report on rural reach and participation, ensuring Sport NI can assess and respond to impact across rural and urban populations.
* **Emphasis on Inclusion and Equity**: Programme guidance highlights rural inclusion as a core priority alongside other underrepresented groups such as disabled people, older adults, and ethnic minorities.

As a result, the CPI model not only delivers across all 11 local councils — many of which are predominantly rural — but does so in a way that reduces inequalities and promotes long-term, equitable access to sport and physical activity in rural settings.

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.

Yes No If the response is NO GO TO Section 5C.

X

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?

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

/

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Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:

Robbie Geary

Position/Grade:

DP

Division/Branch

Sport Development, Sport NI

Signature:

R Geary

Date:

23/06/2025

Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:

Rebecca Hope

Position/Grade:

Interim Director of Sport (G6)

Division/Branch:

Sport NI

Signature:

R Hope

Date:

30/7/25

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

X

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.

**SECTION 6 - Documenting and Recording**

N/A

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.