

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 Investment in Sported's "Engage Her programme".

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

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	☐		

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 Investment into Sported's Engage Her Programme

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

The programme aims to provide tailored insight, training and operational support to strengthen local club's understanding of how to engage with women and girls more effectively. the programme aims to offer volunteer support to help embed learning into their day-to-day activities and develop new opportunities for women and girls to get involved in sport and physical activity locally.

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.

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.

This programme will improve gender equality across sport by addressing participation gaps, leadership underrepresentation, visibility, safety, and access for women and girls.

The Sported's EngageHer programme will also target women in rural areas (in addition to urban areas) and promote full inclusion of women and girls in all levels and forms of sport and physical activity, by: Increasing sports participation; developing female leadership opportunities; creating safer, more inclusive environments; tackling societal and cultural barriers; and improving gender-sensitive data and insights. Sported will prioritise applications to ensure a portion of participating groups are from rural areas, covering a geographical spread across NI. These groups will be supported to consult with and provide activities for women & girls from rural locations. They will also receive peer-support from other groups on the cohort, providing local solutions and sharing learning. The previous Engage Her programme from 2016-2019 benefitted clubs/women from sporting organisations based in rural areas like from Strabane, Kilkeel, Kinawley, Newtownstewart and this round of the programme aims to continue to ensure women and girls from rural areas receive the help and support they need to ensure positive sporting experiences and opportunities.

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.

N/a

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	☐
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

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	☒	Published Statistics	☒
Consultation with Other Organisations	☒	Research Papers	☒
Surveys or Questionnaires	☒	Other Publications	☐
Other Methods or Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below).			☒

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.

[List of Rural Related Research, Publications and Other Information - August 2023.pdf](#)

[Empowerment of rural women in Northern Ireland – impacts on poverty, development and current challenges.](#)

<https://data.nisra.gov.uk/>

<https://www.womensregionalconsortiumni.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Womens-Experiences-of-the-Cost-of-Living-Crisis-in-NI-2.pdf>

Department of Health Survey: first results. Available at: Health survey Northern Ireland: first results | Department of Health (health-ni.gov.uk); NISRA . Wellbeing In Northern Ireland Report Available at: Wellbeing in Northern Ireland | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (nisra.gov.uk); The Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study (2022). Ulster University, University College Dublin, University College Cork, and University of Limerick. Available at: CSPPA.ie – The Children's Sport Participation & Physical Activity Study 2022

ARK. Young Life and Times Survey (2015). ARK www.ark.ac.uk/ylt [distributor], May 2016. Available at: <https://www.ark.ac.uk/ylt/2015/index.htm>

NISRA (2017). Young Persons' Behaviour & Attitudes Survey Available at: Young Persons' Behaviour & Attitudes Survey 2016 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (nisra.gov.uk)

Schubotz, D., McKnight, M., & Lloyd, K. (2016). Young people and sport in Northern Ireland. <http://www.sportni.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Young-People-and-Sport.pdf> Available at: Young people and sport in Northern Ireland. — Queen's University Belfast (qub.ac.uk); Research Work Group for Ireland's Report Card on Physical Activity in Children and Adolescents. (2022). The 2022 Ireland North and South Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Adolescents Available at: The 2022 Ireland North and South Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Adolescents (Summary) (iphrepository.com); NISRA (2021/22) Continuous Household Survey: Engagement in Culture, Arts, Heritage and Sport by Adults in Northern Ireland.; available at: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/engagement-culture-arts-heritage-sport-by-adults-in-northern-ireland-202122.pdf>

Sport NI. (2010). The Northern Ireland Sport and Physical Activity Survey: A Baseline Report Available at: SAPASReport.pdf (sportni.net)

Outdoors Recreation Northern Ireland, 56 Degrees Insight (2020/21), Outdoors in Northern Ireland, Results of population survey November 2020 to October 2021. Available at: POMNI_2020_2021_results_final_version.pdf (mcusercontent.com); Sport Northern Ireland (2020). Northern Ireland Sports Club Survey; Sport Northern Ireland (2018). Sporting Clubs Programme - Year One Progress Update; Sport Northern Ireland (2019). Performance Pathway Coach Mapping

Norman, L., Rankin-Wright, A.J., and Allison, W. 2018. It's a concrete ceiling – it's not even glass: understanding tenets of organisational culture that supports the progression of women is coaches and coach developers, *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*. 42 (5), 393-414.

Sport Northern Ireland (2020). Northern Ireland Sports Club Survey.

Deloitte 2020, Data-driven change: Women in the boardroom - A global perspective, Sixth edition Available at: Women in the Boardroom (deloitte.com)

Sport Northern Ireland (2018) Sporting Winners Programme – Progress Update

Sport Northern Ireland (2018). Sporting Clubs Programme - Year One Progress Update

Sport Northern Ireland, Sheffield Hallam University (2021). Talent Pathway Inclusion Insight pending final report

NISRA (2019/20). Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitudes Survey Available at: Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitude Survey 2019 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (nisra.gov.uk); Connolly S, Carlin A, Johnston A, Woods C, Powell C, Belton S, O'Brien W, Saunders J, Duff C, Farmer O, Murphy M. Physical Activity, Sport and Physical Education in Northern Ireland School Children: A Cross-Sectional Study. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2020 Sep 19;17(18):6849. doi: 10.3390/ijerph17186849. PMID: 32961784; PMCID: PMC7559058.

Web link: Physical Activity, Sport and Physical Education in Northern Ireland School Children: A Cross-Sectional Study - PubMed (nih.gov)

European Commission. 2010. Sport and Physical Activity. Special Eurobarometer Web Link: Sport and Physical Activity - March 2010 - - Eurobarometer survey (europa.eu)

Allender et al cite: Porter, S. 2002. Physical Activity: An Exploration of the Issues and Attitudes of Teenage Girls. London: Scott Porter Research and Marketing;

Web Link: Understanding participation in sport and physical activity among children and adults: a review of qualitative studies | Health Education Research | Oxford Academic (oup.com)

Coakley, J & White, A. 1992. 'Making decisions: gender and sport participation among British adolescents', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 9: 20–35;

Web Link: (PDF) Making Decisions: Gender and Sport Participation among British Adolescents (researchgate.net)

Orme, J. 1991. 'Adolescent girls and exercise: too much of a struggle?', *Educational Health* 9: 76–80

Web Link: Adolescent Girls and Exercise: Too Much of a Struggle?. | Semantic Scholar

Rutherford, J. 2019. '#ActiveFitSporty How can We Encourage Females to Participate and Flourish in Sport and Physical Activity?'

Paul Sellars, Jack Walklett, & Professor Diane Crone (November 2022). Understanding outdoor sports participants' motivations and connectedness to nature in Northern Ireland - 2022 Update Belfast Newsletter (2022). Menopausal Mermaids extol benefits of bracing dips in the North Atlantic

Menopausal Mermaids extol benefits of bracing dips in the North Atlantic | Belfast News Letter

Sport NI (2021). Mournie's User Survey; Sport NI (2020). The Get Wet Stay Active Project Monitoring Report

The Women in Sport Fitness Foundation (2011). Study into Women and Informal Sport Available at: Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation : (wsff.org.uk)

Sport NI and University of Ulster (2019). Active Fit and Sporty Participation Survey Available at: Active Fit Sporty Report | Sport NI

Sport NI and Sported (2017)- EngageHER Case Study. Available at: Case Study: Engage-HER – Challenging Sport Deliverers in Northern Ireland – Women In Sport

Norman, L., and Rankin-Wright, (2018). A. Surviving rather than thriving: understanding the experiences of women coaches using a theory of gendered social well-being, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*. 53 (4), 424-450.

Norman, L. (2008). The UK Coaching System in Failing Women Coaches, *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*. 3 (4), 447-464.

Rankin-Wright, A., Hylton, L. and Norman, L. (2019). Negotiating the coaching landscape: experiences of black men and women coaches in the United Kingdom, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*. 54 (5), 603-621.

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

In reviewing the available data it is apparent that there are many issues and challenges that rural women face within Northern Ireland. Some of these include:

- The persistence of the 'pay gap' between men and women;
- Under representation of women on decision making bodies and in elected office;
- Rural land is still largely owned, managed and worked by men – what opportunities for women?;
- Single pensioner and lone parent households being two of the main household groupings that have the highest risk of poverty, both of which are predominantly female;
- The ageing rural population – people living for longer and needing care and services. Also a gender impact as women live longer and are more likely to be carers than men;
- Centralisation of services and jobs – high transport costs in accessing education, health and employment;
- Lack of access to affordable and flexible childcare – particularly difficult within dispersed rural communities;
- Benefit traps: the impact of changes in benefits (such as working families tax credit and child care tax credit within the UK) have the potential risk of reinforcing poverty;
- Female poverty can often be 'hidden' as most research focuses on households rather than genders within households;
- Poor access to training opportunities and a reliance on networks to get into work, and non-unionisation of the rural workforce;
- The 'Rural Idyll' image continues to be prevalent - involves cultural assumptions and values. For example, being 'independent' is seen as a characteristic of rural dwellers; which can mean that individuals are reluctant to access welfare services and benefits. Also has the potential to restrict the roles that women play e.g. role as the mother or housewife;

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.

The following issues were considered by the Sported EngageHER programme:

- The need for developing female-friendly changing rooms and ensuring community hall access.
- The need for timetabling to accommodate after-school practices, evening and weekend sessions.
- The need for coaching support, coach development and female role models.
- The need for organising ride-share schemes or minibuses.
- The need for outreach work: campaigns to challenge stereotypes and encourage participation.
- The need for female-led coaching bursaries targeting rural coaches;
- The need for pilot mentoring network connecting rural female athletes with peers and role models; and
- The need for inclusion of women's sports measures in local development plans to track participation equity

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.

The resulting policy amendments to the Sported EngageHer programme include:

- Grant programme for rural sports club facilities to improve female access;
- Investment in female-led coaching bursaries targeting rural coaches;
- Funding for transport support schemes to practices and competitions;
- Pilot mentoring network connecting rural female athletes with peers and role models; and
- Inclusion of women's sports measures in local development plans to track participation equity.

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.

☒

Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:	Christine Rea
Position/Grade:	Staff Officer
Division/Branch	Sport NI
Signature:	Christine Rea
Date:	16.10.25
Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:	Rebecca Hope
Position/Grade:	Interim Director of Sport
Division/Branch:	Sport NI
Signature:	R. Hope
Date:	21.10.25