

## 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 Health, Northern Ireland (NI)

#### 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.

A consultation, on options to increase the current rate of pharmacy Premises Fees.

#### 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.

Increase in Pharmacy Premises Fees in Northern Ireland

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

The aim of the policy is to increase pharmacy Premises Fees, which have remained static for 11 years. Several options as to how these might be increased are set out in a consultation document for key stakeholders. Fees are the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland's (the Society's) primary source of income and a fee increase would generate additional revenue which could be used to alleviate the current financial pressures facing the Society and enable it to provide the high-quality service that pharmacists, patients, and the public expect of a Regulator.

An increase in pharmacy premises fees would amend the current policy, by increasing fee amounts for the registration, retention and restoration of pharmacy premises, which are currently specified in The Medicines (Pharmacies) (Applications for Registration and Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 (the 2010 Regulations). Any increase will require an amendment to these Regulations.

**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.*

Not applicable

*Rationale for using alternative definition of 'rural'.*

Not applicable

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

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.

According to the [General Pharmaceutical Services for Northern Ireland: Annual Statistics 2024/25](#) report, published annually by the NI Statistics and Research Agency and the Business Services Organisation (BSO), at UK level, NI has the highest number of pharmacies per 100,000 population for 2023/24 at 26.7 pharmacies per 100, population. In comparison, the UK average is 19.2 pharmacies per 100,000 people. This difference may be explained by the fact that there are fewer dispensing GP practices in NI. The same report also highlights that over 99.4% of the population is living within 5 miles of a pharmacy. However, in many cases, the distance between home and pharmacy was far shorter - 72.5% of all people lived within 1 mile of a pharmacy.

The Department acknowledges that there may be an impact on pharmacy businesses as a result of an increase in pharmacy Premises Fees, particularly for smaller businesses and those located in rural areas. We welcome views, particularly from those pharmacies in rural areas on the perceived impact that an increase in pharmacy Premises Fees will have on their business. The evidence gathered as a result of the consultation will be used to further inform the Rural Impact Assessment.

### 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.

An increase in Premises Fees will apply equally to both rural and urban communities as location is not a factor in relation to the application of a universal fee increase for pharmacy Premises Fees. However, the Department recognises that an increase in fees might have a greater impact on smaller pharmacy businesses and particularly those in rural areas, which could impact on the accessibility to a pharmacy, by those living locally. However, given the high number of pharmacies per 100,000 population in NI and ease of access in terms of distance to nearest pharmacies as set out at 2B above, the impact on service users should be minimal. As highlighted above, the views of these businesses on the potential impact of a fee increase are welcome.

The consultation also seeks views on proposals for payment of retention fees, by direct debit under an administrative arrangement, operated by the Society. These fees must be paid in order for a pharmacy business to remain on the Register of pharmacies maintained by the Society. If progressed, such an arrangement could help spread the cost of an increased fee. Views on this administrative proposal are also welcome.

**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 checked="" 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 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 checked="" 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.**

Not applicable

## 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 type="checkbox"/>	Published Statistics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Consultation with Other Organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Research Papers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Surveys or Questionnaires	<input 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.**

Prescribing data, in primary care settings, provided by the Health and Social Care, Business Services Organisation (2025) General Pharmaceutical Services for Northern Ireland: Annual Statistics 2024/25. Available at [\[link\]](#).

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

The Department is carrying out a consultation on options to increase the pharmacy Premises Fees to determine whether an increase should be applied to pharmacy Premises Fees and if so, the amount of the increase.

The Department will use the information provided during the consultation exercise to identify any potential barriers in the delivery of the policy in both rural and urban 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.**

The implementation of an increase in pharmacy Premises Fees would apply equally to both rural and urban areas.

It is acknowledged that small pharmacies and particularly those in rural areas, are more likely to be impacted by the cost of an increase in premises fees and views are sought from these pharmacies.

## **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.

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

**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.**

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.**


Prescribing data, in primary care settings in the [General Pharmaceutical Services for Northern Ireland: Annual Statistics 2024/25](#) include Local Government District prescribing data and distance to nearest pharmacies in NI.

The Department welcomes the views of small pharmacies, particularly those in rural areas and will consider information provided during the consultation exercise to identify any potential barriers to delivery of the policy in both rural and urban areas.

## 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>	Isobel Riddell
<b>Position/Grade:</b>	Deputy Principal (DP)
<b>Division/Branch</b>	Medicines Legislation Unit
<b>Signature:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	30/4/2026 - Updated 2/6/26
<b>Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:</b>	Brenda McGilligan 30/4 Gillian Wright -3/6/26
<b>Position/Grade:</b>	Principal (G7),
<b>Division/Branch:</b>	PASD
<b>Signature:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	30 /4/26 – updated 2/6/26