

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 public consultation seeking views on options to restrict or stop the routine prescribing of selected medicines in primary care.

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

Developing a	Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input 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 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.

Options to restrict or stop the routine prescribing of selected medicines in primary care.

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

This consultation is seeking views on whether any changes should be made to Health and Social Care prescribing of certain medicines from General Practitioner (GP) practices in primary care:

- those deemed to have limited evidence of effectiveness, and
- those not supported by the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG), some of which may be purchased without prescription by patients from community pharmacies and other retail outlets.

The objective is to improve clinical effectiveness, ensure better value for money, and support the sustainable use of medicines in the HSC in NI.

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.

The options being consulted upon will consider actions to restrict or stop prescribing of selected medicines, which Departmental guidance considers having low and limited clinical value. This consultation aims to assess and address the prescribing of such low and limited clinical value medicines from GP practices in primary care in Northern Ireland, with the objective of improving clinical effectiveness, ensuring better value for money, and supporting the sustainable use of medicines for the NI population.

The proposals will therefore impact on people in rural areas, however it will not have any differential impact on rural areas compared to urban areas.

The actions to restrict or stop prescribing of low and limited clinical value medicines would impact on people living in rural areas as well as those living in urban areas. For information, the Department have also considered the latest prescribing data in primary care settings in NI, which have been provided by the HSC Business Services Organisation (BSO) in June 2025 - [General Pharmaceutical Services for Northern Ireland: Annual Statistics 2024/25](#). The data available at this stage suggests that people in rural areas will not face a greater impact

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 Department has considered the needs of people in rural areas when developing these proposals and it has been determined that they are not likely to impact on people in rural areas differently from people in urban areas.

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 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.

Please see response at 2B.

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: [<https://datavis.nisra.gov.uk/bsopfps-pharmacy-annual-report-24-25.html>].

These official statistics include prescribing data by Local Government Districts and distance to nearest pharmacies. The data available at this stage suggests that people in rural areas will not face a greater impact through the introduction of any of the proposed options within the consultation.

Our judgement is that no further steps are required at this stage to identify specific rural needs, however this draft screening document will be kept under review and updated to reflect any views or evidence sharing during the consultation.

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

Please see response to 3C.

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?

Please see response to 3A and 3B.

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 data currently available indicates that individuals in rural areas are unlikely to experience a greater impact from the options proposed within the consultation document. Any social and economic impacts will apply equally to all patients, regardless of whether they reside in rural or urban communities. Consequently, geographical location or the location of Primary care services, are not a significant factor. As a result, no issues require further consideration.

This draft screening document will be kept under review and updated to reflect any views or evidence sharing during the consultation.

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.

Please see response to 5A.

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.

No specific rural needs have been identified at this stage. The proposals will be applied equally across all areas of Northern Ireland. This draft screening document will be kept under review and updated to reflect any views or evidence sharing during the consultation.

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:	James Gordon
Position/Grade:	Deputy Principal
Division/Branch	Medicine Access Branch
Signature:	James Gordon
Date:	18/06/2026
Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:	Catherine Lynn
Position/Grade:	Grade 7
Division/Branch:	Medicine Access Branch
Signature:	Catherine Lynn
Date:	23/06/26