

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 (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.

Proposed amendments to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997.

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.

The Pharmaceutical Services (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

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

To introduce proposed amendments to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 to enhance existing clinical governance arrangements and enable pharmacy contractors (or their staff) the ability to refuse to provide pharmaceutical services to a person who is violent, threatens violence, or commits, or threatens to commit a criminal offence.

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.

All areas of NI are expected to benefit from the intended policy, given that the aim of the proposals are to enhance existing clinical governance arrangements and enable pharmacy contractors (or their staff) the ability to refuse to provide pharmaceutical services to a person who is violent, threatens violence, or commits, or threatens to commit a criminal offence.

The proposals from a clinical governance perspective would further demonstrate and embed quality and accountability in a chemists everyday interaction with their patients and members of the public, whilst from the perspective of a chemist being able to refuse to provide pharmaceutical services to a violent or potentially violent patient, this would ensure that a community pharmacy contractor would not be in breach of their Terms of Service if they (or their staff) refused to provide pharmaceutical services under these circumstances. These proposals would be applicable to all chemists and pharmacy contractors providing HSC pharmaceutical services irrespective of their geographical location.

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.

No - there is currently no evidence to suggest that the intended proposals will 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 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.

The proposals would impact equally on people in rural areas to that of people from urban areas.

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 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.

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 proposals to amend the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997.

Whilst the Department is currently of the view that no evidence is available to suggest that the intended proposals will impact on people in rural areas differently from people in urban areas, it will use the information provided during the consultation exercise to identify any potential barriers that might exist 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?

The Department has tried to ensure all its section 75 requirements are met. Specific questions, aimed at Northern Ireland respondents, have been designed and incorporated into the consultation document, around Northern Ireland's policy screening to satisfy our statutory equality and rural impact duties.

The Department will share a consultation document with relevant NI stakeholders, outlining proposals to amend the terms of service of chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 which are aimed at enhancing existing clinical governance arrangements and enabling pharmacy contractors (or their staff) the ability to refuse to provide pharmaceutical services to a person who is violent, threatens violence, or commits, or threatens to commit a criminal offence. This will include sharing the consultation with all HSC chemists and pharmacy contractors in NI, and with relevant organisations directly involved in HSC pharmaceutical service delivery.

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 amendments to the terms of service of chemists to enhance existing clinical governance arrangements and enable pharmacy contractors (or their staff) the ability to refuse to provide pharmaceutical services would apply equally to all chemists providing HSC pharmaceutical services in both rural and urban areas.

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.

Not applicable

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.

The Health and Social Care needs of people living in rural areas in NI are considered in the development of all health/medicine/pharmaceutical policies, for example – DAERA’s published urban-rural stats ([Health and Social Care Inequalities in Northern Ireland: Urban-Rural Statistics](#) | [Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)).

Whilst the Department is currently of the view that no evidence is currently available that would suggest that the intended proposals will impact on people in rural areas differently from people in urban areas, it does however welcome the views of all chemists and pharmacy contractors providing HSC pharmaceutical services, particularly those working or based in rural areas. We will willuse and consider any information provided during the consultation exercise to identify if there are any potential barriers to delivery of the policy proposals in both rural and urban areas, and will aim to mitigate against these should they exist.

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:	Eddie Murphy
Position/Grade:	Acting G7
Division/Branch	Medicines Legislation Unit
Signature:	Eddie Murphy
Date:	26 th June 2026
Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:	
Position/Grade:	G6 – Senior Principal Pharmaceutical Officer
Division/Branch:	Pharmaceutical Advice and Services Directorate
Signature:	Chris Garland
Date:	26 th June 2026