Rural Needs Impact Assessment Template

Step 1: Define the Issue

Key questions to consider:

- **What are the objectives of the strategy, policy plan or service?**
- **What impact do you intend it to have in rural areas?**
- **How is ‘rural’ defined for the purposes of this policy/strategy/service/plan?**
- **What would constitute a fair rural outcome in this case?**

To improve their outcomes and help them achieve their full potential in line with their peers, this Strategy describes the pledge to support children and young people in care. It applies to those who are on the ‘edge’ of care, that is:

a. Living in families with intense needs and requiring intensive supports [on the edge of coming into care];
b. Returning home from a period in care [on the edge of a (short) period in care];
c. Leaving care to make the journey into adult life [on the edge of aging out of care]; and
d. Also to those leaving care, that is:
   - Young people who have left care and are still in need of some support, including those who have been adopted; those who are living with family under a Private Law Order and those who are supported in independent living in early adulthood.

For the purposes of the Strategy, those young people are referred to as **care experienced**.

We will work in partnership to deliver improved well-being for children and young people pre-care, in-care and after-care by:

**Pre-care**
Supporting families at an early stage; providing targeted intensive support for children, young people and their families where the risk of entry into care is high; and ensuring that decisions about taking children into care are made without unnecessary delay and always in their best interests.

**In-care**
Securing earlier permanence and stability for children and young people in care and enabling them to build positive and supportive relationships; extending placement options; strengthening support for care givers; providing more effective regional specialist services; providing effective interventions to deal with particular challenges including: substance misuse, poor mental health and emotional well-being outcomes; criminalisation and poor educational outcomes.

**After-care**
Supporting children and young people returning home from care and their families; extending support for children and young people after-care, including care leavers, to help them make a successful transition into independent living as adults.

At this stage of the development of the strategy and implementation plan, no potential rural or local impacts have been identified.
It is not expected that the implementation of this strategy and implementation plan will present specific rural impacts.
Step 2: Understand the situation

Key questions to consider:

- What is the current situation in rural areas?
- What evidence (statistics, data, research, stakeholder advice) do you have about the position in rural areas?
- If the relevant evidence is not available, can this be sourced?
- Do you have access to the views of rural stakeholders about the likely impact of the policy?
- Are there existing design features or mitigations already in place to take account of rural needs?

In 2014/15 an estimated 33% of the NI population were living in rural areas, 58% were living in predominantly urban areas and 9% were living in mixed urban/rural areas. By comparison, of those children looked after for 12 months or longer at the end of September 2015, 75% were living in urban areas before entering care, 20% originated in rural areas and 6% were from mixed urban/rural areas.

Of those children looked after continuously for 12 months or longer at 30/9/16, 42% came from the most deprived areas in NI. Some of these areas of deprivation included rural areas such as Enniskillen, South Armagh, Ballycastle and West of the Bann. This is, however, balanced by those who came from deprived urban areas as well, including Derry and Belfast.

In 2014/15, for those care leavers aged 19, prior to entering care 75% were living in urban areas, 16% in rural areas and 8% in mixed urban/rural areas. After leaving care 75% were living in urban areas, 22% in rural areas and 3% in mixed urban/rural areas.

There has been no evidence to date of rural impacts or that the Strategy will show differential rural impacts in its outcomes. The main impact that was raised by key stakeholders at the pre-consultation stage was around transport within rural areas and this has been identified within the Strategy.

The Education Authority and the Health and Social Care Trusts have existing policies in place to take account of rural needs.
Step 3: Develop and appraise options

Key questions to consider:

- Are there barriers to delivery in rural areas?
- If so, how can these be overcome or mitigated?
- Will it cost more to deliver in rural areas?
- What steps can be taken to achieve fair rural outcomes?

At the pre-consultation stage of the development of the strategy and implementation plan, access to services was identified as a possible barrier in rural areas. This has been reflected within the context of the draft Strategy.

It is not expected that the implementation of this strategy and action plan will present significant rural impacts. It is recognised that Looked After Children in rural areas may have to travel further to access key services and that additional resources may be required to overcome this issue.
Step 4: Prepare for Delivery

Key questions to consider:

- *Do the necessary delivery mechanisms exist in rural areas?*
- *Have you considered alternative delivery mechanisms?*
- *What action has been taken to ensure fair rural outcomes?*
- *Is there flexibility for local delivery bodies to find local solutions?*
- *Are different solutions required in different areas?*

Resources and measures need to be established to ensure that Looked After Children in rural areas have access to the same level of service as urban children. This area needs to be considered and developed further during the formal consultation stage.

The Education Authority, each HSCT and each school has the delegated authority and autonomy to provide flexible services suitable to meet the needs of local populations.

Any additional resources required to deliver this Strategy will be identified during the development and refinement of the Implementation Plan.
Step 5: Implementation & Monitoring

Key questions to consider:

- Have you set any rural specific indicators or targets to monitor?
- How will the outcomes be measured in rural areas?
- Are there any statistics or data that you will collect to monitor rural needs and impacts?

The Looked After Children Strategy and Implementation Plan have been developed by the Health and Education Departments in conjunction with children and young people and key statutory, voluntary & community and public stakeholders. The Implementation Plan has been agreed on a cross department basis and identifies the intended outcomes and the actions to contribute to their delivery.

There are no specific additional rural indicators or targets included in the Strategy. The Department of Health and HSCB already monitor statistics e.g. the numbers of Looked After Children in rural areas. This will continue to be monitored.
Step 6: Evaluation & Review

Key questions to consider:

- What processes are in place to evaluate and review the implementation of the policy, strategy, plan or service?
- Have rural needs been factored into the evaluation process?
- How will lessons learned in relation to rural outcomes be used to inform future policy making and delivery?

The Strategy will be monitored using an Outcome Based Accountability model. Report Cards which include the outcomes of the Strategy and the indicators will inform progress and impact of implementation.

This Strategy is being published in the context of the Executive’s Programme for Government 2017-2021 (PIG 2016-2021), which commits the Executive to improving outcomes for the citizens of Northern Ireland over the course of the 2016-2021 Assembly mandate. Using existing structures the NI Executive and the NICS Board will be able to monitor, review and evaluate any impacts on the rural needs.

Any rural issues identified on review will be addressed by the Departments of Health and Education; the Education Authority and the HSCB.

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