

Appendix 2 - Template for Information to be Compiled

Information to be compiled by Public Authorities under Section 3(1)(a) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

(To be completed and included in public authorities' own annual reports and submitted to DAERA for inclusion in the Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report).

Name of Public Authority:

Reporting Period: April 20 to March 20

Background

The Western Trust is committed to its reporting and monitoring obligations in accordance with the Rural Needs Act (NI) (2016). The Trust has carried out the following activity to comply with and mainstream the duties:

- Health & Social Care Trusts (HSC) have worked collaboratively to ensure that the rural needs assessment template is user-friendly and relevant to HSC business. The key components of the template issued by DAERA have been used in compliance with the legislative obligations.
- The Directorate of Performance and Service Improvement is responsible for central co-ordination of the monitoring report on behalf of the Trust.
- Trust staff continue to liaise with DAERA staff regarding training, information and advice for staff.
- Advice and guidance is available within the Trust for staff completing rural needs assessments.
- HSC Trusts worked with the National Centre for Rural Health and Care to Develop a Rural Needs Toolkit for HSCNI. The Toolkit was launched in October 2022 by Health Minister Swann and was endorsed by Minister Poots, Minister for Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs. The Toolkit is a valuable resource providing guidance for decision makers in health and social care organisations on how best to consider the needs of people living in rural communities.

The Trust is committed to promoting and upholding its duties in relation to the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 and will have due

regard to rural needs in the development of all our policy and public service delivery decisions. The Trust is mindful that the level of 'regard' due will depend on the circumstances and, in particular, on the relevance of rural needs to the decision or function in question. The greater the relevance and potential impact for people in rural needs, the greater the regard required by the duty. In the table below, the Trust has provided detail on those policies which were considered as having a bearing on rural needs and therefore subject to a rural needs assessment. In preparing this monitoring template the Trust considered policies in respect of the social and economic needs of persons in rural areas and for the majority, no rural needs were identified. Many of these policies are clinical or technical in nature and have no bearing on rural needs.

The following table includes information on policies where a Rural Needs Impact Assessment has been completed:

<i>Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016¹.</i>	<i>The rural policy area(s) which the activity relates to².</i>	<i>Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service³.</i>
Acute Directorate		
Temporary Suspension of Emergency General Surgery at South West Acute Hospital, Enniskillen.	Health and Social Care	<p>The Trust initiated a project in September 2021 in order to work towards a sustainable Emergency General Surgery service. This was in response to challenges to the delivery of a safe and sustainable general surgery service, and address the particular challenge in maintaining 24/7 rotas to meet professionally mandated standards of care.</p> <p>This position changed at the beginning of October 2022 when the Trust experienced a number of critical staffing changes, which meant that the 24/7 rota for Emergency General Surgery at South West Acute Hospital (SWAH) could not be sustained after December 2022. This resulted in an unplanned and temporary change to Emergency General Surgery services at the South West Acute Hospital from 5th December 2022.</p> <p>SWAH delivers services to people primarily in rural areas. The focus of this temporary unplanned change is in the location of Emergency General Surgery services and how</p>

		<p>service users and their family/carers living in rural areas across the Trust may be impacted by increased travelling times. The Emergency Department at SWAH will continue to operate as normal seeing the vast majority of patients who would have previously attended.</p> <p>Consideration has been given to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including, for example, access to service in terms of economic cost, availability of public transport and broadband/internet/mobile communication access. The Trust is cognisant of the need to consider and mitigate any potential adverse impact. The Trust has focused on communication of the temporary change prior to the public consultation.</p> <p>The Trust developed a contingency plan with pathways in place to provide safe emergency treatment of general surgery patients at Altnagelvin Hospital, Craigavon Hospital and Sligo Hospital.</p> <p>The alternative hospitals may not be easily accessible from rural locations for those without private transport. Those living in rural locations will likely require more effort, time, and resources to access them than those in an urban area. Mitigating measures may be required to ensure needs of those in rural areas are addressed and that those being supported are not adversely affected by the proposed service change and associated out-workings.</p> <p>In summary impacts are likely to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited availability of public transport.• Cost of transportation to and from alternative provision location.• Limited provision of community transport.• Social impact of potential lack of family support network during the time required for the
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		<p>emergency general surgery and immediately afterward.</p> <p>The Public Consultation process began in January 2023 targeting local populations across the 7 Fermanagh and Omagh District Electoral Areas (DEA's). The main objective of the consultation is to identify if an alternative viable means of delivering the service can be identified. We will use the consultation process to outline key facts to inform the public and listen to alternative proposals. Public consultation events and virtual events will provide rural communities the opportunity to learn more about the reasons for the temporary change, the steps taken to keep all patients safe, and for people to give feedback on viable alternative means to deliver this service. This approach will give people ways to access information on the consultation and to provide views and responses.</p> <p>The Trust will review the Rural Needs Impact Assessment following the public consultation. The Project Board will review qualitative and quantitative data, including the patient experience. This will be reviewed to monitor impact and feedback on the issue of additional travel for patients and their families. Eligible service users can avail of the Hospital Travel Costs Scheme – a scheme which helps people on a low income or income-based benefits who may be entitled to reclaim travel expenses for hospital treatment.</p> <p>The Trust accept this will be a concerning time for the local population and that they will be worried about how safe the alternatives identified will be. The Trust is confident that we can plan and operate the new and temporary arrangements to deliver safe pathways of emergency care with the support of our partners in the NI Ambulance Service and at the Southern Trust.</p>
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Performance and Service Improvement Directorate		
Link to Wellbeing Project	Health and Social Care	<p>This project will aim to create a link from WHSCT orthopaedic surgery waiting lists to potentially up to 24 Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) organisations through a Social Prescribing approach. A pre-habilitation wellbeing programme will be delivered in partnership with local CVS groups. The wellbeing programmes will aim to improve self-management of the orthopaedic condition, reducing the adverse health impact for the service-user as they wait for surgery. It will maximise physical, mental and emotional wellbeing to promote recovery post-surgery. It will also help reduce the social isolation and loneliness experienced by many on the waiting list due to the physical limitations of their condition that reduces their ability to socialise.</p> <p>Those living rurally experience disadvantage in terms of isolation, poor transport network, poor internet access and social and economic disadvantage. These programmes will be running face to face but can also be incorporated in an online format if necessary. Transport will be provided as required in order to ensure individuals can attend programmes in their areas, meaning cost and availability of public transport should not be an issue</p>
Primary Care and Older People's Services Directorate		
Operational Guidelines for the Specialist Dementia and Older People's Community Mental Health Team (CMHT)	Health and Social Care	<p>These guidelines provide an outline of the Specialist Dementia and Older People's Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) principles and key services provided. They give clarity regarding the role and function of the Specialist Dementia and Older People's CMHT to staff, service users, carers and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Any service user who cannot attend an outpatient clinic because of its location and their frailty will be offered a home visit or a telephone appointment. Also the service</p>

		is currently piloting virtual clinics in community centres some of which are in rural areas. If these are successful the service will roll out across other rural areas.
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NOTES

1. This information should normally be contained in section 1B of the RNIA Template completed in respect of the activity.
2. This information should normally be contained in section 2D of the RNIA Template completed in respect of the activity.
3. The information contained in sections 3D, 4A & 5B of the RNIA Template should be considered when completing this section.