

The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

Rural Needs Impact Assessment Template

(April 2018)

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

1B. Please provide the official title/ description of the Strategy, Policy, Plan or Public Service document or initiative:

HSC Pension Scheme – proposed amendments to scheme regulations regarding member contributions phase 2 and miscellaneous amendments.

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

Developing a:	Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adopting a:	Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Implementing a:	Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Revising a:	Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Designing a Public Service		<input type="checkbox"/>				
Delivering a Public Service		<input type="checkbox"/>				

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

This is a revised policy. On 1 November 2022, the department introduced changes to the member contribution structure, including changing the amount that members pay for their pension benefits. This was the subject of a previous consultation, the HSC Pension Scheme proposed changes to member contributions (phase 1), with regulations in place on the 1 November 2022 – the Health and Social Care Pension Scheme (Member Contributions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022.

The contribution structure for the HSC pension scheme is currently being reformed following a comprehensive review in 2021. To ensure the cost of the HSC Pension Scheme was fairly distributed and affordable for all members, these tiered contribution rates asked higher earners to pay proportionally more than lower earners to access the valuable benefits of the scheme. The review was conducted following recommendations provided by the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB), which reached complete agreement that the principles underpinning the previous contribution structure should be retained, including protection for the lower paid, the risk of opt-outs should be minimised, work should be done to ensure the scheme remains a sustainable and valuable part of the HSC total reward offer, 'cliff edges' in the contribution structure should be resolved, there was a pressing need to explore ways to minimise scheme



opt-outs and mitigate other issues caused by the impact of pension taxation and move to use actual pay, rather than whole-time equivalent (WTE) pay, to determine contribution rates would be appropriate. This new policy will introduce the second phase of the scheme regulations and changes to member contributions.

1E. Which 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 applicable¹

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

Please explain:

The policy is being applied to all HSC Pension Scheme members of the HSC Pension Scheme regardless of location.

If the response is **NO** after entering explanation **GO TO Section 3**

2B. 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 will impact people in rural areas differently:

No

¹If a definition of 'rural' is not applicable, the policy is unlikely to fall under the scope of the Act and you should be able to screen out at this stage



2C. Please indicate the rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on (see list at note 1):

None

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

Please explain:

The policy is simply related to the HSC Pension Scheme and will be applied across all of its members.

No Rural impacts were identified.

If the response is **NO** please explain above and **GO TO Section 4**

3B. Please indicate which methods or information sources were used to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas (see note 2 for examples) and provide details including relevant dates, names of organisations, titles of publications, website references, details of surveys or consultations undertaken etc:

3C. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified:



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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 identified by the Public Authority:

No consideration necessary as the policy does not change or impact disproportionately anything in relation to persons living in rural areas.

SECTION 5 – Influencing the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

5A. Has the development, adoption, implementation or revision of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, been influenced by the rural needs identified?

Yes

No

Please explain:

No rural needs have been identified.



SECTION 6 – Documenting and Recording

6A. I confirm that details of the Rural Needs Impact Assessment will be recorded on the Public Authority’s Annual Monitoring Return and the RNIA Template retained by the Public Authority (please check box)

Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:	Kerrie Wallace
Position / Grade:	
Division/Branch	Pension Policy Unit
Signature:	
Date:	07/11/2023
Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:	Siobhán McKelvey
Position / Grade:	Grade 7
Division / Branch	Pension Policy Unit
Signature:	
Date:	07/11/2023

Note 1

Rural Policy Areas (relates to question 2C):

- Rural Businesses
- Rural Tourism
- Rural Housing
- Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas
- Education or Training in Rural Areas
- Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas
- Transport
- Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas
- Health or Social Care Services in Rural Areas
- Poverty in Rural Areas
- Deprivation in Rural Areas
- Rural Crime or Community Safety
- Rural Development
- Other (Please specify)

Note 2

Examples of methods or information sources used (relates to question 3B):

- Consultation with Rural Stakeholders
- Consultation with Other Organisations
- Surveys or Questionnaires
- Other Methods or Information Sources (include details)
- Published Statistics
- Research Papers
- Other Publications