

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.

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.

Introduction of a Proximity App to reduce or prevent the spread of Covid-19 in Northern Ireland.

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 checked="" 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.

NI Proximity App '[StopCOVID NI](#)'

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

Contact Tracing is a pre-existing part of the Public Health response to communicable diseases, with established processes to collect information from confirmed cases to identify other individuals at risk of infection. Rapid follow-up to provide advice and guidance can help to break chains of infection, as part of a broader response to an outbreak. The use of SmartPhone Apps in this context is a new concept which has the ability to both accelerate notifications to at risk individuals and increase the number of contacts identified for each confirmed case, beyond the ability of the infected individual to recall their whereabouts and identify at risk citizens.

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.

Rationale for using alternative definition of 'rural'.

Reasons why a definition of 'rural' is 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.

Introduction of a Proximity App to track and trace infections will have a positive impact on persons throughout Northern Ireland including those who live in rural areas.

There may, however, be a disadvantage for people living in rural areas with poor mobile phone coverage as the App relies on Smartphone technology. Although the App will collect contact information regardless of signal availability or quality, the initial registration or reporting of symptoms (which require contact with Internet based systems) may be affected in areas of poor availability.

While the Ofcom Four Nations Report for 2019 shows 75% of Northern Ireland's land area is covered by good 4G reception from all four networks, and 97% of the country can get reliable 4G from at least one operator, there are stark differences in the level of choice available to customers in urban and rural areas. Ninety per cent of urban areas can get 4G coverage from all four operators, compared to 74% of rural areas.

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

While there will be no differential impact in availability or use of a Proximity App between urban and rural areas, some rural areas have poorer mobile coverage thus affecting ability of a SmartPhone App to interact with the App backend (if not connected to WiFi) which could conceivably delay notification processes. DoH is not responsible for mobile phone network coverage.

The Ofcom Four Nations Report for 2019 reported that:

- There were good 4G services from all four operators available (outdoor) across 75% of the Northern Ireland landmass while voice services from all four operators was available (outdoor) to 86% of the Northern Ireland landmass.
- 61% of premises and 52% of major roads in Northern Ireland have good indoor / in-vehicle 4G coverage from all four operators.
- Voice services (indoor) from all four operators are available in 80% of premises in Northern Ireland and 72% of major roads (in-vehicle).

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.

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.

Sources:

DAERA website and Key Rural Issues report 2019 – information on broadband services only.

Ofcom Four Nations Report 2019 – mobile phone coverage.

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

Smartphone accessibility is required to use the Proximity App. A lack of/ or disrupted mobile service may influence uptake in rural areas, and could potentially delay exposure notification processing. Of the App user is not able to access WiFi in an area of poor coverage.

However, the App will be available to all regardless of rural or urban factors and a Call Centre option is also available.

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?

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.

Introduction of a Proximity App will have the same impact regardless of urban or rural factors as long as it is used.

Mobile phone coverage and availability may impact usage in rural areas, although there will also be a positive impact on the more sparse population in rural areas in reducing contact with regards to virus spread.

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.

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.

Mobile coverage is not within the remit of the Department of Health/ HSC. It is imperative that measures are taken to reduce the spread of Covid-19 and introduction of a proximity App will be available to all persons whether they reside in rural or urban areas. All persons with a positive test will be called by the manual contact tracing process.

Impact across NI as a whole will be positive, thus producing a knock-on benefit for rural areas.

It can be noted that rural mobile coverage is set to increase as a result of an industry project announced in October 2019. Mobile operators have worked with Government and Ofcom on a plan to introduce a '[shared rural network](#)'. This will see high-quality 4G coverage reach 95% of the UK by 2025, as mobile companies share their existing masts and invest in new sites.

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:	Dr Edward O'Neill
Position/Grade:	APP Product Manager
Division/Branch	Seconded to CDIO Group
Signature:	
Date:	18 August 2020
Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:	
Position/Grade:	Chief Digital Information Officer
Division/Branch:	CDIO Group
Signature:	
Date:	19 August 2020