

Rural Needs Impact Assessment

Section 1: Define activity subject to Section 1(1) of Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

1A. Short title describing activity being undertaken that is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016:

New Guidance for the management of Virtual Consultations in Outpatients in BHSCT

**1B. Are you Developing, Adopting, Implementing or Revising a Policy a Strategy or a Plan? (Underline or Circle)
Or are you delivering or designing a public service? (Underline or Circle)
What is official title of this Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public service (if any)?**

Developing and introducing new strategic guidance for the management of Virtual Consultations in Outpatients in BHSCT

1C. Give details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service:

To provide guidance to staff when introducing virtual consultations as a method of service delivery in outpatient clinics
To ensure consistency of approach and implementation across the Trust

1D. What definition of 'rural' is the Trust using in respect of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service:

Section 2 - Understanding impact of 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 response is NO Go To Section 2E. YES

2B. How is it likely to impact on people in rural areas?

IT connectivity may limit the availability of virtual consultations for people who live in rural areas.

Virtual consultations depend on the service users/patients having access to adequate landline or mobile technology.

- NISRA – dataset on Home Internet and Broadband Access
- OFCOM – Connected Nations Report

In Northern Ireland, for the latest dataset available on NISRA (2018), 16% of households had no home broadband and 15% had no home internet access. These households will not be able to avail of services being delivered remotely using technology. In addition, the OFCOM Connected Nations report (2019) acknowledges that more work is needed to improve services in rural areas where some customers who do have access to broadband experience slower speeds than in towns or cities and, further, that 19% of rural dwellers are unable to receive decent broadband

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?

Refer 2B answer

2D. Please indicate which of the following rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to primarily impact on.

Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas		Community Safety or Rural Crime		Agriculture-Environment	
Education or Training in Rural Areas		Health or Social Care Services in Rural Areas	X	Other, please state below;	
Rural Development		Broadband/Mobile Communications in Rural Areas	x		
Poverty or Deprivation in Rural Areas		Rural Business, Tourism or Housing			

2E. Please explain why the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is NOT likely to impact on people in rural areas.

If you completed 2E above GO TO Section 6

SECTION 3 - Identifying Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

3A. Has the Trust taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas, relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service? Yes No if the response is NO, GO TO Section 3D

YES

3B. Which of following methods or information sources were used by the Trust to identify these needs?

**Consultation with relevant stakeholders / Survey or Questionnaire / Research / Statistics / Publications / Other methods.
Please provide details:**

Ongoing engagement and consultation process with key stakeholders

3C. What social and economic needs of the people in rural areas have been identified?

Positive impact: Use of virtual consultations should have a positive impact upon people who reside in rural areas economically as the consultations can take place at home obviating the need for travel to clinics and the associated transport and parking cost

Negative impact: Inability to access virtual consultations due to lack of, or poor connectivity, to mobile/broadband services

3D Please explain why no steps were taken by the Trust to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?

N/A – issues identified through research, surveys, feedback events and appropriate mitigation included in the virtual clinics protocol e.g. offering choice

SECTION 4 - Considering Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

4A. What issues were considered in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?

Accessibility of virtual consultations - A key aspect of the guidance acknowledges that each service area should define its inclusion and exclusion criteria for virtual consultations based on clinical judgement applied on an individual basis for each patient mindful of professional standards, patient safety and outcomes, equality, human rights and rural considerations, capacity and consent issues and the informed choice of the patient.

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

5A. Has the policy, strategy, plan or public service been changed by consideration of the rural needs identified?

Yes No if the response is NO, GO TO Section 5C YES

5B. If yes, how have rural needs influenced the policy, strategy plan or public service?

Outpatient clinics will be delivered using a blended approach to service delivery ie face to face, telephone and via video consultations. Through the clinical triage process staff will be mindful of the lack of and/or poor IT connectivity issues that exist across many rural areas in NI. This is particularly so for services that BHSCT deliver regionally. There will be no adverse impact on service users in waiting times in terms of the method of service delivery used.

Offering of choice of method of delivery upon first contact with service user, including alternative methods of delivery in virtual consultations protocol as mitigation

5C. If no, why have the rural needs identified not influenced the policy, strategy, plan or public service?

Section 6: Documentation:

6A. Please tick below to confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained by the Trust 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:	Estella Dorrian		
Job Title/Directorate	Senior Equality & Planning Manager		
Signature:	Estella Dorrian	Date:	10 th March 2021
Approved by:			
Job Title/Directorate			
Signature:		Date:	