**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.** |
| --- |
| The Department of Justice. |

| **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.** |
| --- |
| Coronial investigations into deaths abroad. |

| **1C. Please indicate which category the activity specified in Section 1B above relates to.** |
| --- |
| Developing a Policy Strategy Plan  **x**  Adopting a Policy Strategy Plan  Implementing a Policy Strategy Plan  Revising a Policy Strategy Plan  Designing a Public Service  Delivering a Public Service |

| **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.** |
| --- |
| Public consultation on coronial investigations into deaths abroad |

| **1E. Please provide details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service.** |
| --- |
| To provide coroners with legislative power to undertake an investigation and, where necessary, inquest into the death abroad of citizens ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland. This would provide for an investigatory process which could determine how, when and where an individual came to their death abroad. |

| **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).  **X**  Other Definition (Provide details and the rationale below).  A definition of ‘rural’ is not applicable. |

| *Details of alternative definition of ‘rural’ used.* |
| --- |
| Not applicable |

| *Rationale for using alternative definition of ‘rural’.* |
| --- |
| Not applicable |

| *Reasons why a definition of ‘rural’ is not applicable.* |
| --- |
| 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?** |
| --- |
| x  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.** |
| --- |
| This policy review will apply across Northern Ireland equally to people in rural and urban areas.  Following repatriation of a body to Northern Ireland, or where a death abroad is unexpected, unexplained or occurred in suspicious circumstances, a coroner may undertake a preliminary investigation into the circumstances of the death and, where necessary, an inquest. Where an inquest is held, bereaved families may wish to attend inquest proceedings in a coroners’ court.  The physical location of inquest proceedings will impact on individuals from rural and urban areas. Inquests are usually held in a court venue closest to where the deceased resided, which means that, unlike other judicial venues such as the High Court, there is no requirement to travel to Belfast.  During the Covid-19 pandemic, the provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 have allowed for remote hearings using telephone or video calls. The Coroners Service used these live links to accommodate preliminary hearings and inquests to enable pathologists, doctors, other experts, and family members to participate in the process. Coroners have continued to undertake as much business as possible either remotely or as hybrid hearings. The relevant provisions of the Coronavirus Act are subject to six-month extensions, with the next period expiring in March 2023. |

| **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.** |
| --- |
| The physical location of inquest proceedings will impact on individuals from rural and urban areas. Inquests are usually held in a court venue closest to where the deceased resided meaning that irrespective of whether living in an urban or rural setting, individuals may have to travel to hearings. The organisation of the NICTS estate means that this should be a reasonable proposition for all court users and does not disadvantage individuals from rural or urban areas.  Depending on future extensions of the Coronavirus Act provisions and a wider public consultation of the use of live links in court settings in Northern Ireland which is being undertaken by the Department, coroners may continue to employ remote or hybrid inquests. This would mean that individuals, whether in an urban or rural setting, would not have to physically attend hearings but could instead do so via an online connection or by telephone.  It is not considered that the use of live links for inquests either has, or will have a significant differential effect on the needs, experiences and priorities of people in rural areas. One differential may be related to the digital infrastructure which is available within their area, although the impact appears to be minimal and temporary in nature. |

| **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 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  Agri-Environment  Access to Justice  Other (Please state) |

**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.** |
| --- |
| Not applicable |

**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**.  **X** |

| **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 Published Statistics Consultation with Other Organisations Research Papers Surveys or Questionnaires Other Publications  Other Methods or Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below). |

| **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.** |
| --- |
| Not applicable |

| **3D. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified by the Public Authority?** |
| --- |
| Not applicable. |

**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?** |
| --- |
| The policy objective is to provide a statutory power for coroners in Northern Ireland to undertake an investigation and possible inquest into a death abroad of a citizen ordinarily resident here. This is a power which is already available to counterparts in the rest of the UK and Ireland.  We do not consider there to be any specific impact on the social or economic needs of people in rural areas that requires further consideration. The various options outlined in the consultation paper provide access to the justice system for bereaved families who have lost a loved one abroad and where the circumstances of the death are such that a coroner may choose to exercise their discretion to investigate that death further.  The continued use of live links supports bereaved families and expert witnesses to attend hearings remotely rather than physically attending a courtroom. Live links use operates alongside physical attendance practice and procedures and only occurs where the coroner is satisfied that its use is in the interests of justice, having taken account of the view of any participant. A coroner may also rescind any direction where it appears to be in the interests of justice to do so.  There has already been secondary legislation in relation to live links which has been extended on a number of occasions. The Department is carrying out a separate consultation in relation to the use of technology for court and tribunal business which considers this issue in more detail. Analysis as part of that process has not found any evidence that the use of live links during the Covid-19 pandemic had any significant or adverse impact of people living 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.** |
| --- |
| Not applicable |

**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**.  **X** |

| **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.** |
| --- |
| Not applicable |

**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.** |
| --- |
| As noted in response to 2C and 3E, no evidence has been identified which suggests that individuals in rural areas will be treated differently, have different needs, or will be impacted adversely as a result of the proposed policy delivery. |

**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.  **X** |

| **Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:** | Andrew Robinson |
| --- | --- |
| **Position/Grade:** | DP |
| **Division/Branch** | Civil Justice and Judicial Policy |
| **Signature:** | Andrew Robinson |
| **Date:** | 21/09/22 |
| **Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:** | Martin Moore |
| **Position/Grade:** | Grade 7 |
| **Division/Branch** | Civil Justice and Judicial Policy |
| **Signature:** | Martin Moore |
| **Date:** | 21/09/22 |