

A Guide to the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 for Public Authorities

*(Revised) April 2018*

Appendix 1 - Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA)

Template

Research shows that criminalising children at a young age draws them further and deeper into the criminal justice system. By increasing MACR from the current age of 10 to 14 years, the Department aims to reduce the number of children entering the justice system. This will result in improved life outcomes for many children who will not have to live under the burden of a criminal record or with the stigma of being a young offender.

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

Increase to the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility

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.

Developing a Policy Strategy Plan

Adopting a Policy Strategy Plan

Implementing a Policy Strategy Plan

Revising a Policy Strategy Plan Designing a Public Service

Delivering a Public Service

X

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

A proposed increase to the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR) in Northern Ireland. The revised policy will be subject to a public consultation running from October to December 2022.

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.

Department of Justice

1A. Name of Public Authority.

**SECTION 1 - Defining the activity subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016**

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*Reasons why a definition of ‘rural’ is not applicable.*

N/A

*Rationale for using alternative definition of ‘rural’.*

N/A

*Details of alternative definition of ‘rural’ used.*

Population Settlements of less than 5,000 (Default definition). Other Definition (Provide details and the rationale below).

A definition of ‘rural’ is not applicable.

X

1F. What definition of ‘rural’ is the Public Authority using in respect of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

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The only possible difference in the impact of an increase in MACR on those living in rural areas would be a positive one. The aim of the revision is to keep children out of the justice system. This includes out of custody also. At present, the only juvenile detention centre in Northern Ireland is Woodlands, which is based in Bangor, Co. Down. For those visiting children who are being held in custody in Woodlands, the journey would be more difficult for those relying on public transport and living in rural areas than it would be for those in a similar position living in an urban area.

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.

Youth offenders come from both urban and rural communities. The aim of the policy is to reduce the number of children who come into contact with the criminal justice system. This will apply to all children in Northern Ireland, wherever they live. We do not believe that the impact of the policy will be different for those living in rural areas when compared to those living in urban areas.

2B. Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.

Yes No If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **2E**.

X

2A. Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?

**SECTION 2 - Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service**

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

If the response to Section 2A was YES GO TO Section 3A.

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

Other (Please state)

x

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

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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.

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).

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.

Yes No If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **3E**.

X

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?

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

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The Department considers that the revision to the policy would not have a differential impact on those living in rural communities. The aim behind increasing MACR is to improve outcomes for all children under the age of 14 who may otherwise be drawn into contact with the youth justice system. It will, therefore, apply equally to those living in rural and urban areas.

3E. Please explain why no steps were taken by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?

If the response to Section 3A was YES GO TO Section 4A.

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

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N/A

4A. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

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

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If the response to Section 5A was YES GO TO Section 6A.

N/A

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.

Yes No If the response is NO GO TO Section 5C.

x

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?

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

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Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:

Jenny McAlarney

Position/Grade:

Acting G7

Division/Branch

Reducing Offending Division

Signature:



Date:

07 September 2022

Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:

Steven McCourt

Position/Grade:

Grade 5

Division/Branch:

Reducing Offending Division

Signature:



Date:

7 September 2022

I confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained and relevant information compiled.

X

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.

**SECTION 6 - Documenting and Recording**

There have been no specific rural needs identified in respect of the policy. The revised policy is anticipated to have a positive impact on children from all areas, both urban and rural, in that it will seek to reduce their contact with the justice system.

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.