S1 of the Act places a duty on the Executive Office to ensure that period products are made available free of charge, on a universal basis, in appropriate locations throughout Northern Ireland by 11th May 2024. Section 2 of the Act provides that each Department (by 11 May 2023) specify by Regulations ‘Public Service Bodies,’ which must ensure that period products are obtainable, free of charge, for use whilst on their premises.

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

*(Revised) April 2018*

Appendix 1 - Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA)

Template

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

Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 “the Act”

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.

Provision of free period products

(implementing the s1 arrangements arising from the Period Products (Free Provision) Northern Ireland Act 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.

The Executive Office

1A. Name of Public Authority.

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

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

*(Revised) April 2018*

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

As above, there are population settlements with more than 5,000 people that would be classed as rural.

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

There are rural settlements with substantially greater heads of population than 5000-another category definition is needed. For example, Cookstown has approximately 15000, Omagh 18000 approximately and Strabane approximately 40000 and these are classed as rural communities and important in the distribution of free period products.

*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?

Like other bathroom products access to period products is an essential item for personal care to address a normal biological need. There is currently no scheme that provides universal access to free period products here. Regardless of where someone lives the legislation requires the scheme to ensure that Products must be reasonably easy to obtain, in a way that respects dignity, privacy and confidentiality and a reasonable choice of types of period products is offered. The strategy will impact equally on rural and non-rural areas by locating free period products in both rural and urban locations. The scheme will also take account of the needs of those facing poverty. Period poverty is described as the lack of access to sanitary products, menstrual hygiene education, toilets, handwashing facilities and/or waste management – regardless of where people live. It is a growing issue which has been made worse given the increased cost of living. A recent survey by Plan International (May 2021) highlights that more than one third (36%) of girls aged 14-21 in the UK have struggled to afford or access period products during the Coronavirus pandemic. In addition, a survey of 1,711 pupils in Northern Ireland by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) revealed that over a quarter of pupils (27.5%) here have had difficulty accessing period products.

There is currently no scheme that provides universal access to free period products in Northern Ireland. To address this gap, [The Period Products (Free Provision) Act 2022](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2022/25/enacted) was made pursuant to a Private Members Bill in the last Assembly and received Royal Assent in May 2022.

The Act introduces 2 new duties one of which, Section 1, places a universal duty on the Executive Office (TEO) to ensure that period products are obtainable free of charge (in accordance with arrangements) in appropriate locations to meet the needs of all persons who need to use them while in Northern Ireland.

Provision of free period products will have a positive impact on all citizens. It will support and increase confidence in people managing periods in school and work, and to carry out normal activities during menstruation.

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N/A

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.

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**

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

*(Revised) April 2018*

N/A

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

X

X

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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* The arrangements to provide free period products will be subject to a 12-week public consultation which will be conducted with a view to encourage feedback from people located in all areas of Northern Ireland including rural areas.
* Innovation lab stakeholder events in February and April 2023, included engagement with rural community representatives from STEP, Rural Community Network and NI Women’s Rural Network.
* Engagement with Local Councils (both urban and rural) through Solace
* TEO Officials met with Local Authorities in Scotland (who have been meeting this need for over 6 years and are the first in the world to be legislatively obligated to provide free period products to anyone who needs them) in February 2023 to learn about the needs of the rural population in Scotland and the differing ways in which the Scottish Local Authorities met these needs.
* TEO Officials met with Scotland Excel in February 2023 to identify how the needs of the rural populations in Scotland were built into the design of the relevant procurement frameworks which are utilized by all 32 Local Authorities in Scotland.
* Engagement with other relevant rural facing bodies in due course
* An Interdepartmental Departmental working group (IDWG) established and meets regularly to consider the needs relating to the provision of Free Period Products.
* Engagement with NISRA
* Latest Census statistics

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).

X

X

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.

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**

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

*(Revised) April 2018*

N/A

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.

The social and economic needs of people in rural areas may differ from those of urban areas. Any differences identified through steps detailed in 3C will be addressed as required. Locations where free products will be provided will take account of the population and needs within rural areas.

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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Similar to those in urban areas-**see 5B**

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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*(Revised) April 2018*

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

The Private Members bill which resulted in the Period Products (Free Provision) Act Northern Ireland 2022 makes the Executive Office responsible for ensuring universal provision of free period products across the whole of Northern Ireland.

Steps to implement the legislation within the parameters of the Act, must meet the needs of both Urban and Rural populations.

The public consultation will provide an opportunity for those in both urban and rural areas to indicate what products they want, and where these should be located. The results of the consultation will then shape the design of the service which will be put in place by May 2024.

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**

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

*(Revised) April 2018*

Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:

Ben Johnston

Position/Grade:

Deputy Principal,

Division/Branch

Equality Policy and Legislation

Signature:

Ben Johnston

Date:

21/02/2023

Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:

Marie Matthews

Position/Grade:

G7 Head of Branch

Division/Branch:

Equality Policy and Legislation

Signature:

Marie Matthews

Date:

16-5-2023

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**

N/A

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.