OECD Conference
Rural Proofing for Health

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Rural Needs Toolkit for Health & Social Care

• Challenges for delivery of health & social care in rural Northern Ireland
• Background to the Rural Needs Act Northern Ireland 2016
• Rural Needs Duty
• Rural Needs Toolkit Development
• Project launch and future plans
Challenges for delivery of health & social care in rural Northern Ireland

- 36% of population live in rural communities in NI
- Rural dwellers have longer life expectancy but
- Rural older people are poorer & more removed from services than urban counterparts
- Social/affordable housing in rural areas is limited
- Rural housing stock is older, less well insulated & more expensive to heat
- Dependence on private car as public transport is limited
- Recruiting & retaining health & social care staff can be challenging
- Health service reform programme stalled as no NI Executive in place
- Pandemic recovery issues
Rural Needs Act Northern Ireland 2016

• Legislation introduced to underpin “rural proofing”
• Imposes a duty on relevant duty holders to “have due regard to rural needs”
• Department’s guidance interprets this to mean that public authorities must consciously consider the needs of people in rural areas.
• Duty holders include all NI Executive Departments, local authorities & health and social care Trusts, the Regional Agency for Public Health and Social Well-Being, the Regional Health and Social Care Board
The Duty and Guidance

• Public authorities have a Duty to have due regard to rural needs when:
  “(a) Developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and
  (b) Designing and delivering public services.”

• A public authority must, in such manner as may be directed by the Department—
  (a) compile information on the exercise of its functions under section 1;
  (b) include that information in its annual report; and (c) send that information to the Department.
Rural Needs Toolkit for Health & Social Care

- 5 Health & Social Care Trusts & NI Ambulance Service
- Partnership approach
- Toolkit a practical support to help planners fulfil rural needs duty
- Lessons learned from the English version but made relevant to NI context
- Aim to make it as relevant to health & social care sector as possible
- Provides a range of case study examples of good practice in rural proofing from NI and UK
- Signposts to further information and support
Next steps

• Launch planned for 10 October 2022
• Endorsed by the Health Minister Robin Swann
• Involvement of the Department of Agriculture/Environment & Rural Affairs – who view this as a further tool for implementation of the duty
• Potential of an action learning set with NI Health Trusts and GB health trusts to learn more about implementation of the toolkit
Case study example: Community First Responders

- 18 schemes over 300 volunteers
- Alerted to specific types of emergency incidents by NIAS including: chest pain, cardiac arrest, choking, potential stroke
- 4700 alerts sent across all schemes in 2021

“Community First Responders are a vital link in the Chain of Survival and can be quite literally the difference between life and death”
Thanks for Listening

Further information:

• National Centre for Rural Health & Care
• Guide to Rural Needs Act NI
• Rural Community Network NI
• Belfast HSC Trust
• Northern HSC Trust
• Southern HSC Trust
• South Eastern HSC Trust
• Western HSCT
• NI Ambulance Service