Appendix 2 - Template for Information to be Compiled

Information to be compiled by Public Authorities under Section 3(1)(a) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

(To be completed and included in public authorities' own annual reports and submitted to DAERA for inclusion in the Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report).

Name of Public Authority: *South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust*

Reporting Period: **April 20** *25* **to March 20** *26*

The following information should be compiled in respect of each policy, strategy and plan which has been developed, adopted, implemented or revised and each public service which has been designed or delivered by the public authority during the reporting period.

DAERA have introduced a new digital platform for public authorities to submit their annual monitoring information under the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 and the submission date has been extended to 2 October 2026.

- The Trust's Executive Team has been briefed to ensure ownership of these duties at strategic level.
- The Directorate of People and Organisational Development is responsible for central co-ordination of the monitoring report on behalf of the Trust.
- Health and Social Care Trusts have worked collaboratively to ensure the rural needs assessment template is user-friendly and relevant to Health and Social Care business. The key components of the template issued by Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs have been used in compliance with the legislative obligations.
- Advice and guidance is provided on the Trust's intranet to raise awareness and support staff when completing rural needs assessments.
- Staff within the Equality Team of the People and Organisational Development Directorate provide advice and guidance to staff regarding the completion of Rural Needs Impact Assessment and also provide support to services, including signposting staff to guidance.
- To ensure effective mainstreaming, the Trust's Policy development teams also signpost staff to requirements relating to the Rural Needs Act.
- This Annual Monitoring template on Rural Needs was submitted to Executive Management Team on 29 September 2026 and Trust Board on 30 September prior to submission to DAERA.

- The Trust is committed to promoting and upholding its duties in relation to the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 and will have due regard to rural needs in the development of all our policy and public service delivery decisions. The Trust is mindful that the level of 'regard' due will depend on the circumstances and, in particular, on the relevance of rural needs to the decision or function in question. The greater the relevance and potential impact for people in rural needs, the greater the regard required by the duty. In the table below, the Trust has provided detail on those policies which were considered as having a bearing on rural needs and therefore subject to a rural needs assessment. In preparing this monitoring template the Trust considered policies in respect of the social and economic needs of persons in rural areas and for the majority, no rural needs were identified. Many of these policies are clinical or technical in nature and have no bearing on rural needs.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016[1].	*The rural policy area(s) which the activity relates to[2].*	*Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service[3].*
SEHSCT – Seat Belt Policy	Health and Social Care	This is a Driving policy to ensure all reasonable steps are taken to ensure the safety of all staff, volunteers, authorised passengers, contractors and other road users whilst travelling in Trust owned fleet or contractors vehicles. No adverse impact on rural needs has been identified.
SEHSCT – Artificial Intelligence Policy (AI)	Health and Social Care	The South Eastern H&SC Trust Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy establishes a framework for the **ethical, safe, lawful and effective use of AI technologies** across the Trust. It applies to all staff and all AI use cases, including clinical, administrative, analytical, operational and generative AI systems. SEHSCT has had due regard to rural needs in developing this AI Policy by embedding equality and rural needs screening within AI governance processes, ensuring consistent application of the policy across all Trust locations, requiring human

		oversight and accessibility safeguards, undertaking stakeholder engagement during policy development, and committing to ongoing monitoring of implementation. The policy is largely governance-focused and does not directly alter service delivery arrangements, access points or transport requirements. Consequently, no significant differential impact on people living in rural areas has been identified. However, the Trust will continue to monitor implementation and consider rural impacts as part of future AI project assessments and ongoing policy review.
SEHSCT – Pest Control Policy	Health and Social Care	The Pest Control Policy is a policy developed and implemented by the SEHSCT Estates Operations Department. Its primary purpose is to ensure effective pest control across all Trust-owned and leased premises, maintaining safe, hygienic and compliant environments for patients, staff, visitors and the wider community. SEHSCT has considered rural needs through the development of a policy that applies equally to all Trust-owned and leased premises, irrespective of location. The policy supports safe, hygienic and uninterrupted service provision across the Trust estate, including facilities serving rural communities. As the policy concerns operational pest management arrangements and does not alter access to services, service locations, eligibility criteria or transport requirements, no significant adverse differential impact on people living in rural areas has been identified. Implementation will continue to be monitored through existing Estates governance arrangements, contractor oversight, service user feedback and incident reporting mechanisms.
SEHSCT – Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response (EPRR)	Health and Social Care	The Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response (EPRR) is a Trust policy that establishes the framework for ensuring the Trust is prepared for, able to respond to, and able to recover from emergencies and

		major incidents in line with Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response (EPRR) principles. SEHSCT has had due regard to rural needs through the development of a policy that applies across all Trust services and locations. The policy aims to ensure effective preparation for, response to and recovery from emergencies, thereby supporting continuity of services for people living in both rural and urban areas. The policy includes arrangements to support accessibility through interpreter services, alternative formats and reasonable adjustments, and is aligned with regional civil contingencies and resilience frameworks. As the policy primarily establishes governance, planning and operational response arrangements and does not alter service eligibility, access criteria, service locations or transport arrangements, no significant adverse differential impact on people living in rural areas has been identified. The Trust will continue to monitor implementation through its established audit and assurance processes
Stress and Mental Wellbeing Policy	Health and Social Care	This Policy sets out a framework for identifying, assessing, and managing stress in a consistent and supportive manner. It defines everyone's roles and responsibilities and outlines the procedures for responding to concerns related to stress. It also includes useful guidance to help spot early signs of stress, complete risk assessments and agree support plans that are consistent with Trust values. The purpose of this policy is to establish a proactive and preventative approach to managing work-related stress and promoting mental wellbeing across the organisation. It aims to embed wellbeing into everyday practice, reduce the risk of harm, and ensure that staff are supported to maintain a healthy, safe, and fulfilling working life.

		This Policy will be implemented throughout all geographical locations of the Trust and is intended to support the health, wellbeing and psychological safety of all staff, regardless of where they work within the Trust.
Introduction of wheelchair docking stations at several access points across the Ulster Hospital.	Health and Social Care	Revised service to provide wheelchairs to patients attending UHD. Previous service relied on membership with the contractor or potential delays to appointment times as service users wait for a wheel chair from Trust portering dept. The Trust anticipates that the proposal will have no adverse impact on service users. Indeed, there should be a positive impact for our service users their family and carers, who are travelling distances from rural areas as revised service is easier to access.