



Title of Paper: Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report 2022/2023		
For Approval A document requiring Board Members majority decision prior to implementation or action.	For Discussion A document requiring Board Members consideration and debate.	For Noting A document that contains information regarding issues of which requiring Board Members should be made aware.

1.0 Background

The Trust is required to produce an annual monitoring return to ensure compliance with Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

The Rural Needs Act (NI)2016 places a legal duty on the Trust to ensure due regard is paid to the consideration of the social and economic needs of service users in rural areas when developing, adopting, implementing and revising policies, strategies and plans and when designing and implementing public services.

The information for 2022/23 was requested for return to DEARA by 21 June 2023. It was agreed with the Director of People and Organisation and DAERA that the Report be submitted in draft form and brought to August EMT and Trust Board for final approval and re-submission.

2.0 Key Issues

The Report details the Rural Needs screening templates which have been completed by Trust Leads for 2022/23 where an impact on Rural Needs has been identified.

The Report also highlights how the Trust has had due regard to Rural Needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising relevant policy, strategy or plans or when designing or delivering public services.

The request to Trust Board is to consider and approve the 2022/23 Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Return as tabled for submission to DEARA as noted above.

3.0 Resources Implications (inc Organisational, Financial, Human Resources)

Significant work is ongoing to support Directorates to comply with Rural Needs statutory obligations and to raise overall awareness of Rural Needs best practice.

4.0 Impact on Safety, Quality and Experience (SQE)

The team’s efforts to promote inclusion and participation for those from rural areas assist in supporting patients, service users and staff and aids better communication helping to improve service delivery.

5.0 Key Risks and Proposals to Mitigate

A key risk is a failure to comply with statutory obligations as laid down by the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

The Equality Team will continue to work collaboratively and in partnership with other HSC Trusts, DEARA, DoH, BSO, the Equality Commission, the NI Human Rights Commission and other key stakeholders to ensure as best as possible such risks are mitigated.

Lead Director: Claire Smyth, Director of People & Organisational Development

Date: 18 August 2023