

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's approach to the implementation of the Rural Needs Act 2016

In relation to Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's corporate approach to implementation of the Rural Needs Act the following actions have been undertaken since its introduction:

- Two training seminars for elected members on the Rural Needs Act 2016 and implications for Council. Following the local government elections in May 2019, training will be provided to all new councillors;
- Two training seminars for council officials on the Rural Needs Act 2016 and the role of officials in ensuring that they are aware, understand and consider the implications of all decision making for rural areas within council;
- One to one guidance with officers on the completion of the Rural Needs Impact Assessment template and signposting to the Council's evidence and research section to assist with the completion of same;
- Council has updated its corporate reporting template which is completed for all council agenda items. This template now includes a section on Rural Needs implications where officers must detail and outline how they have considered the rural implications of the decision/report/strategy/plan/service delivery which is being presented for consideration and approval;
- Attending DAERA engagement events on the Rural Needs Act.
- One to one meetings with representatives from DAERA seeking clarification on issues relating to the Act.
- Engagement with Officers from other District Councils through the Statutory Duty Network Forum on best practise examples in relation to the implementation of the Rural Needs Act.

Further to this, in June 2019 the Council's Corporate Policy and Equality Officer will undertake a sample review of the implementation of Council's revised corporate template with specific reference to the rural needs implications section to monitor and evaluate understanding of the requirements of this statutory duty. This action will therefore determine the type of training to be delivered to officers going forward.