

Rural Needs Impact Assessment – Section 3D & 4A responses

3D. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified by the Public Authority?

Fermanagh and Omagh is a predominantly rural district with the exception of the two main towns of Omagh and Enniskillen. The Council area is home to around 116,000 people with some 70% of the population living in rural areas outside the two main towns. Population is forecast to rise by 3% over the next decade, with stark increases in the number of older people. Current forecasts suggest that the number of residents over the age of 65 will rise from 2011 levels of less than 15% to over 20% by 2030 and even further thereafter.

The social and economic needs of people in rural areas are summarised as follows:

Access to services:

5 of the 10 most deprived SOAs in the Access to Services domain are in Fermanagh and Omagh (Belcoo and Garrison, Rosslea, Trillick, Sixmilecross and Owenkillew) The four most deprived areas in NI in terms of fastest travel time by private transport are in Fermanagh and Omagh (namely Belcoo and Garrison, Rosslea, Belleek and Boa and Owenkillew). Broadband speeds in the district are by far the slowest in NI and indeed the UK. Fermanagh and Omagh is the highest in terms of premises unable to receive 2Mbps and 5Mbps in the UK, 3rd in 10Mbps and 2nd in 30Mbps (Ofcom, October 2018).

Income:

15% of the population are living in households where the equivalised income is less than 60% of the NI Median (NI Average – 13.1%), with our children and older people suffering income poverty most. 20.3% of children under the age of 15 in the district are living in households whose equivalised income is below 60% of the NI median.

The equivalent figure for those aged 65 and over is 8.4%, the worst rate of older people's income poverty across NI. FODC has the highest proportion of domestic dwellings that are unfit, in a state of disrepair, or are without a modern boiler or loft insulation and double glazing.

Employment:

In addition, 21.2% of our working age population are employment deprived with both wage levels and gross household disposable income well below the NI average. Fermanagh and Omagh has an estimated 30% of working age population economically inactive as compared to the NI average of 26% (Labour Force Survey 2016).

Health:

Standardised admission rates due to drugs and alcohol remains an issue for Fermanagh and Omagh and is much more prominent in deprived parts of the district, as the chart illustrates. At 143 and 123 incidences per 1000 patients respectively, hypertension and obesity are the most prevalent health issues in Fermanagh and Omagh.

The Fermanagh and Omagh Residents' Survey 2018 also highlighted the difference between urban and rural residents of the district in terms of their general health and satisfaction levels. Residents in urban areas (ie, Omagh and Enniskillen) were generally healthier and more satisfied with their lives than those living in rural areas of the district. Residents living in urban areas scored higher on self-reported levels of physical health (8.6

vs 7.9) and also mental health (8.7 vs 8.1). Residents living in urban areas also reported higher levels of satisfaction with their life nowadays (8.7 vs 8.1) and higher levels of self-efficacy (22.4 vs 20.5). The starkest statistic however remains that life expectancy is 2.7 years lower in the most than least deprived areas of the district.

4A. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

Living in a rural area can exacerbate the effects of poverty and social isolation for certain groups. Additional costs of living in a rural area such as higher fuel or transport costs can have a greater impact on people on low incomes.

15% of the population are living in households where the equivalised income is less than 60% of the NI Median (NI Average – 13.1%). 21.2% of our working age population are employment deprived with both wage levels and gross household disposable income well below the NI average.

Despite these income limitations, 88% of households in Fermanagh and Omagh have access to one or more cars, as compared to the NI average of 80%. Alongside this, the four most deprived areas in NI in terms of fastest travel time by private transport, are in Fermanagh and Omagh (namely Belcoo and Garrison, Rosslea, Belleek and Boa and Owenkillev). There is no train service in the area and while a bus service does exist, it is limited.

In addition, some groups such as young people or people with disabilities may experience greater difficulties accessing transport services in rural areas than in urban settings. FODC Residents' Survey 2018 found that residents' with a disability scored lower on both the 'local accessibility' domain (3.1 vs 3.8) and the 'your life nowadays' domain (7.0 vs 8.5)¹, and that these issues were further exacerbated in rural areas of the district.

Lower earnings and household incomes are commonly found in the rural west where the population is consequently at highest risk of poverty. There are also links between poor transport services and social isolation. Some rural households have no access to a car while in others private transport may be used by others for travelling to work leaving other household members dependent on alternative means of travel. Limited availability of public transport combined with increased travelling distance to retail, social and leisure facilities may significantly impact on the ability of elderly people, the less physically able and those with young children to socially interact. Friends and family may also be scattered geographically resulting in reduced opportunities for face to face contact. Social isolation and loneliness have been linked to poor physical and mental health and to depression.
