



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

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Dear Keith

The Public Health (Notifiable Diseases – Hantavirus Diseases) Order (Northern Ireland) 2026

The Department of Health proposes to make a Statutory Rule under the powers conferred by section 1(2) of the Public Health Act (Northern Ireland) 1967("the Act").

Purpose of the Statutory Rule

The purpose of this Statutory Rule is to make hantavirus disease (including hantavirus pulmonary or cardio-pulmonary syndrome and haemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome) a notifiable disease under the Act, so that medical practitioners will be required to share patient information with the Public Health Agency if they become aware, or have reasonable grounds, for suspecting that a person they are attending has hantavirus disease.

Previous Engagement with the Committee

None.

Financial Implications

There are no financial cost implications for the Department.

Consultation

Given the urgency of the situation and the fact that this is a technical amendment no consultation took place.

Compliance with section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

The proposals relate solely to the following amendments:

- Schedule 1 to the Act shall be amended by the insertion of Hantavirus disease, including hantavirus pulmonary or cardiopulmonary syndrome and haemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome.
- Accordingly, the notifiable diseases to which the Act applies from the commencement of this Order are those set out in the Schedule which shall be substituted for Schedule 1 to the Act.

Consideration has been given to the human rights implications of these regulations. They are considered compatible with section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Consideration by the Executive

The SL1 and draft Statutory Rule have not been considered by the Executive as it is subject to negative resolution and therefore there was no requirement to do so. The Statutory Rule does not engage paragraph 2.4 of the Ministerial Code.

Equality Impact

An Equality Screening was carried out by the Department. The policy proposals have been considered under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The Department considers the proposals to fully comply with the legislation with no adverse impact on any of the section 75 categories identified. A full Equality Impact Assessment is not considered necessary.

Regulatory Impact

Not Applicable

Rural Needs Impact Assessment

The Department has assessed the proposals in line with the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 and has determined they will not have an adverse impact on rural communities.

Data Protection Impact

The Department considers that these Regulations are compliant the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the GDPR and that the Regulations are consistent with the data protection principles set out therein. A Data Protection Impact Assessment is not considered necessary.

Child Rights Impact

The proposals do not involve any direct impact on children's rights; therefore, a Child Rights Impact Assessment is not considered necessary.

Position in Great Britain

The Health Protection (Notification) (Amendment) Regulations 2026 were laid on 18 May 2026 to include hantavirus disease (including hantavirus pulmonary or cardiopulmonary syndrome and haemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome) as a notifiable disease in England. Wales and Scotland do not intend to make similar amendments.

Any other information

In May 2026 the Republic of Ireland also laid regulations [The (Infectious Diseases (Amendment) Regulations 2026] to add hantavirus to the list of notifiable diseases. Adding hantavirus to the list of notifiable diseases in Northern Ireland will ensure that Northern Ireland is aligned with England and the Republic of Ireland.

Proposed timing of consideration of the SL1

The SL1 has been submitted to the Committee and the Department would propose that the Committee considers it at their next scheduled meeting to ensure that the regulations come into operation as soon as possible. Minister Nesbitt has written to the Chair requesting this.

Proposed Operational Date

These Regulations will be brought into operation as soon as they are made thereby breaking the 21 day rule. The Department intends to write to the Examiner of Statutory Rules to advise them of the situation.

It is proposed that the Statutory Rule will be made and laid as soon as all necessary approvals are received. A draft of the proposed Statutory Rule is attached.

When the finalised Statutory Rule together with the Explanatory Memorandum has been laid at the Assembly Business Office, the Business Office will submit copies to the Committee.

I should be grateful, if you would please bring this matter to the attention of the Committee for Health at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely


Director of ERPHD

cc. Committee.Health@niassembly.gov.uk
NI Human Rights Commission – info@nihrc.org.uk
Equality Commission - information@equalityni.org
 (Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer)