

Social Rights Alliance North East

Regional network that uses human rights for social justice



Let's transform.
Do you want to do this together?
Sign Our Pledge - turn to page 4

WHAT ARE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS?

They are the essential conditions needed to live a life of dignity and freedom. They include:

- **The right to work**
- **Workers' rights**
- **Social security**
- **Health**
- **Education**
- **Food**
- **Water**
- **Housing**

Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone is entitled to social security and the economic, social and cultural rights that are essential for their dignity and personal development.

Essentially, they are day-to-day rights that affect us from when we wake up in the morning to when (even where) we go to sleep at night.

Human rights are enshrined in international law, which is binding on states. The UK recognised the importance of human rights by signing up to various international treaties, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 1976. ESR have equal status in international law with civil and political rights, such as freedom of expression or the right to a fair trial.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM?

National governments and all public authorities have the responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil human rights without discrimination of any kind.

Groups and individuals that face discrimination because of a part of their identity, such as sex, race or disability, are significantly over-represented amongst the most socio-economically disadvantaged.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's impact [assessment](#) into [recent tax and welfare reforms since 2010](#) shows that those who are already the worst off have been the most affected by these changes.

For example, women on average lost £400 per year compared to a £30 average loss experienced by men, with very substantial variation within both sexes. Black and minority ethnic minority households, families with at least one disabled member and lone parents (who are overwhelmingly women) are also amongst those who have suffered disproportionately from these changes.

WHAT'S THE REALITY?

Currently, [14 million people](#), a fifth of the UK's population, live in poverty – four million of them are more than 50% below the poverty line, and [1.5 million](#) are destitute, unable to afford basic essentials.

Levels of [child poverty in North East](#) are above the national average: Nearly 540,000 dependent children until the age of 20 (24%) live in low-income families, compared to 20% in England. [Fuel poverty](#) is also above the national average: over 14% of households lie in fuel poor homes compared to 11% in the rest of England. The North East is home to many food banks providing much needed support. Newcastle West End Foodbank, the largest in the country, provided more than 40,000 food parcels in 2018.

#1ForEquality

Child poverty and fuel poverty
are above the national average
in the **North East.**

justfair

#1ForEquality

Local authorities have a powerful tool at their disposal to build a fair society and reduce the inequalities that harm us all. **They can bring the socio-economic duty to life.**



justfair

Despite significant cuts, local authorities have a powerful tool at their disposal to build a fair society and reduce inequalities. Successive governments have failed to bring the socio-economic duty to life but nothing can stop local authorities from implementing it as a matter of [best practice](#) to actively consider the way in which their decisions increase or decrease inequalities that result from socio-economic disadvantage.

Unlike many countries, the UK has not fully incorporated ESR into domestic law. This means that it can be difficult, sometimes impossible, for people to legally claim their rights. National laws and policies need to reflect the right that people should be able to take their case to court if their rights have been breached.

It's all fine and well saying that people have the right to take their claim to court – but the reality is that many people in this situation cannot afford legal cover. This means that people often get away with abusing the rights of others. Cuts to legal aid over the past few years have had a detrimental impact on people at risk of harm, discrimination and disadvantage, with thousands of people being left [to navigate the justice system alone](#).

#1ForEquality

Inequality is not inevitable though. **It is a political choice.**



justfair

WHAT CAN THE ALLIANCE DO?

Human rights are universal; they have the power to bring together communities that stand for the same values and principles.

Communities around the world, from Buenos Aires and Belfast, to Delhi and Nairobi, are putting human rights into grassroots action, making international human rights law locally relevant. They are showing that human rights are much more than a shield to protect the individual from the state. Human rights also have a unique empowering and mobilising effect.

The Social Rights Alliance is a collective, regional space for organisations and individuals for challenging violations of these rights. Together we can hold public authorities across the North East accountable if they breach human rights. We can:

- Campaign for change both locally and nationally
- Encourage a shift in the narrative around social rights and their importance
- Share ideas and examples of best practice from around the region
- Hold public authorities across the North East to account to ensure their policies comply with international human rights law, and work with them to amend policies, procedures and practice
- Campaign for the introduction of an Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Bill to enshrine ESR in domestic law
- Promote the implementation of the socio-economic duty in each of the local authorities across the region

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

There are many different avenues that a person can take to contributing to a society based on social rights and equality; from talking to the people around you to understand their reality, to supporting activities run by other groups, to participating in or running your own campaign for social justice.

If you're not yet a member, join the Social Rights Alliance and together we can help make social rights a reality for everyone in the North East.

Contact anya.bonner@justfair.org.uk

Sign our pledge and join the Social Rights Alliance:

Everyone has the right to good education, adequate housing, public healthcare quality food, strong social security and a decent standard of living.
This is what makes a free and fair society.

UK government and local authorities must ensure these rights for everyone without discrimination.
This is their legal responsibility

Public authorities are accountable to the people.
Laws should respect the principle that these are human rights and everyone should be able to take their case to court if any of their rights have been breached.

Let's transform. I want to be proud of a society based on social rights and equality.
We have the right to actively participate in decisions that affect us. Businesses, civil society and the general public should also help create the conditions to make social rights a reality for all.

[Click here
sign pledge
online](#)

