

Socio-economic duty and COVID-19 recovery

Just Fair is urging local authorities to tackle socio-economic inequality in COVID-19 recovery plans.

This is because all people need to live in security, peace and dignity with a guarantee of physical health and safety.



The extent of wealth and income inequality is of widespread concern in England. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and the wider governmental and societal response, have brought inequalities into sharp focus. The impact of COVID-19 is particularly evident in the education, employment, food, healthcare, and housing sectors. There is widespread evidence that people of specific groups, who are socio-economically disadvantaged as a result of inequality, are disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Tackling inequality will be vital for COVID-19 recovery.



Local authorities and the UK Government have a powerful tool at their disposal. The Equality Act 2010 consolidated anti-discrimination legislation to require equal treatment in private and public services, and access to employment, for the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 introduces a socio-economic duty on public bodies that requires them:

'when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise its functions' to 'have due regard to the desirability of exercising them in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage.'

Public bodies are asked to consider how their decisions and policies could increase or decrease inequality that results from socio-economic disadvantage. Despite being passed by Parliament in 2010, successive governments have refused to bring Section 1 into force.



Since 2017, Just Fair, with its partner The Equality Trust, has led the #1forEquality campaign which focuses on urging the UK Government to enforce Section 1. While Section 1 confers no legal duty, a number of local authorities have taken steps to reduce socio-economic inequality, such as [North of Tyne Combined Authority](#). We are holding workshops which inform local authorities about how to implement the duty.

If you are a local authority officer, councillor, or politician you can [get in touch](#) with us and:

- **Sign up** to attend a workshop on the socio-economic duty. Check our [Events](#) page to find out when the next event is.
- **Read** our report on 'Tackling Socio-economic Inequalities Locally: Good practices in the implementation of the socio-economic duty by local authorities in England'. We set out findings from our interviews with 20 individuals and seven local authorities who are acting in the spirit of the socio-economic duty.
- **Showcase** your support for the duty by sharing [#1ForEquality](#) and [#SocioEconomicDuty](#) on social media.