

The Equality Coalition is seeking to focus work on four strategic areas over the next year.

1. Collective action and campaigning for a 'rights based return' to power sharing

We will develop a manifesto outlining the conditions needed for a 'rights based return' to genuine power sharing in Northern Ireland. This manifesto will press for the enforcement of unimplemented safeguards found within the NI peace settlement as a mechanism to re-establish devolution in a manner that counters abuses of power, such as those that led to the collapse of power sharing in 2017. Campaigning and lobbying activities will be carried out around the manifesto.

In addition to this, we will continue to promote collective action and mobilization across our membership on the Northern Ireland 'rights deficits', including those that currently exist in relation to LGBT rights, reproductive rights and minority language rights.

2. Enforcing the equality duty

We will seek to increase interventions on the equality duty. Much of this work will be carried out under the auspices of the Equality Duty Enforcement Project (EDEP), which was set up by CAJ with funding from the Baring Foundation to support the work of our members to take forward complaints and other interventions to ensure the equality duty is complied with.

The void created by two years without a devolved government and the more recent empowerment of the civil service to take decisions that had previously been the preserve of Ministers both opens opportunities and entails risks. The equality duty remains one of the few challenge tools to counter poor decision making. There are likely to be a number of upcoming challenges this year and beyond, including the potential loss of the NI welfare reform mitigations package from March 2020 onwards.

3. Protecting socio-economic rights in the context of an EU Exit

We will continue to take forward a body of interventions to ensure the socio-economic rights and entitlements of workers, communities and service users are not damaged by Brexit. In particular, we will challenge detrimental policy decisions taken in relation to Brexit, seek to shape the 'future relationship' between the EU and UK, and strive to protect the rights provisions of the Good Friday Agreement. This will include engaging in campaigning work and furthering interventions to counter racial profiling and the sub-contracting of 'hostile environment' measures to public sector staff, particularly in NI due to the land border.

4. Countering hate expression and incitement to hatred

We will encourage public authorities to adopt proactive policies to tackle hate expression in public spaces and will continue to push back against the present culture of non-intervention, particularly where there is suspicion of paramilitary involvement or endorsement. We will also seek to transfer 'fair employment' workplace experiences to broader sectors and provide training to trade union activists on combating incitement to hatred.