

The Equality Coalition is seeking to focus its work on **three strategic areas** over the next year:

1. PROTECTING ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND WORKERS' RIGHTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND DURING THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS:

- In the context of the cost of living crisis, we will continue to campaign for the NI Executive to discharge its legal duty, arising from the St Andrews Agreement legislation, to adopt a binding anti-poverty strategy on the basis of objective need.
- We will continue to operationalise the effective working of the public sector equality duty (Section 75) in public policy decisions, with a focus on economic social and cultural rights (ESCR), including the gendered impact of policy decisions on women. This will encompass areas including restructuring and 'reform' policy decisions.
- We will continue to intervene, with an equality lens, on decision making related to the Covid-19 pandemic, and its aftermath, including potential reforms of the health service and other structures. We will input into the Covid 19 public inquiry, incorporating our members' perspectives.
- We will press for effective protections for workers in the present post-Brexit economic context, including the utilisation of the rights based commitments in the Withdrawal Agreement. We will also focus on protections for migrant workers in the cross-border context of NI, taking into account the risk of further 'hostile environment' measures and racial profiling in access to public services and internal 'common travel area' journeys.
- We will continue to capacity build our member groups and the broader UNISON membership so we can assist them in taking effective interventions to challenge policies impacting on economic and social wellbeing. This will include supporting the effective use of Section 75, as well as other Westminster and Stormont processes.

2. GFA@25: CAMPAIGNING FOR THE PROTECTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RIGHTS AND EQUALITY PROVISIONS OF THE PEACE SETTLEMENT:

- In marking the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), we will continue to campaign against any regression in GFA protections and call for the full implementation of the outstanding rights-protection frameworks (including the Bill of Rights). We will campaign, within the terms of the GFA, for rights-based reform to the Stormont institutions along the lines of the Equality Coalition '[policy asks](#)' document. Other areas of focus will be the protection of minority rights in light of potential constitutional change and lobbying for the replacement of 'political vetoes' with rights-based safeguards, which are in line with the GFA.
- We will campaign against any attempt to legislate within NI to limit the right to strike (due to the devolution of employment rights legislation in the rest of the UK should not apply in NI).
- We will build on successful engagement with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) and Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) to ensure the protection of workers' rights, and broader rights, through the effective implementation of post-Brexit safeguards. In particular, we will focus on the UK commitment in Article 2 of the NI Protocol to 'non diminution' in certain GFA rights.

- Through the next NI Executive's Programme for Government (PfG), we will seek delivery of the equality and socioeconomic rights commitments contained within the 2020 New Decade New Approach (NDNA) agreement that restored Stormont in 2020, including those commitments on the equality strategies and childcare.

3. COUNTERING HATE CRIME, INTIMIDATION, AND HATE EXPRESSION:

- We will aim to shape the process with the NI Department of Justice (DoJ) on ongoing work for a new hate crime bill in Northern Ireland, including informing the process for the addition of measures within the criminal law to tackle misogyny, based on the Scottish working group's blueprint.
- We will counter the ongoing 'chill factor', including intimidation and paramilitary threats, still experienced by civil society activists 25 years on from the GFA. This includes focusing on intimidation in the workplace and intimidation and harassment in the online world. We will take a 'digital rights' approach to this work.
- We will press for policy reform to deal with the NI specific issues of paramilitary involvement in housing intimidation, as well as racist, sectarian, and homophobic (etc) hate expression in public space.

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