



April 2019

Letter to the Editor

How we can reverse damaging inequalities in our towns and cities by one simple act

Poverty2Solutions, a coalition of 3 groups (ATD Fourth World UK ,Dole Animators and Thrive Teesside) have been working together for nearly 3 years developing a policy ask – the **implementation of Section one of the Equality Act 2010** and are now supporting Just Fair UK's Be#1forEquality

We live in one of the most unequal countries in Europe in terms of income, wealth and regional disparities between South and North. **Stockton, for example, holds the unfortunate position of having the biggest life expectancy gap anywhere in the country.** Inequality is not inevitable, though. It is the result of specific policy decisions. Inequality doesn't work for anyone. It diminishes our ability to make decisions freely, it harms community cohesion and it is bad for the economy as well.

We have an opportunity to do something about it. The Equality Act 2010 contains a very valuable tool to achieve the necessary systemic change: the socio-economic duty.

Contained in Section 1 of the Act, the socio-economic duty would require public authorities to actively consider how their decisions are likely to increase or decrease income and wealth inequalities.

Unfortunately, successive UK governments have failed to bring the duty to life. However, local authorities all around the country are [voluntarily implementing the socio-economic duty](#). With the right amount of leadership, they have discovered that the duty can help them make the most of their (admittedly diminishing) resources to serve their communities and particularly those suffering from food and energy poverty, homelessness and the negative consequences of so-called 'welfare reforms'.

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Transparent and open budgeting processes or the application of a real living wage are two expressions of the commitment of a local authority with the reduction of inequalities.

The elections of 2 May are an opportunity to reduce the inequalities that harm us all. We urge all candidates standing in the local elections to pledge to support the implementation of the socio-economic duty in their local authority and to urge the UK government to bring it into effect at the national level.

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For and on behalf of Poverty2Solutions

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