



POLICY POSITION: Key Point Briefing

The Need for a Single Equality Act

We recommend the adoption of a single equality act for Northern Ireland.

Single equality legislation should reflect international human rights standards and best practice, and build on equality law in GB. Any legislation should also consider and comply with the Protocol Article 2 commitment and keep pace with all future EU equality laws that enhance protections.

The Importance of Modernising our Equality Law

It is fundamentally unfair that different equality groups have different protections without justifiable reason. Such differing protections contribute to a 'hierarchy of rights'.

The adoption of a single equality law approach in Great Britain has further exacerbated and highlighted the significant gaps and shortfalls that exist in Northern Ireland. These differences affect all grounds of discrimination, across a wide range of areas.

Single equality legislation is the most effective means of strengthening and maintaining protections against discrimination in Northern Ireland. Such legislation would also improve consistency, understanding and efficiency - saving time and costs for individuals from all equality groups, as well as employers, service providers, advisory services, and those interacting with equality legislation more generally.

Working Together to Improve Protections

We call on decision-makers to take steps to legislate for a single equality act in Northern Ireland.

We would welcome the support of stakeholders to achieve better equality protections in Northern Ireland by engaging with colleagues, officials, and elected representatives to raise awareness of our recommendations, and advocate for change.

Recommendations

We recommend action is taken to:

- Strengthen equality protections through single equality legislation.
- Reflect international human rights standards and best practice.
- Ensure provisions build on equality law in Great Britain.
- Comply with, Protocol Article 2 obligations, and strengthen equality rights post Brexit.

Benefits of Reform

Single equality law in Northern Ireland would harmonise and simplify the protections available for everyone in society, both now and in the future.

This would provide a number of benefits to a range of users. For example:

- individuals could more readily understand rights and protections if these were more consistent across the various protected aspects of their identity;
- employers and service providers could more easily understand and more effectively implement more harmonised obligations and responsibilities, with associated time and cost savings;
- those providing advice or support services would also benefit from the efficiencies of a simplified and harmonised set of protections in a single equality law;
- those tasked with keeping the legislation under review or updating the legislative framework would also benefit from the efficiencies of simplified and harmonised legislation.

This document and wider information on single equality legislation, including our full policy position and recommendations, can be found at

www.equalityni.org/SingleEqualityAct

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