



4. Public Ethical Issues

- We support attempts to legalise assisted dying, assisted suicide and voluntary euthanasia for those who have made a clear decision, free from coercion, to end their lives and who are physically unable to do so themselves.
- We support liberalisation of the abortion laws, which would include permitting women from Northern Ireland the same rights to free abortions on the NHS in Great Britain as women in England, Wales and Scotland.
- Some religious groups and individuals attempt to restrict the use of human tissues such as embryonic stem cells for scientific research, impeding medical progress. We want the primary ethical consideration to be treatments for diseases.
- We support the proposal of the British Medical Association to introduce a system of 'presumed consent' for organ donation accompanied by a public information and education campaign.
- We oppose NHS funding of homeopathic treatments because of the lack of evidence supporting the efficacy of these products.
- We support restrictive laws on experiments on animals, while recognising that some such experiments are justified in the cause of finding cures for diseases.
- We oppose unnecessary procedures to remove parts of the genitals of girls and boys and want to see all laws allowing such procedures repealed.

The BHA tackles humanist issues at government level. It chooses which issues to focus on according to priority, public concern and its own resources and staffing. This leaflet is a précis of a more detailed policy document available from the BHA.

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Campaigns & Causes



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1. Human Rights

The BHA is committed to the protection and promotion of human rights as exemplified in documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

- We seek an end to exemptions from the Equality Act for religious groups which allow them to discriminate on grounds of religion or belief.
- We oppose attempts to establish wider exemptions, for example when a religious pharmacist refuses to dispense emergency contraception.
- Internationally, laws against 'blasphemy' remain a serious problem for free speech.
- The BBC continues to resist fair representation of humanist voices, for example in Radio 4's *Thought for the Day*.



2. Secularism

We are committed to secularism: State institutions should be separate from religious institutions and the state should not promote religion.

- We want the Church of England to be disestablished because continuing establishment gives it unfair privilege and status.
- Secularism would also require an end to bishops sitting as of right in the House of Lords.
- The government is increasingly encouraging religious groups to take on a role in local communities and pressing local government to welcome such religious groups as 'partners'. We want inclusive, accessible public services without any identification with particular religions or beliefs and with no discrimination in employment or service delivery.
- We want the law in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to allow humanist celebrants to conduct legal marriages as it does in Scotland. This would give non-religious people the same choice that religious people have of a meaningful ceremony composed by a person who shares their values and approach to life.

3. Education

The religious discrimination in our state school system is a concern for us. We aim for Humanism to be better understood as an ethical and fulfilling non-religious approach to life and so we have an interest in ensuring that it features on the school curriculum on equal terms with religions.

- We work for reform of Religious Education so that it will become an inclusive, impartial, objective, fair, balanced and relevant subject allowing pupils to explore a variety of religions and non-religious worldviews. We want this subject to be a national entitlement for all pupils and not, as currently, drawn up on a local basis for each individual local authority.
- Evolution is a key concept that children should be introduced to at an early stage so as to protect them from popular misconceptions and religious fallacies. Creationism and 'intelligent design' are not scientific theories, but they are portrayed as scientific theories by some religious fundamentalists who attempt to have their views promoted in publicly-funded schools. We work for enforceable statutory guidance that they may not be presented as scientific theories in any publicly-funded school.
- We support making Personal, Social, Health, and Economic education (PSHE) a statutory part of the curriculum, and believe that the religious character of a school should not deprive children of their entitlement to good PSHE. Good quality, age-appropriate Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) is a vital part of PSHE. We want it taught as a compulsory subject in all schools from primary age, with no parental opt out.
- We want to see the current law requiring daily collective worship replaced with a requirement for inclusive school assemblies.
- We campaign against state-funded religious schools and for an inclusive, secular schools system, where children and young people of all different backgrounds and beliefs can learn with and from each other.