

Bishops lie about NSS chaplaincy campaign at the General Synod

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The National Secular Society's campaign to get the church to pay the salary of their clergymen who are working in hospitals as chaplains was raised at this week's Church of England General Synod.

The Bishop of Bristol, Rt Rev Mike Hill, falsely claimed the NSS were trying to "exclude" chaplains from the NHS. He said the true value of chaplains "might only be appreciated if they were no longer present".

"Every effort ought to be made, and is being made, to resist secularist calls for chaplains to be excluded from the NHS. Our hospitals would be poorer places without them and patients would be denied comprehensive care if their services were removed," Mr Hill said.

In a [report](#) last year, based on Freedom of Information requests, the NSS found that £29 million is spent annually on hospital chaplains which provide no clinical benefit. The report argued that if the Church wants its chaplains in hospitals then they should fund it themselves.

Terry Sanderson, president of the National Secular Society, said: "Our research was carefully verified and our conclusion was that it was inappropriate for the National Health Service to pay the wages of religious chaplains who should rightly be funded by the churches. We repeatedly said at the time that we were not looking to exclude chaplains, only to have them paid for by a more appropriate paymaster.

"It seems the bishops simply can't make a case without distorting the facts and completely misrepresenting our purpose."

Mr Sanderson said that he would not have expected anything else from a body like the General Synod. "This is a body speaking very much for its own interests. The Church is surely aware what parlous state the National Health Service is in. That it continues to insist that scarce resources are spent on funding its representatives shows a lack of concern for those people – old and young – who are desperately in need of real medical attention."

[Read more about Chaplaincy funding and the NHS](#)

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