

NSS welcomes European Court decision to refuse appeal to Christian activists

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The National Secular Society has welcomed a decision by the European Court of Human Rights not to refer the cases of three British Christians to the Grand Chamber.

Nurse Shirley Chaplin, registrar Lillian Ladele and relationship counsellor Gary McFarlane lost their appeals to the ECtHR in January and had requested the court's Grand Chamber to reconsider their cases.

Responding to the European Court's decision not to allow a final appeal, Keith Porteous Wood, executive director of the National Secular Society, said:

"Fortunately, Europe's highest court has now wisely followed numerous lower courts and rejected the applicants' attempts for religious conscience to trump equality law.

"The UK has the world's most comprehensive equality laws which already include strong protection for religious believers and they would have been fatally compromised, particularly for LGBT people, had the Grand Chamber overturned any of these judgments.

"We hope that this will now draw a line under the attempts by a small coterie of Christian activists to obtain special privileges for themselves which would invariably come at the expense of other people's rights. The principle of equality for all, including for religious believers, is now established and they should stop wasting the time of the courts with these vexatious cases."

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