

For the public benefit? The case for removing 'the advancement of religion' as a charitable purpose

Charities must have 'charitable purposes' that demonstrate how they provide a public benefit. The benefit provided by most of the 13 'charitable purposes' set out in the Charities Act 2011 is clear. The benefits of relieving poverty, promoting good health, saving lives and protecting the environment are obvious to all. But the public benefit of "the advancement of religion" is highly contestable.

Our report – *For The Public Benefit?* – argues that "the advancement of religion" should be removed as a charitable purpose, on the grounds that promoting religion is not inherently a public benefit and can sometimes even cause harm to society.

This measure would not prevent religious organisations from enjoying charitable status, but would require them to demonstrate a tangible public benefit under another charitable purpose heading.

Recommendations for a fairer and clearer charity system:

1. Equal and neutral treatment of religious and non-religious charities

"The advancement of religion" should no longer be recognised as a charitable purpose and as a public benefit in its own right. Religion should not be a factor in determining whether or not an organisation is recognised as a charity or eligible for registration.

2. End abuse and harm

There should be far greater scrutiny and an end to religious charities that cause greater harm than good – there is abundant evidence that this still persists.

3. Tangible evidence of public benefit

Charities must provide clear evidence that they demonstrate public benefit. What constitutes public benefit should be clearly defined and understandable.

4. An emphasis on supporting communities

Charity sector policy should emphasise supporting charities, both religious and non-religious, which deliver tangible outcomes for communities

5. Effective use of taxpayer money

The charity sector must ensure it uses public money to deliver genuine benefits to individuals and wider society.

6. Align charity law with public opinion

Current charity law - and the continuation of 'the advancement of religion' as a charitable purpose - is increasingly out of line with UK public opinion and should be reformed to better reflect this.

- [Read the full report](#)

Take action

Please consider writing to your MP, tell them it's time for "the advancement of religion" to be removed as a charitable purpose.

- [Send a letter to your MP now!](#)