

Many religious charities do fantastic work.

But many others fail to provide a public benefit and some cause harm.

It's time to end religious privilege in charity law.

Charity work carried out by people of all faiths and none should be recognised and celebrated. Much of the work of religious charities, such as helping the poor, is secular in nature and beneficial to society.

But there are religious organisations which exploit the privileged status of religion in charity law to conduct activities that do not fulfil a genuine public benefit, and only serve to further religious ideology.

In the worst cases, religious charities may harm society and individuals.

Registered charities must serve a purpose recognised as "charitable". Charity laws specify a list of "charitable purposes," one of which is "the advancement of religion".

Charities must also demonstrate that they provide a genuine public benefit. But guidelines are vague on what constitutes a public benefit, particular in relation to religious activities. There is still an assumption in the charity system that religion is inherently beneficial. This view is not supported by evidence and implies those without a religion are somehow less moral or charitable.

The inclusion of the advancement of religion within charitable purposes gives religion a privileged position in the charity sector. It enables religious organisations to acquire all the benefits of charitable status, including tax relief, gift aid and public respectability, simply by "advancing religion".

It also includes religious organisations that cause harm to society. This includes charities which facilitate [religious genital cutting](#), support the [non-stun slaughter](#) industry, and promote extremism, hatred and intolerance of other people.

The NSS believes all charities, religious or not, should be held to equally high standards. **That's why we campaign for "the advancement of religion" to be removed from the list of charitable purposes, and for religious charities to be held to the same equality laws as all other charities.**

Take action!

1. Write to your MP

Tell your MP it's time for "the advancement of religion" to be removed as a charitable purpose. Enter your postcode below to find your MP and send a letter to them.

Enter Postcode:

Find my MP

- [Other representatives](#)

We also have template letters to write to your Members of the Scottish or Welsh Parliaments or Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly.

2. Share your story

Tell us why you support this campaign, and how you are personally affected by the issue. You can also let us know if you would like assistance with a particular issue.

- [Share your story](#)

3. Join us

Become a member of the National Secular Society today! Together, we can separate religion and state for greater freedom and fairness.

- [Join us!](#)

Latest updates

[Islamic charity stokes fear of 'black magic' and promotes exorcism](#)

Posted: Mon, 15 Apr 2024 11:16

Islamic charity in Birmingham warns of "the sinister repercussions of magic" and the "snares of sorcerers"

[UN raises concerns over 'gay conversion' charity after NSS briefing](#)

Posted: Tue, 9 Apr 2024 09:29

Charity regulator's failure to act on gay conversion therapy suggests it is "a protected religious practice" in Northern Ireland, says UN

- [1](#)
- [2](#)
- [3](#)
- [4](#)
- [5](#)
- [6](#)
- [7](#)
- [8](#)

- [9](#)
- [10](#)
- ...

- [See more](#)

More information

- [Charity laws – Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Read More](#)

- [Report: The case for removing ‘the advancement of religion’ as a charitable purpose](#)

[Read More](#)