

## What do the parties say? Comparing key humanist issues to party positions in the 2017 Northern Ireland Assembly elections

Northern Ireland Humanists question	DUP	Sinn Féin	UUP	SDLP	Alliance Party	TUV	Green Party (NI)	People Before Profit
Manifesto link	<a href="https://humanism.org.uk/NIA2017DUP">https://humanism.org.uk/NIA2017DUP</a> *	<a href="https://humanism.org.uk/NIA2017SF">https://humanism.org.uk/NIA2017SF</a> *	<a href="https://humanism.org.uk/NIA2017UUP">https://humanism.org.uk/NIA2017UUP</a> *	<a href="https://humanism.org.uk/NIA2017SDLP">https://humanism.org.uk/NIA2017SDLP</a> *	<a href="https://humanism.org.uk/NIA2017Alliance">https://humanism.org.uk/NIA2017Alliance</a> *	<a href="https://humanism.org.uk/NIA2017TUV">https://humanism.org.uk/NIA2017TUV</a> *	<a href="https://humanism.org.uk/NIA2017Green">https://humanism.org.uk/NIA2017Green</a> *	<a href="https://humanism.org.uk/NIA2017PBP">https://humanism.org.uk/NIA2017PBP</a> *
<b>‘Would you support an end to religious discrimination in the employment of staff in all state-funded schools?’</b>	Yes. ‘The DUP will seek to deliver equality for all school sectors... This includes... the abolition of the Catholic Teacher Training Certificate, [and] an end to the Article 71 exemption for teaching from Fair Employment’. <sup>1</sup>	In February 2016 opposed an attempt to end religious discrimination in teacher employment – although supported such a move in principle in 2013. <sup>2</sup>	Yes. ‘We have: Called for the removal of Article 71 of the Fair Employment and Equal Treatment Order 1998 which exempts teachers in schools from protections against discrimination on the basis of religion.’	In February 2016 opposed an attempt to end religious discrimination in teacher employment. <sup>3</sup>	Yes. When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said ‘We do not support the “teacher exception” contained within Article 71 of the Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998 and have voted to remove it’.	Yes. ‘TUV is committed to: Getting rid of the exemption for teaching from fair employment legislation. Everyone should have an equal chance to avail of employment opportunities.’	Yes. When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said it ‘opposes religious discrimination of all kinds, which would include employment in public schools.’	Yes. When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said ‘PBP is for: an end to religious discrimination in schools’.
<b>‘Do you think we should get rid of faith-based religious education in state schools, and instead treat all major religious and non-religious worldviews equally?’</b>	The DUP has supported ‘shared education’ and ‘the Shared Education Bill’, whereby different single faith schools share the same campus, and ultimately wants there to be a ‘single education sector’, but does not support integrated schools as the way there. <sup>4</sup> No clear views on changing education about religious and non-religious worldviews.	Will ‘Continue to encourage & facilitate the growth of... Integrated and Shared Education.’ <sup>5</sup> But also supports ‘parental preference – whether it be in the integrated, Catholic maintained, the controlled or Irish medium sectors.’ <sup>6</sup> No clear views on changing education about religious and non-religious worldviews.	Manifesto calls for ‘a single education system, where children mix from age four... but which also protects a family’s right to education within a religious context.’ When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said ‘Religious Education should remain taught in state schools, though school children should also be made aware that there are many different religions around the globe, as well as non-religious viewpoints.’	‘We recognise the value of faith based education and the initiative of various churches in this regard. The SDLP is committed to parental choice and for access for pupils to faith based, integrated, Irish medium and state education.’ Also ‘believe that parents who wish to send their child to an integrated school should be facilitated by the department as should parents who wish to send their child to a denominational school.’ <sup>7</sup>	‘Alliance believes that every child should have the choice and option of attending an integrated school.’ Want at least 20% of children in integrated schools within ten years. When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said ‘We support undertaking a full and comprehensive review of the curriculum to ensure that a wide-range of academic and vocational options is available. This could be considered as part of that.’	No. Has described ‘shared and integrated education’ as ‘social engineering’. <sup>8</sup>	Yes. When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said ‘We would call for the creation in Northern Ireland of a single, publicly funded, non-selective, integrated secular education system, so we would oppose any attempt to enshrine one religion above others (or above agnosticism or atheism).’	Yes. ‘People Before Profit wants to see: An integrated, all-ability education system... We oppose the sham “shared education” programme which simply reinforces segregation.’ When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said ‘PBP is for: Education about religious and non-religious beliefs’.

\* All party policies come from the respective party manifestos unless a specific reference is given.

<sup>1</sup> DUP Assembly Manifesto 2016, April 2016: <http://www.mydup.com/publications/view/dup-manifesto-2016>

<sup>2</sup> BHA news item ‘Bid to end religious discrimination in teacher recruitment defeated in Northern Ireland Assembly’, February 2016: <https://humanism.org.uk/2016/02/24/bid-to-end-religious-discrimination-in-teacher-recruitment-defeated-in-northern-ireland-assembly/>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Belfast Telegraph* report, January 2015: <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/education/dup-leader-peter-robinson-turns-his-back-on-the-policy-to-create-more-integrated-schools-30932883.html>

<sup>5</sup> Sinn Féin Assembly Manifesto 2016, April 2016: <https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2016/MANIFESTO20116Assemblytogether.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> *News Letter* article on parties’ views on integrated education, March 2016: <http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/northern-ireland-news/integrated-education-where-do-ni-parties-stand-1-7291875#ixzz4727vPOps>

<sup>7</sup> *News Letter* article on parties’ views on integrated education, March 2016: <http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/northern-ireland-news/integrated-education-where-do-ni-parties-stand-1-7291875#ixzz4727vPOps>

<sup>8</sup> TUV statement on the Stormont House Agreement, December 2014: <http://tuv.org.uk/tuv-commentary-on-the-stormont-house-agreement/>

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<b>‘Would you support making high-quality, comprehensive relationships and sexuality education part of the statutory curriculum in Northern Irish schools?’</b>	No. Has voted against any attempts to strengthen sex and relationships education in Westminster. <sup>9</sup>	Yes. Have called in the Republic of Ireland for ‘comprehensive, evidence based sex education’ to be introduced in schools. <sup>10</sup>	Yes. ‘We want to empower our young people through age-appropriate sex and relationships education and support schools and teachers by equipping them with the knowledge of how to recognise instances of homophobic and transphobic bullying so it can be tackled at the first signs.’	Yes. Have called for comprehensive, age-appropriate SRE to be introduced, including in primary schools. <sup>11</sup>	Yes. ‘In order to refresh the curriculum, we will: Introduce age-appropriate sex and relationship education (SRE) in schools.’	No stated policy.	Yes. ‘The Green Party will: Require Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) in all schools’ and ‘Ensure comprehensive and age-appropriate relationship and sexuality education for all school pupils’.	Yes. When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said ‘PBP is for: Comprehensive compulsory RSE’.
<b>‘Would you support legalising abortion, at a minimum in a similar way to how it is legal in Britain?’</b>	No. Opposes any change in abortion law. <sup>12</sup>	Party policy supports the legalisation of abortion in the case of fatal foetal abnormality. <sup>13</sup> All MLAs that voted in February 2016 also voted in favour of changing the law in cases of rape and incest. <sup>14</sup>	When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said that this is a matter of individual conscience. 73% of MLAs that voted in February 2016 voted against changing the law in the case of fatal foetal abnormality and all voted against doing so in the cases of rape and incest.	No. Opposes any change in abortion law. <sup>15</sup> ‘The SDLP continues to oppose the extension of the 1967 Act. We have called on the Minister of Health and the Minister of Justice to publish the report with the findings from the working group on Fatal Foetal Abnormality.’	When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said that this is a matter of individual conscience. All MLAs that voted in February 2016 voted for changing the law in the case of fatal foetal abnormality but 71% voted against doing likewise in the cases of rape and incest.	No. Opposes any change in abortion law. ‘TUV does not believe that the unborn child should be denied his or her fundamental human rights.’	Yes. Will ‘Ensure equality of healthcare services for women, including the full decriminalisation of abortion, in line with calls from the British Pregnancy Advice Service, ensuring that abortion is always and only a decision for a woman after consultation with medical professionals’.	Yes. When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said ‘PBP is for: Free, safe, legal abortion’.
<b>‘Would you support the legalisation of same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland?’</b>	No. Have used petitions of concern to block previous attempts to change the law. <sup>16</sup>	Yes. Have proposed legislation to legalise same-sex marriage. <sup>17</sup> ‘Sinn Féin’s priorities include: Marriage equality’.	When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said that this is a matter of individual conscience. Almost all MLAs that voted in November 2015 voted against. <sup>18</sup>	Yes. Propose to focus on ‘Legislation to legalise marriage for same sex couples in Northern Ireland.’ Have previously proposed such legislation. <sup>19</sup>	Yes. Manifesto proposes a Bill that ‘will extend civil marriage provisions to same sex couples, provided that robust protections are provided through legislation to protect faith groups and religious celebrants who do not wish to marry same-sex couples.’	No. ‘TUV will oppose any redefinition of marriage and defend traditional family values as outlined in the founding principles of the party, believing that that is the bedrock for the success of society.’	Yes. ‘The Green Party will: Introduce legislation for equal marriage’.	Yes. When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said ‘PBP is for: Equal marriage’.

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. <http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/division.php?date=2010-07-21&number=39>; <http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/division.php?date=2011-05-04&number=266>; <http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/division.php?date=2015-07-15&number=49>; <http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/division.php?date=2015-07-15&number=49>

<sup>10</sup> Sinn Féin Republic of Ireland Education Spokesperson Jonathan O’Brien comments, April 2014: <http://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/29591>. See also Sinn Féin Northern Ireland Education Spokesperson Chris Hazzard comments, October 2015: <http://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/36846>

<sup>11</sup> *Belfast Telegraph* report on SDLP Education Spokesperson Sean Rogers comments, February 2015: <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/education/stormont-should-consider-sex-education-for-primary-pupils-31001350.html>

<sup>12</sup> *News Letter* report on votes on legalising abortion in cases of fatal foetal abnormality, rape, and incest, 11 February 2016: <http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/health/bid-to-change-abortion-law-fails-after-emotive-debate-1-7208996>

<sup>13</sup> *Guardian* report on Sinn Féin policy amendment, 7 March 2015: <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/mar/07/sinn-fein-drops-opposition-to-abortion-at-derry-congress>

<sup>14</sup> Report of February 2016 vote on abortion amendments in the Assembly, March 2016: <http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2016/03/01&docID=261095#2051553>

<sup>15</sup> *News Letter* report on votes on legalising abortion in cases of fatal foetal abnormality, rape, and incest, 11 February 2016: <http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/health/bid-to-change-abortion-law-fails-after-emotive-debate-1-7208996>

<sup>16</sup> *BBC News* article on same-sex marriage vote of 2 November 2015: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-politics-34692546>

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

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<b>‘Would you support the legalisation of humanist marriage in Northern Ireland, which has been hugely popular in Scotland since its legalisation there?’</b>	No stated policy.	No stated policy, but supported legalisation of humanist marriages in the Republic of Ireland, which occurred in 2012-13. <sup>20</sup>	When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said it does not currently have policy in this area.	No stated policy, but have supported calls to legalise humanist marriages in England and Wales. <sup>21</sup>	Yes. When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said ‘We would support the extension of the authority to solemnise marriages to accredited humanist celebrants.’	No stated policy.	Yes. Told Northern Ireland Humanists, ‘[we are] perfectly happy to support humanist marriages.’	Yes. When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said ‘We are for legal recognition for humanist weddings, as is the case in the Republic of Ireland’.
<b>‘Would you oppose any moves in Westminster to weaken our human rights settlement, including pulling out of the European Convention on Human Rights – which is essential in protecting fundamental human rights and freedoms?’</b>	No. ‘The DUP has long been critical of the Human Rights Act and the way in which it has been interpreted by the European Court of Human Rights... We support, as a minimum, the reform of the Human Rights Act, to remove the “right to family life” defence against deportation upon conviction for a serious criminal offence.’ <sup>22</sup>	Yes. Will ‘Work with all progressive forces to resist the repeal of the 1998 Human Rights Act’.	Yes. When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said ‘We believe that the rights enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights are essential to a free society. We are open to the idea of a British Bill of Rights replacing the Human Rights Act, but only if the same rights and protections are given. We oppose any attempt to weaken Human Rights legislation in Northern Ireland.’	Yes. ‘We will... resist any attempts to diminish the protections currently afforded to us through the Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention of Human Rights.’ <sup>23</sup>	Yes. ‘The Human Rights Act is an essential component of the Good Friday Agreement and attempts to repeal it will hold us back. We will oppose any proposed repeal of the Human Rights Act.’	No stated policy.	Yes. ‘The Green Party will: Defend the Human Rights Act against attacks from Westminster’ and ‘Oppose withdrawal from the European Convention on Human Rights’.	Yes. When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said ‘We are for retaining [the Human Rights Act].’
<b>‘Would you support the legalisation of assisted dying for people who are terminally ill or are permanently and incurably suffering, in order to protect their right to autonomy and self-determination?’</b>	No. Has voted against proposals to legalise assisted dying in Westminster. <sup>24</sup>	No stated policy.	When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said that this is a matter of individual conscience. Has voted against proposals to legalise assisted dying in Westminster. <sup>25</sup>	No. Has voted against proposals to legalise assisted dying in Westminster. <sup>26</sup>	When contacted by Northern Ireland Humanists, said that this is a matter of individual conscience.	No stated policy.	‘The Green Party will: Support dignity in dying’. Unclear if this refers to incurably suffering, as well as terminally ill, individuals.	No stated policy.

<sup>20</sup> Civil Registration (Amendment) Bill 2012: <http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/bills28/bills/2012/10512/document1.htm>

<sup>21</sup> SDLP signature on a Westminster early day motion, December 2014: <https://www.parliament.uk/edm/2014-15/590>

<sup>22</sup> Statement of DUP Parliamentary Chief Whip Jeffrey Donaldson, May 2015: <http://www.mydup.com/news/article/donaldson-human-rights-act-has-failed-victims>

<sup>23</sup> SDLP 2016 manifesto, April 2016: [https://www.sdip.ie/site/assets/files/43032/sdip\\_manifesto\\_web-1.pdf](https://www.sdip.ie/site/assets/files/43032/sdip_manifesto_web-1.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> House of Commons Assisted Dying Bill vote results, September 2015: <http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/division.php?date=2015-09-11&number=69>

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*



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## About Northern Ireland Humanists

Northern Ireland Humanists is part of the British Humanist Association, working with the Humanist Association of Ireland. The BHA and Northern Ireland Humanists are the national charity working on behalf of non-religious people who seek to live ethical and fulfilling lives on the basis of reason and humanity. We promote Humanism, support and represent the non-religious, and promote a secular state and equal treatment in law and policy of everyone, regardless of religion or belief. Founded in 1896, the BHA has around 55,000 members and supporters, and over 90 local and special interest affiliates.



Northern Ireland Humanists and the BHA are independent of all political parties and do not support, fund, or advocate any particular political party.

All party policies come from the respective party manifestos unless a specific reference is given. Where policies are not stated we contacted the parties to seek further clarity and the table incorporates any replies we received. If you spot something where you think we've got it wrong, or have missed a piece of information, then please do contact us.

Some of the issues we discuss are not devolved to Northern Ireland and so the parties' policies are aimed at the UK Government in Westminster or the Irish Government in Dublin, and not the Northern Ireland Assembly.

You can find out more about our election work at <https://humanism.org.uk/NIA2017>

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