

HUMANIST PRIORITIES IN THE 2019 UK GENERAL ELECTION



Briefing from Northern Ireland Humanists, November 2019

Here are some suggested questions for you to ask your local candidates, along with some detail to help you to do so. You could ask these questions at hustings, on the doorstep, or by writing to your candidates directly. Please find a guide for how to raise issues locally after the questions.

Will you commit to repealing Northern Ireland's blasphemy laws?

- Blasphemy laws are a violation of the right to freedom of speech and expression. They are used around the world as a means of harassing, victimising and discriminating against religion and belief minorities.
- They impede the right to freedom of religion or belief.
- Blasphemy and blasphemous libel remain criminal offences in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Blasphemy laws were repealed in England and Wales in 2009.

Will you commit to fully enacting regulations to allow legally recognised same-sex marriages and safe, legal abortions to take place in Northern Ireland?

- The Westminster Government is legally bound to make regulations for both legal same-sex marriage and abortion in Northern Ireland, coming into force in 2020.
- We believe that these regulations should provide a similar level of access to both of these human rights as is currently the rest of the UK.

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?

- We believe that RE should become an inclusive, impartial, objective, fair, balanced, and relevant subject allowing pupils to explore a variety of religions and humanism, sitting alongside other humanities subjects in the curriculum and with the same status as them. It should include the historical and social contexts of the emergence and development of religions and humanism.



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ENGAGING CANDIDATES ON HUMANIST ISSUES

During an election, candidates are keen to meet local people and groups. This offers several opportunities to lobby and engage them on humanist issues.

Ask your candidates where they stand on our top humanist priorities:

We've prepared a [draft email](#) you can send to your prospective parliamentary candidates about the key issues that are important to humanists. This action takes less than five minutes to complete.

[Use our draft email to write to your candidates](#)

Visits: In the last few weeks of campaigning before the election, look up if candidates are planning any visits to local groups and centres in your area. These will usually be advertised on their websites and social media. Go along to these visits and put your questions to the candidate. Candidates will also be knocking on doors locally to try and drum up support. This is also an opportunity to question them on key humanist issues.

Attend local hustings: Often candidates will participate in local hustings, where they will discuss a range of issues. This is an opportunity to raise humanist concerns which would not normally make the agenda. Check local newspapers, community groups publications, and your candidates' social media to see if hustings are being organised near you.

[Read our guide to hustings.](#)

Local press: Candidates will be particularly sensitive to matters being raised in the local press (print, online, and broadcast) around election time. This presents a good opportunity to raise humanist issues by, for example, writing to your local paper.

Social media: A lot of candidates will be using Twitter and Facebook to promote their campaigns. Posting about humanist issues will raise the profile of humanism in the local area and with the candidates. You can also directly tweet candidates to ask them to support humanist causes.

Note that from the dissolution of parliament until after the General Election, no constituency officially has an MP. MPs who are hoping to be re-elected will often keep in touch with their former constituents, although they cannot do this in any official capacity and cannot hold surgeries.

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