



Strategic Plan 2024-2026



Foreword

This is the strategic plan and ambitions for the Humanist Association of Ireland over the next 3-year period, from 2024 – 2026.

The draft strategy was prepared on the basis of a previous membership survey and a review of the current political, social and cultural life of Ireland since the pandemic. Members were surveyed on the draft strategy, and the final version takes on board the feedback received. We are grateful to members for their thoughtful contributions.

The strategic plan is concise and direct. At the core of this plan are five particular areas of focus which we believe are central to our purpose and mission, and which we are determined to advance.

Humanism is a movement of progression and reform to ensure equal rights are achieved for those who wish to exercise intellectual freedom for individual values and behaviours, rather than that imposed by faith-based authorities.

Neil Ward
Chair
January 2024

Plan Overview

The Humanist Association of Ireland’s Strategic Plan 2024-2026 presents the Association’s vision, mission, and values while outlining a series of aims that will advocate for our members and the wider humanist community and strengthen the rights of the non-religious in Ireland.

The previous Strategic Plan 2020 – 2023 set out five key strategic goals, and considerable progress has been made towards achieving these goals over the lifetime of the plan. The five strategic goals remain valid and are restated here:

1. Educate Irish society about humanism.
2. Advocate for equal rights for the non-religious in Irish society.
3. Grow, develop and support the HAI membership and the humanist community.
4. Develop and promote humanist-ceremonies nationwide.
5. Enhance the HAI’s profile and standing in Irish society.

As of November 2023, the HAI has 1025 members. The Strategic Plan 2024 – 2026 is informed by those members and by our Board of Directors and it intends to meet the needs of these stakeholders, as well as the needs of the wider non-religious in Ireland, in a transparent and open manner. Members have been asked for their views on the draft Plan by way of a survey, and we appreciate all the feedback received. The plan will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it is a ‘living’ document and updated as necessary throughout the period it covers.

Our Vision Mission and Values

Our Vision

A tolerant and connected society, informed by humanist values.

Our Mission

To promote humanism as a practical way of living, and a guiding framework for society as a whole.

Our Values

The core values of the Humanist Association of Ireland are compassion, equality and reason.

- **Compassion** - a quintessential feature of being human is the capacity to show compassion to others.
- **Equality** – respect for people of all backgrounds, and for their right to hold different beliefs and opinions.
- **Reason** - an adherence to empirical evidence, logical thought, and a critical faculty.

Key Achievements 2021 – 2023

- Ran a successful and highly visible Census Information Campaign “Mark No Religion” in 2022
- Presented humanist position on legalising Assisted Dying to the Joint Oireachtas Committee
- Participated in many radio interviews and debates
- Enhanced social media presence
- Trained a team of volunteers to deliver talks on humanism in primary schools
- 28 school talks were delivered in 2022 – 2023
- Monthly events were carried out throughout the period on a wide range of topics
- 20 new celebrants and 3 funeral-only celebrants were trained and accredited by the HAI
- 5824 ceremonies were conducted between 2021 and 2023.
- Attended wedding fairs and a funeral trade show to promote humanist ceremonies
- An independent review of non-religious pastoral care was completed in 2022
- Three issues of the new online digital magazine *Being Human* were published each year
- HAI membership increased by 36%
- HAI represented the humanist community at national events, such as the National Day of Commemoration
- Strengthened links with sister international humanist organisations

Strategic Goals 2024 – 2026

1. Educate Irish society about humanism

- 1.1. We will increase the number of school talks which from 2023 has been extended to secondary as well as primary schools. Resources for teachers will be made available, and we will liaise with teachers’ unions.
- 1.2. We will actively promote school talks on our website and social media.
- 1.3. We will educate people about humanism by being proactive in representing the humanist point of view at relevant events, debates, on social media, national and local radio and television, by writing submissions, letters and op-ed pieces.
- 1.4. We will actively promote our monthly events and annual conference to ensure the widest possible exposure for the HAI.

2. Advocate for equal rights for the non-religious in Irish society.

2.1 Education Equality for the Non-Religious

- 2.1.1 Inequality in education will be the key focus of our campaigning activities, and we will work with volunteers on the Advocacy and Education Working Group to address the failings in the schools divestment programme, discrimination against non-religious teachers and discrimination within schools against non-religious pupils.
- 2.1.2 We will advocate for a fully secular education system.
- 2.1.3 We will ensure that the HAI has input into the proposed Citizens' Assembly on Education.

2.2 Assisted Dying

We will continue to press for legislation on assisted dying to be enacted.

2.3 Voice of Humanism

We will continue to be the voice of humanism and secularism on other issues which affect the rights of the non-religious.

2.4 Interaction with Humanism worldwide

We will continue to support our fellow humanist associations across the world in the quest for justice, freedom and equality for the non-religious.

3. Grow, develop and support the HAI membership and humanist community

3.1. Local Groups

In recognition of the key role played by local groups in advancing humanism in Ireland, we will work to support and engage with local groups.

3.2. Review HAI Membership Strategy

HAI members demonstrate commitment, passion, intelligence and integrity and they are the centre of our organisation.

- 3.2.1. We will work to retain our existing members, whilst simultaneously aiming to attract new members. We will encourage the newsletter subscribers to join the HAI.

3.2.2. We will continue to work to ensure equal participation by women in positions of responsibility on the HAI Board and on occasions where the HAI is required to be publicly represented.

3.2.3. We will continue to run monthly events for members, with a wide mix of topics and speakers. We will hold at least two informal get-togethers for members to meet and exchange ideas, at Christmas and the Summer Solstice.

3.2.4. We will hold an all-island Conference in conjunction with our sister organisation, Northern Ireland Humanists.

3.3. Improve our communications strategy with our members

3.3.1. We will provide regular updates to all members on key policy matters and decisions.

3.3.2. We will continue to publish our online journal, *Being Human*, to provide a platform for articles, debate and stories of humanist interest, and to promote a positive view of humanism as a progressive force in Ireland.

3.3.3. We will encourage and support volunteer involvement from our members in all our areas of activity.

3.3.4. We will increase engagement with the international humanist community and actively participate in international campaigns.

3.3.5. We will continue to enhance our existing positive relationships with several other humanist groups, such as Northern Ireland Humanists and Humanist Society Scotland.

3.3.6. We will continue to build on our connections with other humanist organisations, in particular those in Europe and Humanists International, of which we are a member organisation. We will provide input and support for their campaigns, and we will use opportunities to learn from these groups, as to how we can develop and expand our own presence within Ireland.

4. Develop and promote humanist ceremonies nationwide

4.1. We will continue to ensure that an overview of humanism is included in all humanist ceremonies. This helps to promote the humanist message and may encourage people to join the HAI.

4.2. We will continue to focus on meeting the demand for “cradle to the grave” alternatives to religious ceremonies, by promoting and growing our secular ceremonies, especially

funerals, naming ceremonies and coming of age ceremonies. We will provide ongoing training and support to our celebrants in all ceremony types.

- 4.3. We will continue to recruit and train celebrants with the aim of having humanist celebrants in every county in Ireland.
- 4.4. We will continue to set a high standard for our celebrants, all of whom will be trained by way of a formal training programme, covering all ceremony types. Celebrants will be supported by a programme of continuous professional development and will be subject to the HAI's Standards of Practice for Celebrants.
- 4.5. We will continue to use our website and social media channels to promote our ceremonies, and avail of other suitable promotional opportunities, to assist in educating and informing the general public about the availability of secular ceremonies.

4.6. Secular Support Services

- 4.6.1. Based on the recommendations of the independent review of the scope for providing non-religious pastoral support services, we will work on a pilot project with a suitable hospital to train and deploy humanist volunteers on their pastoral care team.
- 4.6.2. We will liaise with the HSE, private hospitals and the prison service to gain an acceptance of the rights of the non-religious to avail of secular support services.

5. Enhance the HAI's profile and standing in Irish society

- 5.1. We will work to raise the HAI's profile as a national institution
 - 5.1.1. We will build a national and local media presence for the HAI, through seeking greater input and representation at public events, developing relationships with journalists and broadcasters, and building our online presence and connections.
 - 5.1.2. We will promote ourselves as an open and inclusive organisation that welcomes people from all different backgrounds, regardless of gender, age, race, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status, who share in the aims and ideals of humanism.
 - 5.1.3. We will seek out suitable humanist sponsors and supporters to endorse our work, in the form of either well-known people or organisations with a shared ethos.
- 5.2. We recognise and appreciate that HAI members give willingly of their free time to volunteer in many different capacities on behalf of the HAI. As a membership organisation, with no



State funding, we rely on our volunteers to achieve our goals. We will continue to support existing volunteers and to encourage more people to volunteer.

5.3. We will work to ensure all social media platforms are professional, up to date and current.

5.4. We will continue to comply with the Charities Governance Code, and work towards achieving the highest standards of “best practice” in all our endeavours.