

# *Barriers to Britishness*

*Report of the Alberto Costa Inquiry  
into Citizenship Policy*

December 2020

**British**  
**Future...**

The logo for British Future, featuring a dark blue L-shaped graphic element that frames the text from the bottom-left and top-left.

---

Published 2020 by:  
British Future  
Kean House  
6 Kean Street  
London WC2B 4AS

Registered Charity Number: 1159291

Secretary to the Inquiry: Jill Rutter

Editor: Steve Ballinger

© British Future 2020

The authors' rights have been asserted.

**British Future** is an independent, non-partisan thinktank and registered charity engaging people's hopes and fears about integration and migration, identity and race, so that we share a confident and welcoming Britain, inclusive and fair to all.

Registered Charity Number: 1159291

+44 (0)20 7632 9069

@BritishFuture

[www.britishfuture.org](http://www.britishfuture.org)

---

# Contents

Foreword – Alberto Costa MP	4
Executive summary	6
Citizenship: key facts	15
Introduction	19
Today’s legal framework	22
The Inquiry’s findings and recommendations	
What is citizenship and what should citizenship policy aim to achieve?	25
Routes to British citizenship	34
The application process	41
Vulnerable groups	51
English language requirements and the <i>Life in the UK</i> test	57
Citizenship ceremonies	66
International dimensions: British citizenship outside the UK	70
Appendices	
Citizenship policy in selected OECD countries	77
Evidence Submitted to the Inquiry	80
Endnotes	81
Acknowledgements	84
About British Future	84

---

# Foreword

By Alberto Costa MP

I was born in England and raised in Scotland, by parents who came to this country from Italy in the mid-1960s. I am proud to be a British citizen and now represent South Leicestershire in the House of Commons. Yet my parents have not become British citizens in the half-century for which they have lived in this country. So I found myself in Downing Street, explaining how that gave me a rather personal stake in ensuring that we kept the promises made to them, and more than four million other EU nationals in this country, after the 2016 referendum.

When our Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, asked me ‘Why didn’t your parents become British?’ I told him that one part of the answer was that nobody had encouraged them to do so. It had never been the policy of successive governments, Conservative or Labour, to encourage people living here long-term to become British citizens.

For Europeans like my parents, when Britain joined the EU it meant they would enjoy most of the rights of British citizenship, save for voting in Westminster elections. For UK governments, that meant they saw no need to promote UK citizenship to European migrants. That changed, of course, with the 2016 EU referendum: the scramble for a solution to this gap in immigration policy, via the EU Settled Status Scheme, emphasises the urgent need for a new, holistic citizenship policy.

Despite its foundational role as a shared bond between us, citizenship policy has been neglected. This is now an ideal moment to put that right. So I was delighted to be invited by British Future to chair this inquiry. We have sought to set out what the aims of citizenship policy could and should be in this new era; to investigate what is currently happening on citizenship in law, policy and practice; and to recommend practical proposals for reform.

Chairing this inquiry has strengthened my belief that we can galvanise a broad consensus for a positive citizenship agenda – across political parties and the public too.

Most people agree that if someone decides to live in Britain long-term, it is a good thing if they have an opportunity to become British by taking citizenship. It is good for the new citizen, offering security and access to rights; and it is good for our society too when people join in the common bond of citizenship. So it makes sense that UK citizenship policy should welcome those who want to make this commitment to our country and who pass the various tests of eligibility: speaking good English, being of good character, and knowing about the UK’s customs and culture.

The government has introduced a new, post-Brexit immigration system. So the policy debate has been focused mainly on who gets

---

a visa to come to work or study in Britain. This inquiry encourages us now to think beyond the question of who comes to Britain, and to consider how we treat those who choose to build their lives here, pay their taxes here, and make significant contributions to our society.

Just as the new points-based immigration system draws on the experience of Australia and Canada, we could learn much from their approaches to citizenship too. The Canadian handbook for new citizens opens with a warm message of welcome from the Queen. She does not appear in our *Life in the UK* handbook until page 121. It is a symbolic point – but we could simply and easily emulate that welcoming, positive tone towards those who are seeking to become British, and combine it with the practical ideas contained in this report to make that a reality.


Current UK citizenship policy does not seem sure whether citizenship is a good thing or not. It is prohibitively expensive and the process is so complicated that most people need a lawyer to help them apply. When people do get citizenship, the ceremony is usually hidden away in a local council office – not celebrated, like other countries do, in one of our many iconic buildings; and without the involvement of the local community that new citizens are joining.

Citizenship is special – but we do not make it special by setting unnecessary barriers. The cost of citizenship in the UK is the highest in the western world. Indeed, the combined cost of applying to become a citizen in Australia, Canada, the USA and France still does not add up to the cost of a single application in Britain. The fee of £1,330 is almost four times the cost to the Home Office of processing an application.

If we agree that becoming British is to be welcomed, citizenship should not be placed beyond the financial reach of many care home or NHS staff and their families, nor be so complicated that most people can't apply without a lawyer. If we believe that it can aid integration, we should make it easier, not harder, for children born here to become citizens.

So the government should choose to encourage those who are living in Britain long-term, and contributing to our society in many positive ways, to consider citizenship. It should review citizenship policy – covering eligibility, processes and costs – to secure the benefits that citizenship can bring for shared identity and integration.

It is right that we should welcome new citizens, publicly, when they become British – making an important commitment to our country that I hope we can all be proud to call our shared home.



**Alberto Costa MP**

---

# Executive summary

The UK can be proud that in 2019 some 159,380 people chose to become British citizens. At a time when society can feel fragmented and where many of the institutions that once bound us together have a less powerful hold, the common bonds of citizenship are more important than ever. Yet citizenship is a neglected area of public policy. The Government has not set out what citizenship policy should aim to achieve. In such a situation it can appear that the Government is ambivalent about citizenship.

The societal benefits that the common bond of citizenship brings are not being fully realised as many people who would otherwise be eligible face substantial barriers to becoming British. Among the most significant of these obstacles to citizenship are its high fees, which in the UK are the highest of all developed countries. There are, however, opportunities to push citizenship policy up the agenda at a time of policy reform stemming from the UK leaving the EU. The Government will also take forward a 'Constitution, Rights and Democracy Commission' to look at ways to restore trust in our institutions. This, together with policy change, presents opportunities to review citizenship policy. With these opportunities in mind, British Future convened an independent inquiry on citizenship policy. The Inquiry's remit was to:

- Consider the aims of citizenship policy in the UK, setting out what citizenship should mean in the 21st century and what policy should aim to achieve.
- Investigate current policy issues and the application of citizenship law and policy in the UK, including the eligibility criteria, fees, the application process and scope for simplification.
- Identify and set out practical proposals for citizenship reform that would be capable of securing cross-party support.
- Foster greater debate about citizenship policy and promote greater civil society and community engagement in this issue.

The Inquiry members were:

Alberto Costa MP (Chair)

Michael P. Clancy OBE, Law Society of Scotland

Steve Double MP

Andrew Gwynne MP

Omar Khan, former Director, Runnymede Trust

Fraser Nelson, The Spectator

Sunder Katwala, British Future

Satbir Singh, Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants.

British Future acted as the Inquiry's secretariat. In addition to the formal sittings, the Inquiry put out an open call for evidence and held three discussions with new citizens and citizens by birth, with these events held in Edinburgh, Sheffield and Southampton.

---

# The Inquiry's findings and recommendations

The inquiry considered eight questions, with its findings and recommendations set out below.

## I. What is citizenship and what should citizenship policy aim to achieve?

This was a foundational question for the Inquiry. There was consensus that citizenship is a legal status that enshrines a set of responsibilities and rights and is also a social bond. Both the legal and social aspects of citizenship impact on individuals and wider society. It is, therefore, essential that this area of public policy is not neglected, and that the Government sets out the aims of citizenship policy.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Immigration reform associated with leaving the EU and the planned Constitution, Rights and Democracy Commission should be used by the Government as an opportunity to discuss and clarify the aims of citizenship policy. Parliament, experts and the public should be involved in this debate.**
- **The Government should set out the aims of citizenship policy in the UK to prospective citizens and the wider public, alongside an explanation of the responsibilities and rights involved in becoming a British citizen. These should be made available in simple language on the Home Office website and in relevant official documents such as the Life in the UK handbook, which needs considerable review.**
- **The Inquiry's view is that citizenship affords responsibilities and rights and also is a common bond. Citizenship policy should therefore have two aims: to make these rights and duties meaningful and to strengthen British citizenship as a social bond.**
- **The acquisition of British citizenship should be seen as a positive decision that the Government welcomes and wants to encourage. The Life in the UK handbook should send out a message of encouragement and welcome to those who have decided to become British citizens.**
- **Civil society organisations, employers, local authorities and city mayors and the devolved governments in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales should also encourage the uptake of citizenship.**
- **A key aim of policy reform should be to simplify policy, address anomalies within the system and reduce barriers that prevent people who meet qualification criteria from becoming British citizens. Policy change should not be pursued if it acts as a barrier, preventing people from gaining British citizenship to which they might otherwise be entitled.**

---

## 2. What eligibility criteria should applicants fulfil before becoming British citizens?

Applicants for British citizenship need to fulfil a set of residence, good character, English language and civic knowledge requirements in order to become British citizens. The Inquiry reviewed the current eligibility criteria, and concluded that they are generally fair, but there remains a legacy of anomalies and arbitrary and complex regulations in relation to those who are automatically British citizens by virtue of their birth. Simplification of immigration and nationality law was also a recommendation of the recent Windrush Lessons Learned Review. Allowing all children who are born in the UK to become British citizens – as was the case before 1983 – would also simplify nationality law and address some of these anomalies.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Based on independent advice the Government should review eligibility and routes to British citizenship with the aim of simplification, addressing anomalies including those that relate to a person's date of birth.**
- **Nationality law should be amended to allow children born in the UK to be British citizens automatically.**

## 3. Is the current application process easy to navigate or does it act as a barrier to those who would otherwise be eligible for British citizenship?

The Inquiry reviewed the application process, the level at which fees are set and sources of advice and help for applicants. The UK's citizenship fees are the highest of all developed countries. For the cost of becoming a British citizen (£1,330 for an adult and £80 for the ceremony), a person could become a citizen of Australia (£155), Canada (£373), New Zealand (£243) and the United States (£590). The inquiry believes that current fee levels are a barrier to the uptake of British citizenship for many families – an issue that was highlighted in almost all the evidence submitted to the Inquiry.

The Inquiry recommends that the Home Office takes independent advice and reviews its policy. It should set out its rationale for the current fee levels, balancing these against other public policy aims of the Government. If there are societal benefits attached to citizenship in respect to increased community cohesion, there are also arguments to reduce the financial barriers to obtaining British citizenship.

Evidence also suggests a lack of advice for applicants and that it is difficult for people to complete an application form without expert assistance. Some applicants struggle to book appointments to upload their documents in the service centres run by Sopra Steria. While the Home Office needs to guard against fraudulent applications, there are strong arguments for simplifying the



---

citizenship application process, which could be achieved without risking abuse.

Simplifying the application process, providing more advice and reviewing fee policy are therefore priority areas for citizenship reform.

### **Recommendations:**

- **While it is reasonable for citizenship fees to cover administrative costs, the Home Office should undertake a review of fee policy, with the aim of reducing financial barriers to the acquisition of British citizenship among people who would otherwise qualify for citizenship. The review should examine the impact of current fee levels on individuals and wider society, as well as the rationale for setting fees at a level far in excess of the costs of administration.**
- **The Inquiry recommends that citizenship by registration is made free for those who become British by this route – a group that mostly comprises children. Other groups who would benefit from this fee reduction include those with subsidiary categories of British nationality such as British Overseas Territories Citizens and British National (Overseas) passport holders from Hong Kong, who now have a route to citizenship through the bespoke British National (Overseas) visa.**
- **Future increases in fees for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) and citizenship by naturalisation should be pegged to the rate of inflation in the same way as other fees such as Air Passenger and Vehicle Excise Duties.**
- **The Government should review the citizenship application process with the aim of making it something that most people can complete themselves, without the need for legal advice.**
- **Investment in IT in the Home Office should be used as an opportunity to simplify the application form. The requirement to be physically present in the UK exactly five years before an application is submitted should be dropped. Applicants should not be asked for information that the Government already holds on them, for example, HMRC and DWP records that show their legal residence in the UK.**
- **There should be an urgent Home Office review of the Sopra Steria document uploading service from the perspective of fees, the location of uploading points and the availability of appointments. The Home Office should consider reinstating local authority nationality checking services if the performance of the Sopra Steria service does not improve.**
- **People should be able to apply for citizenship and their first passport in the same process and receive their certificates of naturalisation or registration and their British passport at their citizenship ceremony.**

- 
- **The Home Office should produce a short, clear and accessible advice leaflet on applying for citizenship, which should be available in printed form and online. Relevant opportunities should be used to give this information to people, for example when they register a baby's birth, or by signposting from other Government web pages.**
  - **City mayors, local authorities and employers should play a role in the provision of advice about the application process. Civil society organisations working with migrants and refugees should also encourage the uptake of citizenship and offer advice and assistance.**

#### 4. Are there vulnerable groups who face particular barriers to becoming British citizens?

Submissions to the open call for evidence suggested that some groups of people found it particularly difficult to become British citizens, even when they fulfil residency, good character, language and civic knowledge requirements. The Inquiry decided to look at the treatment of such vulnerable groups, from the perspective of the eligibility criteria and specific barriers to British citizenship. The experiences of children in care, children born outside marriage or civil partnership, stateless people and UK-born children who are eligible for citizenship under Section 1(4) of the British Nationality Act 1981 were examined in detail. The level at which citizenship fees are set is a barrier which disproportionately impacts on some of the above groups, as they tend to have lower incomes and fewer savings.

The Inquiry welcomes the 2018 decision to give children in care in England and Wales access to legal aid for immigration matters, including citizenship applications. However, the lack of affordable advice is a further barrier that may deter vulnerable people from becoming British citizens, despite meeting other qualifications. The Inquiry concluded that there are practical changes that could be made that would simplify nationality law and enable the above groups to become British and fully participate in the economic and social life of the UK.

#### **Recommendations:**

- **Citizenship by registration should be free for those who become British by this route. This group mostly comprises children and those with subsidiary categories of British nationality, such as British Overseas Territories Citizens and British National (Overseas) passport holders from Hong Kong who now have a route to citizenship through the bespoke British National (Overseas) visa.**
- **Nationality law should be amended to allow children born in the UK to be British citizens automatically, restoring a policy that applied before 1983.**

- 
- **Vulnerable groups of people should be encouraged to take legal advice, which should be affordable and widely available in all parts of the UK.**
  - **Those applying to remain in the UK under statelessness determination procedures should be allowed to work while their application is pending or receive help with their accommodation and subsistence through a system akin to the current asylum support system.**

## 5. Does the *Life in the UK* citizenship test achieve its aims and should there be revisions to the test and the English language requirements?

The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 provided the legal basis for the *Life in the UK* citizenship test, obliging applicants for British citizenship to show they have sufficient knowledge of the language and life in the UK. The inquiry reviewed the test and language requirements to see if they met their stated aims, as well as assisting integration.

Fluency in English is foundational to the two-way process of integration. It helps newcomers to the UK become fully part of the economic and community life of the country. Poor English makes people more vulnerable to loneliness, unemployment and exploitation. Language barriers can increase misunderstandings and tensions between new arrivals and long-settled residents. Policy that encourages the learning of English should be welcomed, including language requirements. The Inquiry believes that the current English language requirements – a B1 level in speaking and listening English – should be retained at the same level, as they strike the right balance between incentivising learning and not setting too high a bar, which could exclude large numbers of people.

Among those who gave evidence to the inquiry there was a consensus that applicants for British citizenship should show that they can speak English and know about the history, laws and values of the UK. Most prospective and new citizens support this view and want to learn about the UK's history and traditions. However, the Inquiry believes that the citizenship test needs reform in both its format and content. A multiple-choice test does not encourage debate and dialogue about our shared values, which are much more likely to be reinforced through face-to-face interaction.

### **Recommendations:**

- **The content and format of the *Life in the UK* test and handbook should be subject to review by an independent advisory body. New and long-standing British citizens should be involved in this process.**
- **Drawing on policy in Germany and Norway, the Home Office should pilot a ten-session British citizenship course where**

---

**applicants would study alongside British sixth formers. Both groups would learn about the geography and history of the UK, its administrative and political systems and the shared values that underpin our way of life. These courses might be organised by schools, colleges, or National Citizen Service providers, with those enrolled in such programmes required to pass a short test as part of the course that, by its nature, will also test their English language skills. Should these pilots be successful, such citizenship courses should replace the current test as the method by which to test knowledge of life in the UK.**

- **The English language requirements covering applicants for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) and British citizenship should be retained at the current B1 level.**
- **The Government should set up an independent ‘Learning English’ Freeview channel which would help prospective British citizens practice their English, but also broadcast material relevant to the citizenship course and to promote integration.**

## 6. How can the acquisition of citizenship become a positive and meaningful experience?

As noted above, face-to-face discussion about the meaning of citizenship would make its acquisition more positive and meaningful. Citizenship ceremonies were also introduced to give greater meaning to becoming a British citizen. The Inquiry believes that these ceremonies are important and do meet this aim. They are popular with those who attend them, and they offer the opportunity to welcome newcomers and communicate the common bond of citizenship to both new citizens and existing ones. But ceremonies rarely involve local residents in the UK. In contrast to practice in countries such as Australia, they are not high-profile events and there is little effort to publicise them. Despite an abundance of historic buildings, the UK rarely holds ceremonies in iconic locations. Nor does the UK offer citizenship to people who have made a great contribution to life in the UK, or to reward remarkable bravery. There is a real need to breathe new life into these important events.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Each year, the Prime Minister and her Majesty the Queen should hold a high profile citizenship ceremony where British citizenship is awarded to a select number of people who have been outstandingly brave or made a great contribution to life in the UK, either as an individual or because they represent a particular group – for example, key workers – whose contribution is valued.**
- **Councils should hold ceremonies at iconic locations and encourage local residents, schools, faith and civil society organisations to be involved in these events.**

- 
- **The option to attend citizenship ceremonies should be offered to new citizens who are children.**
  - **The number of guests that a new citizen can bring to a ceremony should be increased to five (from the current limit of two).**
  - **Citizenship ceremonies should help encourage civic participation. Information about volunteering and voter registration should be given out at the ceremonies.**
  - **New citizens should be presented with their first passport at their citizenship ceremony.**
  - **The Home Office, supported by local authority registrars, should issue good practice guidance to make sure that the ceremonies achieve their aim of promoting a cohesive society, communicating the common bond of citizenship and a warm welcome to those who have chosen to make the UK their home.**

## 7. Is the UK fulfilling its duties to British citizens who live overseas, including those who hold subsidiary categories of British nationality and stateless people?

Citizenship policy extends beyond the borders of the UK and covers the 5.4 million British citizens who live abroad, those with subsidiary categories of British nationality and stateless people. The Inquiry believes that greater consideration needs to be given to British citizens who live overseas, including the situation faced by the 900,000 British citizens living in the EU, which must be kept under review. The Inquiry welcomes the recent announcement to offer all those entitled to British National (Overseas) passports in Hong Kong a new bespoke status of five years' limited leave to remain in the UK, with the ability to live and work in the UK and a route to citizenship after five years.

Many British citizens who live abroad retain strong ties to the UK and their skills could be harnessed as 'soft power' to promote trade and to act as cultural ambassadors. This is a missed opportunity by the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office.

### **Recommendations:**

- **The Government must make sure that all British citizens abroad have access to advice, consular assistance and protection, keeping the situation faced by British citizens in EU countries under review.**
- **The Government should uphold the commitment made in the 2018 immigration white paper to give British citizenship to current British Overseas Territory Citizens.**
- **The UK Government should work with international partners to seek solutions for the estimated 10-15 million**

---

**people who are stateless in today's world. It should support UNHCR's work on statelessness and use its influence as a Commonwealth country to put pressure on India, Malaysia and Pakistan to seek solutions for stateless people in these countries.**

- **The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office should put in place a strategy to engage with the British diaspora and mobilise their soft power to support the UK's long-term global influence and economic and political goals.**

## 8. What are the best mechanisms for providing parliamentary oversight for this complex area of law and policy?

Nationality law and policy is complex, and this makes parliamentary scrutiny difficult. An additional challenge is that much policy is set out in nationality guidance which, unlike immigration rules, is not presented to parliament. The Inquiry considered approaches that would increase the oversight of nationality law and also increase discussion about this subject. An independent expert body to provide oversight of citizenship policy appears to be the best approach to provide oversight of citizenship law and policy.

### **Recommendation:**

- **The Government should set up an independent advisory group on citizenship to look at the aims of citizenship policy, the responsibilities and rights attached to British citizenship, routes to citizenship, the application process, ceremonies and the content of the Life in the UK test. This advisory group should also undertake structured engagement with new and prospective British citizens and the wider public to hear their views on these issues.**

Nearly 40 years ago, the Government passed the British Nationality Act 1981, its last major reform of citizenship policy. In the four decades since this legislation was passed, British society has seen many changes. Many of the institutions that once united us have lost their hold and our society has become more individualistic and fragmented. The last 40 years have also seen significant demographic change, including increased international migration.

In this context, the social bonds that unite us become more important. British citizenship is one such bond, but only if newcomers are encouraged to become citizens and British citizenship is a meaningful condition for us all.

In publishing this report, the Inquiry hopes that it will promote debate on this important issue and spark policy reform so that citizenship can truly become one of the common bonds that unites us all in a society that is fair and welcoming.

---

# Citizenship: key facts

British citizenship enshrines a set of rights and duties, some of which are not held by people who are not British citizens. What makes British citizenship unique is that today only British citizens have the right of abode in the UK. The right of abode is a status that was introduced in the Immigration Act 1971, giving a person unrestricted rights to enter and live in the UK.

Most people living in the UK are automatically British citizens by birth.

Nationality law has emerged over many hundreds of years and it is a complex area of legislation, in part because of the UK's colonial history. One legacy of our history is the four subsidiary categories of British nationality held by people who often live outside the UK and which do not usually give those who hold them the right of abode in the UK, namely:

- British Overseas Territory Citizen (BOTC): held by those who live in the UK's overseas territories.
- British Overseas Citizen: a category of British nationality held by 12,000 people who did not become British citizens or BOTCs after the British Nationality Act 1981.
- British Subject – people who did not become British citizens or a citizen of a Commonwealth country after the British Nationality Act 1948.
- British National Overseas (BN(O)), which is a new category of British nationality created in 1997 for those living in Hong Kong, with 357,156 such passports thought to be valid as of 17 April 2020<sup>1</sup>. In July 2020 the Government announced that those with BN(O) status would be offered a new bespoke visa, giving them five years' limited leave to remain in the UK, and the ability to apply for settlement after this, and British citizenship after 12 months of settlement. The BN(O) visa also covers children born after 1997 to parents who have BN(O) status.

Looking back over the last 120 years, the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914, the British Nationality Act 1948, the Immigration Act 1971, British Nationality Act 1981 and the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 have been the most significant pieces of primary legislation affecting citizenship policy.

## Who becomes a British citizen?

In 2019 some 159,380 people became British citizens.

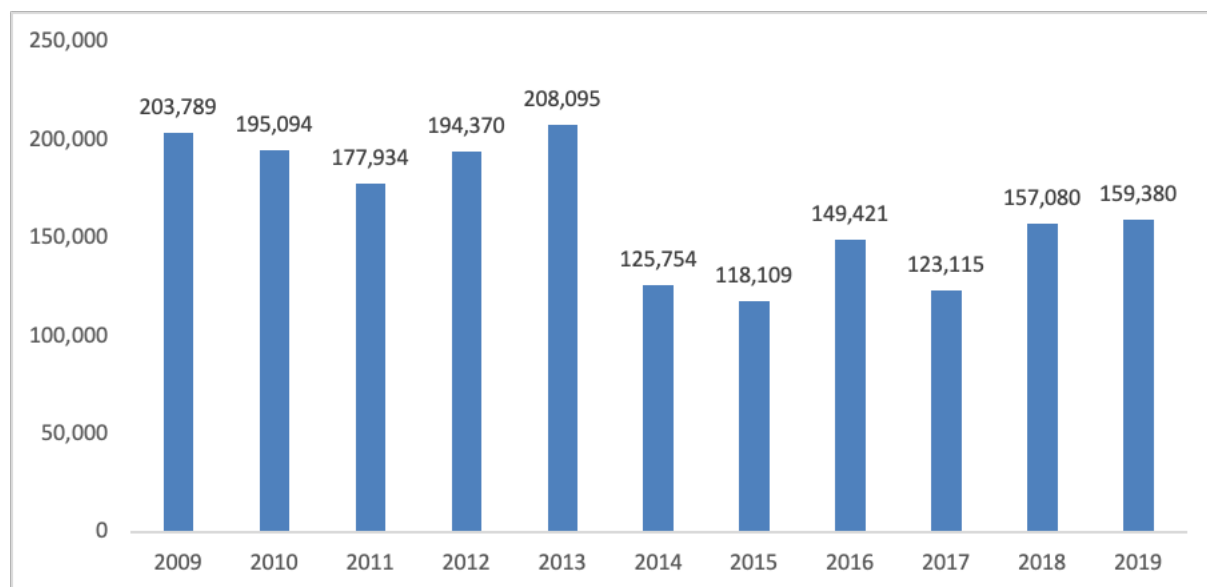
Trends in applications for citizenship largely follow levels of immigration with a lag of 5-10 years. Until recently there were proportionately fewer applications for British citizenship from citizens of EU countries compared with those from outside the



EU. Since 2016, the numbers of EU citizens applying for British citizenship has increased: some 30 per cent of those granted British citizenship in 2019 came from EU member states, compared with 4 per cent in 2010.

Of those granted British citizenship in 2019, the top 10 counties of previous nationality were India (14,680 grants of citizenship), Pakistan (12,912), Nigeria (8,841), Poland (8,806), Italy (5,774) Romania (5,604), South Africa (4,797), France (4,472), Germany (4,331) and Bangladesh (3,780)<sup>2</sup>.

## Grants of British Citizenship, 2009-2019



Source: Home Office immigration statistics quarterly release, February 2020, citizenship tables.

The majority of non-EU nationals who are still in the UK ten years after getting their first entry visa will have become British citizens. For example, some 65 per cent of non-EU citizens who entered the UK in 2005 had become British citizens by 2015, and 75 per cent had done so by the end of 2018<sup>3</sup>.

Some 53 per cent of migrants who entered the UK over the ten-year period 2008-2017 were male, with this gender ratio consistent over the years. Yet women and girls are slightly more likely to take up citizenship<sup>4</sup>. Over the same ten-year period 52 per cent of those who became British citizens were female<sup>5</sup>.

Certainty and security are major reasons that prompt people to apply for British citizenship. This explains the increase in applications for British citizenship from EU citizens after the referendum in 2016. But the desire for security is not the only factor that is associated with the uptake of British citizenship. There are practical reasons - the possession of a British passport makes travel easier, particularly for those from poorer countries. Citizenship is an assertion of belonging and that the UK is now



---

home<sup>6</sup>. The desire to vote and the desire to be recognised as a full member of British society are also reasons why people apply for British citizenship<sup>7</sup>.

## Applying for citizenship

A person's route to becoming a British citizen depends on how they entered the UK and other circumstances. Most people who become British citizens do so on the basis of:

- Birth in the UK or a qualifying territory.
- Through marriage/civil partnership.
- Prior residence in the UK.
- Humanitarian routes afforded to the Windrush generation, stateless people and undocumented people with a strong connection to the UK.

People either 'register' or 'naturalise' as British citizens. Generally, it is children who register, while those becoming citizens through marriage or prior residence 'naturalise'. In 2019, some 29 per cent of new British citizens did so through registration, 53 per cent did so through naturalisation based on prior residence and 19 per cent did so through naturalisation based on marriage or civil partnership.

Whether people are registering or naturalising, those applying for British citizenship need to fulfil a set of requirements. These are:

- A specified period of residency.
- Good character requirements<sup>8</sup>.
- Passing the *Life in the UK* citizenship test.
- Fulfilling English language requirements.

Residency requirements are determined by a person's immigration status and how they entered the UK. For most people, a minimum of six years' residency is needed before a person can apply for British citizenship, including 12 months of holding Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) or EU Settled Status.

The *Life in the UK* citizenship test comprises 24 multiple choice questions which the applicant has 45 minutes to answer. To pass the test, a person must score 75 per cent or above. The knowledge required to pass the test is set out in an accompanying handbook<sup>9</sup>. In 2018 some 159,566 tests were taken with a pass rate of 78 per cent. The test costs £50 and is taken online.

Applicants also need to pass a Home Office approved English language test at a B1 level, which is equivalent to a good GCSE pass in a foreign language. The test costs £150 and is taken in a secure examination centre. People from certain national groups and those with a degree taught in English are exempt from the English language test.

---

Application forms are now mostly submitted online to the nationality casework team within the UK Visas and Immigration division of the Home Office.

Citizenship by naturalisation currently costs £1,330 plus £80 to cover the citizenship ceremony. The fee for citizenship by registration is usually £1,206 for an adult and £1,012 for a child. It has been calculated that the average cost to the Home Office of processing a citizenship application is £372<sup>10</sup>. The requirement to hold Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) before applying for citizenship is an additional financial outlay for those from outside the EU as the fee for ILR is £2,389.

Citizenship applications are generally processed more rapidly in the UK than in most other developed countries. The Home Office has a target of processing straightforward citizenship applications within six months and this target was met in 99.4 per cent of cases in the last quarter of 2018<sup>11</sup>.

Once a grant of citizenship has been made, adults are required to attend a ceremony within three months of being invited to do so by the Home Office<sup>12</sup>. Some 113,301 new citizens attended ceremonies in 2019.

Ceremonies start with a short welcome from the Superintendent Registrar. New citizens are then asked to swear an oath of allegiance or solemn affirmation and an oral pledge to the UK. They are then invited to sing the national anthem. There may also be a longer address from the Registrar, the local Lord Lieutenant or another local dignitary.

---

# I. Introduction

Some 159,380 people became British citizens in 2019. As well as enshrining a set of individual rights and responsibilities, the process of becoming a British citizen can incentivise integration, with applicants having to pass the *Life in the UK* test and show knowledge of the English language. There is evidence to show that acquiring citizenship can also confer a stronger sense of ‘belonging’ among those who have recently settled in the UK. British citizenship is also a social bond and a shared identity, both important considerations in a society that can sometimes feel fragmented and divided.

Despite these societal benefits, there are some substantial barriers to citizenship, including the cost of the application process, which in the UK is set at a higher level than many other comparable OECD countries (See section five of this report and the Appendix). A 2018 House of Lords inquiry concluded that barriers to acquiring British citizenship meant that its potential to forge a social bond has not fully been realised<sup>13</sup>.

The Government has not set out the aims of citizenship policy and as such it can appear to be ambivalent about citizenship. Immigration, nationality and integration policy objectives can also cut across each other. Citizenship is omitted from broader political debates about immigration. There are, however, opportunities to address this omission, through debate about changes to immigration law stemming from the UK leaving the EU and through the proposed Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission. With these opportunities in mind, British Future convened an independent inquiry on citizenship policy in the UK, which was chaired by Alberto Costa MP. The Inquiry examined options for citizenship reform and its specific objectives were to:

- Consider the aims of citizenship policy in the UK, setting out what it should aim to achieve.
- Investigate current policy issues and the application of citizenship law and policy in the UK, including the eligibility criteria, the application process and scope for simplification.
- Identify and set out practical proposals for citizenship reform that would be capable of securing cross-party support.
- Foster greater debate about citizenship policy and promote greater civil society and community engagement in this process.

---

The Inquiry considered eight questions:

**1. What should citizenship policy aim to achieve?**

The Inquiry examined what citizenship should mean in the 21st century and the aims of citizenship policy.

**2. What eligibility criteria should applicants fulfil before becoming British citizens?**

The Inquiry reviewed the current eligibility criteria, looking at whether they are reasonable and fair. The scope for simplifying eligibility criteria was also examined.

**3. Is the current application process easy to navigate or does it act as a barrier to those who would otherwise be eligible for British citizenship?**

The Inquiry examined potential barriers to citizenship, including the application process itself, access to advice and fees. It examined what it might be reasonable to charge applicants for citizenship and options for the reform of fee policy. The scope for simplifying the application process was also examined.

**4. Are there vulnerable groups of people who face particular barriers to becoming British citizens?**

**5. Does the *Life in the UK* citizenship test achieve its stated aims and should there be revisions to the test and the English language requirements?**

The Inquiry also looked at how effectively knowledge, skills and values are tested, and at opportunities to replicate good practice from outside the UK.

**6. How can the acquisition of citizenship become a positive and meaningful experience?**

The Inquiry examined ways of strengthening people's shared identity as British citizens. It also looked at whether citizenship ceremonies could better be used to build bridges between new citizens and local communities.

**7. Is the UK fulfilling its duties to British citizens who live overseas?**

Including those who hold subsidiary categories of British nationality, such as people who hold British National (Overseas) passports in Hong Kong.

**8. What are the best mechanisms for providing parliamentary oversight for this complex area of law and policy?**

---

The Inquiry's membership was chosen to represent a broad range of views and experiences. As well as MPs, its members included those with legal expertise and representatives of civil society organisations working with migrant and minority ethnic communities. The Inquiry members were:

Alberto Costa MP (Chair, Conservative)  
Michael P Clancy OBE, Law Society of Scotland  
Steve Double MP  
Andrew Gwynne MP  
Omar Khan, former Director, Runnymede Trust  
Fraser Nelson, The Spectator  
Sunder Katwala, British Future  
Satbir Singh, Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants.

Jill Rutter of British Future acted as the Inquiry's Secretary. The Inquiry met three times in early 2020. It also put out an open call for evidence in autumn 2019. Some 47 organisations and individuals submitted evidence (see Appendix).

In addition to its formal sittings, the Inquiry's secretariat organised four discussions that fed into the Inquiry. These included a private round table with civil society organisations in London. The Cohesion Advisory Group, which is based in Sheffield, organised a community consultation for the Inquiry in late 2019. This was attended by civil society organisations as well as people who were in the process of applying for British citizenship or had recently been granted this status.

The Inquiry's secretariat also held two focus group discussions in Edinburgh and Southampton, where it brought together six British citizens by birth and six people who had recently become British citizens. These two groups debated the same questions that the Inquiry considered and which are set out above. The focus group discussions were also filmed, with edited versions of the two discussions shared on social media to spark debate.

---

## 2. Today's legal framework

Modern British nationality law has emerged over hundreds of years, much of it having its origins in case law arising from medieval immigration and the union of England and Scotland. It is also a complex area of law, in part because of the UK's colonial history.

The **British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914** codified nationality law for the first time. British subject status was granted to those born in the UK or the King's dominions, by descent through the male line, by marriage to a British subject male, or naturalisation in the UK or its dominions.

The next significant legislation was the **British Nationality Act 1948**, passed in the context of decolonisation and the agreement that newly independent Commonwealth countries would pass their own citizenship legislation. It set out the new status of Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies (CUKC), essentially a common citizenship for those who lived in the UK and for all British subjects who had a close relationship with the UK and its remaining colonies. It also allowed for the status of 'Commonwealth citizen', which carried with it the right of entry and abode in the UK. This legislation introduced an oath of allegiance for new citizens and removed restrictions on dual citizenship.

Four further pieces of nationality legislation were passed in 1958, 1964 (twice) and in 1965, much of it dealing with transitional arrangements for citizens of newly independent Commonwealth countries.

The **Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962** amended the 1948 legislation, specifying that Commonwealth citizens and CUKCs who were not born in the UK or did not hold a British passport were subject to immigration control. This was the first time in British law that citizenship rights were separated from the right of abode.

The **Immigration Act 1971** further amended the 1962 legislation. It introduced the status of 'right of abode', which gives a person *unrestricted* rights to enter and live in the UK. In future the right of abode could only be granted to British citizens, although CUKCs and Commonwealth citizens who were settled in the UK before 1973 still retained this status.

However, not all Commonwealth citizens and CUKCs who entered the UK between 1948 and 1973 had retained passports or permits to show that they had lived in the UK before 1973. The increased checking of documentation by employers and public services in recent years has led to a group of people who assumed they were British being denied healthcare, social security, the right to work or, in some cases, being detained and deported. Their treatment was subject to the *Windrush Lessons Learned Review*, which reported in 2020. The Inquiry welcomes the Government's decision to

---

accept the recommendations of this review, some of which apply to nationality law. The Windrush Lessons Learned Review recommends simplification of immigration and nationality law and highlights the warning signs of individual cases of people who could not show that they were British. These warnings were missed on or not acted on by the Home Office<sup>4</sup>.

## The modern policy landscape

Much modern citizenship policy derives from the **British Nationality Act 1981**, which sets out in detail the conditions for the acquisition or deprivation of British citizenship. It replaced the category of CUKC with three new categories of citizenship: British citizenship, British Dependent Territories Citizenship and British Overseas Citizenship.

**The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002** provided the legal basis for the *Life in the UK* citizenship test, English language requirements, citizenship ceremonies and the oath of allegiance and pledge. The first citizenship ceremonies were held in 2004 and the *Life in the UK* test was introduced in 2005. The desire to make citizenship meaningful and a process that increased civic participation drove these changes, with the Government stating that citizenship should “*strengthen active participation in the democratic process and a sense of belonging to a wider community. We believe that one means of promoting this understanding is to place much greater emphasis than we do at present on the value and significance of becoming a British citizen*”<sup>5</sup>.

In 2007 Prime Minister Gordon Brown commissioned the Lord Goldsmith Review of Citizenship, with his report published in 2008<sup>6</sup>. The Government later published ‘The path to citizenship’, a green paper that recommended a new naturalisation process involving three stages: a temporary visa, probationary citizenship, followed by full British citizenship. The green paper suggested that people could speed up their journey to citizenship by volunteering for a charity or through other acts of social value. Although there was legal provision for this in the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009, these proposals of the 2008 report were never implemented and were later dropped as impractical.

In the past, much international migration to the UK was permanent or semi-permanent in nature, with most migrants taking up British citizenship. But this situation no longer holds and in 2012 the Government brought in changes which made it more difficult to renew Tier 2 work visas, with the explicit aim of ‘breaking the link between migration and settlement’. Further changes to citizenship policy were proposed in the 2018 immigration white paper, which stated that the *Life in the UK* test should place greater emphasis on shared British values, and a review of the level of English needed for citizenship.

---

## Complexity

As can be seen, nationality law is complex, and some of this complexity is a legacy of the UK's colonial past. One inheritance from this past is the four subsidiary categories of British nationality – British Overseas Territory Citizen, British Overseas Citizen, British Subject and British National Overseas – which do not give those who hold them the right of abode in the UK and which are discussed in Section 10 of this report.

The 2018 immigration white paper committed the Government to reviewing British Overseas Territory Citizenship, with a view to giving those who have BOTC papers full British citizenship<sup>17</sup>. More recently, unrest in Hong Kong drew attention to these subsidiary categories of British nationality.

The British Nationality Act 1981 was an attempt to overhaul the system, although this legislation did not substantially simplify nationality law. As the Windrush Lessons Learned Review has highlighted, the 1981 legislation also did not fully address anomalies. Moreover, the majority of nationality policy is not set out in legislation, nor in immigration rules that are presented to Parliament. Rather, it is set out in nationality guidance, which comprises at least 37 different documents running to over 1,000 pages. This, and the complexity of nationality law, has made parliamentary scrutiny difficult. Accountability and oversight are issues that were considered by the Inquiry and are discussed in section three of this report.



---

## The Inquiry's Findings:

### 3. What is citizenship and what should citizenship policy aim to achieve?

A foundational question for the Inquiry was to examine the nature of citizenship and what citizenship policy should aim to achieve.

#### What is citizenship?

There is an extensive literature about the nature of citizenship, which mostly draws from political philosophy. In law, citizenship enshrines the relationship between the individual and the state and is a legal status that sets out an individual's rights and also their duties such as jury service. Citizenship can also be viewed as a social bond and a form of connection with others who live in this country.

The Inquiry spent some time discussing the nature of citizenship and this topic was a major theme in the submissions to the Inquiry. There was a consensus that citizenship is both a legal status enshrining rights and responsibilities and also a social bond, although different people placed different levels of emphasis on the importance of each component. The Inquiry, too, takes the position that citizenship is a legal status *and* a social bond.

The rights and duties enshrined through citizenship are set out below. Possession of these rights provides citizens with the security of belonging, and enables people fully to participate in the economic, social and political life of this country.

Citizenship also acts as a social bond. This is an important consideration in a society where immigration has increased, where society is more fragmented and where many of the institutions that once bound us together have lost their hold. Citizenship acts as a social glue in a number of ways. First, there is evidence to show that citizenship encourages the two-way process of integration. The requirement to know about life in the UK and to speak the English language incentivises social and economic integration. The security that citizenship provides encourages newcomers to put down deeper roots in their new communities.

Second, British citizenship can be seen as a shared identity and something that the new citizen and the citizen-by-birth have in common. This is particularly important at a time when immigration has been a salient and divisive issue and where some people have concerns about the cultural impact of immigration. Polling undertaken for British Future in 2020 found that 67 per cent of respondents agreed that *“if someone decides to live in Britain long-term, it is a good thing if they have an opportunity to become British*

---

*by taking citizenship*<sup>18</sup>. A majority of people of all ages, social grades, ethnic groups and political affiliations agreed with the statement, while just 8 per cent of respondents disagreed.

There is a strong public preference for permanent over temporary migration. Most people in Britain prefer newcomers to settle, learn English, take citizenship and become part of the local community. Public attitudes research by the think tank Bright Blue<sup>19</sup> in 2020 found that 60 per cent of the public feels “it is important for immigrants living permanently in the UK to become citizens.” That same research found majority public support for making it cheaper and quicker for some migrants, such as those working in key frontline roles in social care or the NHS, to become citizens.

Seeing people who join our society make the decision to become British dispels some of the anxieties that some members of the public hold about cultural change and integration, as the Inquiry heard in the discussions organised in Edinburgh and Southampton:

*“I was telling my Scottish friend about the process, what I’m reading, what I’m studying and she was like ‘Oh my God you didn’t have to go through all of that?’ then at lunchtime we got to talk about the history. She found it really interesting to know that we had to go through all of this. She was really pleased because she thinks people who come into the country don’t know anything about the culture.”*

New citizen, Edinburgh.

To those most worried about the cultural impacts of immigration, becoming a British citizen – with its oath of allegiance and requirement to speak English – is a visible demonstration of new citizens’ commitment to be part of our shared society. In this respect, citizenship acts as a social glue and common bond.

## The responsibilities and rights of British citizens

British citizenship enshrines a set of rights and duties, some of which are not held by people who are not British citizens. In medieval England, a person was either a citizen or an alien. At this time, aliens had relatively few rights. In the succeeding years, the distinction between citizen and non-citizen has become blurred, first through the introduction of denizenship and much later through the rights afforded to Irish citizens after 1949 and the introduction of the status of ‘settlement’<sup>20</sup>. As a modern form of denizenship, ‘settlement’ – in the form of Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) and EU Settled Status – also affords people certain economic rights and the ability to enter and remain in the UK without time limits on their stay.

What makes British citizenship unique is that today only British citizens have the right of abode in the UK. The right of abode is a status that was introduced in the Immigration Act 1971 that gives a person *unrestricted* rights to enter and live in the UK. Since the implementation of the British Nationality Act 1981 it has not been

---

possible for a person to have the right of abode without being a British citizen. The right of abode differs from ‘settlement’ in that it does not expire if the person who holds it leaves the UK. (Those who have ILR lose this status if they are absent from the UK for more than two years, or for EU Settled Status this status is lost after five years of absence).

Voting is another right associated with citizenship. But as can be seen from Table 3.1, it is not only British citizens who can vote in elections. A legacy of the UK’s history is that Irish citizens and Commonwealth citizens with leave to remain in the UK can also vote in general elections. In 2008 the Lord Goldsmith report on citizenship<sup>21</sup> recommended removing the rights of Irish and Commonwealth citizens to vote in UK elections, but this proposal was rejected. The debate about voting remains live, with the recent extension of the franchise in Scotland and Wales.

Following a public consultation, the Scottish Government has recently passed the Scottish Election (Franchise and Representation) Act 2020. It extended the local and Scottish Government electoral franchise to 16 and 17 year olds, refugees and those who have leave to remain (mostly those who have ILR or EU Settled Status). A similar public consultation recently took place in Wales and in early 2020 legislation was passed to extend the right to vote in local and Senedd elections to 16 and 17 year olds, and foreign nationals who have leave to remain in Wales.

No public consultation on the voting franchise has yet taken place in England. Leaving the EU has meant that EU citizens have lost their right to vote in local elections in England. Those with EU Settled Status are the largest group of people to live permanently in England who are now unable to vote in any elections. British citizenship would obviously be a route by which EU citizens could vote in the UK. At the same time, it is worth opening up a conversation about the voting franchise in England and the proposed Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission is an opportunity to do this.

---

## Summary of rights and duties of a British citizen:

- Right of abode in the UK.
- Duty of allegiance to the Crown.
- Expectation of a British passport.
- Freedom of movement within the UK and the UK-Ireland Common Travel Area.
- Consular and diplomatic protection.
- Right to vote, where registered, in the UK Government, local, mayoral and devolved elections.
- Right to stand in elections subject to residence requirements.
- Right to donate to a political party if you are on an electoral register.
- Duty to provide information for the purposes of electoral registration.
- Right and duty to undertake jury service subject to residence requirements.
- Full access to social security and public services, subject to residence and eligibility requirements.
- The ability to apply for jobs where citizenship restrictions apply, for example the civil service
- Duty to pay taxes and National Insurance.

**Table 3.1: Summary of rights afforded to British citizens and others living in the UK**

	British Passport	Consular assistance	Right to enter and remain in the UK	Registered to vote - general election	Registered to vote - local elections	Access to social security and public services
British Citizen	Yes	Yes	Yes, unconditionally through the right of abode	Yes	Yes	Yes (if habitually resident) <sup>22</sup>
British Overseas Territory Citizen (Gibraltar)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (if habitually resident)
British Overseas Territory Citizen (other)	Yes	Yes	No, unless specified on visa	Yes	Yes	No
British Overseas Citizen, British subject, British National (Overseas)	Yes	Yes	No, unless specified on visa	Yes	Yes	No
British Protected Person	Yes	Yes	No, unless specified on visa	No	No	No
Irish citizen living in UK	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (if habitually resident)
Person with EU Settled Status	No	No	Yes	No	England: no. Wales: yes. Scotland: yes.	Yes (if habitually resident)
Commonwealth citizens with leave to enter or remain in the UK	No	No	Yes, with conditions specified on visa	Yes	Yes	Yes (if habitually resident)
Non-Commonwealth citizens with leave to enter or remain in the UK	No	No	Yes, with conditions specified on visa	No	England and Northern Ireland: no. Scotland and Wales: yes.	Yes (if habitually resident)
People recognised as refugees or stateless people	No	In limited circumstances	Yes	No	England and Northern Ireland: no. Scotland and Wales: yes.	Yes (if habitually resident)

---

## The aims of citizenship policy

While the British Nationality Act 1981 was an attempt to overhaul law and policy and to address anomalies, it has been nearly 40 years since such a comprehensive review of citizenship has taken place. In the time since this legislation has been implemented there have been numerous changes to nationality guidance, but little parliamentary debate.

This absence of debate gives the impression that the Government is ambivalent about citizenship. This ambivalence has meant that citizenship policy has been neglected as a policy issue and there has been little parliamentary oversight. Immigration, nationality and integration policy objectives also cut across each other. For example, it is government policy to encourage the skilled migration that the economy and the NHS and other employers want. Citizenship might give skilled migrant workers the security they need to stay in their jobs. Yet citizenship policy makes it expensive for them to become British citizens.

The Inquiry believes that the Government must set out the aims of citizenship policy. In doing this, the Government needs to decide how it sees citizenship. Is it solely a legal status that details a set of rights and duties? Or is it both a set of rights and duties and a social bond?

The meaning that is attached to citizenship, both by new citizens and British citizens by birth, also merits consideration. Should it be an aim of policy to make the citizenship process positive and special and how should this be achieved? Should value be attached to citizenship by encouraging people to apply? Or should the Government make citizenship feel special by making its acquisition difficult, so that British citizenship becomes a special and exclusive club with a high bar to entry?

Debate about the aims of citizenship policy is long overdue. Immigration policy change and the proposed Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission offer opportunities to start such a debate.

The Inquiry also considered what citizenship policy should aim to achieve. Its view is that citizenship is both a set of rights and duties *and* a common bond. Citizenship policy should therefore have two aims: to make these rights and duties meaningful to new and 'old' citizens; and to strengthen the potential of citizenship to act as a social bond. This means that acquisition of British citizenship should be seen as a positive decision that the Government welcomes and wants to encourage.

It is recommended that the Government set out its aims in information targeted at prospective British citizens and the public, alongside an explanation of the responsibilities and rights involved in becoming a British citizen. The content of the *Life in the UK* handbook should also be changed to reflect the view that becoming a British citizen is positive and that new citizens are welcome.

---

The Home Secretary and others among this country's political leadership also need to voice their support for citizenship.

*“The fundamental aim of ‘citizenship policy’ should be to guarantee that everyone living in the UK is able to participate fully and without discrimination in the political, social and economic life of the UK.”*

Dr Tendayo Bloom, University of Birmingham, in evidence submitted to the Inquiry.

## Accountability and oversight

There was consensus among Inquiry members and many of those who sent in evidence that nationality law and policy is complex and that this makes parliamentary scrutiny difficult. Complexity and a lack of oversight can contribute to injustices and mistakes in the application of immigration and nationality law, as the Windrush Lessons Learned Review has highlighted<sup>23</sup>. An additional challenge is that much policy is set out in nationality guidance. Unlike immigration rules, this guidance is not presented to parliament.

The Inquiry considered approaches that would increase the oversight of nationality law, and also increase debate about this subject. Outside judicial review there are, of course, already mechanisms for oversight, which include the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee and the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration. Both have an essential role to play in scrutiny but each of their remits covers many different aspects of the immigration and nationality system, which limits their ability to scrutinise nationality law.

Another option for greater scrutiny over immigration and nationality law might be an expert committee with statutory powers that operates in a similar way to that in which the Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) does for welfare law, another area where policy is complex and largely set out in secondary legislation. Ministers are usually required to submit regulations in draft form to the SSAC, whose experts may then decide to scrutinise them formally. A similar committee might oversee immigration and nationality law, including rules and guidance.

A further option would be to consider an independent body tasked with overseeing citizenship. In the past, the Government has appointed such a group to oversee the *Life in the UK* test and handbook. The Advisory Board on Naturalisation and Integration (as it was later called) sat between 2004 and 2009 and was chaired by Sir Bernard Crick.

*“The Advisory Board on Naturalisation and Integration provided a useful forum for discussion about naturalisation and integration – there were experts on ESOL<sup>24</sup>, for example. And we developed a vibrant network of people who shared a common interest in citizenship, including registrars in local authorities; the testing centres; the writers*

---

*and developers of the Life in the UK publication (a top seller); further education colleges; researchers in universities; Home Office officials and civil servants from other government departments.”*

Patrick Wintour, former member of the Advisory Board on Naturalisation and Integration, in evidence submitted to the Inquiry.

Reviewing both options from the perspective of effectiveness, the Inquiry recommends an independent advisory body on citizenship because it believes it is important to monitor practice, such as the format of citizenship ceremonies, and not just law. The Inquiry proposes a body that reports to the Home Office, with a remit that includes reviewing the aims of citizenship policy, providing scrutiny of nationality law and oversight of the *Life in the UK* test and citizenship ceremonies. This advisory group should also undertake some structured engagement with new British citizens, the wider public and other stakeholders to hear their views on these issues.

*“The Life in the UK test and the way in which people can show their knowledge of the UK should be reviewed. We urge that this revision and amendment should not be done solely by the Home Office civil servants but should include wide participation from those affected.”*

The Immigration Lawyers Practitioners Association in evidence submitted to the Inquiry.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Despite frequent legislation there has been no clear articulation of the aims of citizenship policy by the Government, nor much debate on this issue. Consequently, it can appear that the Government is ambivalent about citizenship. Citizenship is also an overlooked area of public policy and this neglect has meant that there has been little incentive to reform and simplify nationality law. The Government needs to review the aims of citizenship policy and start a wider debate on this issue.

### **The Inquiry recommends:**

- **Immigration reform associated with leaving the EU, and the planned Constitution, Rights and Democracy Commission, should be used by the Government as an opportunity to discuss and clarify the aims of citizenship policy. Parliament, experts and the public should be involved in this debate.**
- **The Government should set out the aims of citizenship policy in the UK to prospective citizens and the wider public, alongside an explanation of the responsibilities and rights involved in becoming a British citizen. These should be made available in simple language on the Home Office website and in relevant official documents such as the Life in the UK handbook, which needs considerable review.**
- **The Inquiry’s view is that citizenship affords responsibilities and rights and also is a common bond. Citizenship policy**



---

**should therefore have two aims: to make these rights and duties meaningful and to strengthen British citizenship as a social bond.**

- **The acquisition of British citizenship should be seen as a positive decision that the Government welcomes and wants to encourage. The Life in the UK handbook should send out a message of encouragement and welcome to those who have decided to become British citizens.**
- **Civil society organisations, employers, local authorities and city mayors and the devolved governments in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales should also encourage the uptake of citizenship.**
- **A key aim of policy reform should be to simplify policy and address anomalies within the system. It should also reduce barriers that prevent people who meet residence, good character, language and civic knowledge criteria from becoming British citizens.**
- **Policy change should not be pursued if it acts as a barrier, preventing people from gaining British citizenship to which they might otherwise be entitled.**
- **The Government should set up an independent advisory group on citizenship to look at the aims of citizenship policy, the responsibilities and rights attached to British citizenship, routes to citizenship, the application process, ceremonies and the content of the Life in the UK test. This advisory group should also conduct structured engagement with new and prospective British citizens and the wider public to hear their views on these issues.**

---

## 4. Routes to British citizenship

The Inquiry reviewed the eligibility criteria for British citizenship, looking at whether these were fair and set at the right level. It also looked at whether there is scope to simplify eligibility criteria and address some of the remaining anomalies in nationality law.

### Automatic acquisition of British citizenship

Most people living in the UK are automatically British citizens by birth, through the principle of citizenship by *jus soli* or ‘birthright’ citizenship. People can also be British citizens by descent, through the principle of *jus sanguinis* or ‘bloodright’ citizenship. Those who are automatically British citizens by birth or descent do not have to apply for citizenship: rather a birth certificate and other supporting documentation is sent to the UK Passport Office in order to obtain a first passport.

#### You are automatically a British citizen if you were:

- Born in the UK before 1 January 1983 to at least one British parent.
- A Citizen of the UK and Colonies on 31 December 1982 with the right of abode in the UK.
- Born in the UK between 1 January 1983 and 29 April 2006 to at least one British parent or an Irish parent living in the UK. Until 2006, if the parent that met these conditions was the father he had to be married to the mother at the time of the child’s birth.
- Born in the UK before 1 October 2000 to an EU/EEA citizen working or studying in the UK, with the same requirements as above regarding marriage.
- Born in the UK on or after 1 October 2000 to an EU/EEA citizen who had Permanent Residency, right of abode or ILR at the time of the child’s birth, with the above requirements regarding marriage.
- Born in the UK after 1 January 1983 to at least one parent who was ‘settled’ in the UK (having ILR or EU Settled Status) at the time of the child’s birth, with the above requirements regarding marriage.
- Born in the UK after 12 January 2010 to a parent who was serving in the UK armed forces<sup>25</sup>.
- Adopted by a British citizen (or citizens) habitually resident in the UK. The adoption order has to have been made in a UK court on or after 1 January 1983, or can be a Hague Convention adoption order that came into effect on or after 1 June 2003.
- Born outside the UK or an Overseas Territory to a parent who is a British citizen, *other than by descent*. The rules around qualification are complex; an unmarried father cannot pass on British citizenship by descent if the child was born before 1 July 2006, for example. Although British Citizens by descent cannot usually pass on this status to their child, there are exceptions if the parent had been born in the UK or was a Crown servant.

---

As can be seen from the above, the law about automatic British citizenship is complex, with seemingly arbitrary rules in respect to a person's date of birth. There has been media coverage of families where one child is automatically a British citizen, while another child has to register to become a British citizen by virtue of their date of birth. These are strong arguments for a simplification of nationality law to address these anomalies, including those that relate to a person's date of birth. Allowing all children born in the UK to be British citizens automatically would achieve this and considerably simplify nationality law. Birthright citizenship is examined in greater detail in section seven of this report.

Some of the EU citizens that the Inquiry met in Edinburgh, Sheffield and Southampton were unaware that their children may automatically be British citizens if born in the UK. Although the Home Office has undertaken a large-scale information campaign to encourage compliance with the EU Settlement Scheme, none of this information mentions routes to citizenship. As discussed in section seven of this report there is a need for the Home Office to improve the information it gives about citizenship, so that those who qualify by virtue of their birth in the UK do not miss out.

## Requirements for qualification

For those who are not British citizens by birth or descent, there are two broad routes to acquire citizenship in the UK: through naturalisation and registration. Generally it is children, people born in the UK, people with subsidiary categories of British nationality and stateless people who register, whereas it is those becoming citizens through marriage or prior residence who naturalise. Fees for registration are a little lower than naturalisation fees.

Whether people are registering or naturalising, they have to fulfil a set of requirements. These are:

- A specified period of residency.
- Good character requirements<sup>26</sup>.
- Passing the *Life in the UK* test.
- Fulfilling English language requirements.

Residency requirements are determined by a person's immigration status and how they entered the UK. For most people, a minimum of six years' residency is needed before they can apply for British citizenship, including one year of having been 'settled' in the UK, that is holding Indefinite Leave to Remain or EU Settled Status (Table 4.1). But as this table shows, there are some groups whose immigration status means that their journey to citizenship does not follow this 'five years plus one year' pathway.

Table 4.1: Routes to citizenship

Route of entry to UK	Years to Settlement	Years to citizenship
EEA/EU citizen	Five years' residency to EU Settled Status	Five years plus one year of EU Settled Status (previously Permanent Residence)
Tier 1 Entrepreneur or Exceptional Talent	Three or five years, depending on economic activity	Three years plus one year of ILR or five plus one years
Tier 1 Investor	Two years	Two years plus one year of ILR
Tier 2 General	Five years	Five years plus one year of ILR
Tier 4 visa	Most Tier 4 visas only last for five years. If a person enters with a Tier 4 visa, they will need to switch visas and show 10 years' residency before ILR is granted	10 years plus one year of ILR
Tier 5 visas (includes the Youth Mobility Scheme)	No route to extend visa	
Family visa	2.5 + 2.5 years	Five years plus one year of ILR
Armed forces personnel and veterans	Need to have served in UK armed forces for at least four years	Four years plus one year of ILR
Refugee	Five years as a refugee/HP	Five years plus one year of ILR
Stateless person	Five years leave as a stateless person	Five years plus one year of ILR. Citizenship is by registration
Person born in UK to undocumented parents	n/a	Have to show 10 years, but no requirement to hold ILR. Citizenship is by registration
British Overseas Territories Citizens, British Overseas Citizens, British Nationals (Overseas) and British Subjects		Have to show five years' residency, no requirement for ILR, although the new scheme for BN(O)s is likely to require five years' leave then one year with settlement prior to an application for citizenship.

The period of residency that an applicant for British citizenship needs to fulfil is of similar length to many other English-speaking countries. Most applicants for Australian citizenship have to fulfil four years' legal residency. In Canada an applicant for citizenship has to have been legally resident in the country for 1,095 days within a five-year period. The United States and France have a five-year route to citizenship (see Appendix). In Germany, Scandinavian countries and in eastern Europe, residency requirements tend to be longer. Italy, Spain and Switzerland generally require ten years of lawful residence before an application for citizenship can be lodged.

Applicants for UK citizenship must also show that they have not been absent from the UK for more than 90 days per year for each of the qualifying years. Additionally, they have to show that they were present in the UK on the day exactly five years before their application is received by the Home Office (or two or three years if on more rapid routes to citizenship). This requirement can be

---

challenging as applicants have to find and submit proof of this requirement. It is because of this specific obligation that many people decide that they need the help of a solicitor or legal adviser.

The Inquiry examined the eligibility criteria for British citizenship from the perspective of their fairness and whether they were set at the right level.

Generally, the Inquiry believes that the residency requirements are fair, although it proposes that everyone who is born in the UK should automatically be a British citizen. (The rationale for this change is set out in section six of this report.) It does, however, recommend that the requirement to be present in the UK on a specified day – usually exactly five years before application – is dropped. This makes citizenship applications unnecessarily complex, and does not add protection against fraudulent applications.

The Inquiry supports the requirement to be ‘settled’ prior to becoming a British citizen and does not support the approach taken by the 2008 Goldsmith Review of Citizenship, which recommended a direct route to citizenship and replacing ILR with a new category called ‘associate citizenship’ for those who are unable to become British citizens. EU Settled Status and ILR offer a secure status for those unwilling or unable to become British citizens and should remain in place for this reason.

The Inquiry supports the current good character requirements as they are, although it recommends that the Home Office review their application to children from the perspective of safeguarding, welfare and the best interests of children.

The Inquiry supports retaining the English language requirements at the same B1 level, although it recommends changes to the format of the *Life in the UK* test, with this recommendation set out in section seven of this report.

## Refusals and the deprivation of citizenship

In 2019 some 9,784 applications for British citizenship were refused, rejected without full consideration or withdrawn. Table 4.2 gives further data on refusals, rejections and withdrawals in 2018 and 2019.

**Table 4.2: Refusals, rejections and withdrawals of British citizenship 2018-19**

	2018	2019
Total refusals after full consideration	8,372	6,623
Rejected on grounds of being British already	888	791
Rejected without full consideration – other reasons	986	2,290
Withdrawn application	110	90

Some 3,080 applicants were refused British citizenship on good character grounds in 2019, a 19 per cent fall over the previous year (3,826 refusals). Failure to fulfil such requirements accounts for just under half (47 per cent) of all refusals of British citizenship. Other significant reasons why citizenship is refused include failure to fulfil residency requirements (28 per cent of refusals in 2019), incomplete applications (0.6 per cent of refusals in 2019), no British parent (two per cent of refusals in 2019), delay in responding to Home Office enquires (five per cent of refusals in 2019) and insufficient knowledge of *Life in the UK* or the English language (three per cent of refusals in 2019).

In the same year a further 14 per cent of refusals were for unspecified ‘other’ reasons. No further detail has been provided about other grounds for refusal and the Inquiry urges the Home Office to be more transparent about these reasons. Action to prevent the submission of application forms that are then rejected helps applicants for citizenship and their legal advisers, but also reduces the administrative burden placed on the Home Office.

Similarly, the Inquiry suggests that the Home Office should provide more information about why citizenship application forms are rejected without full consideration, particularly since there was an increase of 132 per cent in such cases in 2019 compared with the previous year (Table 5.2).

As noted above, failure to meet the good character requirement is a significant reason why British citizenship is refused. The Home Office publishes guidance on good character<sup>27</sup>, which has recently been updated to provide greater clarity following two reviews by the Independent Chief Inspector for Borders and Immigration<sup>28</sup>. The guidance is clear in relation to those who have previous criminal convictions. A custodial sentence of more than four years will almost always result in the automatic refusal of citizenship. A three-year, conviction-free period will need to elapse for those who receive non-custodial sentences. Sentences received abroad will usually be treated in the same way as those received in the UK. There is much less clarity on cautions, warnings and civil penalties such as parking fines and bankruptcy and lawyers also advise applicants to disclose them. British citizenship can also be refused

---

on grounds of ‘notoriety’ which the guidance describes as “*activities [that] have been notorious and cast serious doubt on their standing in the local community*”<sup>29</sup>.” The Inquiry believes that greater transparency is needed in relation to refusals that are not based on criminal convictions.

Between 2014 and 2016 some 133 young people under 18 were refused citizenship on the basis of good character. Coram Children’s Legal Centre has called for a further review of the good character requirements as they apply to children, taking into account safeguarding, welfare and the best interests of the children concerned. This is a reasonable request and it is hoped that the Home Office takes steps to address the concerns raised by this charity.

As noted above, failure to satisfy residency requirements or reply to Home Office questions are also significant grounds for the refusal of citizenship. In the open call for evidence some people suggested that some applicants who met all the requirements but failed to submit enough evidence were also being refused citizenship. A simplification of the application process and clarity about the evidence that is required would address this issue, preventing the submission of applications that are then refused.

Those refused British citizenship can appeal against this decision. After an internal Home Office administrative review which costs £372, an Immigration and Asylum tribunal would be the next point of appeal against the refusal of citizenship. However, tribunal statistics are not sufficiently detailed regarding how many refusals of citizenship are reversed on appeal.

The Home Secretary can also remove British citizenship by signing a deprivation order, an issue that has received some recent media attention due to the Hilal al-Jeddah<sup>30</sup>, Shamima Begum<sup>31</sup> and Jack Letts<sup>32</sup> cases. The British Nationality Act 1981 (as amended) gives the Home Secretary the power to deprive a person of citizenship if one of three conditions is met:

- If deprivation is conducive to the public good and the action would not make the person stateless.
- If citizenship was obtained by fraud of other forms of deception.
- If a person obtained citizenship through naturalisation and deprivation is conducive to the public good and the Home Secretary has reasonable grounds on which to believe that a person is able to become a national of another country. The Immigration Act 2014 introduced this condition after the Supreme Court decision on the al-Jeddah case<sup>33</sup>.

Between 2011 and 2015 some 62 deprivation orders were signed by the Home Secretary, with the largest proportion being for fraud. Since then, it is thought that the numbers of deprivation orders has increased, due to extremists leaving the UK to fight in Syria. However, freedom of information requests for more recent

---

statistics on the deprivation of citizenship have been refused<sup>34</sup>. Immigration and Asylum Tribunals will hear appeals against deprivation where citizenship has been obtained by fraud, with 91 such cases heard in 2018/19 and an average of 51 cases heard per year between 2015 and 2019. The Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) will hear cases where citizenship has been taken away in the interests of national security or related matters. However, no statistics are available on the numbers of SIAC hearings on citizenship.

## Multiple citizenship

The British Nationality Act 1948 allowed multiple citizenship for the first time in the UK. However, over 50 countries still bar dual or multiple citizenship or place severe restrictions on holding it. China, India and Nigeria have such bars in place and many EU countries also place restrictions on holding multiple citizenship including Austria, the Netherlands and Lithuania. Poland does not explicitly allow multiple citizenship; although this is tolerated there are penalties for dual citizens who enter Poland using foreign travel documents.

Based on 2018 Annual Population Survey data, there were an estimated 1.3 million people living in the UK who were nationals of countries that bar or severely restrict multiple citizenship. Some of this group will eventually become British citizens, while others may leave the UK. There are, however, many thousands of people who may be unwilling or unable to become British citizens because of restrictions on multiple nationality. EU Settled Status and Indefinite Leave to Remain offer a secure status for those unwilling or unable to become British citizens and should remain in place for this reason.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Applicants for British citizenship have to fulfil a set of residence, good character, English language and civil knowledge requirements in order to become British citizens. The Inquiry believes that these are generally fair, but there remains a legacy of anomalies and arbitrary and complex regulations in relation to those who are automatically British citizens. Allowing all children who are born in the UK to become British citizens would simplify nationality law and address some of these anomalies.

### The inquiry recommends:

- **Based on independent advice the Government should review eligibility and routes to British citizenship, with the aim of simplification and addressing anomalies, including those that relate to a person's date of birth.**
- **Nationality law should be amended to allow children born in the UK to be British citizens automatically.**



---

## 5. The application process

The Inquiry set out to examine barriers to citizenship among those who would otherwise be eligible for it, including the level at which fees are set. It also reviewed options for reducing financial barriers to citizenship, assessing whether there is scope for simplifying the citizenship application process and if there was sufficient advice and assistance for applicants.

### Applying for British citizenship: options for clarity and simplicity

Applications for British citizenship are now mostly submitted online to the nationality casework team within the UK Visas and Immigration division of the Home Office. Applicants complete a 31-page form<sup>35</sup>, pay the required fee, attach their biometric identity documents (passports and Home Office Biometric Residence Permits), as well as supporting evidence. Applicants for British citizenship by naturalisation complete ‘Form AN’ but there are currently 11 different forms for those required to register rather than naturalise.

While the wording on application forms uses clear language, there is little clarity about how much supporting evidence is required. Form AN, for example, asks for “pay slips during the qualifying period” but without specifying how many payslips would satisfy Home Office requirements<sup>36</sup>. Applicants who are refused on the basis of incorrect or insufficient evidence do not have their fee refunded. In such circumstances many applicants opt for caution and pay an immigration solicitor to collate their documentation and submit their application. Many of those who gave evidence to the Inquiry felt that the application process was too difficult to complete without such expert advice.

*“Until the point I applied for British citizenship I had 17 addresses. That was very difficult to remember and, for some of them, to know.”*

New citizen, Sheffield.

*“It is expensive and onerous regarding the evidencing of overseas travel during the residency period. That last point is what took me the most time, and without my company’s travel records I would not have been able to complete this question.”*

New citizen, in evidence submitted to the Inquiry.

The Inquiry believes that there are strong arguments for simplifying the citizenship application process with the aim of making it something that most people can complete themselves, without the need to pay for legal advice. Planned investment in IT in the Home Office should be used as an opportunity to achieve this aim. Applicants should not be automatically asked for information that the Government already holds on them, for example, HMRC and DWP records that show their legal residence

---

in the UK. There is a precedent in cross-linking Home Office and HMRC and DWP records in that the EU Settlement Scheme already links to HMRC and DWP data.

Applicants are also required to show that they have been physically present in the UK on an exact, specified day: usually five years before the Home Office receives their application forms. The aim of such a requirement is uncertain, as it serves little purpose in preventing fraudulent applications. Such a requirement could easily be removed without compromising the integrity of the application process.

*“Requirements as they are work well and are strong. Certain aspects could be reviewed, however: the need to be physically present five years ago seems something of a futile and archaic rule to be strict on.”*

Price Waterhouse Coopers in evidence submitted to the Inquiry.

Allowing people to apply for citizenship and their passport at the same time would also make the process of becoming a British citizen simpler. The passport could be presented to the new citizen at their citizenship ceremony.

In the past, citizenship applications tended to be submitted by post, with applicants required to send in their passports to the Home Office. After 2003, many local authorities began to offer Nationality Checking Services – part of council registry offices – whereby an immigration adviser would check an applicant’s documentation, then scan and submit these documents to the Home Office. There were 129 such services across the UK, which generally charged applicants about £70 for checking and submitting documentation. Their staff also had qualifications approved by the Office for the Immigration Services Commissioner. Local authority Nationality Checking Services also helped those applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) and often gave people useful information in the same appointment. Their services were generally thought to be effective.

Since the end of 2018, most local authorities have closed their Nationality Checking Services, as an alternative service is now offered through a partnership between Sopra Steria, a private company, and the Home Office. This new service enables applicants to upload their forms, biometric data and supporting evidence in one of 57 centres across the UK<sup>37</sup>. People who want to renew their visa or apply for ILR or to the EU Settlement Scheme also use these service points.

There have been some criticisms of the Sopra Steria service. Unlike the previous Nationality Checking Services, the new centres do not check that applicants present the correct information. There have been numerous complaints of a lack of appointment slots with applicants pressured into booking a £250 ‘Premium Lounge’ service. Some applicants need to travel long distances to the new centres: for example, there are only three uploading points in Scotland, in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow. In relation to these

---

new services the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration recently stated:

*“Greater transparency is also important in relation to the workings of the Visa Application Centres [which are also heavily criticised by some stakeholders]. The outsourcing of ‘front end services’ to commercial partners makes perfect sense. Numerous other countries have followed the same path. But, although they have no decision-making powers, the Visa Application Centres are still performing an immigration function, since the application process relies on them. Therefore, the Home Office remains accountable for them working efficiently and effectively and meeting applicants’ needs. As such, it must do more to show that it has heard and acted upon the various complaints, about the availability of appointments for example.”*  
Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration,  
2020.<sup>38</sup>

The Inquiry recommends that the Home Office reviews the Sopra Steria document uploading service from the perspective of fees, the location of uploading points and the availability of appointments. Should the performance of the current service not improve, the Government should consider reinstating the local authority Nationality Checking Services.

## Decision-making

Once the Home Office’s nationality casework division has received a citizenship application, it makes the decision to deem it a ‘straightforward’ or ‘non-straightforward’ case, with 16 per cent of applications falling into the latter category in the fourth quarter of 2018<sup>39</sup>. The Home Office has a target of processing straightforward citizenship applications within six months and this was met in 99.4 per cent of cases in that time period<sup>40</sup>. In this respect the Home Office performs well when compared with other OECD countries: the target time for completing 90 per cent of applications for Australian citizenship, for example, is 21 months. Current Home Office performance is also a major improvement on the situation experienced by applicants for citizenship in the 1990s when a wait of two or three years was typical. A report from the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration in 2014 concluded that the Nationality Casework team “*had a strong focus on providing good customer service.*”<sup>41</sup>

## Access to advice and assistance

In order to help those applying for British citizenship, the Home Office has published a guidance booklet called *Guide AN*<sup>42</sup>. This sets out the requirements for citizenship by naturalisation. Although the Home Office has tried to use clear language, many applicants for British citizenship would struggle to understand the requirements and process set out in Guide AN. Moreover, there is no signposting to citizenship from other Home Office web pages, particularly those pertaining to ILR and the EU Settlement

---

Scheme. If the Government wishes to encourage the uptake of citizenship, it needs to improve the quality and quantity of information and increase signposting from other sites.

As noted above, many applicants for British citizenship choose to use a lawyer or immigration adviser to help them prepare and submit their citizenship application. This adds to the costs of citizenship. The need for such help is reflective of the difficulties people face in navigating a complex legal framework and difficult application process. It also highlights a lack of information about the citizenship process, something that was referenced in responses to the inquiry's open call for evidence.

*“There is a need for clearer messaging, for citizens who are granted settled status, that this status is a pathway to citizenship.”*

The 3 Million in evidence submitted to the Inquiry.

Citizenship applications are usually outside the scope of legal aid in England and Wales, apart for specific vulnerable groups such as children in public care or stateless people. The latter group can apply for Exceptional Case Funding from the Legal Aid Agency. This contrasts with the situation in Scotland, where citizenship is within the scope of legal aid, although applicants are strictly means-tested.

Among those who provided evidence to the Inquiry, a number of organisations argued for statelessness applications and those registering as British citizens under Section 1 (4) of the British Nationality Act 1981 to be eligible for legal aid in England and Wales, without the need for a lawyer or adviser to make a time-consuming application for Exceptional Case Funding. The Inquiry believes that there are strong arguments for extending legal aid for these two groups and this is discussed in Section Seven of this report.

The Inquiry does not support extending legal aid to cover all citizenship cases, as this would act as a disincentive to the Home Office to simplify the application process. Instead, the Inquiry recommends that the Government must review the application process with the aim of making it something that most applicants can complete themselves, without the need to pay for legal advice.

City mayors, local authorities and employers could also play a role in giving advice about the application process. There are also many civil society organisations that already offer advice to refugees and migrants. Apart from helping vulnerable groups such as stateless people, little information and assistance is generally provided regarding citizenship applications by many of these organisations. Refugee organisations, in particular, tend to focus their work on newcomers who are in the process of applying for asylum. While it is reasonable to have such priorities, civil society organisations could do more to encourage and support their former clients to apply for citizenship, by organising drop-in advice workshops, classes to help people pass the test and providing easy-to-understand written advice.

---

The involvement of councils and civil society in providing advice and assistance on applying for citizenship would have the advantage of reducing the demand for unregulated ‘advisers’. Those giving immigration advice about citizenship are currently required to have a qualification licensed by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner. Yet the Inquiry is disturbed to see evidence of rogue advisers targeting people who want to become British citizens. They often advertise their services through Facebook, typically charging people between £500 and £2,000 to submit an application. As well as making an application to the Home Office, some of these unlicensed advisers also offer coaching to help people pass the test. It is essential that the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner continues to prosecute rogue advisers, but civil society organisations and others need to do more to reduce demand for such services.

## Fees

The level at which citizenship fees are set was a key issue that the Inquiry wanted to review and it was a theme that was raised in most of the evidence submitted to the Inquiry. Citizenship by naturalisation currently costs £1,330 plus £80 to cover the citizenship ceremony. The fee for citizenship by registration is £1,206 for an adult and £1,012 for a child. Fees for citizenship are higher in the UK than in any other developed country (Table 5.1 and Appendix). Yet it has been calculated that the average cost to the Home Office of processing a citizenship application is £372<sup>43</sup>.

*“If you’re a family, it’s over £4,000, that’s a lot of money to take away, that’s a few months’ wages for most people.”*

New EU citizen, Southampton.

The requirement to hold Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) before applying for citizenship is an additional financial outlay for those from outside the EU as the fee for ILR is £2,389. On top of fees, applicants also have to pay for an English language test (£150), the *Life in the UK* test (£50), legal advice, use of Sopra Steria document scanning services and the fee for the citizenship ceremony (£80). A family of two adults and two children from outside the EU would need to spend at least £15,000 to secure ILR and then British citizenship. High fees appear to be most significant barrier preventing the uptake of British citizenship and was a major concern voiced by almost everyone who gave evidence to the Inquiry.

*“The Legion firmly believes this is no way to say thank you to our Commonwealth personnel for their years of Service and is calling on the Government to remove Indefinite Leave to Remain fees for Commonwealth Armed Forces personnel who have served at least four years, and their dependents.”*

The Royal British Legion in evidence submitted to the Inquiry.

Table 5.1 Naturalisation charges in selected OECD countries

Country	Charge for naturalisation
Australia	AU\$285 (£155)
Canada	CA\$630 (£373)
Denmark	Kr11,000 (£120)
France	€55
Germany	€255
Ireland	Application fee €175, certification fee €950
Italy	€300
Netherlands	€881 for naturalisation and €350 for exam
Norway	Norway 4,200 Kr (£375) but free for children
Poland	Stamp duty charge PLZ219 (£45)
Spain	€100 plus test fee
Sweden	SEK1,500 (£125)
USA	US\$725 (£590)

There is evidence that high fees cause some people to delay an application for citizenship while they save to cover this cost. But for some individuals such delays have a high personal impact. Children and young people who can become British citizens through Section 1(4) of the British Nationality Act will usually find that without citizenship they cannot work or attend university as a 'home student'. This issue has been raised in the media, with these concerns voiced by organisations working with migrants and refugees, but also by head teachers, faith groups and councils.

*“Coram Children’s Legal Centre runs a pro bono project helping families to make children’s citizenship applications and has made over 90 applications. In the majority, where the child is not in care, the families have all been on a very low income and struggled to raise the very high and ever increasing application fee. ...Many applications are delayed for over a year whilst the fee is raised, or have to be abandoned entirely.”*

Coram Children’s Legal Centre in evidence submitted to the Inquiry.

In response to high fees, a number of organisations are starting to provide low- or no-interest citizenship loans for vulnerable people. Big Society Capital is running such a scheme, which operates as a social investment with a lender receiving interest on their loan. The fund – of which the citizenship scheme is only one part – loans money to a citizenship applicant, who then pays back the loan with interest. Applicants are usually put in contact with the fund by organisations offering advice to migrants and refugees. King’s

---

College London is also running a loan scheme in partnership with CitizensUK.

Although fee increases were frozen in 2019, the Government has argued that citizenship fees help make Borders and Immigration a user-financed service. The Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration reviewed fee policy in 2018 and called for a “*Review [of] the routes to settlement, including assessing the negative effects on individuals and families of requiring repeated applications for leave prior to considering settlement.*”<sup>44</sup>

In December 2019, following a case brought by the Project for the Registration of Children as British Citizens, the High Court ruled that the £1,012 fee for children to register as British citizens was unlawful, as in setting the fee level the Home Office failed to assess children’s best interests. The court, however, rejected the argument that the Home Office had no legal power to set the fee above the cost of administering a citizenship application. It gave the applicants permission to go to the Supreme Court to clarify this issue.

## Citizenship fees: options for reform

The Inquiry believes that the current fee level is a barrier to citizenship. It recommends that the Home Office review its policy, setting out its rationale for the current fee levels, balancing this against other public policy aims of the Government. If there are societal benefits attached to citizenship with respect to increased community cohesion, there are also arguments to reduce the financial barriers to obtaining British citizenship.

The Inquiry has also considered its own recommendations on fees, considering what would be reasonable to charge applicants for citizenship, losses in revenue to the Home Office and wider societal impacts. There are a number of options for reform set out below.

1. Citizenship fees could be lowered across the board and future fee increases pegged to the rate of inflation. A number of other government fees or taxes are index-linked in such a way, for example, Vehicle Excise Duty.
2. Citizenship by registration could be free for under-18s, saving families money. This would mean that the Home Office would lose £22.5 million in revenue if applications were at 2019 application levels.
3. Citizenship by registration could be offered as fee-free for everyone, covering children, stateless people and those with other subsidiary categories of British nationality such as British National (Overseas) passport holders. This would mean that the Home Office would lose £31.4 million in revenue based on 2019 application levels.



- 
4. Make a free or low-cost citizenship offer to EEA/EU nationals currently covered by the EU Settlement Scheme. Such an approach has been proposed by think tanks such as Policy Exchange<sup>45</sup>. Although this would make the acquisition of citizenship cheaper for many millions of people, it might lead to accusations of discrimination from long-term residents from outside the EU, who have also had to pay high fees to obtain Indefinite Leave to Remain.
  5. Review the need to hold Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) or EU Settled Status for 12 months prior to applying for citizenship, instead proposing a direct route to citizenship after five or six years' residency in the UK. Applying for ILR is a substantial cost: currently £2,389 per person. In 2008 the Goldsmith Review of Citizenship recommended a direct route to citizenship and replacing ILR with a new category called 'associate citizenship' for those who are unable to become British citizens. EU Settled Status and ILR do offer a secure status for those unwilling or unable to become British citizens and should remain in place for this reason. A direct route to citizenship would also mean lost fee revenue for the Home Office.
  6. Set in place a fee waiver system whereby those on low incomes do not have to pay citizenship fees. Such a system already applies to those applying for some categories of leave to remain (although not Indefinite Leave to Remain) who can show they are destitute and have a human rights claim to leave to remain in the UK. The disadvantage of fee waivers is that it adds extra layers of bureaucracy to the process of applying for citizenship and would require Home office staff to administer such a scheme.

Looking at the above options, the Inquiry believes that option three - making citizenship by registration free - would be the fairest and simplest option. This would mean that British citizenship would be free for children, stateless people and those with subsidiary categories of British nationality. There would be a substantial saving for families with children, who often find themselves hard-pressed to cover multiple citizenship fees. Such a system would be easy to administer, unlike a means-tested system. Young people born in the UK to stateless or undocumented parents will be able to secure what the British Nationality Act 1981 already guarantees them. Securing this documentation will enable a comparatively small group of people to go to university, find work and contribute to society.

The inquiry also recommends that future fee increases for Indefinite Leave to Remain and citizenship should be pegged to the rate of inflation, as is currently the practice with Vehicle Excise Duty.



---

## Conclusions and recommendations

Simplifying the application process, providing more advice and reducing fees are priority areas for citizenship reform. The level at which fees are set is a barrier to the uptake of British citizenship and by extension limits the ability of citizenship to be a unifying common bond.

The Inquiry believes that it is very difficult for people to complete an application form without expert assistance. While the Home Office has to guard against fraudulent applications, there are strong arguments for simplifying the citizenship application process that could be achieved without risking fraud. There is also a lack of advice for applicants.

### **The Inquiry's recommendations are as follows:**

- **While it is reasonable for citizenship fees to cover administrative costs, the Home Office should undertake a review of fee policy, with the aim of reducing financial barriers to the acquisition of British citizenship among people who would otherwise qualify for citizenship. The impact of current fee levels on individuals and wider society should be examined in such a review, as well as the rationale that underpins the decision to set fees at a level far in excess of the costs of administration.**
- **The Inquiry recommends that citizenship by registration is made free for those who become British by this route – a group that mostly comprises children. Other groups who would benefit from this fee reduction include those with subsidiary categories of British nationality such as British Overseas Territories Citizens and British National (Overseas) passport holders from Hong Kong who now have a route to citizenship through the bespoke British National (Overseas) visa.**
- **Future increases in fees for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) and citizenship by naturalisation should be pegged to the rate of inflation, in the same way as other fees such as Air Passenger and Vehicle Excise Duties.**
- **The Government should review the citizenship application process with the aim of making it something that most people can complete themselves, without the need for legal advice.**
- **Investment in IT at the Home Office should be used as an opportunity to simplify the application form. The requirement to be physically present in the UK exactly five years before an application is submitted should be dropped. Applicants should not be asked for information that the**

---

**Government already holds on them, for example, HMRC and DWP records that show their legal residence in the UK.**

- **There should be an urgent Home Office review of the Sopra Steria document uploading service from the perspective of fees, the location of uploading points and the availability of appointments. Should the performance of the Sopra Steria service not improve, the Home Office should consider reinstating local authority nationality checking services.**
- **People should be able to apply for citizenship and their first passport in the same process and receive their certificates of naturalisation or registration and their British passport at their citizenship ceremony.**
- **The Home Office should produce a short, clear and accessible advice leaflet on applying for citizenship, which should be available in printed form and online. Relevant opportunities should be used to give this information to people, for example when they register a baby's birth, or by signposting from other Government web pages.**
- **City mayors, local authorities and employers should play a role in giving advice about the citizenship application process. Civil society organisations working with migrants and refugees should also encourage the uptake of citizenship and offer advice and assistance.**

---

## 6. Vulnerable groups

Submissions to the open call for evidence suggested that some groups of people found it difficult to become British citizens, even when they had the right to do so. The Inquiry decided to look at the treatment of such vulnerable groups, from the perspective of the eligibility criteria and whether there are other barriers to British citizenship. The experiences of children in care, children born outside marriage or civil partnership, stateless people and the UK-born children of undocumented migrants were examined in detail.

### Children in care

There were an estimated 103,000 children in care across the UK in 2019<sup>46</sup>, of which about 5,000 are thought not to hold British citizenship. As a corporate parent, a local authority has a duty to act in a child's and care leaver's best interests and secure the best possible outcomes for them. This includes helping them to gain a secure immigration status. Yet in evidence submitted to the Inquiry, Coram Children's Legal Centre raised concerns that some local authorities were not helping eligible children in their attempts to apply for British citizenship.

The Ministry of Justice has recently brought back immigration and nationality legal aid for separated children in care, which will enable children to be assisted in making an application for citizenship. Although this move is to be welcomed, it requires social workers being aware of this rule if it is to have an impact. Local authorities are also still required to pay an application fee on the child's behalf, a factor that is likely to discourage some from helping children apply for British citizenship.

Where children in care are entitled to be British citizens, it is usually in their best interests that they do so. The present situation, where central government – the Home Office – charges another arm of government – the local authority – to cover the citizenship fees of children in their care is not reasonable; it merely represents moving money from one government department to another. Enabling all children born in the UK to be British citizens automatically would mean that many children in care would not miss out on British citizenship and that councils would not have to pay registration fees. For children in care who were born outside the UK but are otherwise eligible for citizenship, a policy of fee-free registration would benefit children and councils alike.

### Children born outside marriage or civil partnership

Most people born in the UK to at least one British parent would probably assume they were British, although this has not always been the case for children born outside marriage or civil partnership. Between 1 January 1983 and 29 April 2006 a child born

---

in the UK to at least one British or Irish parent was automatically a British citizen only if the mother was British/Irish, or if the father was British/Irish and he was married to the mother at the time of the child's birth.

Amendments to legislation in 2006<sup>47</sup> and 2015<sup>48</sup> attempted to deal with this discrimination against children born outside marriage or civil partnership. These changes enabled a child to become a British citizen in a situation where a British father was not married to the non-British mother. Parents now need to supply a birth certificate naming the father and other evidence, for example results of a DNA test. There is provision for fee-free registration for those who have previously been denied automatic British citizenship because of previous rules. However, an absence of information has meant that many of those who now qualify for automatic British citizenship may not be aware that they do.

In many ways this is a similar set of issues to those raised by the Windrush scandal: over-complexity of the law and retrospective changes. As with the Windrush group, children born outside of marriage or civil partnership may assume they are British yet in law they are not, unless they take steps to remedy this situation through fee-free registration.

*“It has been a long road for children to get closer to avoiding discrimination in nationality acquisition, visited on them because of their parents’ marital status... Yet discrimination for these children persists and reverberates down to the next generation.”*

Coram Children's Legal Centre in evidence submitted to the Inquiry.

## Stateless people

It is estimated that there are between 10 and 15 million stateless people across the world<sup>49</sup>. It is not known how many stateless people live in the UK, but their numbers are likely to be small as their absence of documentation makes travel to the UK very difficult. In 2018 some 1,016 previously stateless people became British citizens<sup>50</sup>. They are a diverse population in terms of their countries of origin, but the largest group of stateless people are Kurds and Palestinians who have fled conflicts in Syria and Iraq.

The UK is a signatory to the 1954 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. It is also one of the few European countries that has statelessness determination procedures incorporated into immigration and nationality law. People applying for statelessness leave have to show the Home Office that they have sought and failed to obtain or re-establish their nationality with the appropriate authorities of the relevant country. After five years' leave as a stateless person, an application for Indefinite Leave to Remain can be made. Once a stateless person has had ILR for 12 months he or she can apply for British citizenship.

---

Despite these protections, there are still some shortcomings in the treatment of stateless people in the UK. The process of applying to be recognised as a stateless person is complex and usually requires legal advice. Yet applicants do not automatically qualify for legal aid in England and Wales, although a legal adviser can apply to the Legal Aid Agency for Exceptional Case Funding.

Applicants for statelessness leave cannot work in the UK while their case is being determined but, unlike asylum-seekers, they receive no subsistence allowance or housing, unless they have previously applied and been refused asylum and qualify for ‘Section 4 support’ under the provisions of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. This policy and the absence of legal aid means that most advisers encourage stateless people to apply for asylum first of all, so they are not left destitute. If they are then refused, they are advised to apply under the statelessness determination procedures. This lengthy process leaves a small number of people in limbo for many years.

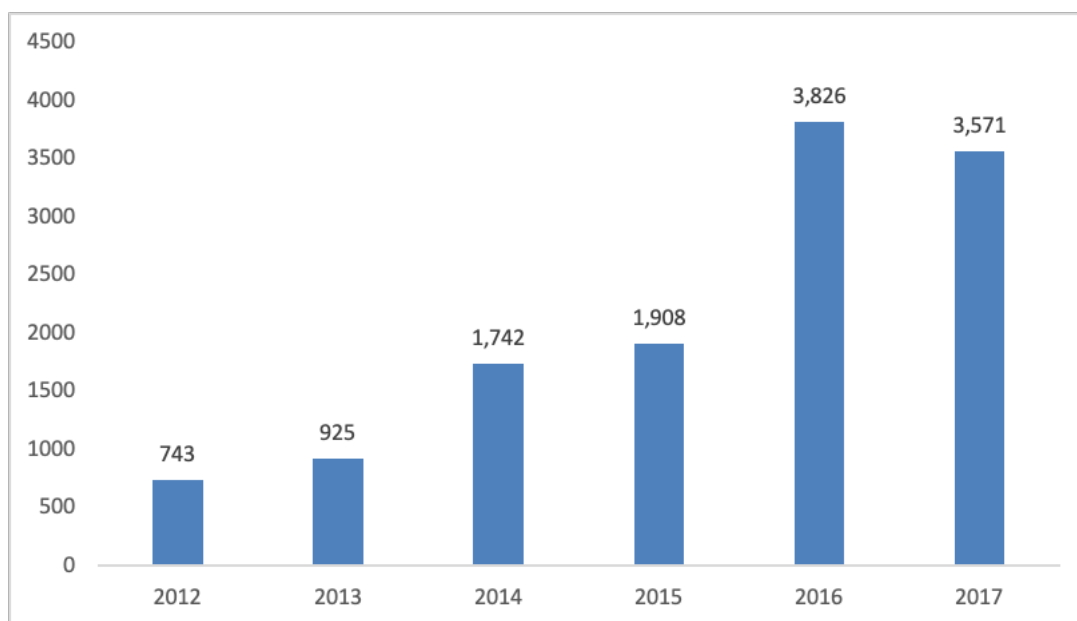
The Inquiry recommends that those who are applying to remain in the UK under statelessness determination procedures should be allowed to work while their application is pending or receive help with their accommodation and subsistence through a system akin to the current asylum support system. As previously recommended, the acquisition of British citizenship by registration should be fee-free. There is also a need for greater awareness of statelessness procedures among organisations offering advice to migrants and refugees.

## The UK-born children of parents without settlement rights

Another vulnerable group identified by the Inquiry are the UK-born children of parents who have limited leave to remain or are undocumented migrants. Before the implementation of the British Nationality Act 1981 all children born in the UK were British citizens, whatever the status of their parents, as the UK then had a policy of birthright citizenship. Over 25 countries, including Canada and the United States, still retain birthright citizenship policy. These are generally countries whose legal system is based upon English common law – Calvin’s Case (1608) – and/or have seen the abolition of slavery.

As noted above, the British Nationality Act 1981 restricted birthright citizenship in the UK. But in order to prevent children from becoming stateless through no fault of their own, Section 1(4) of the British Nationality Act 1981 allows children and adults born in the UK who can show they have lived here for the first 10 years of their life to register as British citizens. Figure 6.1 shows how many people have become British citizens through this route.

Figure 6.1: Numbers of people registering as British citizens under Section 1 (4) of the British Nationality Act 1981



Citizenship fees are, however, a substantial barrier to registering for citizenship under Section 1 (4) of the British Nationality Act 1981, as most children who register under these provisions come from low-income families. Organisations such as We Belong, Coram Children’s Legal Centre and Amnesty International have campaigned for registration fees to be reduced or waived. The Inquiry was told:

*“Coram Children’s Legal Centre assisted a mother who was street homeless and she and her children were sleeping on buses when they attended our drop-in. The daughter was eligible to register as British, but the mother could not afford the fee, and so although we made a referral for her to receive pro bono citizenship assistance, she opted to apply for leave to remain under the immigration rules, a much less stable form of status, because a fee waiver was available.”*

Coram Children’s Legal Centre in evidence submitted to the Inquiry.

From time to time over the last 40 years there have been calls to reinstate birthright citizenship in the UK. This would obviously mean that children born in the UK would not have to pay citizenship fees. The Inquiry has weighed up the arguments for doing this and believes that there is a strong case for changing the law, so that all children born in the UK are British citizens.

Allowing all children born in the UK to be British citizens would significantly simplify nationality law, benefiting children of British citizens, as well as those born to parents from within and outside the EU. As can be seen from section four, the eligibility criteria for automatic British citizenship are complex. It is still possible for a

---

family to have two children, one of whom is automatically a British citizen and one of whom is not, merely because of their dates of birth. Birthright citizenship would simplify the law for children of British citizens, too.

Another group who would benefit from such a change are those born in the UK to parents who are undocumented migrants or have limited leave to remain, who currently have the right to register as British citizens under Section 1 (4) of the British Nationality Act 1981.

It is not known how many undocumented migrants living in the UK would become British citizens if the law changed to allow birthright citizenship. Recently, the Greater London Authority commissioned research to estimate the undocumented population in the UK. This used the residual method (total overseas-born population minus those thought to be legally resident) and suggested a central estimate of 215,000 undocumented children in the UK, of which half were estimated to be UK-born<sup>51</sup>. This methodology is contested by demographers and the Inquiry shares these reservations<sup>52</sup>. A Home Office statement on the Greater London Authority research said “*We do not recognise these statistics.*” Certainly, they do not tally with the Home Office data in Figure 6.1, nor school or casework data from organisations that work with undocumented migrants. A figure in the low tens of thousands is a more likely estimate of those who would benefit from a change in the law to allow birthright citizenship.

The case against birthright citizenship is that it might lead to abuse in the form of ‘birth tourism’. Certainly, there are some documented cases of this practice where agents operating out of China arrange for mothers to give birth in the United States<sup>53</sup>. Heavily pregnant women can, however, be barred from flying. It is also within the powers of UK Visas and Immigration to take action to reduce this risk. A government can also reverse such a policy should it be abused. The Inquiry does, however, recommend that an intelligence report and risk assessment is carried out by the Immigration Enforcement International division of the Home Office before making such a policy change.

A policy to allow birthright citizenship would not extend to the child’s parents. Rather, it gives a secure status to children who are not responsible for the circumstances of their birth and may have known no country other than the UK.

There is public support for birthright citizenship. Polling conducted by ICM for British Future in 2020 found that 61 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement ‘children born in the UK should be eligible for British citizenship’<sup>54</sup>. Just 13 per cent of respondents disagreed and age, education, political opinion made little difference to people’s view on this issue. Discussion groups held as part of the National Conversation on Immigration examined the case of a UK-born child of an undocumented single

---

mother<sup>55</sup>. Many people who took part in these discussions assumed she was British because she was born in the UK. They felt her situation was not her fault and helping her to become a British citizen would enable her to contribute to society.

Birthright citizenship prevents lengthy and expensive legal casework. If this policy was adopted, there would be savings to the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice in that the bureaucracy associated with Section 1 (4) applications and legal aid would be reduced. Arguably, the strongest argument for birthright citizenship is that it would enable children and young people who are currently living in the shadows to integrate, pay taxes and make a contribution to society.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The Inquiry recommends some practical changes for vulnerable groups, whose needs are often overlooked in broader debates about immigration and nationality. The experiences of children in care, children born outside marriage or civil partnership, stateless people and the UK-born children of undocumented migrants were considered.

### **The Inquiry recommends:**

- **Nationality law should be amended to allow children born in the UK to be British citizens automatically, restoring a policy that applied before 1983.**
- **Citizenship by registration should be free for those who become British by this route – a group that mostly comprises children.**
- **Vulnerable groups of people should be encouraged to take up legal advice, which should be affordable and widely available in all parts of the UK.**
- **Those applying to remain in the UK under statelessness determination procedures should be allowed to work while their application is pending, or should receive help with their accommodation and subsistence through a system akin to the current asylum support system.**



---

## 7. English language requirements and the *Life in the UK* test

The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 provided the legal basis for the *Life in the UK* citizenship test and an obligation for citizenship applicants to show they have “sufficient knowledge of the language.” The first test was held in 2005 with the English language requirements introduced in the same year. Since then, the content and format of the *Life in the UK* test has been the subject of ongoing media interest, some of which has been humorous, but much of which has been critical<sup>56</sup>. The 2018 immigration white paper committed the Government to reviewing the English language requirements and also the *Life in the UK* test in order to place greater emphasis on shared British values<sup>57</sup>. In this context the Inquiry looked at whether revisions were needed to language requirements and the *Life in the UK* test. Specifically, it looked at:

- What knowledge, skills and values should prospective citizens be expected to possess?
- How should the knowledge, skills and values required to become a British citizen best be conveyed and tested?
- How do other countries approach language and civic knowledge requirements within the process of applying for citizenship? Is there good practice that could be adapted to a UK context?

### English language requirements

Currently, adult applicants for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) and citizenship by naturalisation have to show that they have:

- An approved qualification in speaking and listening in English, at B1 level at least; or
- A degree taught or researched in English.

Certain categories of people are exempt from the English language requirement, including citizens from exempted countries<sup>58</sup>, people aged 65 or over and Commonwealth armed forces veterans.

Refugees are also exempt from the English language requirements when applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain, but these exemptions do not cover those applying for citizenship.

Applicants are required to pass a Home Office approved test in a secure examination centre. Most of these secure centres are run by the British Council or the Trinity examination board. The test costs £150, although many applicants also enrol on courses to help them pass the test, with these courses also charging fees.

Fifteen years ago, after the implementation of the English language requirements, applicants had to pass a test set at Entry Level 3.

---

But since then, the language requirement has been strengthened and widened to cover those applying for ILR and many categories of visas. Applicants for citizenship by naturalisation now have to have a B1 level speaking and listening qualification, while the *Life in the UK* test is also a proxy test of reading at this level. Those who pass the current test have skills that are equivalent to someone who has a higher-level GCSE in a foreign language, in that they should be able to ‘understand simple discussions about family life, work, school or leisure-related topics, deal with most travel situations and describe experiences, events, dreams and ambitions’<sup>59</sup>.

As noted above, the Government is committed to reviewing the English language requirements, with a view to increasing the level required for citizenship above that required for Indefinite Leave to Remain. The rationale for such a policy change is to incentivise progression in English language fluency. If such a proposal was implemented it would mean that the UK had one of the most demanding language requirements of all OECD countries (see appendix Table A1). There are, of course, merits in encouraging greater fluency in English among the UK’s migrant and refugee populations. But there are also disadvantages in that such a move risks being a barrier to taking up British citizenship for those less confident about sitting academic tests. The Inquiry’s task was to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of such a proposal.

Data from the Annual Population Survey estimates that 10 per cent of the overseas born population of the UK (around 1 million people) report experiencing problems in work or education as a consequence of their limited English language skills. Such an estimate is consistent with Census 2011 findings, which showed that over 900,000 people aged over three did not speak English well or at all. Groups most likely to struggle to meet a higher English language level include:

- The least well-qualified migrant workers from EU countries, including those who work long hours or live in areas where there is limited English language provision.
- Refugees who have had an interrupted or limited prior education before arriving in the UK.
- Those with limited prior education before coming to the UK and who may have little social contact with those from outside their community.

Increasing the barrier to citizenship risks marginalising people who have settled in the UK and who call this country their home. There are also other ways to encourage new arrivals to learn English, with civil society organisations playing an important role in this process<sup>60</sup>. Therefore, it is the Inquiry’s recommendation that the current English language requirements should be retained at their current level.

---

## The *Life in the UK* test

The *Life in the UK* test was introduced in November 2005 for those applying for citizenship and in April 2007 for those applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain. Its stated aims are to show that applicants:

- Can read and understand English.
- Have enough knowledge about life in the UK.
- Are aware of the rights and responsibilities of a British citizen and understand our shared British values<sup>61</sup>.

A person starts the process by booking a test slot and paying a fee of £50, with applicants allocated one of the five test centres nearest to where they live. There are now 40 test centres across the UK. In 2018 PSI Services took on the contract to deliver the *Life in the UK* test from Learndirect, after criticisms from Ofsted and the National Audit Office about the latter's performance in delivering other government contracts. Facilities in the test centres are sub-contracted to other organisations – usually private training companies. Despite this practice there are some geographic gaps, with applicants sometimes facing long journeys to take the test.

The *Life in the UK* test is taken online. It comprises 24 multiple-choice questions, which the applicant has 45 minutes to answer. To pass the test, a person must score 75 per cent or above. The knowledge that is required in order to pass the test is set out in an accompanying handbook<sup>62</sup>.

In 2018 some 159,566 tests were taken with a pass rate of 78 per cent<sup>63</sup>. Insufficient preparation and poor English are the two main causes of failure and there are significant variations in the pass rate among different national groups<sup>64</sup>. There are, however, no limits on the number of times a person can sit the test.

The failure rate has led to organisations and individuals offering courses to help applicants pass the test. Some of these courses are reputable and offered by trainers who usually have teaching qualifications: the Inquiry secretariat met with such a course leader and some of her students in Sheffield. A teacher on such a course also gave written evidence to the Inquiry.

*“Most of my students arrive feeling anxious about the prospect of studying for the test – but leave feeling glad to have learnt so much, and over the moon to then pass. What everyone finds helpful, who comes on my course, is having someone to take them through the book and explain and simplify the material, for example, almost everyone on my course finds the history chapter (a particularly feared chapter) more interesting than they were expecting.”*

Louise Clack, teacher, in evidence submitted to the Inquiry.

As well as such social enterprises, there is also an industry of commercial organisations that purport to help people pass the test (as well as help with English language examinations required

---

for visas and citizenship). Some of these organisations also offer immigration advice. An undercover BBC investigation in February 2019 showed representatives of two of these private companies offering to help candidates cheat in the test<sup>65</sup>, with one group charging £2,000 for this service. This was not the first time that journalists have exposed abuse and there is a clear need for better regulation of these organisations by local authority trading standards and the Office for the Immigration Services Commissioner.

Civil society organisations working with migrants and refugees might also consider offering support to clients wanting to apply for citizenship, for example classes to help people pass the citizenship and English language tests, as well as offering advice to help people submit their applications. Such a move would help reduce demand for the services of rogue organisations.

## Content

*“I feel in-between about the test...it’s quite interesting because you get to know about the heritage and you’re getting to know more history... I think it should include more current affairs stuff, you know, who the Prime Minister is.”*

New citizen, Edinburgh.

To help people pass the *Life in the UK* test the Government publishes a handbook, which is now in its third edition. After the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 gained Royal Assent, David Blunkett, then Home Secretary, appointed an independent group to oversee the content of the test and the handbook. The Advisory Board on Naturalisation and Integration (as it was later called) sat between 2004 and 2009 and was chaired by Sir Bernard Crick. He was responsible for much of the content of the first handbook<sup>66</sup>.

A revised handbook was published in March 2007. Factual errors were corrected and the new handbook used less complex language. More emphasis was also put on employment matters and everyday needs such as housing, money, health and education.

A further revision took place in 2013 and the *Life in the UK* handbook took on a new, illustrated A5 format and title. Much of the practical information about everyday life – employment, housing, money, health and education – was removed from the third edition of the handbook and test. The argument for this change was that by the time people came to apply for citizenship, they would already have acquired this knowledge. Instead, greater emphasis was placed on British values and British history. At the same time as this change was made, the option to pass an ‘ESOL with citizenship course’ as an alternative to the *Life in the UK* test was ended. These courses usually comprised about 30 hours teaching time and were delivered by further education colleges as day or evening classes. This route was popular with those who were

---

less confident about taking tests and it was also seen as a more meaningful way of learning about life in the UK.

The current handbook has been written by Home Office civil servants and comprises five chapters, with applicants tested on all of them:

1. The values and principles of the UK (six pages, but with only one page on shared or British values, with no examples or illustrations).
2. What is the UK? (two pages)
3. A long and illustrious history (46 pages)
4. A modern thriving society (37 pages on religion, customs and traditions, sport, arts and culture and places of interest).
5. The UK Government, the law and your role (48 pages, including pages on democracy, government and the judiciary, as well as sections on rights and freedoms and a person's role in the community).

## Criticisms of the test and handbook

The content of the handbook and test have received considerable media coverage and are probably the most salient and well-known aspect of nationality law. Along with fees, the form and content of the *Life in the UK* test were issues raised in almost all of the evidence submitted to the Inquiry. Many of the points that were made reiterated conclusions of a recent House of Lords Inquiry on citizenship<sup>67</sup>.

The handbook and the *Life in the UK* test have been criticised for their inclusion of trivia – for example, the height of the London Eye - which few British citizens would be expected to know, and arguably few would consider important for aspiring British citizens to recall<sup>68</sup>. Many of those who submitted evidence felt that the current content and format of the test meant that it was not fulfilling its stated aims of making applicants for British citizenship aware of their rights and responsibilities and of shared British values.

Some of those who submitted evidence argued that information about everyday life – the education system and the NHS, for example – should be included in the handbook and tested. The Inquiry does not support this change in emphasis as people who apply for citizenship will have lived in the UK for a number of years and will have acquired this practical information during this period of residence.

The Inquiry believes that there are some omissions to the information covered in the handbook and test, with little about the UK's geography and no good quality map of the country. There is little information about Northern Ireland's recent history. Nor is there substantial discussion of the UK's history as a colonial

---

power or the anti-slavery movement and more recent campaigns for equality. This is a significant oversight as it is important to stress that many sections of society worked to secure the rights and safeguards we now enjoy. The tone of the *Life in the UK* handbook also received criticism in evidence submitted to the Inquiry, in that there is no overarching message of welcome, a sentiment that the Inquiry supports.

Candidates pass the *Life in the UK* test by rote learning facts then sitting a multiple-choice test. It is debatable whether meaningful commitment to shared or British values (such as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs, or of no faith) can be tested in this way. Support for these values emerges through everyday face-to-face interactions and discussions with other people.

*“Life in the UK just requires new citizens to sit in their bedrooms and swot for a test! There is no requirement to go anywhere, meet anyone or participate in any way that would develop a sense of home is where the heart is.”*

Viv Endicot in evidence submitted to the Inquiry

Despite these criticisms, the Inquiry found that there was broad support for the principle of having a citizenship test from those who submitted evidence, and from new citizens alike. In the discussions in Edinburgh, Sheffield and Southampton, the Inquiry found that new citizens wanted to learn about the UK’s history and traditions, although they felt that not all information in the handbook was relevant. There was also much debate about whether the handbook should contain more information about cultural forms, such as idioms and acceptable norms of behaviour. Some new citizens felt that this information would be useful while others disagreed as they learned about British culture by interacting with people.

*“What does it mean to be British? What’s going to help me to live in this society? Knowing those dates? Possibly...but actually in everyday life it probably means more to understand when someone says ‘Oh it’s not my cup of tea,’ I understand what that means.”*

New citizen, Southampton.

## Civic knowledge tests outside the UK

The Inquiry examined practice outside the UK, looking at whether there were approaches to citizenship tests that could be replicated in the UK. Many OECD countries test the civic knowledge of applicants for citizenship (see appendix).

Canada sets a citizenship test for 18-54 year olds comprising 20 questions. Applicants also attend an interview with an immigration official, which tests their language skills and is where applicants receive their test results. Those who are 55 or over, as well as 14-17 year olds, attend the interview but are not required to sit the test. As well as online and TV Freeview teaching material, the Canadian

---

Government has produced a handbook. The Discover Canada Study Guide is a 68-page book published for those applying for citizenship in the country, covering history, geography, government structures and Canadian values. Although its content is of a similar nature to *Life in the UK*, the tone of Discover Canada is more welcoming than the *Life in the UK* handbook. The first page shows a picture of the Queen and a new citizen, and gives the citizenship oath of allegiance in English and French, with the first paragraph of page two reading:

*“Welcome! It took courage to move to a new country. Your decision to apply for citizenship is another big step. You are becoming part of a great tradition that was built by generations of pioneers before you. Once you have met all the legal requirements, we hope to welcome you as a new citizen with all the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.”*

It is noteworthy that Her Majesty the Queen does not make an appearance in the *Life in the UK* handbook until page 121.

In Norway, applicants for citizenship have an option of either a citizenship test or sitting the same civics test that is taken by 18-year-olds, with these two groups sometimes studying side-by-side in schools and colleges.

In Germany, applicants for citizenship have the option of (i) sitting a naturalisation test, or (ii) enrolling on an integration course and passing the DTZ (Deutsch Test für Zuwanderer) examination at the end of the course. Integration courses involve 600 hours of German language teaching and 100 hours of ‘orientation’ about Germany’s legal and political systems, history, as well as the rights and duties of the citizen and societal values. The course costs €1,300 with fee waivers available for low income groups. While a person usually has to show eight years’ legal residency before they apply for citizenship, applicants with a DTZ certificate can apply after seven years’ residency. A disadvantage of having two routes to citizenship is that it tends to be highly-educated labour migrants that take the naturalisation test, while refugees mostly attend integration courses, so this limits social interaction between migrant populations from different backgrounds. Despite this caveat, integration courses are worthy of further consideration with a view to piloting them in the UK.

## Options for reform to the test

The agreement signed between the Home Office and PSI Services may mean that substantial reforms to the citizenship test cannot be implemented until this contract expires. But this does not prevent the Government from reviewing the format and content of the *Life in the UK* test. There are a number of options for reform if the Government wishes the test to place greater emphasis on shared British values:

- The Government might simply change the content of the handbook and test to place greater emphasis on British values.



- 
- A number of countries have used Freeview channels to help migrants and refugees learn their language, as well as learning about everyday life, history and culture. A *Learning English* Freeview channel might be an option that could be pursued in the UK, helping migrants learn English as well as the civil knowledge felt to be important for new residents. Information about shared British values is also much easier to communicate through documentaries that involve real-life examples. An amended *Life in the UK* test could then examine this additional knowledge.
  - Looking at what takes place outside the UK, the Government might wish to test shared British values in an oral examination. This could be delivered by examination officers, local authority staff (as in France) or immigration officers.
  - The Government might consider reinstating citizenship courses with a classroom test at the end of a period of study.

There was a consensus among the Inquiry panel that it is right for applicants for British citizenship to show that they speak English and know about the history, laws and values of the UK. Most prospective and new citizens also supported this view and wanted to learn about the UK's history and traditions.

As discussed above, Germany and Norway have routes to citizenship where applicants attend integration or civics courses and the Government might consider this option. In England and Northern Ireland, citizenship education forms a compulsory part of the National Curriculum, while it is a non-statutory subject in Wales and delivered as a cross-curricular theme in Scotland. Although the operation of different education systems presents challenges, a similar approach to Norway might work in the four nations of the UK where school students and prospective citizens study civic knowledge side-by-side and take the same test. Classroom discussions could enable greater consideration of shared British values. Such a course might also incorporate volunteering. Schools, the further education sector and the organisations involved in delivering the National Citizenship Service all have the skills to organise such provision.

*“I think taught courses would be a good way to help people feel much more engaged with becoming a British Citizen.”*

Louise Clack, teacher, in evidence submitted to the Inquiry.



---

## Conclusions and recommendations

The Inquiry supports the retention of an English language requirement and testing applicants for British citizenship on their civic knowledge. Learning about life in the UK is valuable and this process promotes integration. Most new citizens agree with the Inquiry in this respect.

However, the Inquiry believes that the citizenship test needs substantial reform in both its format and content in order to meet its stated aims of showing that applicants know about their rights and responsibilities as a British citizen, our shared values and life in the UK. The current test and handbook contain too much trivial knowledge that does not support the test's stated aims. The tone of the handbook could also send out a stronger message of welcome. A multiple-choice test does not encourage debate and dialogue about our shared values, which are much more likely to be reinforced through face-to-face interaction.

### **The Inquiry recommends:**

- **The content and format of the Life in the UK test and handbook should be subject to review by an independent advisory body. New British citizens should be involved in such a review.**
- **Drawing on policy in Germany and Norway, the Home Office should pilot a ten-session British citizenship course where applicants would study alongside British sixth formers. Both groups would learn about the geography and history of the UK, its administrative and political systems and the shared values that underpin our way of life. These courses might be organised by schools, colleges, or National Citizen Service providers, with those enrolled in such programmes required to pass a short test as part of the course that by its nature will also test their English language skills. Should these pilots be successful, such citizenship courses should replace the current test as the method by which to test knowledge of life in the UK.**
- **The Life in the UK handbook and all future teaching material should send out a message of welcome to those who have decided to become British citizens.**
- **The Government should set up an independent 'Learning English' Freeview channel, which would help migrants practice their English and would also broadcast material relevant to the citizenship course and promoting integration.**
- **The requirement that applicants for ILR and British citizenship can demonstrate English language speaking and listening skills, at a B1 level, should be retained at this level.**

---

## 8. Citizenship ceremonies

The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 introduced the requirement for new citizens to attend a citizenship ceremony and swear an oath of allegiance and pledge to the UK. The rationale for introducing a ceremony to the citizenship process was twofold. First, citizenship ceremonies were meant to make the acquisition of citizenship a more meaningful process<sup>69</sup>. The ceremonies also aim to highlight the common bond of British citizenship. Both are important aims that the Inquiry supports. Because of this, it is important to review whether ceremonies are fulfilling these aims and if there is room for improvement. Current practice was examined, including whether there is scope for citizenship ceremonies to play a more effective role in building bridges between new citizens and local communities.

### Format of citizenship ceremonies

The UK was a comparative latecomer to citizenship ceremonies. Canada held its first ceremony in 1947 and Australia in 1949. The UK's first citizenship ceremony was held in Brent in 2004 in the presence of Prince Charles and the Home Secretary.

Some 113,301 new citizens attended ceremonies in 2018. Birmingham City Council conducted the most ceremonies in that year (2,699 people in 2018), while in both Orkney and the Western Isles less than 10 people attended ceremonies in 2019<sup>70</sup>.

Once a grant of citizenship has been made, a new citizen is required to attend a ceremony within three months of being invited to do so by the Home Office (with the period extended to six months during the COVID-19 crisis). Children under 18 do not have to attend a ceremony and parents can collect their certificate for them. Ceremonies are organised by local authority registrars, with a fee of £80. New citizens are usually restricted to two guests, a rule that disappointed a number of new citizens that the Inquiry met in Edinburgh and Southampton, although most local authorities offer private ceremonies where more guests can be accommodated, albeit for a higher fee.

Ceremonies start with a short welcome from the Superintendent Registrar. New citizens are then asked to swear an oath of allegiance or solemn affirmation, with the latter offered for those whose beliefs prevent them from swearing to Almighty God. The new citizens then make an oral pledge, with the text given below. Those attending the ceremony may then sing or listen to the national anthem. There may also be a longer address from the Registrar, the local Lord Lieutenant or another local dignitary. The new citizens are then presented with their certificates of naturalisation or registration, although they are not given a British passport. As previously noted, the Inquiry recommends that people should be able to apply for citizenship and a passport at the same time and receive their certificates of naturalisation or registration and their first British passport at their citizenship ceremony.

---

Some local authorities present new citizens with a small gift, for example a book about local history, mug or paperweight. Voter registration has been incorporated into some ceremonies and some local authorities have used ceremonies as an opportunity to give out information on issues such as fire safety and volunteering.

“*Welcome, you are now British,*” are the concluding words of a citizenship ceremony. This statement affirms that new citizens have joined the community of British citizens and are equal members of society.

### Text of the oath and pledge made by new citizens at their citizenship ceremony

*I, [name], swear by Almighty God that, on becoming a British citizen, I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Her Heirs and Successors according to law.”*

*Pledge: “I will give my loyalty to the United Kingdom and respect its rights and freedoms. I will uphold its democratic values. I will observe its laws faithfully and fulfil my duties and obligations as a British citizen.”*

## Unrealised potential

It is the Inquiry’s view that citizenship ceremonies are popular with those who attend and that the Government has achieved its aim of making the acquisition of citizenship a meaningful process for new citizens themselves. Overwhelmingly positive comments were made about citizenship ceremonies in the open call for evidence and in the discussions in Edinburgh, Sheffield and Southampton, sometimes to the surprise of the ‘citizens-by-birth.’

*“I really enjoyed the ceremony, it was very important for me to go through that, it sort of signified the end of the journey. It is a long process...five years for the application, collecting all the paperwork, but it’s just a nice ending to that process.”*

New citizen, Southampton

Many local authority registrars had put a great deal of effort into the early ceremonies, with some of these events held in iconic locations such as the Tower of London or Salisbury Cathedral, involving dignitaries and the local community. Following the Lord Goldsmith Citizenship review, a citizenship ceremony guide was published in 2008, with the aim of spreading good practice across the UK<sup>71</sup>. The Goldsmith Review itself recommended that citizenship ceremonies be given higher profile and should engage the local community in order “*to communicate the common bond of citizenship to both new citizens and existing ones*”<sup>72</sup>.

---

Over the last 15 years that interest in citizenship has waned, although there is a core of local authority registrars who still make a significant effort. The Inquiry was encouraged to learn about initiatives taking place in Brent, Edinburgh and Wiltshire<sup>73</sup> as well as a London-wide ceremony run by the Mayor. In Darlington<sup>74</sup> local school children have welcomed new citizens. These are initiatives that could be replicated in more places across the UK.

While the oath/affirmation, pledge and national anthem are common to all ceremonies, there is now a great deal of difference in the form taken by ceremonies in different places in relation to their location, duration, the involvement of dignitaries and the local population and the content of the address. There has been little encouragement from central government to make all ceremonies meaningful and special; or to use them to build bridges between new citizens and local residents. Evidence submitted to the Inquiry noted:

*“These events are regularly hidden. Rarely is there any mention in the local or national press that citizenship ceremonies take place at all...This is no way to treat or welcome new voters with full rights of citizenship into our shared community... This is very different from the approach in other countries like Canada and the United States. [Their] Ceremonies are welcoming events that regularly receive coverage in local news, both television and newspapers. Political leaders routinely attend and offer their support.”*

Professor Thom Brooks, in evidence submitted to the Inquiry.

There are various examples of good practice outside the UK. In Canada, some citizenship ceremonies are held on Canada Day. In the US, Independence Day citizenship ceremonies have been held at the Statue of Liberty and at Golden Gate Bridge. Since 2001, Australia has held an annual Citizenship Day on 17 September. This event is to encourage Australians to reflect on the meaning and importance of their citizenship. Ceremonies are held in Canberra and across Australia, often in iconic locations. Schools incorporate Citizenship Day into their civics education, for example by involving pupils in local citizenship ceremonies or holding special assemblies. The involvement of ‘citizens by birth’ is a practice that should be replicated in the UK.

Although most French citizenship ceremonies are held at the local prefecture, the French Government holds some ceremonies in iconic locations, with the Prime Minister welcoming new citizens at the Pantheon. The French government also awards citizenship to foreign nationals who have been outstandingly brave or have made an exceptional contribution to life in France. A well-publicised case was that of ‘Spiderman’ Mamadou Gassama, a Malian national who rescued a small boy dangling from a balcony and was later awarded French citizenship by President Macron<sup>75</sup>. Such an approach could be replicated in the UK and would raise the profile of citizenship ceremonies.

---

The Inquiry recommends that this country should hold a high-profile citizenship ceremony each year where British citizenship is awarded to a select number of people who have been outstandingly brave or have made a great contribution to life in the UK, either as an individual or because they represent a particular group – for example, key workers – whose contribution is valued and who are not eligible to receive other honours. Recovery from the COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity to bring in such a policy and to reward some of those people who have helped this country overcome the crisis.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The Inquiry believes that citizenship ceremonies are important. They are popular with those who attend them, and they offer the opportunity to welcome newcomers and communicate the common bond of citizenship to both new citizens and existing ones. But ceremonies rarely involve local residents and, in contrast to practice outside the UK, there is little effort to publicise them. There is a real need to breathe new life into these important events.

### The Inquiry recommends:

- **The Prime Minister and Her Majesty the Queen should hold a high profile citizenship ceremony each year where British citizenship is awarded to a select number of people who have been outstandingly brave or have made a great contribution to life in the UK, either as an individual or because they represent a particular group – for example key workers – whose contribution is valued.**
- **Councils should hold ceremonies at iconic locations and encourage local residents, schools, faith and civil society organisations to be involved in these events.**
- **The option to attend citizenship ceremonies should be offered to new citizens who are children.**
- **The number of guests that a new citizen can bring to a ceremony should be increased to five, up from two today.**
- **Citizenship ceremonies should help encourage civic participation. Information about volunteering and voter registration should be given out at the ceremonies.**
- **New citizens should be presented with their first passport at their citizenship ceremony.**
- **The Home Office, supported by local authority registrars, should issue good practice guidance to make sure that citizenship ceremonies achieve their aim of promoting a cohesive society, communicating the common bond of citizenship and a warm welcome to those who have chosen to make the UK their home.**

---

## 9. International dimensions: British citizenship outside the UK

British citizenship policy extends beyond the borders of the UK. An estimated 5.4 million British citizens live abroad<sup>76</sup>. The Inquiry examined the UK's links with and responsibilities to this British diaspora, including an estimated 900,000 British citizens who live in the EU. It also reviewed the treatment of people who hold subsidiary categories of British nationality, whose numbers include British National (Overseas) passport holders who live in Hong Kong. The Inquiry has also examined how the UK Government could use its international influence to secure solutions for statelessness.

### British citizens abroad

Immigration into the UK has been a high-profile issue over the last 20 years. Amid the media prominence given to this issue, it is easy to forget that for most of the last 400 years the UK has been a country of emigration rather than immigration. An estimated 5.4 million British citizens now live outside the UK, with the top ten countries of residence given in Table 9.1<sup>77</sup>. Many of this British diaspora are long-term residents abroad, and a few may never have lived in the UK. However, an estimated 125,000 British citizens emigrated from the UK in 2018, with 33 per cent of this number moving abroad because they had a job overseas or were looking for work<sup>78</sup>. British citizens who live abroad also include retirement migrants: in May 2018 some 1,177,434 people were collecting their state pensions outside the UK (9.3 per cent of all pensions).

The presence of this large diaspora raises several issues for policymakers. It is important that the Government gives more attention to British citizens who live overseas.

British citizens and those with subsidiary categories of British nationality are entitled to consular assistance and diplomatic protection. It is essential that this right is upheld and that British citizens are satisfied with their country's consular services.

**Table 9.1 Main countries of residence of British citizens living outside the UK**

	Country	Estimated number of British citizens	Source of population data
1.	Australia	1,088,000	2016 census.
2.	United States	702,000	2017 American Community Survey.
3.	Canada	500,000	2016 census.
4.	Spain	500,000	Some 252,000 on Spanish population register, total number includes people who spend part of year in Spain.
5.	Hong Kong	450,000	Figure includes 50,000 HK Chinese who were given British citizenship in 1990s and 357,000 British National (Overseas) citizens.
6.	New Zealand	252,000	2018 census.
7.	United Arab Emirates	240,000	FCO estimate.
8.	South Africa	200,000	Census 2011 as updated.
9.	France	164,000	Eurostat 2019.
10.	Ireland	109,000	Eurostat 2019.

The situation of the estimated 900,000 British citizens living in the EU is an issue of concern to the Inquiry and was raised by a number of people who submitted evidence. British citizens living in the EU are likely to lose the right to free movement within the EU27 countries. While they could retain this right by applying for the citizenship of a EU state, some may risk having to renounce their British citizenship if they do so.

The Withdrawal Agreement protects the rights of UK citizens who are legally resident in another EU country by the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020. But it is up to individual member states to incorporate the Withdrawal Agreement into their domestic legislation and to implement its guarantees in practice. At the time of writing, the progress that each country has made in rolling out registration schemes has been patchy. In Germany, for example, British citizens will be required to obtain a residence permit from their local *Ausländerbehörde*, and some of the detail of this scheme still needs resolving. It is important that the UK Government monitors the situation of UK citizens in each EU member state, and takes appropriate action when registration schemes fall short.

In 2018 some 65,000 British citizens migrated back to the UK. Of this group 12 per cent had been away for between one and four years, five per cent had been away for 5-9 years, five per cent for more than 10 years and 67 per cent had never lived in the UK<sup>79</sup>. Currently British citizens who return to the UK are usually not allowed to use public services such as the NHS until they are judged to be ‘habitually resident.’ The Government needs fair and



---

workable rules to decide under what conditions a returning British citizen should be allowed to use public services and to minimise the destitution experienced by some British citizens who fall between the gaps of national entitlements.

## Positive links with the British diaspora

Many British citizens who live abroad do retain strong ties to the UK. It has been argued that the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office does not see this group in terms of ‘soft power’ and as a positive asset that could be mobilised to project the UK’s global influence<sup>80</sup>. Such engagement would allow the UK to harness the potential of British citizens living abroad to promote trade and investment links, develop overseas knowledge networks, and act as cultural ambassadors.

The Inquiry believes that the UK government should look at best practice in other countries. For example, New Zealand<sup>81</sup> and France have strategies for engagement with their own diaspora communities. The UK does not have such policies. Voting in UK parliamentary elections is one means by which British citizens who live abroad can maintain their connections with the UK. At present, British and Irish citizens can register as overseas voters for up to 15 years after leaving the UK, if they had previously been registered or resident in the UK. It is thought that 1.3 million people who live abroad are eligible to vote in UK parliamentary elections, but only 285,000 people registered as overseas voters in the 2017 general election. The Government has announced it wants to scrap this rule and allow British citizens who meet these conditions to have a vote for life, but this change has yet to be implemented<sup>82</sup>. Clearly, overseas voting is one means to engage with British citizens who live outside the UK but a broader strategy is needed to harness the goodwill of British citizens living overseas.

## Subsidiary categories of British nationality

In addition to British citizenship there are four subsidiary categories of British nationality:

- British Overseas Territory Citizen (BOTC).
- British Overseas Citizen (BOC).
- British Subject.
- British National Overseas (BN(O)).

Further information about these four groups is given in Table 9.2. Those who hold these categories of British nationality carry British travel documents and are entitled to consular assistance and diplomatic protection. They can also register to vote in general and local elections if they live in the UK. Apart from BOTCs from Gibraltar, those who hold these subsidiary categories of British nationality do not have an automatic right of abode in the UK,



---

although they can enter the UK as visitors without a visa.

Only British Overseas Territory Citizenship is an active category, in that this nationality can be passed on to the next generation and new applicants can apply for registration. There were 1,608 applications to register as a British Overseas Territory Citizen in 2017<sup>83</sup>.

The UK also retains a category called British Protected Person, although this is not a category of British nationality. The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office estimates that 1,300 valid travel documents are held by British Protected Persons, mostly by people with connections to what were once British protectorates.

Until recently, the experience of those who held these subsidiary categories of British nationality was a low-profile issue. A consideration of subsidiary categories of British nationality is now relevant to this Inquiry for two reasons. First, the 2018 immigration white paper committed the Government to “*consider examining the case for continuing to have a separate category of British Overseas Territory Citizen*”<sup>84</sup>. This commitment has yet to be implemented. Second, the situation in Hong Kong has focused attention on the protection of British National (Overseas) passport holders who live there.

## Hong Kong

Hong Kong residents include substantial numbers of British citizens as well as those who hold British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) status. In 1990 the UK Government passed the British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990, which set up the British Nationality Selection Scheme. This allowed key professionals (for example the emergency services, entrepreneurs, civil servants etc) and their immediate families to register as British citizens, with the aim of giving people security and thus avoiding pre-emptive migration to the UK prior to the transfer of sovereignty to China in July 1997. An estimated 50,000 people took up this offer and most remained in Hong Kong. In July 1997, the UK Government introduced British National (Overseas) as a subsidiary category of British nationality for those living in Hong Kong. Again, this status aimed to provide the security needed to prevent large-scale migration to the UK and also to prevent statelessness.

Although people with subsidiary categories of British nationality are entitled to British consular assistance and protection, this cannot be given to BN(O)s of Chinese ethnicity who live in Hong Kong, mainland China or Macao. This is because the Chinese Government considers this group to be Chinese nationals and it does not recognise dual nationality. In late 2019, as pro-democracy protests increased, a number of MPs called for an urgent Government review of consular assistance and protection to BN(O)s in Hong Kong and their rights should they be forced to come to the UK<sup>85</sup>.

Following China's decision to impose a new security law on Hong Kong, on 1 July 2020 the British Government announced a new and bespoke immigration offer to those holding British National (Overseas) status and their immediate family in Hong Kong. They would be offered five years' leave to remain in the UK, alongside the ability to work and study here. After five years' residency in the UK, British National (Overseas) citizens are to be allowed to apply for settlement and after 12 months of settlement they can register as British citizens<sup>86</sup>. This decision is to be welcomed and it will give many BN(O)s the security they need to remain in Hong Kong, thus limiting pre-emptive migration to the UK. Further details about the BN(O) visa scheme were announced on 22 July 2020, which allowed those born after 1997 to at least one parent with BN(O) status also to be covered by the BN(O) visa scheme.

**Table 9.2 Subsidiary categories of British nationality**

Category	Qualification criteria	Estimated number held	Notes on population
British Overseas Territory Citizen (BOTC)	<b>Active category</b> Replaced British Dependent Territory Citizens. BOTCs have connections with a qualifying territory because they or their parents or grandparents were born, registered or naturalised in that British overseas territory. Gibraltarians are exempt from UK immigration controls whereas other BOTCs are not.	Total population of qualifying territories = 218,000.	Most residents of qualifying territories which are Anguilla, Bermuda, BAT, British Indian Ocean Territory BVI, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Montserrat, Pitcairn Islands, Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands.
British Overseas Citizen (BOC)	<b>Residual category</b> People who were Commonwealth and United Kingdom citizens on 31 December 1982 and did not become a British citizen or a BOTC. It is possible to register as a BOC, but only if that person would otherwise be stateless.	FCO estimates that 12,000 BOC travel documents are held.	A diverse group. Many are residents of Commonwealth countries that have <i>jus sanguinis</i> citizenship laws. Ethnic Lebanese in Sierra Leone or Indians in Kenya or Hong Kong are typical groups. Some 656 BOCs applied to be British citizens in 2018.
British Subject	<b>Residual category</b> People who, on 31 December 1948, did not become British citizens or a citizen of a Commonwealth country, Pakistan or Ireland. A person can only register as a British subject by descent if they would otherwise be stateless.	Unknown, but population likely to be small.	Many are older people.
British National (Overseas) BN(O)	<b>Residual category</b> A new category of British nationality created in July 1997 for those living in Hong Kong. It is no longer possible to acquire BN(O) status, although BN(O)s without any other nationality can register as BOCs or British citizens.	Although 2.9 million people are eligible for BN(O) status, only 357,000 people held BN(O) passports in April 2020.	On 1 July 2020 the UK Government announced a scheme to offer BN(O)s five years' leave to remain and a route to citizenship in the UK.

---

## Stateless people

It is estimated that there are between 10 and 15 million stateless people in the world today, including 600,000 people in Europe. Countries with large stateless populations include Bangladesh (Rohingyas from Myanmar), Brunei, Cote d'Ivoire, Estonia, India, Iraq and Kuwait (Bidoons), Latvia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Syria (Kurds) and countries hosting stateless Palestinians.

Protecting and assisting stateless people falls under the remit of UNHCR. The UK was one of the first countries to sign the 1954 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. This country can be justifiably proud of its record on this issue. Nevertheless, statelessness remains a neglected issue within larger debates about asylum and immigration. It took until 2013 for the UK Home Office to put in place statelessness determination procedures and still the UK remains one of the few European countries to have such procedures.

Stateless people do not always have access to programmes that evacuate refugees to the UK. When the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme was announced in 2015, it was restricted to Syrian nationals. In 2017 it was later extended to all those fleeing from Syria, including stateless people. But it continues to exclude stateless Palestinians, because they are not permitted to register with UNHCR and the Home Office relies solely on UNHCR to identify vulnerable refugees.

Parliament has a major role to play in making sure that statelessness remains on the agenda, in the UK and internationally. Special mention must be made to the work of David Ennals (1922-1995), an MP and later a life peer whose tireless diplomacy played a significant role in protecting stateless Biharis in Bangladesh. Such advocacy on behalf of stateless people must continue. The UK Government should use its international influence to call for solutions to statelessness, putting pressure on countries hosting large stateless populations, including Commonwealth countries such as Malaysia, Pakistan and India, which in August 2019 removed 1.9 million Assamese from the National Register of Citizens.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Citizenship policy needs to consider British citizens who live abroad, currently numbering over 5.4 million people. Many of this group retain strong ties to the UK. While they are entitled to consular assistance and protection, the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office does not see this group in terms of 'soft power' and a positive asset who could be mobilised to project the UK's global influence. The 2018 commitment to citizenship for British Overseas Territories Citizens should be upheld and the Government also needs to continue its work to seek solutions to statelessness.

---

## **The Inquiry recommends:**

- **The Government must make sure that all British citizens have access to advice, consular assistance and protection, keeping under review the situation faced by British citizens in EU countries.**
- **The Government should use the opportunity of new immigration legislation to uphold the commitment made in the 2018 immigration white paper to give British citizenship to current British Overseas Territory Citizens.**
- **The UK Government should work with international partners to seek solutions for the estimated 10-15 million people who are stateless in today's world. It should support UNHCR's work on statelessness and use its influence as a Commonwealth country to put pressure on India, Malaysia and Pakistan to seek solutions for stateless people in these countries.**
- **The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office should put in place a strategy to engage with the British diaspora and mobilise their soft power to support the UK's long-term global influence and economic and political goals.**

# Appendices

Table A.1 Citizenship policy in selected OECD countries

Country	Fee for naturalisation	Language requirement	Civic knowledge requirement	Years to citizenship by the most usual route for people born overseas	Other notable conditions
Australia	AU\$285 (£155)	Citizenship test fulfils language requirement.	Citizenship test.	Four-year route for most people.	
Canada	CA\$630 (£373)	Equivalent of A2 level qualification in English or French.	Citizenship test.	Need to be resident for 1,095 days within a five-year period.	Requirement to file tax returns.
Denmark	Kr1,000 (£120)	B2 language level, but migrants receive free classes and study e-learning materials. Language level recently increased.	Citizenship test and signed pledge.	Nine years' residency required for most applicants.	Applicants have to be self-supporting.
France	€55	B1 level tested in one-to-one interview.	No test but one-to-one interview in which knowledge of French culture, law and society is tested. Applicants then sign a 'Reception and Integration Contract (CAI). This is valid for 12 months, after which the applicant is interviewed to see if they have met the requirements of the CAI.	Five years, but there is a 12-month delay after application before citizenship is granted.	Have to be employed or self-supporting. Application lodged at the local prefecture office.
Germany	Usually €255	B1 level (speaking, listening, reading and writing) or DTZ certificate after attending an integration course, which is heavily subsidised.	Naturalisation test or DTZ certificate after attending an integration course.	Usually need eight years' residency or seven years with a DTZ certificate.	
Hungary	No fee for application, but exam costs F52,500 (£144)	B1 level, with citizenship exams fulfilling this requirement.	A written and oral examination on the constitution, the public administration system and everyday politics. Applicants have to swear an oath of allegiance.	Eight years' continuous residence.	Application submitted at council office and mayor has the responsibility to notify successful applicants.

Ireland	Application fee €175, certification fee €950	None	None	One year of continuous residence before date of application and four years of residence during previous eight years.	Good character requirements. Have to attend a citizenship ceremony and sign a declaration of fidelity.
Italy	€300	A written Italian language test at B1 level has recently been introduced including for those claiming Italian citizenship by registration.	No citizenship test, but migrants have to sign an integration agreement that lasts for 2 years. The agreement is reviewed and commits the person to learning about the principles of the Italian republic, learning spoken Italian to A2 level, knowing about everyday life in Italy, sending children to school and agreeing with the Charter for Citizenship and Integration Values.	For those who do not have Italian ancestry, or were not born in Italy, ten years' uninterrupted stay for non-EU residents (four years for EU).	Italy's citizenship application process is subject to long delays and unpredictable outcomes. A 48-month wait is codified in the process.
Netherlands	€881 for naturalisation and €350 for exam.	To get a permanent resident's permit and certain other visas, many migrants have to sit a civic integration exam ( <i>Inburgeringsexamen</i> ) set at A2 level. As well as speaking, listening, reading and writing, this tests knowledge of Dutch society. This is also a condition for citizenship through naturalisation.	See left	Five years with a valid residence permit.	Application is made in person.
New Zealand	NZ\$470 (£243)	No formally specified level but informally checked in application process. However most migrants have to show accredited English qualifications to get a visa, with these set at a high level.	None	Physically present in New Zealand for at least 1,350 days during the five years before your application, and for at least 240 days in each of those five years.	Many applications are made in person.

Norway	4,200 Kr but free for children.	Choice between sitting an A2 level exam (oral and written) or attending a 300-hour course. A2 exam options in Sami, bokmaal or nynorsk <sup>87</sup> .	Choice between a citizenship test (60 minutes of multiple choice questions) or the concluding exam of the Norwegian Social Studies Test, the latter being more linguistically demanding.	Seven years' residency over the last ten years.	No birthright citizenship by registration nor options for citizenship by descent. Dual nationality has only recently been permitted (2020).
Poland	Stamp duty charge PLZ219 (£45)	B1 level, tested through an exam or another recognised qualification.	None.	Have to have held permanent resident status for three years or have lived legally in Poland for ten years and hold permanent resident status.	A lot of signed paperwork is needed. Also need to show a stable and regular source of income, and own or rent an apartment or house.
Spain	€100 (other costs too, such as civics test).	Test at A2 level.	Civics test about Spanish culture and law.	Ten years' uninterrupted residence unless a refugee (five years), national of Portugal, a Ibero-American country, Philippines, Eq Guinea (two years) or a spouse.	
Sweden	SEK1,500 (£125)	None at present, but proposal to introduce them.	None	Five years of continuous residency.	Citizenship applicants have to demonstrate good conduct, which includes paying taxes.
Switzerland	Fee for filing application of 100 SF (£86), plus cantonal administrative fee of 500-3,000 SF (£428-£2,600).	Test to show A2 level writing ability and B1 level spoken skills in a national language.	Usually a personal interview with cantonal officials then a written test.	Ten years' lawful residence.	Policy on citizenship tests and residency vary from canton to canton.
USA	US\$725 (£591)	Oral interview includes reading, writing and speaking test.	In the oral interview applicants are asked ten questions which test their civics knowledge.	After five years' residence with a Permanent Residence card.	

---

# Evidence to the Inquiry

## **This was submitted by:**

Amnesty International  
Behavioural Insights  
Dr Philip Yip CANZUK Facebook Group  
Consonant  
Coram Children's Legal Centre  
EU Network on Statelessness  
Immigration Lawyers Practitioners Association  
International Observatory of Human Rights  
Just for Kids Law  
Project for the Registration of Children as British Citizens  
PwC  
Refugee Asylum and Migration Policy Project  
Refugee Council  
Social Engine  
The Royal British Legion  
The 3Million  
Together in the UK

Dr Eleni Andreouli, Open University  
Dr David Bartram, University of Leicester  
Dr Tendayi Bloom, University of Birmingham  
Professor Thom Brooks, University of Durham  
Amy Clarke, University of Sussex  
Dr Agnes Czajka, Open University  
Viv Endecott  
Nancy Kellogg  
Gavin Kelly  
Saminder Pawar  
Dr Devyani Prabhat, University of Bristol  
Clare Smyrell  
Dr Kelly Staples, University of Leicester  
Kim Tanneberger  
Dr Katherine Tonkiss, Aston University  
Dr Georgie Wemyss, University of East London  
Patrick Wintour – formerly a member of the Advisory Board on  
Naturalisation and Integration  
Andrew Yong, Barrister  
Professor Nira Yuval-Davis, University of East London

Plus 11 individuals who wished to remain anonymous.

## Reports and References

Prabhat, D. (2018) *Addressing challenges of acquiring British citizenship*,  
Policy Paper 24, Bristol: University of Bristol Policy Bristol.



---

# Endnotes

1. Cited in M. Gower (2020) *British National (Overseas) status*, London: House of Commons Library.
2. Home Office immigration statistics quarterly release, February 2020 citizenship tables.
3. Home Office Migrant Journey tables, 2019.
4. ONS Long-term International Migration estimates 2019.
5. Home Office citizenship tables, 2019.
6. Aptekar, S. (2016) 'Making Sense of Naturalisation: what citizenship means to naturalising immigrants in Canada and the USA' in *Journal of International Migration and Integration* Vol 17:1143-1161.
7. Rutter, J. and Latorre, M. and Sriskandarajah, D. (2008) *Beyond naturalisation*, Submission to the Goldsmith review on citizenship, London: IPPR.
8. Home Office (2019) *Nationality: good character requirement*, London: Home Office.
9. Home Office (2019) *Life in the UK: Official. A guide for new residents*, London: The Stationery Office.
10. Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) (2019) *An inspection of the policies and practices of the Home Office's Borders, Immigration and Citizenship Systems relating to charging and fees*, London: ICIBI.
11. Ibid.
12. Extended to six months during the COVID-19 crisis.
13. House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement (2018) *The Ties that Bind: Citizenship and Civil Engagement in the 21st Century*, London: House of Lords.
14. Williams, W. (2020) *Windrush Lessons Learned Review: independent review by Wendy Williams*, London: The Stationery Office.
15. Home Office (2002) *Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain*, London: Home Office.
16. Lord Goldsmith QC (2008) *Citizenship: Our Common Bond*, London: Lord Goldsmith Citizenship Review.
17. Ibid.
18. ICM poll of 2,043 GB adults undertaken for British Future, 15-17 May 2020.
19. Aslanagic-Wakefield, P (2020), *A better reward? Public attitudes to citizenship*, London: Bright Blue.
20. EU Settled Status and Indefinite Leave to Remain are immigration statuses which give the right of settlement.
21. Lord Goldsmith QC (2008) *Citizenship: Our Common Bond*, London: Lord Goldsmith Citizenship Review.
22. A legal term and a test to show someone lives in the UK 'regularly'. British citizens and others can lose access to certain benefits including non-emergency NHS care if they have lived outside the UK for more than three years.
23. Williams, W. (2020) *Windrush Lessons Learned Review: independent review by Wendy Williams*, London: The Stationery Office.
24. English for Speakers of Other Languages that is English language provision for adults.
25. Home Office (2019) *British Citizenship: Automatic Acquisition*, London: Home Office.
26. Home Office (2019) *Nationality: Good Character Requirement*, London: Home Office.
27. Home Office (2019) *Nationality: Good Character Requirement*, London: Home Office.

- 
28. Independent Chief Inspector for Borders and Immigration (2017) *A short inspection of the Home Office's application of the good character requirement in the case of young persons who apply for registration as British citizens*, London: ICIBI.
  29. Home Office (2019) *Nationality: Good Character Requirement*, London: Home Office.
  30. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/518120/David\\_Anderson\\_QC\\_-\\_CITIZENSHIP\\_REMOVAL\\_web\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/518120/David_Anderson_QC_-_CITIZENSHIP_REMOVAL_web_.pdf)
  31. At the time of writing this case is being taken to the Supreme Court.
  32. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-49385376>.
  33. McGuinness, T. and Gower, M. (2017) *Deprivation of British citizenship and withdrawal of passport facilities*, London: House of Commons Library.
  34. [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/citizenship\\_deprivation\\_statisti](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/citizenship_deprivation_statisti)
  35. [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/citizenship\\_deprivation\\_statisti](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/citizenship_deprivation_statisti)
  36. An example of one form 'Form AN' can be seen online: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/834937/form-an-10-19.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/834937/form-an-10-19.pdf)
  37. Scanning costs £45 and document checking costs £35 in Sopra Steria centres.
  38. Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) (2020) *An inspection of the Home Office's Network Consolidation Programme and the 'onshoring' of visa processing and decision making to the UK*, London: ICIBI.
  39. In-country Migration Transparency data, August 2019.
  40. Ibid.
  41. Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) (2014) *An inspection of nationality casework*, London: ICIBI.
  42. Home Office (2019) *Guide AN Naturalisation Booklet – The Requirements*, London: Home Office.
  43. Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) (2019) *An inspection of the policies and practices of the Home Office's Borders, Immigration and Citizenship Systems relating to charging and fees*, London: ICIBI.
  44. Ibid.
  45. Goodhart, D. (2016) *Immigration and Integration after Brexit*, London: Policy Exchange.
  46. In England 78,150; Northern Ireland 3,281; Wales 6,845 in the year April 2018-March 2019. In July 2018 there were 14,738 children in local authority care in Scotland.
  47. British Nationality (Proof of Paternity) Regulations 2006.
  48. British Nationality (Proof of Paternity) (Amendment) Regulations 2015, SI 2015/1615.
  49. UNHCR estimate.
  50. Home Office Quarterly Immigration Statistics, citizenship tables, May 2019.
  51. Jolly, A.; Thomas, S. and Stanyer, J. (2020) *London's children and young people who are not British citizens: a profile*, London: Greater London Authority.
  52. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/people-leave-footprints-millions-more-unauthorized-immigrants-cannot-be-hidden>
  53. <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/welcome-to-maternity-hotel-california-168813/>
  54. ICM poll of 2,305 GB adults undertaken for British Future, 10-13 January 2020.
  55. Rutter, J. and Carter, R. (2018) *National Conversation on Immigration Final Report*, London: British Future and Hope Not Hate.
  56. See for example, Brooks, T. (2016) *Becoming British: UK Citizenship Examined*, London: Biteback Publications.

- 
57. HM Government (2018) *The UK's future skills based immigration system*, London: HMSO.
  58. USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Caribbean nations.
  59. British Council definitions.
  60. See, for example, Scottish Government (2015) *Welcoming Our Learners: Scotland's ESOL Strategy 2015-2020*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government.
  61. Home Office website, January 2020.
  62. Home Office (2019) *Life in the UK: Official. A guide for new residents*, London: The Stationery Office.
  63. Home Office in-country migration transparency data, LUK1 table.
  64. FOI request to the Home Office, 2014 and Advisory Board on Naturalisation and Integration (ABNI) (2009) *Final Report*, London: ABNI.
  65. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-47047719>
  66. Home Office (2003) *The New and the Old: the report of the Life in the UK Advisory Group*, London: Home Office.
  67. House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement (2018) *The Ties that Bind: Citizenship and Civic Engagement in the 21st Century*, London: House of Lords.
  68. Brooks, T. (2013) *The Life in the UK Citizenship test: is it unfit for purpose?* Durham: Durham University School of Law.
  69. See Hansard debate on the second reading of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Bill 2002 and Home Office press release of 26 February 2004.
  70. Citizenship tables in Home Office Quarterly Immigration Statistics, May 2020.
  71. Brent Council (2008) *A guide to good practice on citizenship ceremonies*, London: Brent Council.
  72. Lord Goldsmith QC (2008) *Citizenship: Our Common Bond*, London: Lord Goldsmith Citizenship Review.
  73. <https://www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/news/new-citizens-take-part-combined-ceremony>
  74. <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/local/darlington/16097213.darlington-children-help-celebrate-british-citizenship-ceremony/>
  75. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-46538253>
  76. British Future estimates for the Migration Museum Departures exhibition, February 2020.
  77. Ibid.
  78. ONS Long-term International Migration estimates November 2019.
  79. ONS Long term International Migration estimates, November 2019.
  80. Finch, T. (2010) *Global Brit: Making the most of the British diaspora*, London: Institute for Public Policy Research.
  81. Gamlen, A. (2013) 'Creating and Destroying Diaspora Strategies: New Zealand's Emigration Policies Re-examined' in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 38(2):238-253.
  82. Cabinet Office (2018) *A democracy that works for everyone: British citizens overseas response to feedback to policy proposals*, London: Cabinet Office.
  83. Home Office immigration statistics quarterly release, February 2020, citizenship tables.
  84. Home Office (2018) *The UK's future skills-based immigration system*, London: Home Office.
  85. See Hansard, Rights of British National (Overseas) Passport Holders, 24 October 2019 [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2019-10-24/debates/1910244000023/RightsOfBritishNational\(Overseas\)Passport-Holders](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2019-10-24/debates/1910244000023/RightsOfBritishNational(Overseas)Passport-Holders)
  86. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-to-extend-residence-rights-for-british-nationals-overseas-citizens-in-hong-kong>
  87. [http://samfunnskunnskap.no/?page\\_id=181&lang=en](http://samfunnskunnskap.no/?page_id=181&lang=en)

---

# Acknowledgements

The Inquiry would like to thank all the members of the panel who gave their time and took part. Panel members sat as individuals and so the Inquiry's recommendations do not necessarily represent the policies of their organisations.

We are grateful to Jeni Vine of the Sheffield Cohesion Advisory Group, Sheffield, for organising the community consultation. We would also like to thank Adrian Berry, Coram Children's Legal Centre and Professor Thom Brooks whose research and expertise has been invaluable at various times during the inquiry.

Jill Rutter, Josh Westerling, Steve Ballinger, Lucy Buckerfield and Jake Puddle, all from British Future, should also be thanked. They were all involved in the inquiry, acting as its secretariat, and assisting with production of the report and its launch.

The Inquiry would like to thank the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Moneygram who provided funding to cover British Future's costs in supporting the Inquiry's work. Finally, we are grateful to all those individuals and organisations that took the time to provide evidence.

## About British Future

British Future is an independent, non-partisan thinktank and registered charity, engaging people's hopes and fears about integration and immigration, identity and race.

These debates, from EU migration and refugee protection to integration and combating prejudice, can seem noisy and polarised.

Securing political consent for policy change requires public support. British Future has developed a unique, in-depth understanding of public attitudes, uncovering the common ground on which people can agree.

Our long-term aim is a country where we are no longer 'Them and Us' but rather a confident and welcoming Britain, inclusive and fair to all.

# British Future...

*British Future is an independent, non-partisan thinktank and registered charity engaging people's hopes and fears about integration and migration, identity and race, so that we share a confident and welcoming Britain, inclusive and fair to all.*

British Future  
Kean House  
6 Kean Street London, WC2B 4AS  
[www.britishfuture.org](http://www.britishfuture.org)  
[info@britishfuture.org](mailto:info@britishfuture.org)