

PRICE OF BELONGING

£1,012

2021

CHILD
CITIZENSHIP
REPORT

Background & Demands

Citizens UK and the Institute of Education have conducted independent research into child citizenship fees in the UK. **This is a call to the Home Office and Home Secretary, Priti Patel, to reduce the £1,012 citizenship fee** that prices many children out of their entitlement to British Citizenship. We propose to alleviate the barriers children face in becoming British Citizens by:

1. Reducing the cost of applications for British Citizenship to £372 per child.
2. Waiving the application fees for families who can not afford it.
3. Exempting children in care and care leavers from having to pay the application fee.

This report compares the citizenship fees of the EU-15 countries, the United States, and Canada with the fees charged by the United Kingdom. The impact of these fees on the **economic**, **psychological**, **educational**, and **social** wellbeing of children will be analysed in this report.

Our research looks extensively at the educational issues that manifest as a result of child citizenship fees; the expensive process stifles children's freedom to fully participate in schools, higher education, and their own communities.

Please note that the terminology around citizenship varies depending on the preferred terms of the respective country. Therefore, there are variations in the terminology used in this research report.



Table of Contents

excerpt from the poem "Accepted" by Lucy Webb, a Year 9 student

*Some aren't accepted
Different from the group
Part of the world
But not given the credit
Changing the world
But not being allowed to live in it.
Needing only a small document
To be a part of something bigger.
**We all belong.
But we're not all accepted.***

01 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

02 INTRODUCTION

04 KEY FINDINGS

11 IMPACTS

21 'BRITISH'

22 SINCERELY,
EDUCATION LEADERS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

23 TESTIMONIALS

27 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

28 REFERENCES

*A British citizen.
Legally a British citizen.
I was born here.
Raised here.
**This is my culture.
This is my identity.***

excerpt from the poem "Citizenship" by
Jessica Sebuwufu, a Year 10 student

Executive Summary

- 01 It costs **£1,012** to register a child as a British Citizen. The fees for processing applications are not refundable.^[1]
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- 02 The Home Office makes **£640 profit** per application which amounts to **£102,749,216 profit from child citizenship fees** alone between 2017 and 2020.
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- 03 In February 2021, the Court of Appeal upheld the High Court's ruling that the **£1,012 fee is unlawful**.
-
- 04 The United Kingdom charges over 10 times more for citizenship registration than other European countries, including Spain, France, Belgium, Denmark, and Sweden.
-
- 05 There are approximately **85,000 to 215,000 children** who are entitled to British citizenship but are left undocumented due to various barriers, including the high cost of the registration fee.^[2]
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- 06 Families, especially non-white immigrants, suffer from existing economic hardships in addition to the high fees. Issues like **occupational downgrading** lead to families living in **overcrowded housing**.
-
- 07 Non-citizens have limited access to secondary healthcare and are subject to surcharges and upfront charging of extortionate fees. Undocumented children are less likely to use primary medical services which they are entitled to.^[3]
-
- 08 Non-citizen students often come from families with **No Recourse to Public Funds**, leaving them at high risk of poverty and poor living conditions.
- 09 Children without full citizenship experience exclusion and barriers to accessing higher education. Non-citizen families are vulnerable to **domestic stigmatisation and prejudice**, as they are often seen as targets of **overt and covert discrimination**.

[1] https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pcjm8ChAz4oNhojaL7Gf0MSB76Y_q01ZLmFUsW4KRb4/edit#bookmark=id.sibpegecrlg

[2] https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla_migrate_files_destination/irregular-migrants-report.pdf

[3] <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/apr/18/upfront-fees-deterring-immigrants-from-seeking-nhs-care>

Introduction

Not all children born in the UK are automatically British. It depends on their parent having citizenship or permanent status when they are born. But thousands of children have a right in law to become British through a legal process called registration. It currently costs a family £1,012 to register a child as a British Citizen through the UK Home Office. Despite charging this high price, it only costs the Home Office £372 to process an individual application. There is an **estimated £640 profit made from each child's application for citizenship**. If a child is refused registration, there is no provision of legal aid or advice and no support offered at the Home Office's internal review stage; this means that many children and their families are at risk of losing out on significant rights and benefits.

*I'm British whatever you say,
Be angry if you may.
You can try and try to take away my nationality
But guess what? It's part of my identity.*

*We're British and you know it.
You can't wake up one morning
and say that's gonna change.
That's it.
We make this country what it is today.
So don't push us away.*

excerpt from the poem "British" by Cecil Okoro, a Year 11 student

Our research^[1] found that the **United Kingdom charges over 10 times more for citizenship registration than other European countries**, including Spain, France, Belgium, Denmark, and Sweden. The second most expensive is Greece, which only amounts to half the price of the UK's fees. Data we acquired through a Freedom of Information^[2] request evidenced that **nearly 900 stateless children were obliged to pay the £1,012 fee in 2018**, with half of the applications made by parents from Commonwealth countries.

It is legally required that The Home Office consistently prioritise a child's best interests when deciding the verdict of their registration or passport application. **In February 2021, the £1,012 fee was declared to be unlawful** - a ruling upheld by the Court of Appeal after a High Court judgement - after a "mass of evidence"^[3] was presented that suggested the fee prevents many children from being registered for citizenship. It was found that the unattainability of citizenship is leaving children all over the nation feeling "alienated, second-best and not fully assimilated into the culture and social fabric of the UK".

Bell Ribeiro-Addy, MP for Streatham, presented this issue to the Prime Minister during the Prime Minister's Questions this February. **The Prime Minister responded that he is "interested" and willing to "study" the matter, thus we provide the following research to support this enquiry**. We advocate that the fees be reduced to the £372 cost of application processing, and urge the Home Office to take the detrimental educational and social impacts of current prices into account during their reviews.

[1] https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pcjm8ChAz4oNhojaL7Gf0MSB76Y_q01ZLmFUsW4KRb4/edit#bookmark=id.flhqzg9t5x7x

[2] https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pcjm8ChAz4oNhojaL7Gf0MSB76Y_q01ZLmFUsW4KRb4/edit#bookmark=id.pvwmcbs0lgs

[3] <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/children-british-citizenship-appeals-court-home-office-b1804010.html>

History of Court Rulings and Legal Decisions

Child 'O', age 12:

"I was born in England in 2007. I have never travelled to another country. I don't want to tell my friends that I am not British like them because I'm scared. I worry that if my friends find out, they won't understand that I really am British like them."



The **British Nationality Act 1981** stated that it is lawful to charge a fee for children applying to be registered as British citizens. The Secretary of State does not allow exemptions, reductions or waivers to meet the merits of individual cases.

Since **6th April 2007** the subordinate legislation under section 42 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004 has set fees at a level which include an additional £640 to that of the £372 administrative cost of application processing.

In **December 2019** the High Court ruled that the citizenship fees were unlawful, saying that the Home Office "failed to have regard to the best interests" of children.

In **October 2020** the Court of Appeal heard the challenges of PRBCB & Claimant Child 'O' to the Home Office for children to register their right to British citizenship.

In **February 2021** the Court of Appeal upheld the High Court ruling that the £1012 fee is unlawful as it did not consider the best interests of children.

PRCBC has sought and been granted permission to appeal to the Supreme Court on this point.



The fee was "unaffordable" for a "large number of would-be applicants" who were entitled to British citizenship, who he said would "also be living in poverty, or with severely limited means".

Richard Drabble, Queen's Counsellor

Key Findings

"I enjoy playing netball for my school team. My team have been abroad twice for netball tournaments, but I could not travel because I do not have my British passport."

Child 'O', age 12:

Presently, a registration fee of £1,012 is required by the Home Office for a child under 18 to apply for British citizenship. There are additional hidden fees in the application process:

- Children under 18 applying for registration as a British citizen must also enrol their biometric information with **an additional cost of £19.20 per person**.
- If a child turns 18 during the application process, a further £80 per applicant will be required to cover the citizenship ceremony fee.

The fee for handling and processing the application is not refundable, even if the application is rejected or withdrawn.

Children denied the same opportunities as their peers due to a fee they themselves cannot afford to pay.

People fed by the silver spoon decide the future of a ten year old child and his right to deserve citizenship. Making a profit - whether they are accepted or denied.

excerpt from a poem by Akeim St Aubyn-William, a Year 11 student



£102,749,216

Amount of Profit Made from Child Citizenship Fees (2017-2020)

Amount of Profit Made from Child Citizenship Fees by the Home Office

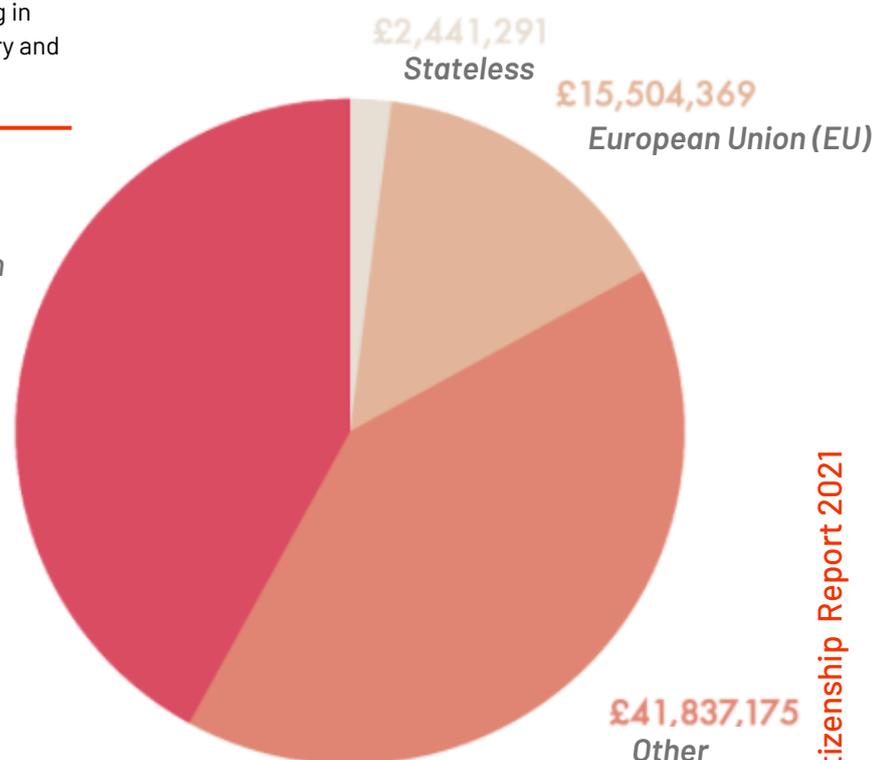
Origins of Child Applicants	Profit (2017-2020)
European Union (EU)	£15,504,369
Commonwealth	£42,966,381
Stateless*	£2,441,291
Other	£41,837,175
Total	£102,749,216

*Stateless children in the UK: Children currently staying in the UK but are not recognised as a citizen of any country and are unable to live permanently in any other country.

*"It's only £1000",
How fortunate you are,
Living in a perfect world.
Your eyes shielded
From the struggles of the poor, the homeless, the
vulnerable. Do they deserve to suffer?
Don't you see the injustice
In intelligent, hard-working people
Knocked off the pathway to success,
Just because of their bank accounts?"*

excerpt from a poem by Jessica Sebuwufu,
a Year 10 student

Commonwealth
£42,966,381



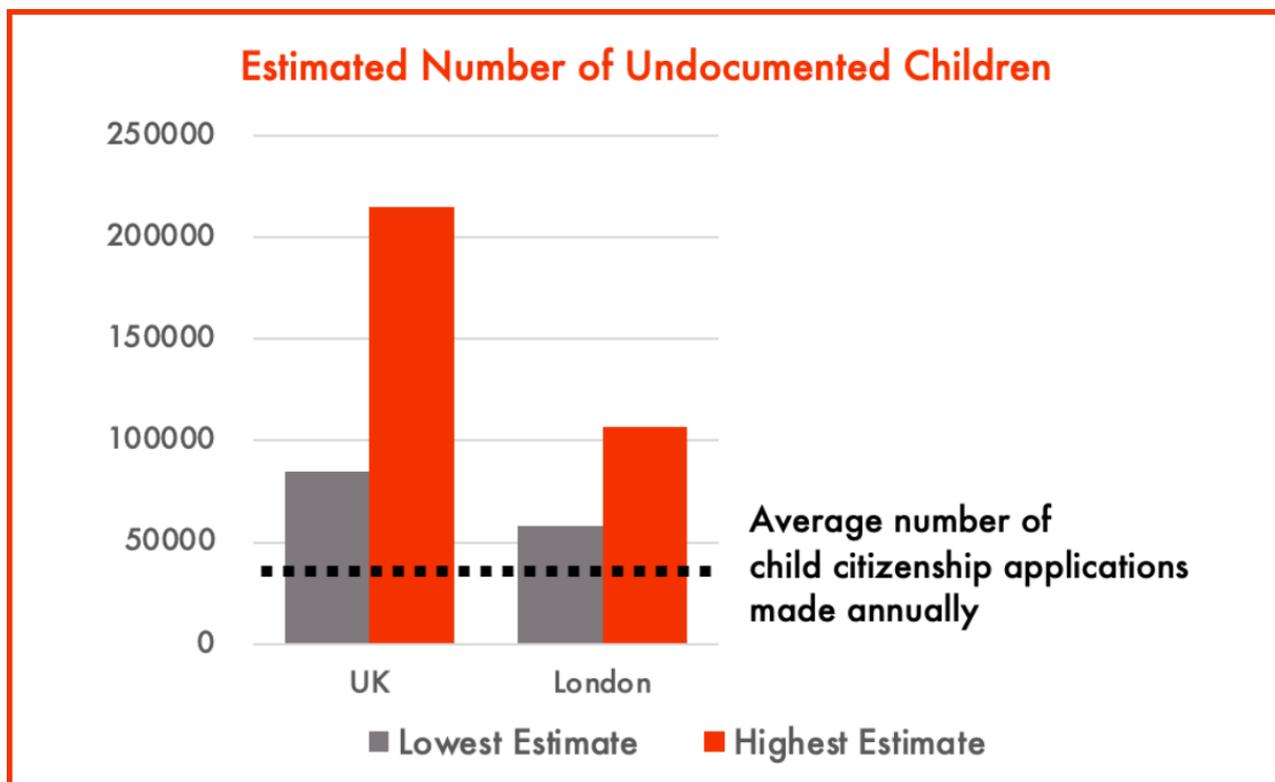
▲ FIGURE 1. AMOUNT OF PROFIT MADE FROM CHILD CITIZENSHIP FEES BY THE HOME OFFICE

Undocumented Children

In 2019, there were approximately 6.2 million non-British citizens living in the UK, with Polish being the most common nationality^[1]. Assuming a similar age structure to the general population, with around 21 per cent being under 18, we can estimate that there may be **13 million non-British citizen children** living in the UK. Many thousands of these children are likely to be **eligible to register as British**.

For example, if they were born in the UK, they can register once they reach the age of ten, or if one of their parents acquires permanent status or British citizenship. Compared with the number of potentially eligible children, the number of citizenship applications for children and others who can register is low. According to Home Office statistics, under 45,000 registration applications were made in 2020. This could be explained by the high application fee^[2].

▼ **FIGURE 2. UNDOCUMENTED CHILDREN AND CITIZENSHIP APPLICATIONS**

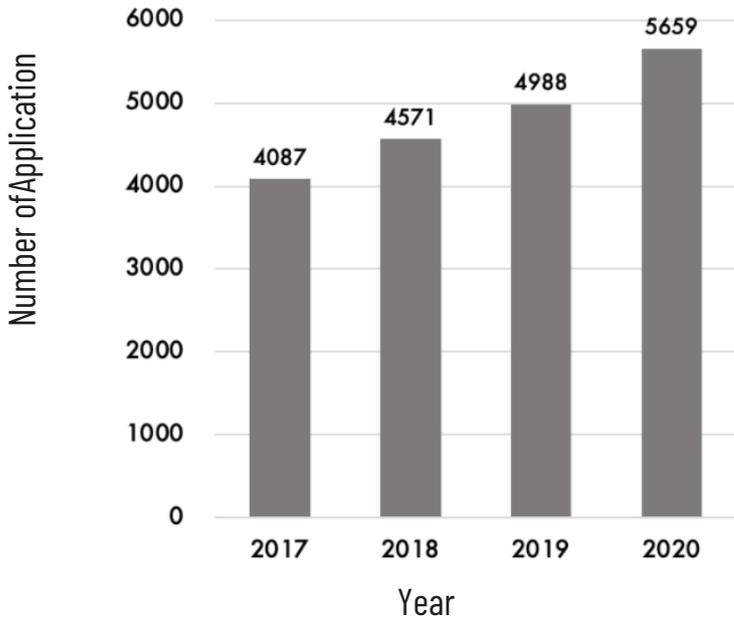


[1] shorturl.at/awKQY

[2] shorturl.at/lxDH5

Undocumented Children

British Citizenship Applications from Sixth Form Students



◀ **FIGURE 3. SIXTH FORM STUDENTS AFFECTED BY CITIZENSHIP**

When the British Nationality Act of 1981 came into force **the cost for British citizenship registration for children was set at £35**. The Home Office began charging more than the administrative cost in 2007. Currently, **only £372 of the £1,012 fee represents the administrative cost**. The following graph maps the rate of increase.

▼ **FIGURE 4. CHILD CITIZENSHIP FEE INCREASE OVER TIME**

CHILD CITIZENSHIP FEE INCREASE OVER TIME



International Comparison of Fees

A document

A couple pieces of paper

Black ink

We are asking politely

For you to accept us, to love us

Scrap the fees with opening arms and say

"Welcome home"

excerpt from the poem "That's all it is"

by Leila Lempek, a Year 9 student

Country	Children Citizenship Fee
Austria	£200
Belgium	Free
Denmark	Free
Finland	£80-£100 (naturalisation) Free (granting)
France	£55 (naturalisation) Free (granting)
Germany	£76
Greece	€100-€700
Ireland	€175-€375
Italy	N/A
Luxembourg	Free
Netherlands	£22-£173

(continued)

Portugal	£175-£250 (naturalisation) Free (granting)
Spain	£102 (naturalisation) Free (granting)
Sweden	£15 (naturalisation) Free (granting)
US	£457 (naturalisation) Free (granting)
Canada	£75 (naturalisation) Free (granting)

Naturalisation: The legal act or process by which a person change their nationality.
Granting: The legal act or process by which people naturally qualify for a certain nationality.

Citizenship Process & Requirements

Country

Other circumstances

Belgium

Belgian nationality is **granted** from birth to children if:

- They were born in Belgium and would be a **stateless*** person before the age of 18 or before emancipation.
- They were born in Belgium and **lose their only other nationality** before turning 18.
- They were less than 12 years old and born in Belgium of parents who reside in Belgium for over 10 years.

Denmark

Danish nationality is **granted** from birth to children if:

- They were born **stateless*** in Denmark.
- They were unable to become a Danish citizen with a parent.

Citizenship Process & Requirements

Country

Other circumstances

Finland

Finnish nationality is **granted** from birth to children if:

- They **did not get citizenship of any other country** on the basis of his or her parents' citizenship.
- They did not have even a **secondary right** to citizenship of another country on the basis of birth, for example through the confirmation of paternity or by declaration.
- Their parents have **refugee status**

France

French nationality is **granted** from birth to children if:

- They were born in France to **stateless*** parents, to **unknown** parents, or to parents who **cannot transmit their nationality** to their children

Germany

People born within the borders of Germany **automatically** have German citizenship

Ireland

Fees to be paid when the certificate of naturalization is approved:

- Application on behalf of a minor: €200
- Refugee, stateless person: **no charge**

Italy

Cannot apply under 18.

Italian citizenship is **granted** from birth to children if:

- They were born in Italy to **stateless*** parents, to **unknown** parents, or to parents who **cannot transmit their nationality** to their children

Luxembourg

People born within the borders of Luxembourg **automatically** have Luxembourg citizenship

Portugal

Portuguese nationality is **granted** from birth to children if:

- They were born in Portuguese territory to foreign parents, if they declare they want to be Portuguese and provided that one parent has resided in Portugal for at least five years at the time of birth;
- They were born in Portuguese territory and **do not possess another nationality**.
- They were born in Portuguese territory to foreign parents and if the children have lived in Portugal for **10 years**.

Citizenship Process & Requirements

Country

Other circumstances

Spain

Spanish nationality is **granted** from birth to children if:

- They were born in Spain to non-Spanish parents, if **both have no nationality** or if the legislation of **neither grants nationality** to the child.
- They were born in Spain to parents whose identity is **unknown**.
- They have obtained **refugee status** and have resided in Spain for **5 years**.
- If they are **born in Spanish territory** and have resided in Spain for **1 year**.

Sweden

Swedish nationality can be applied through notification for children if:

- They were **born in Sweden**.
- They have been **stateless*** since birth.
- They have a permanent residence permit and are resident in Sweden.
- Applications are free if:
 - They are under 18 years of age, applying with adults.
 - They are **stateless*** and have been granted **refugee status**

US

US nationality is **granted from birth** to a child born in US territory.

Canada

Canadian nationality is **granted from birth** to a child born in Canada territory.

*Stateless status: People who are not recognised as a citizen and unable to live permanently in any country.

*Citizenship is like being in a family, full of love and warmth,
Our family should all be equal, given rights and responsibilities,
Michael Jackson said it best,
"If you want to make the world a better place,
Take a look at yourself and make a change."*

excerpt from a poem by Margret Aruna, a Year 7 student



Impacts

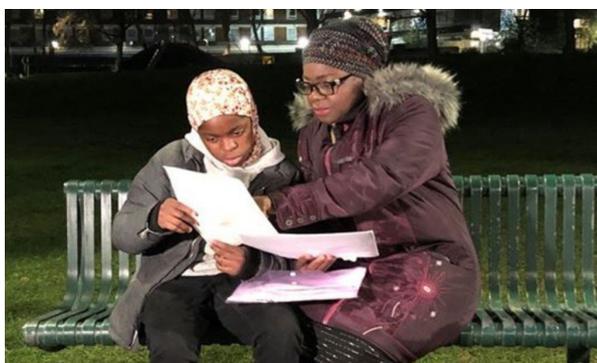
Economic, Health-related,
Psychological,
Educational, Social

*Caring parents finding £1012
It's a huge amount of money
Tomorrow, more expenses
It's unfair
Zzzzz.....waiting for change
Enduring all the pain of feeling stuck
Never giving up hope!*

excerpt from the poem "Citizen" by Jadon,
a Year 5 student

Economic Impacts

The child citizenship fee of £1012 makes up 49 % of a monthly salary of a median earner in the UK. The amount also makes up $\frac{1}{6}$ of an average UK resident's savings. While some people may find this sum manageable, around 9 % of UK residents do not have any savings and would not be able to afford paying such an expense^[1]. In 2020, the median gross weekly earnings were £479.10. If we count a month being 4.35 weeks, the median gross monthly earnings in the UK are £2081.



*I mean imagine a single mother
Who has very little to live on
Working very hard everyday
To provide for 2 young children
Making up excuses
To why she can't afford those school trips
But what they don't know is
Mummy is saving up for their British citizenship*

excerpt from the poem "£1,012" by Josephine Ayodele, a student

Migrants often suffer from discrimination in the labour market and experience what is known as "**occupational downgrading**"^[2] where they are hired for jobs they are **overqualified** for. This results in earnings that are substantially less than their similarly-qualified counterparts with UK origins. Immigrants are **66%** more likely to be employed in **elementary occupations** such as cleaning or construction work - the lowest-skill and lowest-paid occupational category^[3].

[1] <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/annualsurveyofhoursandearnings/2020>

[2] <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1468-0297.2009.02338.x>

[3] <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/social-policy-and-society/article/evaluating-the-labour-market-integration-of-new-immigrants-in-the-uk/B16ACA68B815D6BF467D66174284C4BF>

Economic Impacts

Even second-generation immigrants experience a gap in their financial income^[1] in comparison to the average British population. These conditions tend to be even harsher for non-white immigrants and their children.

Many migrants with leave to remain in the UK have no recourse to public funds. This means that they are not eligible for benefits and the welfare safety net. This can make it harder to save the money needed for citizenship application fees.

Finally, it is common for migrants to live in **overcrowded housing**, especially in cities^[2]. This means that the number of people living in a property exceeds the number of beds available, which is an important indicator of the poor economic conditions that early generation immigrants endure. The £1,012 citizenship registration fee for the children of these families may add to their continuous economic hardships and can have damaging effects on their collective quality of life.

*We cannot live in fear of others because of their difference, however, "terrorists", "foreigners", "pests", "leeches",
Black, white, blue, green, what does British even mean?
What matters is inside,
The emotions and character and values,
The love and individuality and difference.*

excerpt from a poem by Oluwatimilehin Sallu, a Year 9 student



*The money I cannot afford,
The time I cannot afford,
You have made me an outcast.
Was I a fool to have hope?
Maybe I should just give up.
Is that what you want?
Would you?
You have made me an outcast.*

excerpt from the poem "Outcast" by Tyrell Tucker, a Year 10 student

*Money Money Money - is that all you see?
We know you make money from the fees.
But what does it profit a man to gain the whole world
But forfeit his soul?
What does it profit a man to take money from those
that need it most? It's foul.*

excerpt from the poem "British" by Cecil Okoro, a Year 11 student

[1] <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/social-policy-and-society/article/evaluating-the-labour-market-integration-of-new-immigrants-in-the-uk/B16ACA68B815D6BF467D66174284C4BF>

[2] <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/migrants-and-housing-in-the-uk-experiences-and-impacts/>

Economic Impacts

The Citizenship Payment Plan

"Consider the parents/guardians of 2, 3 or 4 children. Families that have been living, working, bearing and raising children here for over 10 years. Parents that need to renew their own status here every couple of years, investing thousands of pounds into uncertainty. We know that sometimes a parent will have to choose which child to secure because how many families can afford multiples of £1,012 upfront?

The Citizenship Payment Plan has provided affordable financial assistance to 60 parents for over 70 children's citizenship fees in the last year. Every parent that has used our service has either fully repaid or is in the process of repaying, a testament to the importance they place on their child's citizenship. We want to help more parents secure their child/children's status, until the time comes for the Government to do the right thing and make the fees affordable in the first place. No parent should be priced-out of their children's entitlement to a secure and prosperous life"^[1]

Impacts of Covid-19 On Children Subject To Citizenship Registration Fees

Children with foreign-born parents are more likely to live in households where the health and economic impact of the wider coronavirus crisis is particularly severe^[2]

For some migrant and minority ethnic groups, the risk of Covid-19-related death is up to four times higher than the average.

In many schools, online learning has had little or no element of pupil-to-pupil interaction, thus depriving pupils with foreign-born parents of opportunities to socialise with their peers, leaving them even more prone to social and cultural exclusion than before lockdown^[3]

Migrants make up a large proportion of workers in essential jobs who support the functioning of the British economy and society during the Covid-19 pandemic, being also subject to higher risk of being infected with the disease.

[1] <https://edaid.com/cpp>

[2] <https://www.economicsobservatory.com/how-have-migrant-pupils-been-affected-lockdown-and-school-closures>

[3] <https://www.economicsobservatory.com/how-will-coronavirus-and-recession-affect-uk-immigration>

Healthcare

People on visas in the UK have to pay health surcharges to access secondary healthcare, and those who have not paid these charges have limited access to secondary healthcare and are subject to upfront charging for the care they need, even if they cannot afford to pay for it. These charges have disproportionately **deterred immigrant patients from seeking help and receiving important and urgent medical treatments**. This has also **negatively impacted the NHS and public health** due to increased pressures on doctors to make judgments about patients' status and need for care, as well as increased workload, which is taking time away from patient care^[1].

Miss Ramdhun, a student of Mauritian origin awaiting A-Level results but delayed going to university due to immigration status issues:

"My dad has worked and paid his taxes in Britain for more than a decade. He used to be quite healthy then after all this debt came on him he seemed to get ill. He used to be full of life and always partying, but he's not like that any more."



Moreover, as a part of the affected population, some children without citizenship are less likely to use primary medical services which **they are entitled to**, due to the fear of deportation and other adverse legal consequences^[2]. Therefore, they can have limited access to both primary and secondary healthcare in the UK.

Chelsea, Year 6, St. Mary's CE Primary:

"Please reduce the price for everyone who are not British to be able to go to the hospital and give birth or receive care. Just imagine if you were in their shoes or position and you had to pay 1000s and 1000s of pounds! Please be kind and fair!"



[1] <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/ethics/refugees-overseas-visitors-and-vulnerable-migrants/bma-view-on-charging-overseas-visitors>

[2] <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jan/09/100000-children-in-london-without-secure-immigration-status>

Psychological and Health-Related Impacts

Ms Ago-Kumadie, 46, a school catering manager in Camberwell, South London, an immigrant from Ghana:

“Every morning I used to go to work looking over my shoulder worrying about police or immigration officers, it was a tough time. We got through it but lots of people are still living with that fear.”



The restrictions on medical care go against the **best interests of the child principle** in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child^[1] and similar duties in UK law to promote children’s best interests. Lowering the child citizenship fee would promote children’s welfare by ensuring fewer children were excluded from the medical care they need.

Anonymous Parent, At Surrey Square Primary School:

“It’s been very difficult for us because we have applied for all 3 of our children and each time we had to think so hard about the money to pay for the citizenship fees. At times there was no food for us to eat because we needed to save money for the applications. It has given us physiological problems when we realised how much money we had to save. Our children were all born in the UK and we believe they should have had the right to citizenship that just costs the admin fee.”

Vulnerable migrant groups are most likely to^[2]:

- Lack the means to prove their status and eligibility to healthcare;
- Lack access to legal advice;
- Lack the ability to advocate for themselves due to language barriers, lack of support networks and social capital;
- Fear being reported to immigration enforcement.



[1]<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>

[2]https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/A_Short_Guide_to_Access_to_NHS_Health_Care_for_Migrants_JCWI_DOTW.pdf

content/uploads/2018/11/A_Short_Guide_to_Access_to_NHS_Health_Care_for_Migrants_JCWI_DOTW.pdf

Psychological and Health-Related Impacts

Ismat, A Student At Surrey Square:

"I feel like an outsider because I was born here but they don't treat me British"

Psychological impacts



In addition, citizenship registration proceedings **disregard the voice of children and young people**, contributing to a sense of helplessness and positioning them as passive subjects.

Meanwhile, children of immigrants are often **forced to mature extremely fast**, expected to translate complicated documents to their parents and to be acutely aware of the precarious position their family is in. This strenuous process exerts undue pressure on these children, leading to **mental distress and negative life outcomes**.

*Having a passport is important to people
Only if I had one to explore the world like other people
My mum has to go through a long process to get us one
Either way, my mum was not born here... so I am not a British citizen!*

a poem by Daniel, a Year 5 student



Educational Impacts



The negative impacts of non-citizenship can transpire into the everyday educational lives of children and young people in a variety of ways.

Students without citizenship live with the reality that if they are unable to obtain citizenship rights by the end of their school years, their **access to higher education is seriously at risk** - if not impossible - despite great ambition and years of hard work.

Chris, a University College London Student:

*"I specifically remember that conversation happening, when my mom was like "This is a very expensive process and because you are the priority right now, because you will go to university and **we're going to save up for you first and then I'll see what I can do about your little brother.**"*

Non-citizen students are likely to come from families with No Recourse to Public Funds. This leaves them at high risk of poverty and without reliable access to simple rights like food, decent living conditions, healthcare and social security.

Furthermore, they may have to go **without educational support**, such as access to free school meals^[1], financial relief for uniforms or help with school-based transport needs. Students endure lengthy, obstructive processes to attempt to join in with simple, joyful school activities that they are entitled to, such as school trips and travel^[2].

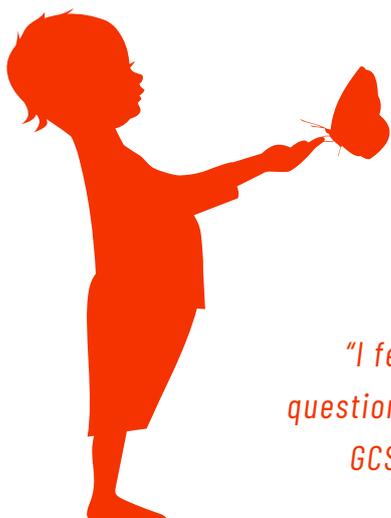
Jonas, Year 9 student, South London:

"It started to affect me in year 6 that's when I became aware of it because when I was going on my end of year 6 trip I knew that I have to get special documents and in secondary school I haven't really had the opportunity to go on any trips because of this issue."

[1] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486235/BIS-15-650-long-residency-eligibility-criteria-consultation.pdf

[2] <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/foreign-born-people-and-poverty-uk>

Educational Impacts



These limitations have a detrimental effect on children's development: poverty is proven to adversely impact cognitive development, health and therefore educational attainment^[1].

"I feel like all the education I've had throughout my life here is being called into question. It's like I'm being told I'm not British enough. I went to school, I passed my GCSEs, I've done my A-levels but that's not good enough to be British. Then they asked me to do the citizenship test right in the middle of my A-levels."

Miss Ramdhun, student of Mauritian origin awaiting A-Level results but delayed going to university due to immigration status issues

Beyond material and tangible needs, children without full citizenship report^[2] experiencing exclusion and barriers to feeling like they belong in their home country. They feel as though their valuable participation as active, engaged and integral parts of UK communities is not respected, and that their potential contributions to the growth of our society will never be realised. All of these issues obstruct the academic performance and development of these students.



"Scores of our pupils have gained their British Citizenship over the past few years - something they have all had a right to. But every single time, there is a massive detrimental impact on the families, due to the extortionate fees they are expected to pay. The children are acutely aware that their citizenship comes at a huge cost - both financial and emotional - and the injustice of this is felt by the whole school community"

Fiona Carrick-Davies, Family and Community Coordinator at Surrey Square

[1] <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/103494/1/casepaper203.pdf>

[2] <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/sep/25/undocumented-children-facing-deportation-from-uk>

Social Impacts



Identity, belonging, and social inclusion are vital elements of citizenship and naturalisation^[1]. There is a positive correlation between naturalisation and social integration, which strengthens ties between historically disadvantaged migrant communities. Its absence leads to **discrimination, social distance, geographic segregation, and unjust work environments**^[2].



“I want everybody who comes here and makes their lives here to be and to feel British. That's the most important thing.”

- Boris Johnson

excerpt from the poem “That's all it is” by Leila, a Year 9 student:

“Cannot afford the price of belonging”

Citizenship also provides children with a sense of **social security** across their lifespan^[3]. This security connects children with the life they wish to have constructed – from friends, community events, extracurricular activities, to languages and cultural traditions^[4]. It is only through this process of identifying with a country's nationality and culture that a child can start to “feel” British.

Chris, a University College London Student:

“I think getting citizenship was quite a big turning point of actually seeing myself as someone who was British, even though I knew that culture-wise, language and all that kind of stuff, for all intents and purposes I was British but I never felt like one until I had my citizenship.”

[1] <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Briefing-Citizenship-and-naturalisation-for-migrants-in-the-UK.pdf>

[2] <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/migrants-social-relationships-identity-and-civic-participation-in-the-uk/>

[3] <https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/information/professionals/resources/lifeline-for-all>

[4] <http://children.worldsstateless.org/random-pages/the-importance-of-nationality-for-children.html>

Non-citizen families are vulnerable to **domestic stigmatisation and prejudice**, as they are often seen as targets of **overt and covert discrimination**^[1]. The adverse effects can trickle down through families to the most vulnerable members, children, while they are also facing the risk of direct alienation from mainstream society^[2]. Without rightful access, citizenship can transform into a social exclusionary tool, manifested in refusal and barriers associated with granting citizenship^[3].

“Thousands of children - who have met the strict criteria for citizenship but cannot afford the fee - are being left unable to fully contribute to our society.”

Bethan Tanner, Assistant Principal, St Gabriel's College

Anita Hurrell, Head of the Migrant Children's Project at the children's charity Coram:

“As a society, we see ourselves as people who care for children, who look out for our young people. However, right now in the UK, citizenship and immigration policy is failing a significant number of children who have never known another country. These children are growing up in limbo instead of being citizens in the country they call home.”



Feelings of social exclusion and alienation frequently emerge when children without citizenship **cannot participate fully in their social lives and with their peers**. Non-citizenship becomes a source of **worry and embarrassment** for children who have spent all or most of their lives living in the UK. The only barrier to enjoying their social liberties and freedoms as children is often the steep registration fee^[4].

[1] <http://children.worldstateless.org/random-pages/the-importance-of-nationality-for-children.html>

[2] <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/1855901.pdf>

[3] <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/1855901.pdf>

[4] <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-24755547>

'British'

Jessica Sebuwufu, A Year 10 Student

*I'm British whatever you say,
Be angry if you may.
You can try and try to take away my nationality,
But guess what? It's part of my identity.*

*We're British and you know it.
You can't wake up one morning and say that's gonna change.
That's it.
We make this country what it is today.
So don't push us away.*

*Money Money Money - is that all you see?
We know you make money from the fees.
But what does it profit a man to gain the whole world
But forfeit his soul?
What does it profit a man to take money from those
That need it most? It's foul.*

*We are smart, strong and steady.
We are ever ready.
THINK because living in Britain has never felt so painful.
THINK because we are supposed to be a family.
THINK because you don't need that money.
THINK
Because we are British.*

To Whom It May Concern,

We are writing as a group of concerned education leaders. There are thousands of children and young people across the UK who, even though they have the right to become British citizens by law, are blocked from becoming citizens because their families cannot afford the **high cost of citizenship application fees**. This currently stands at £1012 for children.

Without citizenship young people are ineligible for student loans and home fees and are effectively blocked from going to university. Schools who have multiple pupils in this situation have noticed a real and significant detrimental impact from the cost of this application, including an increase in food insecurity and lack of basic needs being met. This often leads to schools having to step in to fill the gap by providing clothing, food and emotional support as well as subsidising additional extra-curricular activities.

We believe that every child and young person who has the right to become a citizen by law should be enabled to become a citizen in practice. If we are serious about social mobility then this barrier to education must be removed.

As a first step, we would like the government to reduce the application fee for British citizenship from its current level of £1012 per individual child to its actual cost price (about £350). This will benefit many talented children and young people currently studying in schools across our country who are affected by this issue.



Sincerely,
**Education Leaders Of The United
Kingdom**



Testimonials

From Teachers & Community Organisers

Fiona Carrick-Davies, Family and Community Coordinator at Surrey Square

"It's really heartbreaking, actually, when you see children in this situation because they absolutely are British. They feel British, they were born here, it's the only country they've ever known, they've never been out of the country."

Jack Mollart-Solity, Widening Participation Manager (Priority Groups & Special Projects) Care-experienced, Estranged, Forced Migrant & Mature Students, King's College London

"No one should be priced out of their citizenship. It is fundamentally wrong. It stops people living the life they deserve. Take university: going changes lives. But without citizenship, many can't access student loans. Rather than start a degree, they watch as their friends do, unable to join them. This shouldn't be happening. Abolishing fees is fair. I didn't pay for my citizenship and nor should others."

Anne-Marie Canning, The Brilliant Club

'Child citizenship is a serious barrier to higher education access. I have witnessed so many talented young people blocked from accessing a degree due to their status - with no access to the Student Loans System and facing international student fees university becomes a financial impossibility. The prohibitively high cost of child citizenship is curtailing ambition and depriving our country of the doctors, lawyers and nurses of tomorrow. That's why we set up the Citizenship Payment Plan, to help families struggling to afford the rights of their children.'

Anita Hurrell, Head of the Migrant Children's Project at the children's charity Coram

'As a children's legal charity, we advise hundreds of children every year that they have a right in law to British nationality. But too often these children's rights to British nationality are theoretical because the price of the application fee is too high. Children from more disadvantaged families and children in local authority care should never be priced out of being citizens in their own country. Why should they grow up in limbo instead of having the stability, rights and opportunities that are theirs in law?'



Testimonials

From Parents

St Mary's Parent Testimony

"Paying for my children to get their British Citizenship is something I could never afford without taking out a loan or borrowing money which I'm scared to do. Why should they suffer and be denied the same rights as their friends when all they did was to be born in this country?"

Kafilat Oduneye, Mother Of Four At Surrey Square

"I've managed to do the three children now, I've got one and mine left... we're still looking for money"

Ms Ago-Kumadie, 46, A School Catering Manager In Camberwell, South London, An Immigrant From Ghana

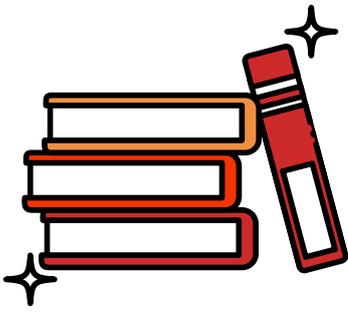
"I have that debt in mind all the time. It stops us going on holiday, it limits us from doing a lot of things as a family."

Bernice, Parent Of Two Children, South London

"Sometimes I come back from work I'm tired and I cry, why am I doing this [pay citizenship fee] these children were born here they are not born in any other country why do I have to go through this just for him?"

Parent 'T', Parent at Surrey Square Primary School

"I think the Government should do something about it because a child born in this country should not be denied their rights by setting the fees so high. Being born in any country, you should automatically be a citizen of that country. Why is the Government discriminating against a child born in the UK because their parents are not citizens?"



Testimonials

From Students

Chris, a University College London Student

"When I was younger definitely it was a point of stress, I feel like I've had to mature quite quickly. Just to be able to deal with all this and help my mother because she didn't really have anyone else to help. So I had to be her support and also help her with the really quite difficult language that they used, I mean as you're 12-13 you're not really going to understand all these big words and all these documents but there was nothing else we could do so I had to force myself to learn all of it and educate myself."

Benicia, 15 years old, South London

"I just thought that they thought of me as someone who was foreign even though I wasn't. I was as British as the next person so I was just in shock pretty much that they thought that I wasn't from this country."

Chris, a University College London Student

"During high school it was a pivotal point of embarrassment for me and I didn't actually tell my friends I was a non-citizen until a couple years ago. There were trips where my school will go to France or Italy and all my friends would go, but I just wasn't able to participate."

Ismat, Student at Surrey Square

"The struggle that we had to go through to get it [British citizenship]... I didn't think it was something happy."

Jonas Kitisu, student

"Everybody was looking at me. I was pulled off the coach because I had different travel documents from everybody else"

"I was in Year 6 and I didn't really understand either that it was because my passport was different."



Testimonials

From Students

Jonas, 14, Student

"I was born in St Thomas' Hospital, like many of my friends who have British citizenship and didn't have to pay for it," he said. "My mum has had to pay excessive amounts of money just for us to stay here. I see myself as a British citizen, regardless of what any system says. I never left the country until I was 11, this country is pretty much the only place I've known for my whole life but the government is trying to tell me I'm not British because my mum, who has been here for 20 years, is not British."

"I would class myself as British regardless of whether or not I have the documents because I was born here, I went to school here, I do everything here."

Miss Ramdhun, student of Mauritian origin awaiting A-Level results but delayed going to university due to immigration status issues

"I feel like all the education I've had throughout my life here is being called into question. It's like I'm being told I'm not British enough. I went to school, I passed my GCSEs, I've done my A-levels but that's not good enough to be British. Then they asked me to do the citizenship test right in the middle of my A-levels.

"I used to try and avoid all these problems, I didn't want it to upset my studies, I didn't want to think about it. But now I feel I want to do something about it,"

"My GCSEs, my schooling should be enough. They're asking someone who went to school in this country, who has got quite a lot of qualifications here, who wants to work and contribute, to prove that I have the right to belong here."

excerpt from a poem by Karsinn Conteh, a Year 10 student:

*One Grand! One Grand!
This is way too much!
The price is silly; it's way too much!
So please be considerate and change this way.
Please change the amount we have to pay.*

excerpt from the poem "Chances" by Nihmatalai,
a Year 8 student:

*Chances of university gone
Chances of voting gone
How can they fit in with their friends if they're gone?
Gone to university
Gone to vote
They'll be sitting there wondering
Could I be with them if I had the money?
If my parents were born here?*

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As poet Sonia Schez put it,

**“Something is wrong with citizenship fees.
Let's change it for the better.”**

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