

PRICE OF BELONGING

£1,012

2021

CHILD
CITIZENSHIP
REPORT

Background

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 access to British Citizenship. We propose to alleviate the barriers children face in becoming British Citizens by:

- Reducing the cost of applications for British Citizenship for children to cost price £372.
- Waiving the application fee for families who can not afford it.
- Waiving the application fee for children in care.

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 this price will be analysed to the economic, psychological, educational, and social wellbeing of children.

Our research looks extensively at the educational issues that manifest as a result of child citizenship fees; the expensive process stifles children's freedoms 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.

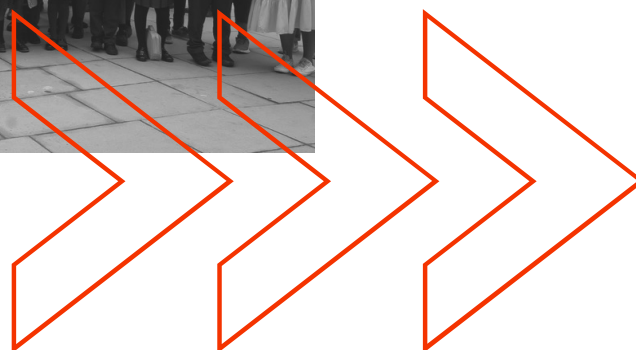


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Lucy Webb, a Year 9 student, excerpt from her poem 'Accepted'

*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.*

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Jessica Sebuwufu, a Year 10 student, excerpt from her poem 'Citizenship'

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

Introduction

It currently costs a family £1,012 [1] to register a child as a British Citizen through the UK Home Office. Ceremonial fees can amount to £80 if the minor turns 18 years old during the application process and including biometric information costs an additional £19.20. Despite charging this high price, it only costs the Home Office £372 to process an individual application [2]. 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.

Our research [3] 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 charge is Greece, which only amounts to half the price of the UK's fee. Data we acquired through a Freedom of Information request [4] 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" [5] 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.

*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.*

Cecil Okoro, a Year 11 student, excerpt from his poem 'British'

History of High Court Ruling

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 £1012 registration fee is mandatory with inflexible by the Secretary of State to 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 PRBC & 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.

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

"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."[6]

Richard Drabble, Queen's Counsellor:

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". [7]



Key Findings



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.

Akeim St Aubyn-William, a Year 11 student's poem

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:

- A further £80 per applicant is required to cover the citizenship ceremony fee if the child turns 18 during the application process [6].
- Children under 18 applying for registration as a British citizen must also enrol their biometric information with a separate cost of £19.20 per person [7].

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

Table 1. Child Citizenship Registration Fee

Type of Fee	
Registration	£1,012
Citizenship Ceremony	£80
Biometric Information Enrolment	£19.2
Total:	£1111.2



£163,337,600

Amount of Profit Made by Child Citizenship Fee (2017-2020)

Total Amount of Profit Made by Child Citizenship Fee from 2017-2020

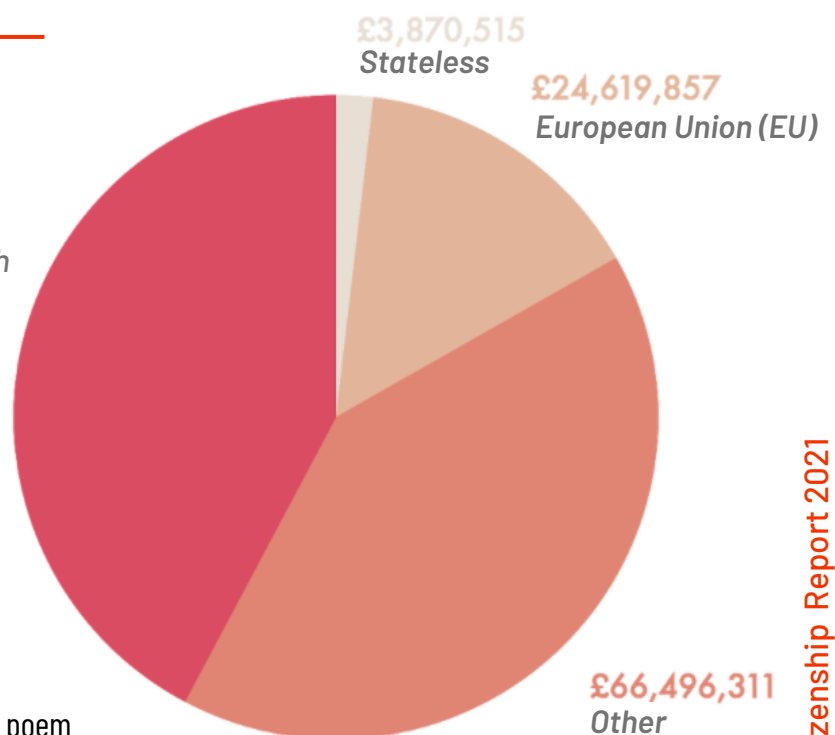
Origin of Children	Profit (2017-2020)
European Union (EU)	£24,619,857
Commonwealth	£68,350,917
Stateless	£3,870,515
Other	£66,496,311
Total	£163,337,600



*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?*

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

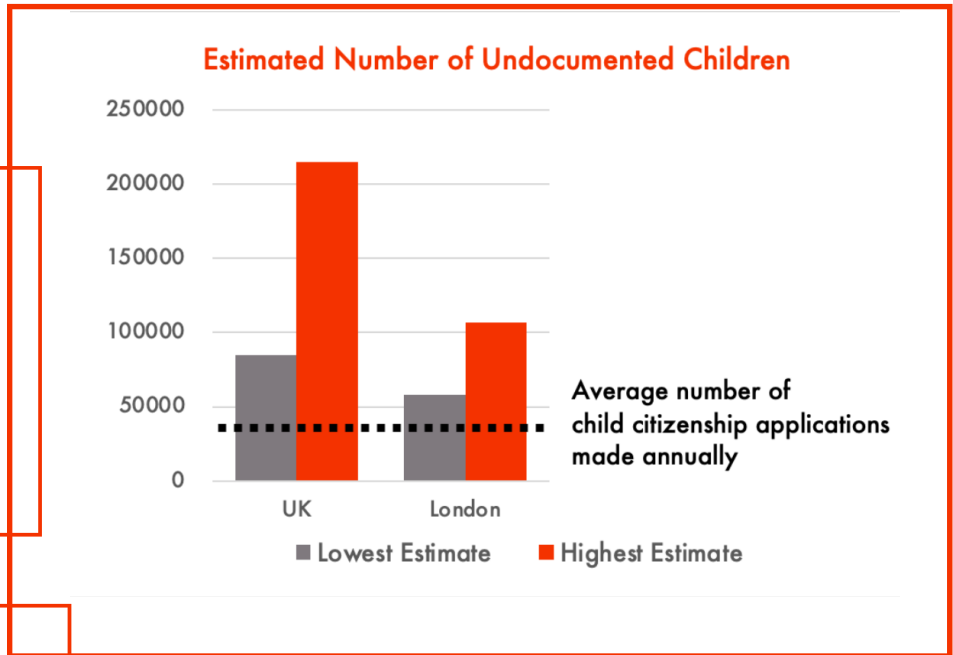
Commonwealth
£68,350,917



Undocumented Children

Research from 2009 to 2020 estimated that there are approximately 85,000 [10] to 215,000 [11] undocumented minors living in the UK, with 58,000 [12] to 107,000 [13] living in London. According to the FOI response from the Home Office, approximately 40,000 child citizenship applications were submitted annually between 2017 and 2020. Compared with the undocumented minor population, the number of citizenship applications is very low. This could be explained by the high fee [14].

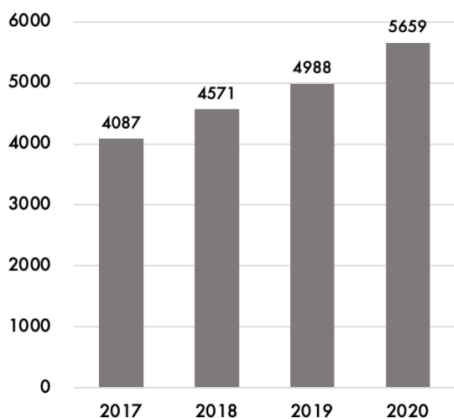
▶ **FIGURE 1. UNDOCUMENTED CHILDREN AND CITIZENSHIP APPLICATIONS**



*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.*

Cecil Okoro, a Year 11 student, excerpt from his poem 'British'

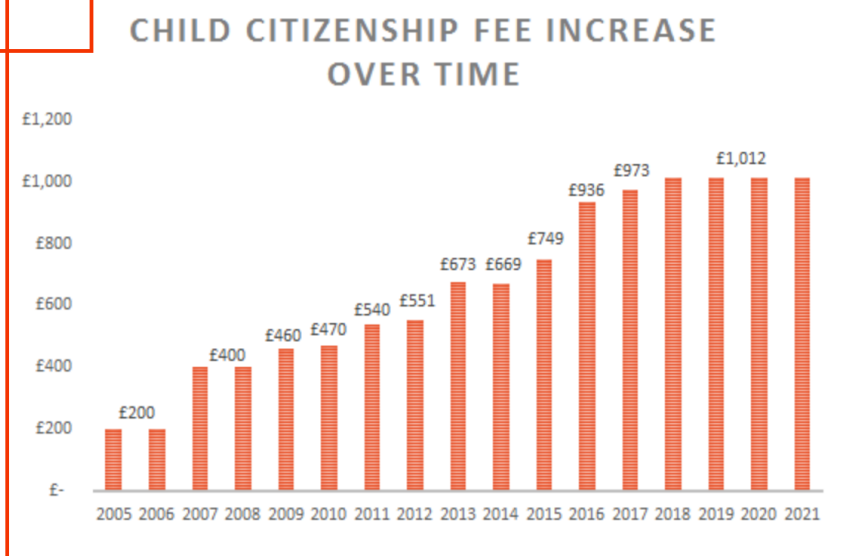
British Citizenship Applications from Sixth Form Students



When the British Nationality Act of 1981 came into force [15] the cost for British citizenship registration for children was set at £35. The Home Office began charging more than the administrative cost in 2007 [16]. Currently, only £372 of the £1,012 fee represents the administrative cost [17]. The following graph maps the rate of increase [18] [19] [20].

▲ **FIGURE 2. SIXTH FORM STUDENTS AFFECTED BY CITIZENSHIP**

▶ **FIGURE 3. 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'

Leila Lempek, a Year 9 student, excerpt from her poem 'That's all it is'

Country	Children Citizenship Fee
Austria [21]	€200
Belgium [22]	Free
Denmark [23]	Free
Finland [24]	€80-100 (naturalization) Free (granting)
France [25]	€55 (naturalization) Free (granting)
German [26]	€76
Greece [27]	€100-€700
Ireland [28]	€175-€375
Italy [29]	N/A
Luxembourg [30]	Free
Netherlands [31]	€22-€173

(continued)

Portugal [32]	€175-€250 (naturalization) Free (granting)
Spain [33]	€102 (naturalization) Free (granting)
Sweden [34]	€15 (naturalization) Free (granting)
US [35]	€457 (naturalization) Free (granting)
Canada [36]	€75 (naturalization) Free (granting)

CITIZENSHIP PROCESS & REQUIREMENTS

Country Other circumstances

Belgium

Belgian nationality is granted from birth to children: [37]

- If they are born in Belgium and would be a stateless person before the age of 18 or before emancipation.
- If they are born in Belgium and lose their only other nationality before turning 18.
- if they are 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: [38]

- If they are born stateless in Denmark.
- If they are unable to become a Danish citizen with a parent.

CITIZENSHIP PROCESS & REQUIREMENTS

Country

Other circumstances

Finland

Finnish nationality is granted from birth to children: [39]

- If they do not get citizenship of any other country on the basis of his or her parents' citizenship;.
- If they do 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.
- If their parents have refugee status

France

French nationality is granted from birth to children: [40]

If they are 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 [41]

Ireland

Fees to be paid when the certificate of naturalization is approved: [42]

- Application on behalf of a minor: €200

Refugee, stateless person: no charge

Italy

Cannot apply under 18. [43]

Italian citizenship is granted from birth to children:

If they are 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 [44]

Portugal

Portuguese nationality is granted from birth to children: [45]

- If they are 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;
- If they are born in Portuguese territory that does not possess another nationality.

If they are born in Portuguese territory to foreign parents if the child has lived in Portugal for 10 years.

CITIZENSHIP PROCESS & REQUIREMENTS

Country

Other circumstances

Spain

Spanish nationality is granted from birth to children: [46]

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

Sweden

Swedish nationality can be applied through notification for children: [47]

- If they are born in Sweden.
- If they have been stateless since birth.
- If 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.
- If they are stateless and have been granted refugee status

US

US nationality is granted from birth to a child born in US territory. [48]

Canada

Canadian nationality is granted from birth to a child born in Canada territory.[49]



Karsinn Conteh, Year 10 student, excerpt from her poem

*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.*

Margret Aruna, Year 7 student, excerpt from her poem

*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.'*



Impacts

Economic, Health-related,
Psychology,
Educational, Social

Jadon, a year 5 student, poem "Citizen":

*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!*

Economic Impacts

While £1,012 is manageable for an average earner, the financial situations of migrants and their children can differ significantly.

Migrants often suffer from discrimination in the labour market and experience what is known as 'occupational downgrading' [50], 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.



Josephine Ayodele, student, excerpt from her poem '£1, 012':

*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*

Immigrants are 66% more likely to be employed in elementary occupations [51] such as cleaning or construction work, the lowest-skill and lowest-paid occupational category.

Economic Impacts

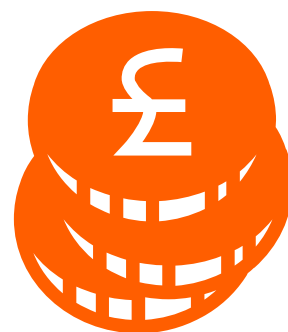
Even second-generation immigrants experience a gap in their financial income [52] in comparison to the average British population. These conditions tend to be even harsher for non-white immigrants and their children.

Oluwatimilehin Sallu, a Year 9 student, excerpt from his poem:

*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.*

Finally, it is common for migrants to live in overcrowded housing [53], especially in cities. 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 adds drastically to their continuous economic struggles and strains, and can have damaging effects on their collective quality of life.



Tyrell Tucker, Year 10 student, excerpt from his poem 'Outcast'

*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.

The £1,012 citizenship registration fee for the children of these families adds drastically to their continuous economic struggles and strains, and can have damaging effects on their collective quality of life.

Psychology and Health-Related Impacts

Healthcare

Non-citizens have limited access to secondary healthcare and are subject to surcharges [50] and upfront charging of extortionate fees [51]. These charges have disproportionately deterred immigrant patients from seeking help and receiving important and urgent medical treatments, which has also negatively impacted the NHS and public health [52].

Moreover, as a part of the affected population, undocumented children are even less likely to use primary medical services which they are entitled to, due to the fear of deportation and other adverse legal consequences.

This contradicts the “best interests of the child” principles based on Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child [53] and section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 [54]. Lowering the child citizenship fee would promote the welfare of these children by offering fair and just access to healthcare.

Vulnerable migrant groups are most likely to [55]:

- *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 for being reported to immigration enforcement*



Psychology and Health-Related Impacts

Psychological impacts



In addition, citizenship registration proceedings disregards 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. The strenuous process exerts undue pressure on these children, leading to mental distress and negative life outcomes.

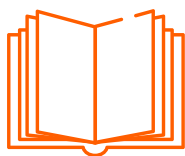
Chris, a University College London Student:

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 there was nothing else we could do so I had to force myself to learn all of it and educate myself.

Daniel, a year 5 student, poem:

*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!*

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 [60], 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 [61].

"During high school and the duration spent in College, multiple school trips were offered in which I could not attend due to not having a British passport, the one time I flew out of the country many things were needed e.g visa and this took a lot of time to prepare. I felt like a burden to my school as they had to spend so much time and effort helping me so I could take part."

Fola, PRCBC

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 [62].

"I always endeavoured to do my best academically, despite the uncertainty that surrounded my future, because I value education and knowledge deeply, and because I believe that education provides a way out of poverty and the hardships which I witnessed my parents endure."

Bibire, PRCBC

Beyond material and tangible needs, without full citizenship children report [63] 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 nourishing and growth of our society will never be realised. All of these issues obstruct the academic performance and flourishing of these students.

Nihmatalai, a Year 8 student, excerpt from her poem 'Chances':

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

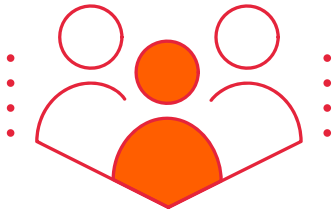
They'll be sitting there wondering

Could I be with them if I had the money?

If my parents were born here?



Social Impacts



Identity, belonging, and social inclusion are vital elements of citizenship and naturalisation [64]. There is a positive correlation between naturalisation and social integration, which strengthens ties between communities, especially among historically disadvantaged migrant communities [65]. Its absence leads to discrimination, social distance, geographic segregation, and unjust work environments [66].

“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

Leila, a Year 9 student, excerpt from her poem 'That's all it is':

Cannot afford the price of belonging

Citizenship also provides children with a sense of social security across their lifespan [67]. This security connects children with the life they wish to have constructed – from friends, community events, extracurricular activities, to languages and cultural traditions [68]. It is only through this process of identifying with a country's nationality and culture can a child 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.

Non-citizen families are vulnerable to domestic stigmatisation and prejudice, as they are often seen as targets of overt and covert discrimination [69]. 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 [70]. Without rightful access, citizenship can transform into a social exclusionary tool, manifested in refusal and barriers associated with granting citizenship [71].

"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

Kamena Dorling, Head of Policy and Public Affairs 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 their social liberty and freedom to fully enjoy a childhood here is often the steep registration fee [72].

'British'

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.

Acknowledgements

This report would not have been possible without the collaborative team work of Xiran Wang, Kainat Malik, Mengke Jiang, Lillan Lemouchi, Liying Cao, Yana Nedelcheva, Jan Vacha, and Lucy Zhang, undergraduate students from the Institute of Education, University College London.

Special thanks to St. Gabriel's College, St. Mary's Lewisham CE Primary School, PRCBC and Chris, a UCL student for providing testimonies.

We are particularly grateful to Kainat Malik, who graphically designed this report, and Yana Nedelcheva, who conducted the initial qualitative research.

As poet Sonia Sanchez put it,

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

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