



September 2018

Children's Right to Citizenship



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In a nutshell

Thousands of children grow up in the UK without British citizenship. Many of them are born here and are entitled to it. However, many children are essentially being prevented from registering as British citizens as the government charges a large, profit-making fee - it costs the Home Office £372 to register a person but they charge £1012. We think that this profit element should be removed from the children's registration fee in all cases and that children who cannot afford the fee should not pay at all. We are calling on the Home Office to make these changes.

The details

The price of British Citizenship

Currently, the registration charge for children to apply for British citizenship is £1,012. £372 of this is the cost of administration and £640 is profit to the Home Office. This fee has increased over the last couple of years.

At the moment, there is no power to waive (not charge) the fee for children whose families cannot afford to pay. In practice this means the many children are unable to register simply because they and their families cannot afford the fee. Once young people reach the age of 18 many lose their right to register.

Among the children charged £1,012 to register as British citizens are thousands that were born in the UK, grew up here and have never even visited another country.

Citizenship: A Human Right

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasises that everyone has a right to a nationality (Article 15).

Article 8 of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child (UNCRC) emphasises that children have the right to an identity – an official record of who they are. Governments should respect children's right to a name, a nationality and family ties.

Who does this affect?

Children born in the UK are only born British if, at the time of their birth, one of their parents is British or settled here. When passing the British Nationality Act 1981, Parliament recognised that many of these children will nonetheless be as connected to the UK as any of their peers. That is why the Act includes provisions to guarantee these children's rights to the citizenship of their country of birth and country of origin. Many other children, who've lived here since they were very young and whose futures clearly lie in the UK, are eligible to be registered too. They face the same fee. As do several children in local authority care.

What is the impact?

The right to citizenship is important to children for many reasons:

- Certainty concerning their future
- Right to a British passport
- Freedom from immigration control
- Right to work
- Student finance
- Security
- Identity

Everyone should have access to these rights regardless of their nationality as they are fundamental rights.

Case Study: Daniel

15-year-old Daniel didn't even know he wasn't British until he was denied the chance to join his friends on a school trip. He has a right to apply for citizenship - but only if he pays the Home Office £1,012. If he can't, he may not be able to work, study or even get hospital treatment.

Daniel came to this country with his mother when he was three years old. The UK is the only place he has ever known, and he feels no less British than any of his other friends. But, like thousands of other children in the UK, he is being priced out of his rights by the Home Office. Daniel wants to become an army officer. His application to register as a British citizen is still outstanding.

'I didn't even know I was not British until my mother had to explain to me why I couldn't go on the same school trips as my classmates. I didn't understand at first and I didn't think it was fair that I was left out. When my mother told me I wasn't British, I felt sad.'

What Amnesty is calling for

Children's rights are not for the Home Office to block because of money. We need your help to tell them that no child should be prevented from securing their British citizenship. We would like them to:

- Remove any element of the registration fee over and above the actual cost of administration
- Take away the entire fee in the case of children in local authority care
- Not charge the fee in the case of any child who is unable to afford the administrative cost of registration

Take Action

1. Petition

Sign our petition and ask others to do so. You will find a template at the end of this mailing. You can also do this action online. See below for the link.

2. Creative Action

We would like to produce a petition that looks a little more creative to show to the Home Office. We are asking people to:

- illustrate or write what citizenship means to them or others
- **and/or** what stands between children and their right to citizenship.

We would like your contributions to be on rectangular-shape pieces of card or paper i.e. **brick shaped** as we plan to build a huge wall with people's contributions to signify how the current fees are a barrier between children and their right to citizenship. Feel free to get creative. We plan to show this to the Home Office.

Please send your 'bricks' to:

Anne Montague (Community Organiser Youth)

Amnesty International UK

17-25 New Inn Yard

London EC2A 3EA

Deadline: Mid November

3. Has your MP signed the Early Day Motion (EDM)?

A number of MPs have sponsored an EDM about this issue. Check to see whether your MP has signed up to it using the link below. If not, you might like to write to them to urge them to sign up.

<https://www.parliament.uk/edm/2017-19/1262>

Early day motions (EDMs) are motions submitted for debate in the House of Commons for which no day has been fixed. As there is no specific time allocated to EDMs very few are debated. However, many attract a great deal of public interest and media coverage.

Source: <https://www.parliament.uk/about/how/business/edms/>

Useful Resources & Links

This campaign is being led by the Amnesty International UK's **Children's Human Rights Network (CHRN)**.

Film

We have produced a 3-minute film outlining this issue which includes interviews with young people affected.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3wf2tSLYS4>

Find out more about the CHRN

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/join-our-childrens-human-rights-network>

Link to online petition

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/home-office-stop-profiteering-childrens-rights?from=issue>

Read the blog:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/ether/profitting-childrens-rights>

UK: PROTECT CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

ENSURE CHILDREN CAN ACCESS THEIR RIGHT TO REGISTER AS BRITISH CITIZENS



We believe it is unacceptable for children who have the right to register as British citizens under the British Nationality Act 1981 to be prevented from doing so by the charging of a prohibitively high fee. We, the undersigned, call on the Immigration Minister to:

- Remove the profit-making element of the registration fee
- Introduce a fee waiver for cases where a child's parent or other carer would be unable to afford the fee to register
- Charge no fee for registration in cases of children assisted by a local authority under the Children Act 1989

Name	Name of School/college/institution	School/college postcode	Signature

The information you give above will be delivered to the named target. Until that time, your data will be stored securely by Amnesty International United Kingdom Section – a company limited by guarantee registered in England & Wales (01735872), and Amnesty International UK Section Charitable Trust - a charity registered in England & Wales (1051681) and in Scotland (SC039534) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England & Wales (03139939) We will not use it for any other purposes. We will never sell or swap your personal information with anyone else. To find out more about how we use your information, please read our policy at www.amnesty.org.uk/privacy-notice.