

Lord Goldsmith QC

Citizenship Review

# Becoming a British citizen: A learning journey

by Dr. Dina Kiwan

“...the importance of history in relation to citizenship has been emphasised and developed within citizenship education in schools, and therefore this strengthens the case for the same recognition of the importance of history in understanding British citizenship for immigrants applying for British citizenship.”

Extract from page 7

# About the Author

Dr. Dina Kiwan is an Academic Fellow/Lecturer in Citizenship Education at Birkbeck College, University of London, and Programme Director of the International Centre for Education for Democratic Citizenship (ICEDC), a joint international centre of Birkbeck College and Institute of Education, University of London. She is also Programme Director for the MSc Citizenship Studies, from September 2008. She was educated at the Universities of Oxford, Harvard and London.

Her most recent research has investigated the extent to which ethnic and religious diversity was accommodated in the policy development process of citizenship education in England leading up to its statutory introduction in 2002. Her book, *Education for Inclusive Citizenship*, was published by Routledge in 2007. Broader research and policy interests cut across the domains of education, nationality and immigration, driven by an interest in politico-philosophical understandings of citizenship, with a particular interest in the extent to which such conceptions are inclusive of diversity, in particular ethnic and religious diversity.

She has over ten years research experience in the fields of psychology, citizenship, education and human rights, having worked at Harvard University, Columbia University, Amnesty International at the United Nations, the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate and the Home Office. In 2002, she was appointed a member of the Home Office 'Life in the UK' Advisory Group by the UK former Home Secretary, David Blunkett. Chaired by Sir Bernard Crick, this Advisory Group's remit was to advise on the development of language and political literacy courses and assessment for immigrants applying for British citizenship. She is also the co-author of the *Diversity and Citizenship in the Curriculum Review* (with Sir Keith Ajegbo), an independent report commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), published in January 2007. In June 2006, she was summoned to give oral evidence to the House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee's Inquiry into Citizenship Education. From 2004-2006, she was seconded to Head of Secretariat to the Advisory Board for Naturalisation and Integration (ABNI), working with Sir Bernard Crick, its first Chair, carrying forward the implementation of the recommendations of the former 'Life in the UK' Advisory Group. She is currently a member of the advisory board for the Lord Goldsmith Review of Citizenship.

# About the Review

The Prime Minister has asked Lord Goldsmith to carry out a review of British citizenship. In particular:

- To clarify the legal rights and responsibilities associated with British citizenship, in addition to those enjoyed under the Human Rights Act, as a basis for defining what it means to be a Citizen in Britain's open democratic society;
- To consider the difference between the different categories of British nationality;
- To examine the relationship between residence, citizenship and British national status and the incentives for long-term residents to become British citizens; and
- To explore the role of citizens and residents in civic society, including voting, jury service and other forms of civic participation.

Over the course of the Review, we will be publishing a series of pamphlets to draw out new ideas and to stimulate discussion.

This is an independent Review and each pamphlet represents the views of the author.

You can find out more about the Review at [www.justice.gov.uk/reviews/citizenship](http://www.justice.gov.uk/reviews/citizenship)

# Introduction

The thousands of people who become British citizens every year do so by completing a journey. For some people, that journey begins fleeing persecution in another part of the world before finding safety in the UK. For others, the purpose of the journey is to join family already settled in the UK. There is also a ‘learning’ journey involved – both cognitive and emotional, developed through the experience of living in the UK and learning about its institutions, its peoples and its cultures, gaining both knowledge and skills, and also developing a sense of belonging to the UK. The focus of this pamphlet is on the third aspect of the journey: on learning.

Since 1997, ‘citizenship’ has been a high priority on the policy agenda across government. In 1998, a policy review of citizenship education in England was set up by the then Secretary of State for Education, David Blunkett. Chaired by Sir Bernard Crick, this review was carried out by the Advisory Group on Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools (QCA, 1998). Its key recommendation that ‘Citizenship’ become a statutory subject in the English secondary school curriculum was accepted by government, and in September 2002, citizenship education was introduced into secondary schools in England. Subsequently, in 2002, a second Advisory Group at the Home Office was set up, by David Blunkett as Home Secretary, in the domain of nationality and citizenship. This ‘Life in the UK’ Advisory Group, of which I was a member, again chaired by Sir Bernard Crick, had the remit to develop proposals for language and citizenship courses and tests for immigrants applying for British Citizenship, with its report, *The New and the Old* published in September 2003 (Home Office, 2003). The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, requires those applying for British citizenship to be able to show ‘a sufficient knowledge of English, Welsh or Scottish Gaelic’ and to have ‘sufficient knowledge about life in the United Kingdom’ (Home Office, 2003). In this context, the Life in the UK Advisory Group was set up with the remit ‘To advise the Home Secretary on the method, conduct and implementation of a ‘Life in the United Kingdom’ naturalisation test’. Its key recommendations included that applicants for British citizenship must either: i) successfully pass a ‘citizenship test’ – for those at or above English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Entry level 3, or successfully complete an accredited ESOL (‘English as a Second Official Language’) with citizenship course – for those whose English is below ESOL Entry level 3. The government accepted these recommendations, and since November 1st 2005, applicants for British citizenship have been subject to these new requirements under the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act (NIA) 2002 in order to demonstrate sufficient understanding of English (or Welsh or Scottish Gaelic) and of life in the United Kingdom.

The pamphlet sets out to consider three main issues, and to set out recommendations to take things forward. The first question considers what skills and knowledge are important and useful for new citizens to have. In order to start answering this question, it is necessary to outline and consider the stated rationale behind the new naturalisation requirements, and to examine the content of the citizenship 'test' and ESOL with Citizenship courses: is it the 'right' content pitched at an appropriate level? Secondly, how should would-be citizens be assessed to have met the naturalisation requirements? And finally, what can be done to further support new citizens on their journey to citizenship?

# Rationale for the new naturalisation requirements

The rationale for the work of the ‘Life in the UK’ Advisory Group is set out in the Advisory Group Report: The New and the Old (Home Office, 2003). It refers to the government’s stated intention in the 2002 White Paper, Secure Borders, Safe Haven, of raising the status of becoming a British citizen. Indeed, in the first pamphlet of this series on the future of citizenship ceremonies by Mark Rimmer, he describes how previously, applying for British citizenship was a purely bureaucratic process, with applicants filling out application forms and sending these in the post. The Life in the UK Advisory Group report also describes the work as falling within broader government policy aims including ‘a wider citizenship agenda’ ‘encouraging community cohesion’ and ‘valuing diversity’.

Crucially, for the Chair and members of the ‘Life in the UK’ Advisory Group, encouragement and support for lifelong learning was seen to underpin these government aims of participative and inclusive citizenship and community cohesion. It is not inconsequential that this Advisory Group was set up by David Blunkett, formerly Secretary of State for Education, and chaired by Sir Bernard Crick, who had previously developed the policy recommendations for the statutory introduction of citizenship education into secondary schools in England. It is also significant that at least eight of the fourteen members of the Advisory Group had had expertise in the domain of education. The New and the Old Report proposed that the new naturalisation requirements should be perceived as an ‘entitlement’ rather than as a ‘hurdle’. Whilst concerns were expressed with regard to the word, ‘test’ – which were given in the terms of reference for the Group’s work, there was strong support for providing migrants planning to apply for citizenship with support in English language and ‘knowledge of the in the UK’ (citizenship).

In our original recommendations of the ‘Life in the UK’ Advisory Group Report, we proposed that language and citizenship education should be made available at the earliest opportunity for those planning to settle in the United Kingdom and apply for British citizenship. The following six broad categories of substantive content area were proposed:

- 1 British national institutions
- 2 Britain as a diverse society
- 3 Knowing the law
- 4 Employment
- 5 Sources of help and information
- 6 Everyday needs.

We also proposed that a handbook be developed for new migrants to the UK, the aim being to promote integration and understanding of British society, including its political institutions. The first edition of the Handbook was initially compiled by a sub-committee of the 'Life in the United Kingdom' Advisory Group, chaired by Professor Sir Bernard Crick, and of which I was a member, with the help of the Citizenship Foundation. A second edition of the Handbook, *Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship* was subsequently published in 2007, consisting of the following 9 chapters:

- 1 The making of the United Kingdom (providing a concise history)
- 2 A changing society (including demography, immigration patterns, role of women, family, children and young people)
- 3 UK today: a profile (population, religion, regions, customs and traditions)
- 4 How the United Kingdom is governed (system of government, formal institutions, devolved administrations, relation with Europe and world; role of citizen)
- 5 Everyday needs (housing, education, health, leisure)
- 6 Employment (looking for work, rights, children and work)
- 7 Knowing the law (citizen rights, human rights, marriage and divorce, children, courts, legal advice/aid)
- 8 Sources of help and information
- 9 Building better communities.

As Head of Secretariat of the Advisory Board on Naturalisation and Integration (ABNI) at the Home Office until September 2006, I had the responsibility of overseeing, advising and contributing to the new edition of the Handbook. The second edition was intended to update those chapters that contained out-of-date information, and also to ensure that the language used throughout the Handbook was at a level of approximately ESOL Entry level 3. The visual presentation and layout of the text has also been revised so that it is more user-friendly to its readers. For example, there is text in coloured boxes titled 'check that you understand' to signal to the reader key points of understanding that they should take from the text. In addition, a final chapter – chapter 9: building better communities has been added to the new edition, highlighting the notion of 'shared values'. It outlines common public perceptions of what citizens' rights and responsibilities are, and it proposes what makes for a 'good' citizen, providing details on jury service, helping out at schools, becoming a school governor, joining a political party, becoming involved in local services, volunteering, and contributing to charity.

Before being able to start to answer what content the citizenship ‘test’ and courses should cover, it is important to recognise that citizenship policy developments in the domain of nationality can not be fully understood without reference to earlier and continuing developments in the domain of citizenship education policy. In the original Crick Report, Citizenship was conceptualised in terms of three ‘strands’ - social and moral responsibility, political literacy and community involvement. On interviewing the ‘key players’ who had been involved in the policy and curriculum development, I identified three dominant conceptions of citizenship – ‘moral’, legal’ and ‘participatory’ – with the participatory being the most dominant of three (Kiwani, 2008). ‘Identity-based’ understandings of citizenship were relatively absent, with the Crick Report making no explicit mention of the relationship between citizenship and nationality or national identity. Citizenship was presented predominantly in terms of developing knowledge and skills for active participation. However, it is of note that this understanding of citizenship has shifted significantly over the last five years<sup>1</sup>, with diversity and immigration now considered to be important drivers behind the agenda for citizenship. This shift in emphasis is similarly reflected in the DCSF-commissioned review of Diversity and Citizenship in the curriculum (0-19), which I co-authored with Sir Keith Ajegbo, and published in January 2007 (Ajegbo, Kiwan and Sharma, 2007). With regard to the citizenship curriculum, the remit we were given asked us to consider whether ‘modern British social and cultural history’ should be a fourth pillar of the Citizenship curriculum. In our report, we recommended that a fourth strand, entitled ‘Identity and Diversity: Living Together in the UK’ be added to supplement the three strands of the original Crick Report. Five sub-themes are highlighted as important areas to include:

- i) Understanding that the UK is a ‘multinational’ state, made up of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales
- ii) Immigration
- iii) Commonwealth and the legacy of Empire
- iv) European Union
- v) Extending the franchise (e.g. legacy of slavery, universal suffrage, equal opportunities legislation).

It should be noted that whilst understandings of citizenship in the educational domain – emphasising the importance of political literacy and active participation are evident in the Handbook, there has also been influence from the domain of nationality back into the domain of citizenship education policy. In developing the recommendations of the Diversity and Citizenship curriculum review, I drew on my experience of working on the Handbook, but in addition, what the remit for this review also required was emphasising the importance of history in the context of understanding of British national identity and citizenship.

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<sup>1</sup> See my evidence given to the House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee Inquiry into Citizenship Education (June 2006), report published March 2007.

Now to return to the question of what content the citizenship ‘test’ and ESOL with Citizenship courses should cover, there clearly have been ongoing debates around this. For those taking the course route, there is no fixed syllabus. Instead the teacher has the flexibility to draw on the range of topics outlined, and to contextualize these as appropriate to the participants in the class. With regard to the ‘test’<sup>2</sup>, initially, the content was based on chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the Handbook: the UK as a changing society, the UK today (demography), and how the UK is governed. With the publication of the second edition, the test now also covers material from chapters 5 and 6 - everyday needs and employment. It is notable in its absence that chapter 1, which covers British history does not currently constitute part of the test. The Life in the UK Advisory Group had argued against including British history as items on the test, pointing out that such history only becomes meaningful over time through the contextualised experience of living in the United Kingdom. However, as I have discussed earlier, the importance of history in relation to citizenship has been emphasised and developed within citizenship education in schools, and therefore this strengthens the case for the same recognition of the importance of history in understanding British citizenship for immigrants applying for British citizenship. It is sometimes argued that immigrants are required to know more than the native-born population, however, many new immigrants are eager to learn about the history of their new country, and the provision of courses (and the Handbook for those at higher levels of English going the test route) should be seen as an entitlement rather than a hurdle. In addition, in time, with today’s children taking Citizenship at school, there will be no substantive difference between children’s citizenship learning at school, and the naturalisation requirements for those applying for British citizenship.

With regard to the recent inclusion of chapter 5 and 6, I would speculate that in part, additional non-controversial material was needed to increase the number of test items for inclusion in the test item bank. It may be that the debates surrounding the testing of British history referred to in the previous paragraph were too contentious as well as too difficult. Similarly, chapter 7’s focus on rights might also have been thought to be contentious; in some media reports of the Handbook and test, there have been suggestions that such material could encourage applicants for citizenship to apply for welfare benefits. The inclusion of chapters 5 and 6 may have been primarily driven by such pragmatic concerns – to increase the text from which test items could be devised, for this text to be of minimal controversy, and for the material to be straightforward and not too difficult. Indeed, with regard to level of difficulty, of concern is the lower than expected average pass rate for the test since its introduction in November 20005 currently at 70%; the Life in the UK Advisory Group had advised that a 75% pass rate would indicate a satisfactory benchmark to aim for. This issue will be revisited in the following section on assessment.

It is clear that chapter 5: Everyday needs (housing, education, health, leisure), and chapter 6: Employment (looking for work, rights, children and work), provide very practical information of use to those new to the country. However, there is something of a paradox in covering this material, as currently funding regulations impose what is often referred to as the ‘3-year rule’ – namely that immigrants are not entitled to

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<sup>2</sup> For those at higher levels of English language – at or above ESOL Entry level 3.

free English language classes until they have been resident in the country for three years. So they have to wait three years before enrolling on an ESOL with citizenship course to learn about information most important and relevant for them to know in the very early stages of their arriving in the country. The government's argument is a financial one – that offering free classes to all migrants would be too expensive, and that the 3-year rule is a rough indicator of intention to settle in the country. However, given the government's stated intention to actively support and promote integration, this financial cost must be weighed against the financial costs that result as a consequence of lack of integration – social exclusion, unemployment, and even community conflict. In addition, the Further Education sector is under severe strain, because of under-funding and long waiting lists – exacerbated by larger influxes over the last 3-4 years as a result of the expansion of the EU. So I would make two related recommendations – first a funding recommendation, followed by a content recommendation.

### Recommendation 1

If the government wants to make real attempts to support and promote integration, it should urgently review the 3-year rule<sup>3</sup>. This is not to say that ALL newcomers should be funded: 'intention to settle' is still key. But the government should do two things: firstly, it should make available extra funds in the form of 'hardship grants' specifically for the case of new immigrants planning to settle in the UK, and in need of such financial support in order to enroll on ESOL and Citizenship courses. Secondly, the government should develop a more nuanced indicator of intention to settle, than the 3-year rule.

### Recommendation 2

Whilst chapters 5 and 6 provide useful reference information – of particular use when migrants first arrive in the country, it is important and appropriate to cover substantive content from chapter 1 - history, and also from chapter 7 - on the law both in the ESOL and citizenship courses and in the 'test'. Both ESOL with Citizenship courses and test questions must ensure that when covering material on history and the law, that this is made explicitly relevant to the UK contemporary context (for example, understanding that the UK has long been a multinational and multicultural state, with a history of immigration, key political events in the UK since 1945 and other sociopolitical developments in the twentieth century that have shaped our modern political and legal institutions, knowing the rights and duties of a citizen, knowledge of human rights, children's rights, family law,).

Another possible area for inclusion in the ESOL with Citizenship courses and the test is local and regional knowledge. It is often assumed that by participating at, or having knowledge about the local level, that this sense of local belonging somehow translates into a sense of belonging and identity at the national level, although there is no firm evidence to support this often implicit assumption. Indeed, people may be well integrated at a local community level, yet feel no sense of identification at

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<sup>1</sup> This rule does not apply in Scotland.

the national level at all. It should be noted that ESOL teachers for many years, even before the introduction of the new naturalisation requirements, have taught English in a relevant and contextualised way, often using teaching materials and learning resources that draw on local and regional examples, and there is no doubt that this will continue. However, it is all too easy to lose sight of the larger picture, and neglect citizenship issues at the national level. In part, this is an issue of teacher expertise and confidence, where research has reported that teachers, both in the further education sector, as well as the school sector, report relatively low levels of knowledge and confidence in the domain. Whilst there have been a number of training sessions held across the UK, there is an ongoing need for continued government investment in the training of ESOL teachers.

### Recommendation 3

It is important that there is continued government funding for the training of ESOL teachers, including substantive training of citizenship issues at the national level, as teachers often report lower levels of knowledge and confidence in teaching such material.

### Recommendation 4

- i) With regard to local and regional knowledge, it is important that such materials be available at the earliest possible point in the form of welcome packs for new immigrants planning to settle in the UK.
- ii) Citizenship learning should also be contextualised locally and regionally, as well as nationally in ESOL and citizenship classes, but for the citizenship ‘test’, it is appropriate that the emphasis be on the national level, rather than the local level, given the mobility of applicants across the UK which would make the inclusion of such material impractical.

Since April 2007, the same requirements – ‘sufficient’ language and ‘sufficient’ knowledge of life in the UK, have been introduced for those seeking to permanently settle in the UK (indefinite leave to remain). So those applicants wanting to apply for permanent residence also sit the ‘citizenship’ test, or attend an ESOL and Citizenship course (for those at lower levels of English). On fulfilling these requirements, they can ‘bank’ this and do not need to repeat the test if and/or when they decide to apply for British citizenship. At a conceptual level, this could be seen as blurring of a distinction between citizenship as nationality, and citizenship as active participation, with the only difference in requirements between the two statuses being length of residence. Given that the rationale for the new naturalisation and settlement requirements have been presented in terms of primarily being concerned with promoting integration, this bringing closer together of citizenship as nationality and citizenship as active participation should be seen as positive. What the new settlement requirements reflect is recognition of the importance of active participation and integration through living in the UK as the basis of a commitment to permanently settle in the UK. This is not to downplay the symbolic (as well as practical) significance of becoming a British citizen in the legal sense, as recognised and celebrated by the citizenship ceremonies.

### Recommendation 5

The active participatory nature of the requirements could be further developed by supporting systems of mentoring. (Please refer to third and final section of this pamphlet).

## Assessing or certifying the naturalisation requirements

But does it make a difference exactly what content is included in the ‘citizenship’ test or courses? Will there be different outcomes? What may be most significant is that two forms of assessment exist – the test route and the course route, and that the test is not too difficult and can be repeated until the applicant passes. The rationale for this is that the test is not meant limit access to citizenship, but rather to certify knowledge and understanding of relevant information for those settling permanently in the UK and/or applying for British citizenship. It is often argued that the word, ‘test’ has negative connotations, and may indeed have the reverse of the intended effect - that instead of encouraging more people to apply for citizenship, that fewer will apply. At a presentational level, it may be useful to consider ways of encouraging (or at least not discouraging) potential applicants to apply for citizenship. In part, this may be related to presentation, but also actively promoting and publicising the process of applying for citizenship.

### Recommendation 6

That the word ‘test’ be dropped, and instead, be replaced by the more accurate term, ‘certification’.

### Recommendation 7

That the government support publicity events across different regions and administrations, possibly run in conjunction with local authorities, other public sector bodies and public relations organisations (as recommended in the original ‘Life in the UK’ Advisory Group Report).

Furthermore, there has been no evaluation of the impact of the new naturalisation requirements. It is important to establish whether there are differential outcomes comparing the two routes, and to be able to interpret findings in relation to such variables as age, sex, (former) nationality, social class, level of English language proficiency, level of education, and length of time in the UK. As noted earlier, it is of concern that the statistics show that the test pass rate is lower than expected, and this is especially the case for some nationalities, for example with pass rates lower than 50% for those from Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Turkey (ABNI Annual Report 2007).

### Recommendation 8

That the government urgently commence a longitudinal evaluation of the impact of the introduction of the new naturalisation requirements or that such research is commissioned, as originally recommended by the report of the ‘Life in the UK’ Advisory Group.

Whilst the overall content of the Handbook certainly signals what is important to know about living as a citizen in the United Kingdom, it could be argued that the actual content of the test itself – that is, one chapter included rather than another on the test, is relatively less important than the experience of going through the learning process or ‘journey’ itself. In fact, the naturalisation requirements, in particular the ESOL and Citizenship course route, were conceived of by the ‘Life in the UK’ Advisory Group as learning ‘entitlements’, providing, in some cases, a first step towards a ‘lifelong learning’ journey. This may be particularly important for more marginalised sections of immigrant communities, who would not necessarily take the step (or be supported to do so) to engage in such active learning.

Not only is this an educative initiative, but also through interaction in the classroom, comes with it opportunities for social interaction and mixing with others, greater possibilities for work and professional integration, and also, it is hoped, an interest, and sense of empowerment to become civically involved in the local community and beyond. It also recognises the importance of being able to communicate verbally in the language of the receiving society in order to avoid exclusion, which also plays an important role in facilitating and promoting participation in social, economic and civic domains. Given these benefits of interaction through attending classes, I would recommend that there should be a reconsideration of the original recommendations in the ‘Life in the UK’ Advisory Group report pertaining to those at higher levels of English above ESOL Entry level 3, who currently take a test at a local test centre. It was never intended for those applying for British citizenship to be ‘tested’ without the educational and social benefits of meeting and interacting with others through a class, or through meaningful and active participation in a community context. Those taking the test route should also be required to undertake such a form of ‘interaction’.

### Recommendation 9

The original recommendation was that applicants attend a “short course. in a recognised educational institution or with an authorized provider with a qualified teacher”, or “self study and/or distance learning to develop an appropriate portfolio or other evidence of civic learning, volunteering or civic participation” (Home Office, 2003, p.22-23). Therefore, those at or above ESOL Entry level 3 should, in addition to taking the test, be additionally required to enroll in a short course or show portfolio evidence of civic participation. This would also address the lower than expected pass rates on the test.

With regard to the recommendations of what is judged to be ‘sufficient’ knowledge of English language and ‘sufficient’ knowledge of citizenship and how this is to be measured, I have already mentioned that the requirements were never intended to be a ‘hurdle’ to the acquisition of citizenship; rather, such entitlements were envisioned to be the first important step in communicating and participating with one’s fellow citizens, and learning and integrating into a new culture. In fact, the New and the Old Report actually refers to the proposed courses as an “entitlement”. The notion of ‘progress’, as opposed to reaching an endpoint is evident in the very title of the Handbook: *Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship*. Here ‘journey’ is the significant word – intended to portray citizenship as a continual process, and the formal acquisition of the legal status of citizenship as only the starting point. This notion of ‘progress’ illustrates the strong educative purpose that the new naturalisation requirements were expected to fulfill, and is evident in the two forms of assessment – the course route and the test route, and also in the measurement of progress indicated by moving from one ESOL level to the next.

#### Recommendation 10

It is important to retain the notion of ‘progress’, as opposed to imposing one common standard, within the assessment of what is judged to count as ‘sufficient’ English and ‘sufficient’ knowledge of life in the UK.

### Administering the test

The citizenship test is a 45-minute online test consisting of 24 questions of 4 main formats: multiple choice, true/false, choosing 2 correct answers from 4, and choosing which of two statements is correct. It has been contracted out by the Home Office and is managed by a private company, UFI. Tests are taken at a learndirect test centre. The questions draw directly from the text in the designated test chapters and are direct comprehension, and are not intended to require the reader to make inferences from the text. UFI, the company that manages the Life in the UK test on behalf of the Home office has a website ([www.lifeintheuktest.gov.uk](http://www.lifeintheuktest.gov.uk)) which provides contact details for test centres where the test can be taken, details of fees, a sample test, and basic computer training in the use of the keyboard and mouse for those requiring such additional support. Each test-taker takes a different test (that is, a different set of 24 test items). Most test-takers take the test in English, although it is available in Welsh or Scottish Gaelic. The test also fulfills the requirement that applicants for citizenship, and also, since April 2007 - permanent settlement, show evidence of “sufficient” English (or Welsh or Scottish Gaelic) as the questions have been written at as level so as to require understanding of language at ESOL Entry level 3.

The question might be raised as to whether this administrative process best serves the aims and objectives of citizenship agenda – namely to promote integration and sense of belonging.

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<sup>4</sup> TimeBank monitor survey October 2007

### Recommendation 11

An argument could be made in terms of promoting a more meaningful sense of belonging by managing the ‘test’ or ‘certification’ process by the government itself (possibly at the local authority level) rather than by a private company – as is the case with regard to management and administration of the citizenship ceremonies.

It could also be considered whether this certification might take the form of an interview as opposed to in the form of a written test. However, whilst an interview would seem to be more appropriate in conceptual terms – that is, it would seem more like ‘certification’ and less like a ‘test’, it may result in too great a bureaucratic burden on local authorities. Over time, the ‘certification’ point will shift towards the point of settlement, rather than citizenship. Numbers for certification of citizenship will be expected to shrink, but overall numbers of those sitting the test will rise given that this includes all those applying for indefinite leave to remain.

### Recommendation 12

That impact assessments and financial assessments be carried out to make an evidence-based judgment as to whether the introduction of an interview-based certification would be viable.

Whilst it is clear that there must be a compelling case to shift away from the ‘test’ model to an ‘interview’ model, this only emphasises the urgent need for an evaluation of the impact of the introduction of the new naturalisation requirements. There is no reliable research evidence upon which to make such important policy decisions. It is crucial that decisions can be informed by such research evidence as opposed to relying on ideologically-driven arguments. Therefore it can not be stated too strongly, as outlined in recommendation 8 – that a longitudinal evaluation, (as has been set up in the domain of citizenship education), should be implemented as soon as possible.

## Supporting aspiring new citizens

In this final section, I will briefly reiterate and signpost a number of areas for supporting aspiring new citizens in their learning journey to citizenship:

### i) Mentoring

It is particularly important to provide support for mentoring of new immigrants and would-be citizens, by those citizens in the receiving community across different ethnic and religious groups. Indeed, it was noted in the Mentoring pamphlet earlier in this series, that often this mentoring relationship often provides mentees with their first direct and substantive experience with someone from outside of their own community. It is important to quality assure mentors and provide appropriate training for mentors – and government must financially support voluntary organisations in fulfilling this role. In addition, specifically schemes for economic integration should be developed and supported through partnerships between voluntary organisations and businesses.

- ii) **Continued funding and training for ESOL and citizenship teachers**  
As previously mentioned, there is continued need to provide funding towards the training of ESOL and citizenship teachers across the UK. (Please refer to section 1).
- iii) **Publicity campaign (a ‘travelling roadshow’) explaining the naturalisation process and promoting the benefits of applying for citizenship across the UK**  
In the context of encouraging longstanding permanent residents to apply for citizenship, as well as providing clear information (and dispelling misinformation) to newer immigrants, I would recommend that government fund a ‘travelling roadshow’ in order to promote the benefits of applying for citizenship. This would consist of relevant officials and/or Ministers in partnership with new citizens, and supported by business, voluntary organisations and public relations firms.
- iv) **‘Participation portfolios’ as supplementary or alternative forms of certification**  
Given that the introduction of the new naturalisation requirements have been framed primarily in terms of promoting effective integration of newcomers into life in the UK, it is important that this ‘journey’ to citizenship is meaningful, useful and relevant. It is clear that the ESOL and Citizenship courses route provides opportunities for meaningful active participation and interaction, and encourages lifelong learning – of benefit to the economy as well as promoting integration and community cohesion. It is important also for those with higher levels of English, going through the ‘test’ route to have opportunities for active participation, therefore I would recommend a consideration of supplementary<sup>4</sup> forms of certification for this group – in the form of schemes of active participation and volunteering where aspiring citizens can document this learning and experience in a ‘participation portfolio’ which can then be certified.
- v) **Encouraging the engagement of the business sector with regard to its potential role in integration - training and mentoring support**  
The potential contribution of the business sector to the learning and integration of immigrants and new citizens should not be underestimated. Government should support employers providing ESOL and citizenship learning opportunities to their employees, which could be encouraged by making it a requirement of becoming a sponsor under the points-based system. In some large companies or organisations, there may be capacity for on-site English language support, and other forms of mentorship relevant to economic, but also social and civic integration, and this should also be supported and encouraged.

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<sup>4</sup> In the first instance, until an evaluation can inform a decision as to whether to move away from the ‘test’ model to an ‘interview’ model.

**vi) Education and awareness-raising with regard to equivalence of non-UK qualifications**

In efforts to maximise economic integration, and to effectively take advantage of the skills of immigrants and new citizens, in some cases it is important to educate the employer where there can sometimes be lack of knowledge and sometimes even prejudice regarding qualifications obtained from outside of the UK. This can become a barrier to successful and appropriate employment. I would reiterate the recommendation made in the 'Life in the UK' report with regard to addressing this issue – that there be awareness raising campaigns so as to educate and familiarise employers with non-UK based qualifications, through such frameworks as provided by the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) on non-UK qualifications and their equivalents.

# Conclusions

This pamphlet has emphasised the importance of the learning journey to citizenship, which is both a cognitive and emotional journey. English language skills and ‘citizenship’ knowledge of life in the UK are centrally important in achieving economic, civic and social integration of immigrants settling and making their lives in the UK. However, the government must adequately support and show real financial commitment to individuals’ efforts to integrate through sufficient funding of the further education sector and other community organisations providing ESOL and citizenship classes, and an urgent review of the ‘3-year’ rule. In addition, teacher training is crucially important, and must continue to be supported.

A question that keeps surfacing is the effectiveness and suitability of the ‘test’. It is important to remember that people’s lives are at the heart of this rather than merely a comparison of systems and ‘measuring’ instruments. There are clearly differing arguments about the pros and cons of the test model, however, until the government commissions a longitudinal evaluation of the impact of the introduction of the new naturalisation requirements on people’s journeys to citizenship, there will be no real and reliable research evidence upon which to make such important decisions.

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