

Dear MP¹

I'm writing to you to protest about the huge fee - £1,012 - that children have to pay to apply to register to become British citizens. I learned about this through the Project for the Registration of Children as British Citizens (PRCBC). PRCBC is a small charity supporting children and young people, often those without parents or legal guardians, to register to become British citizens.

Please ask the Home Secretary to reconsider this policy and reduce children's citizenship fees.

Many children living in the UK have the absolute right in law to become British – e.g. if they were born here and if they have lived here for the first 10 years of their life, or one of their parents gained settlement after their birth, or they were born and are stateless and have lived here for five years. But many of these children can't apply because of the huge cost. There is also no legal aid to help a child to register as a British citizen.

Setting so high a fee for a child who has the right to get citizenship is wrong and unfair and creates a divide. In the case brought by PRCBC, the High Court found the fee to be unlawful because it has been set without consideration of children's best interests.² For many children - children in care, children who have been estranged from their families, young people struggling to get by on their own - these fees present an insurmountable barrier to citizenship - something these children have a right to.

It is particularly wrong that the Home Office states its actual cost to deal with the application is £372. This means £640 of the £1,012 fee is profit to the Home Office. Unlike some immigration application fees, there is no provision for a fee exemption, even for children in care.

British citizenship would put these children in the same position as their friends and make them feel fully part of society. They should not be priced out of their rights when they fulfil all the criteria to register as British citizens, except that they are too poor to afford the fee.

Please ask the Home Secretary to reduce the fee to no more than the actual cost and provide an exemption from the fee to children in local authority care and fee waivers for any child unable to pay. The government should not be making a profit from children's rights to British citizenship. No child with the right to British citizenship should be excluded by a fee.

Yours sincerely

[Your name]

¹ [You can find out who your MP is through www.parliament.uk – put in your postcode at 'Find your MP' and you can find out your MP's name and his or her email and postal address]

Usually the email address for the MP is firstname.surname.mp@parliament.uk but some also have other email addresses mainly for their constituents.

² The judgment is called *R (PRCBC, O & A) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2019] EWHC 3536 (Admin) and is available here: <https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2019/3536.html>

[Your full address, including postcode – the MP needs this to know that you live in the area he or she represents. your phone number if you want the MP to be able to phone you, you don't need to put this.]