



Justice and Home Affairs Committee

Corrected oral evidence: The Life in the UK Test

Tuesday 29 March 2022

10 am

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Members present: Baroness Hamwee (The Chair); Baroness Chakrabarti; Lord Dholakia; Lord Hunt of Wirral; Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws; Lord Ricketts; Baroness Sanderson of Welton; Baroness Shackleton of Belgravia.

Evidence Session No. 1

Heard in Public

Questions 1 - 9

Witnesses

[I](#): Mr Sunder Katwala, Director, British Future; Professor Dina Kiwan, Professor of Comparative Education, Department of Education and Social Justice, University of Birmingham; Ms Madeleine Sumption, Director, Migration Observatory.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

1. This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witnesses

Mr Sunder Katwala, Professor Dina Kiwan and Ms Madeleine Sumption.

Q1 **The Chair:** Good morning and welcome to the Justice and Home Affairs Select Committee. We are discussing the citizenship Life in the UK Test. I am very pleased to welcome our witnesses: Sunder Katwala, the director of British Future; Madeleine Sumption, the director of Migration Observatory; and Dina Kiwan, professor of comparative education, Department of Education and Social Justice, University of Birmingham. Welcome to all of you.

We all have some questions. Please do not be formal. Interrupt one another and interrupt us, as you see appropriate, because we really want to understand what you all think of this. It is a narrow piece of work. A number of other committees, and of course lots of people outside this place, have looked at citizenship in its very broadest sense. We are confining ourselves to the Life in the UK Test that applicants for citizenship and for indefinite leave to remain need to pass.

I have a copy of the Life in the UK Test *Handbook* at last from the Library. I am waiting for mine, paid for, from the Stationery Office, but it has not arrived. It is awful when one's prejudices are confirmed immediately. It fell open at cricket, so maybe that is what my colleagues look at in the Library.

As I said, legislation requires long-term residents, ILR and prospective citizens, to have "sufficient knowledge about life in the United Kingdom", which of course begs quite a big question of what is "sufficient knowledge". What do each of you understand to be sufficient knowledge about life in the United Kingdom? I will come to you last, Professor Kiwan, because I know you were involved in the early work. Let me start with Sunder Katwala.

Mr Sunder Katwala: Thank you for the invitation to be here. British Future is a charity and think tank. We conducted a short inquiry on the broader citizenship process.

On life in the UK and what it is to be sufficiently prepared for it, the test achieves some things, perhaps imperfectly and a bit clunkily, that it is trying to achieve, but it is not really there to prepare you for life in the UK. It is for years four, five and six of life in the UK. What we should have been doing on day one, year one and year two to help you navigate your way around shops, schools or the public services and so on is an earlier question. Now, after you have lived in the UK for several years, we are preparing you to become part of the body of citizens, so you will gain the right to vote and the responsibilities and duties to sit on juries if you are called and so on. It is doing a slightly different thing.

De facto, we are clearly checking people's willingness and ability to absorb quite a lot of information, some of it very useful and some of it a bit pointless, in order to show that they are willing to do that. Obviously, in doing that we are testing their English skills up to a point, and their ability to remember and retain things and get them right in a multiple choice quiz.

What it is not quite doing is the obvious, common-sense thing it should be doing, which is trying to give people, and get from them, the kind of knowledge that the group of citizens they are joining would already hold. That should be the thing it was doing. We are, perhaps reasonably, giving an idealised version of our country to our new citizens. We are asking them to be idealised citizens. All citizens should know their history and so on, and these citizens will. The rest of us probably will not. When we brought together British-born and new citizens in Edinburgh and Southampton, and got them to do bits of the test, the British-born citizens were very reliant on the people who had done the test and read the book to put historical events in chronological order.

It is not meeting the test of getting you to do things that other people would know among the group of people who are doing it. It could do that if we refined it a bit. It is a sort of mash-up of the driving theory test, where you remember the stuff while you are doing it, and a bit of pub quiz. Really, it is a sort of Civil Service entry test. There is some very arcane information in it. Somebody who did it told me that one question was, "Do men and women have equal rights?" Well, we need people to know that and, whether you think it or not, you would probably guess what the answer was. The next question was, "How many quangos are there, roughly?" That is not particularly a thing that you need to know.

The Chair: You mentioned the use of language. I am asking what is sufficient knowledge about life in the UK. There are language requirements as well. Are you saying that a knowledge of the English language is an integral part of the test?

Mr Sunder Katwala: By its nature, because there is a handbook and a set of questions, it is. There is very broad consensus among the population at large and new citizens that it is reasonable. It is very hard, I think, to have full participation in the democratic, social and economic life of the country you are joining as a citizen if you do not have some functional English. If we set it too high, we would exclude people. The current level is about right, but that is one of the things we are requiring of would-be citizens, compared to—

The Chair: Does this test that?

Mr Sunder Katwala: De facto it does because you have to remember the information.

The Chair: But is that what it is designed to do quite separately from another English test?

Mr Sunder Katwala: I think we have never quite pinned down what it is for. Others here will know the history. Is it there to check that you have these credentials, or that you are who you say you are and that you have the commitment? Is it there to reassure the general population of the hoops we are making other people jump through by doing it? We have never quite balanced those things, but de facto it is the way that we are testing comprehension, possibly in terms of what is in the book

and what is in the questions at a somewhat higher level than you might think was precisely necessary.

The Chair: Madeleine, what do you think is “sufficient knowledge”?

Ms Madeleine Sumption: To frame the discussion, it might be helpful to talk briefly about the different types of knowledge that one might require of people. I think there may be separate conversations about what is necessary and sufficient.

Basically, there are various different categories. There is political and constitutional knowledge—“What are the four nations of the United Kingdom?”—and that kind of stuff. Then there is the pub quiz trivia, either historical or cultural facts, such as Roundheads and Cavaliers and “Four Weddings and a Funeral”. Then there is a more practical set of things. On the one hand, it is what the law requires of you, such as cars needing an MoT and forced marriage being illegal. On the other hand, it is how you use some of the services that are available, such as registering with a GP and that kind of thing.

You then get into the more subjective area of stuff, which is broadly labelled “values” in some way: tolerance, and respect for religious freedom. Then there is a fuzzier area of things that the curriculum drafters believe to be social norms. That, of course, is very subjective. It is stuff like it being useful to shop locally. All of that kind of stuff is in there as well.

Analytically, it is useful to separate those types of things and think about which ones we actually need. When we are thinking about what is sufficient, the key question is really, “Sufficient for what?” We have to distinguish between what is desirable, as Sunder said — what we think it would be good that newcomers know — and what is actually necessary, particularly given that an assessment is something people can pass or fail, and there will be people who fail it. It is easy to make the case that some of these things—the pub quiz trivia-type things—are desirable for people to know. It is more complicated to say that they should be removed from the country after five years of living here if they have not heard of “Four Weddings and a Funeral”. Similarly, should people be denied a vote, because that is the main thing you get from being a citizen, if they do not know some of these things?

Analytically, when thinking about it, what is actually sufficient is subjective, and reasonable people will disagree. Analytically, something that is helpful to think about is, in the case of ILR, should people be required to leave if they do not know this? Or should they be prevented from voting and having other benefits of citizenship if they do not know that? That is effectively what the policy is doing.

Professor Dina Kiwan: To start with, if we just take the concept of “sufficient”, what does that actually mean? It entails a notion of enough, adequate or to meet the needs of. As Madeleine said, it is necessarily subjective. It entails making normative judgments about what should count as sufficient or what is fit for purpose.

The notion of fit for purpose implied in the conception can be judged by evaluating the policy aims and whether those are met. But that necessarily will depend on the type of citizenship—liberal, communitarian, republican or other—that you hold. Also is it sufficient for whose needs? Is it for the prospective citizens? Is it the perceived needs of the state, with dimensions such as security, participation or social cohesion, or is it about other citizens and their perceived concerns or needs?

When I was on the life in the UK advisory group, which it is scary to say was 20 years ago, we were driven very much by the notion of stressing practical knowledge to meet immediate, everyday needs and civic competence, over and above more abstract historical academic knowledge. There was a judgment that the acquisition of the knowledge should not be overly onerous. It was telling that at least eight of the 14 of us on the committee had a background in education. It was seen as a very educative process fundamentally, and as the starting point of a learning journey. There was a more liberal notion of the requirements of citizenship rather than a thicker, more maximal identity-laden notion of citizenship. That was at the time when I was there.

The Chair: Perhaps we can come on to how it has morphed since then. I had a look at the report, and knowing the law is described briefly as what the police can and cannot do; rights and duties; the protection of the law and basic obligations; and then some specific references. There is reference to consumer protection, trading standards and some levels of courts, as well as how to get legal advice. It is all quite hard information, as are everyday needs on types of housing, how you use the health service and how you get children into school. I am reading those out just to give the context of what the advisory group was looking at then.

Q2 Baroness Sanderson of Welton: Thank you for coming here today. Assuming that we do not quite know what sufficient knowledge is, when we decide that, what are the different means for assessing it and how do you think they compare with each other? We know who is expected to fulfil the test as we have it at the moment, but are they the right categories? Who should be expected to fulfil the test of sufficient knowledge, and what should their performance be?

Professor Dina Kiwan: If we look across, beyond the UK, there is obviously a citizenship test mode. There are tests of language, sometimes speaking, reading and writing, or mixtures of those. There are integration courses and interviews. There is quite an array of things.

What was particularly significant, and I think what we were proud of in the life in the UK advisory group, was that we actually had two modes: the test route and the course route. The test was set at ESOL entry level 3, so if you were at that level or above you could do the test route, and that would implicitly meet the language requirements as well. If you were not at that level, to promote an inclusive approach to acquiring citizenship, you could take an ESOL course at an accredited college.

The fact that the Government accepted those recommendations signalled a rationale that the English language requirement was not meant to be a hurdle, relatively speaking. The report actually refers to it as an entitlement. Again, as I was saying, it was very educatively framing the concept of citizenship as learning.

Clearly, when one looks at the statistics, 80% were doing the test route and 20% the course route, so there are issues as to quite what was going on. Were people going into the test route for various reasons? Was it less expensive and less of a time burden? It might not have been the right thing. That is another side of it.

Integration aspects were seen to be particularly well met in the course route that you could not get in the test route. You swat up and go and sit the test, and that is it, whereas with the course route prospective citizens would report how they met other people from outside their community. It was learning with others. In my academic work, I have conceptualised learning in three ways: cognitive, emotional and participative. Clearly, the test route does the cognitive, but when you have the course route you also have the chance for emotional learning and a sense of belonging and identity, as well as participation and being involved.

On the question of who should be expected to fulfil the requirement, clearly there are a set of exemptions around age and disability. Refugees in the UK are not required to do it, although there are variations across Europe. Germany is quite like us. The Netherlands is making its language requirements harder. France includes writing now, although keeping it at the same level. The US is quite strict on age, whereas for Canada you are exempt at age 55 and above.

On the ILR citizenship debate, when we had these discussions as part of the life in the UK advisory group we were thinking about it in very conceptual terms. When you are permanently settling in a place, it is the same kind of knowledge, skills and involvement, except for the actual ability to vote. It was seen that one might as well take the test at that stage, but if you failed the test it would not be the fact that you had to leave.

Baroness Sanderson of Welton: Thank you. Madeleine?

Ms Madeleine Sumption: In terms of the different options, there is the standard multiple choice-type test that we have here. That is obviously mechanised and done totally with a computer and is very efficient. There are some countries where they have interviews, but still with pretty prescribed, formulaic questions and answers. For example, the US has an oral interview, but it asks one of 128 specific questions. It is not delving into what the interviewer feels like asking.

You can, in theory, have interviews. There have been some cases of that. There was a very controversial case back in 2006 in the German state of Baden-Württemberg, where they had an interview that was meant to be more nuanced and actually trying to get to the bottom of what people's values were. It was very controversial, partly because it is much more discretionary and very subjective.

The main alternative to those different types of testing will be some kind of course. That is potentially more inclusive, in the sense that it does not have to be a pass or fail course. It can just be that you are exposed to the content, but we are not going to have the more punitive side of it and say, “You cannot stay or you cannot become a citizen if you don’t pass”. The flip-side is that there may be greater costs for a course. If people have to pay for it, that could exclude people as well.

The other serious option on the table, which a lot of countries do and is probably the single most common option, is nothing at all. The standard across comparable high-income countries would be just to have a residence requirement, a language requirement and a criminal background check. If people have lived and held down whatever is their legal status in the country for around five years, you assume that along the way they will have acquired what they need.

On the question about who should take it, there is a big question about ILR versus citizenship. The function of a test is different for ILR versus citizenship, as I mentioned previously. What you think the test is assessing should inform whether it is ILR or citizenship. If you are going to do it at ILR, the argument effectively needs to be that this knowledge is so important that it would be damaging for there to be people who are in the country permanently and do not know these things. A low threshold of knowledge would meet that standard, whereas if you are thinking of something maybe a little bit more symbolic—to be honest, I think the purpose of this policy is symbolic in many ways—maybe it is more appropriate at citizenship, that has more symbolic content than ILR.

Baroness Sanderson of Welton: That is really helpful; thank you.

Mr Sunder Katwala: When we talk to people about this, especially when we brought new citizens and British-born citizens together, the new citizens were more emphatic about the case for something rather than nothing, whereas the British-born citizens were not sure. That was partly because one group had thought about it and been through it, and the other group were thinking about it for the first time.

What did they value? They valued the handbook because in a way the handbook says, “If you, British society and the British state, can tell us the things that you think we should know and you put them in one place, we will find out the things you think we should know, and you should check if we know them or not”. It is useful to have what it is in one place, because otherwise there is a need-to-know basis for what to know to fit in that is fuzzier and less accessible. That was the value of the handbook.

As to how to do it, I think the multiple choice tick-box test is fairer than the subjective interview at the town hall that is subject to unconscious biases, but it is not a particularly good way to do it. It is a functional way to do it. If you need to do it at scale and you do not want to invest too much in the process of checking that people have learned the thing and can tick the boxes, it works. It is a way that you can do 80,000 or 100,000 people if you just check whether people want to read the book and jump the hoops.

If you are taking citizenship seriously, it is an active thing. It is a discourse-based thing. The tick-box allows you to say that tolerance is good, genders are equal, racism is bad, terrorism is wrong and, “If we ask you those questions, would you please tick the appropriate version?” In a way, you are affirming that you know what the correct answers are, and you are willing to tick them. In a nothing system you would be doing something like that. Presumably, you would be signing some statement of commitment to something.

The course-based versions are better if you create the time and resource. I think you should pilot them because active citizenship is a contact sport with other people. Free speech is good but hatred is bad, and the issue of how you balance those things or how much you retain your identity, background and heritage but become part of the thing that everybody shares is quite subjective. If you talk those things through, you get somewhere, hearing other people’s stories about them.

They have done versions of this in some countries. The best version would be a course that new citizens did alongside another group of people who are acquiring the responsibility of citizenship—for example, 16 to 18 year-olds, or people who live here and know their way around to now acquire knowledge about their rights, duties and obligations. It would be of benefit to young, new citizens to be in contact with new citizens. It would be of benefit to new citizens to be in contact with other new citizens. If you piloted a 10-week course or something as an option, it would be more expensive to deliver and would mean more time commitment from those who did it, but it would be a better version of what active citizenship is than learning multiple test answers and ticking the right boxes.

Baroness Sanderson of Welton: You potentially have one extreme to another: nothing or very resource intensive.

Mr Sunder Katwala: That is quite doable.

Q3 **Baroness Chakrabarti:** I think this might be a good time for my question. You mentioned other countries. Could I ask all three of you what lessons you think we might learn from alternative models, tests or other mechanisms serving the same purpose as a test in other countries, and which of those you think is the best model?

Professor Dina Kiwan: In a sense, I will repeat what I said. I think the course model, if it can be funded properly, and the certification and bureaucracy is minimised, is at the forefront of best assessing civic knowledge. It is learning the language, and the civic content is embedded there. It takes inclusion seriously and takes account of different starting points for levels of language. It implicitly acknowledges differences in opportunity, social class, ability, life experience and former education in a way that a standard test at one level cannot do. I was surprised that the split was 80% doing the test and 20% doing the course, but when you understand the context and how funding was removed from 2007 that is the result.

In terms of purely what is the best way, I would say the course, but in politics you have all sorts of other factors such as funding and whether you want to prioritise it and so on. I believe that the best mode is the course.

Baroness Chakrabarti: Dr Sumption, are you aware of other countries that are doing the same thing but differently and better?

Ms Madeleine Sumption: As I mentioned, the most mainstream option is not to have anything at all. I think that is probably the most common. There is the option that we used to have of a choice between the test and the course. That is potentially more inclusive, in the sense that different modes will work for different people. Someone who works very long hours, for example, may struggle to attend a scheduled course, whereas for other people it may be more convenient or less stressful than going through the test.

In terms of other models, we might get a couple of lessons from experiences in other countries. The first is to be aware of the limits of what it is actually possible to test. The German example that I mentioned in Baden-Württemberg is an interesting case. In some ways, the things that people care the most about—the idea of values—are the most difficult. It is something that this model of testing is not well suited for. We may need to scale back ambitions in that respect.

The US test is an interesting model. It does not have too much on values and so forth. It is very focused on political and constitutional knowledge. What is interesting about it, probably more than the content, is that it is quite short. It has defensibility in the sense that they are mostly things that Americans would know. Some of the stuff is a little more complex, but if you look down the list most of the things are defensible: “What happens on 4 July?” They are the types of things that are genuinely part of a shared culture. The other thing that is interesting about it is that all the questions and answers are published in advance, which makes it less stressful for people. There is a transparency about what they are expected to know. The amount of content is manageable.

All the different models do different things, but I think the US model is quite interesting from that perspective.

Professor Dina Kiwan: With the course model, it has been found that once people have taken one course—I am talking about the more vulnerable members of society and those who traditionally have been excluded—they are very likely to go on and do further education. That may not be a direct aim of the course, but it has wider benefits.

Baroness Chakrabarti: Is there something to be said for a combination of what you are both discussing? There could be a course for the process, for all the educational, inclusion, emotional and cognitive benefits that you mentioned earlier, and the defensibility that to be an American you need to know about the basic rules of the constitution. Is there something to be said for a course with a very simple transparent test at the end of it?

Professor Dina Kiwan: I guess it would depend how simple it is. One of the areas where there has been very little focus on looking at the effects on different groups is those with disabilities. The US makes some adaptations, but most countries just say, “If you have a disability, it is all black and white. You are out or you do it”. There are 1 billion people globally with a disability. It is projected that by 2050 a quarter of the globe will have some kind of disability. This is a pressing issue and there is going to be mass migration as a result of conflict, climate change and pollution. It will become more and more important for us to be more sophisticated in how we design a test, a course or whatever the requirements are going forward.

Mr Sunder Katwala: In order to work out where to look for lessons, there is an underlying question that has not quite been answered in the UK. Do we have a position, a policy or an approach to citizenship itself? Are we pro it, so we would like to encourage it, welcome it and celebrate it, but not insist on it because it might not be for everybody? Are we agnostic about it? Our official policy is broadly agnostic, but if you are agnostic about it and if you meet the eligibility, the number of years and you can tick the boxes, that is fine and a process is all it is. Are we making it difficult so that it is special, or would it be more special if we made it more difficult? We have never quite understood that.

Some societies have tended to be quite pro-citizenship. America, Canada and Australia do more ceremonial and symbolic things. The American version is the one that probably meets the “Are we asking new citizens to do the things that 18 year-olds can do?” and so on.

We are broadly agnostic about it. If you are agnostic about it in the UK, you introduce these processes, but really the Government do not know whether they are for it or against it. It ends up being a bit of a money-spinner. You just see what you can gain from it, and you do not value people being encouraged to do it or being welcomed when they do it, because people will have to pay if they have to do it.

If you are trying to encourage it, you think about the eligibility and the promotion of the idea. You think about the test and the ceremony together as something you want to be seen to be valued. It would take you more towards the social contact models as well, if we introduced into the process some contact with the other people who are on that journey. If you are just getting people to tick the box and say, “I know the fundamental values and I am not for terrible things”, you will do less.

Baroness Chakrabarti: That is helpful. Thank you.

The Chair: Madeleine, do any other countries have a test for the equivalent of indefinite leave to remain, or are we an outlier there?

Ms Madeleine Sumption: I should know the answer to that, and I do not. I can probably find out.

The Chair: It was not a trick question. Perhaps we could come back to that with you after today. As you have pointed out, the consequences of failing for someone in that position could be quite dramatic.

Q4 Lord Ricketts: Reflecting for another moment on international practice, some countries put a lot of emphasis on integration and the process being part of integration. In Belgium, I know there are language tests in both languages, French and Flemish, to show that a potential citizen can integrate. In France, it is a very formal process, a bit like America, I think. There is a lot of status applied to it, and the grant of citizenship is done by the préfet in a very formal ceremony. There is quite a strong civic commitment side to it. There are many different models.

Does the Life in the UK Test and the booklet, as it is now developed, actually achieve the purpose, whatever it is we think the purpose should be? I know that you were on the working group, Professor Kiwan. It has of course evolved a lot since 2005. Perhaps I could come to you at the end. As you all know, it has been criticised for accuracy, relevance, gender balance and whether it covers enough practical information or not. Looking back on 15 years of experience with it, is it broadly achieving its intended purpose?

Ms Madeleine Sumption: Overall, we do not have very good evidence on what the full impacts of the test have been. There have been some rigorous studies, talking to test takers and asking them what they got out of the test and whether they thought it was useful or not. Generally, the views have been mixed. Often, people say that they thought there was a value to some of the things they learned from the handbook about the history of the UK that they might not otherwise have known.

One of the main criticisms that test takers had in some of the studies is the rote memorisation of a tremendous amount of content, which they are aware that many British people do not know themselves. My conclusion from those studies would be that test takers do not necessarily have a problem with the idea of a test, but they did not feel that the content was defensible because there was so much of it and because some of it is quite obscure.

There will be other impacts, but we do not know very much about them. One of the things in particular is: what is the deterrent effect of the test? There is research with people who have taken it, but we do not have a good sense of the people who never even attempt to become citizens because they do not think that they can make it through the process.

Lord Ricketts: It would be interesting to know whether people think it gives them the practical knowledge that you would need as a citizen, as a result of the rote learning.

Mr Sunder Katwala: I think we must make a distinction between the handbook and the test. The handbook is doing a better job than the test. The handbook is valued because, in the end, the Government and other people have put between some covers the things they feel are the foundations. They might be a bit high, and a British citizen who reads it will laugh at some versions of it. It is a slightly idealised

version. We could label the different bits better. “This is the know-your-rights and responsibilities bit”, and, “This is the fuzzier culture, society and identity bit”, but it is valued that there is a place to find out what it is.

The way we test on that is a bit silly and maybe a bit stressful. We are asking people questions that their fellow citizens do not know. We could fix that quite easily by getting a panel of the new citizens and the old citizens together to say, “You should ask this”, or, “You should not ask that”, and, “All of us think this is a useful thing to know”.

The handbook itself and its existence is good. Its messaging and framing could be better. It does not go to the agnosticism point. It does not say, “Welcome, I am glad you are doing this. Thank you for considering it and it is great you are doing it”. In Canada, the Queen says that on page 1. You get the Queen on page 120 here on some aspect of the constitutional role of the monarchy. In a way, it is the framing of, “Great that you are thinking about this. Here are your rights and responsibilities, and here are some things about the culture and society”.

The other thing that people value would be hearing other people’s journeys. People said to us that what made them really fit in was when they understood idiom. When people say, “It’s not my cup of tea”, what does that mean? “Once I got that, then I knew”. That is the kind of thing a course would do.

One of the things we want to see, for language and for the test, is a Freeview channel that would have bits of the BBC archive to help you. It might also have people saying, “What did I know? What did I come to feel? How did I blend my identities together and what does that mean for my children”? Hearing those stories would bring to life what this is doing in a way that the Civil Service version does not quite achieve.

Lord Ricketts: Professor Kiwan, looking back 20 years at the work you did then and how it has evolved since, are you satisfied that it is doing the job that you hoped it would do? I think I gathered from your previous answers that you are quite in favour of giving people the option of courses as part of a rounded approach.

Professor Dina Kiwan: Fundamentally, it is a question about validity and reliability. On validity, is it measuring what it is supposed to be measuring? On reliability, is it consistently using a method that measures something in the same way over time?

In a sense, this gets back to the first question that was asked. What is the right knowledge to test? It has dogged us over the years. It has gone from whether it should be practical or more on history. When we were led by Sir Bernard Crick, he was of the view that there should be a chapter in the handbook that gave some history, but that it would be unfair to quiz people on it and that that was the difference between the handbook and the test.

We are swaying, depending on different political ideologies and visions of the test, between Labour and Conservatives. In a month’s time, I think, Ricky van Oers is

coming to testify to the committee. She has done some excellent work. In a piece of work that is really good, she talks about three models of citizenship: liberal, republican and communitarian. She takes the citizenship tests and compares them in the UK, the Netherlands and Germany, asking which model is most adhered to by looking at each of the items in the test. All three broadly correspond most closely to the communitarian model, prioritising identity dimensions of citizenship.

What is quite worrying for the UK test, according to the methodology that she uses, is that the UK corresponds least well to any of the models. That says that the test items have not been designed very well or in a very coherent way to correspond properly to any single notion; it is all a bit of a mish-mash.

Lord Ricketts: We shall be interested to talk to her. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Far from starting with a welcome, the first line in the edition I have in front of me says, "Britain is a fantastic place to live", which I think is deeply worrying. Perhaps we should all go home if we are living in a fantasy.

Q5 Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws: My question is about other purposes that a Life in the UK Test could be used for. To some extent, you have already answered aspects of that. One of them was about how the test may increase the value of indefinite leave to remain. I am not sure whether there is a value in including it or not. I should be interested in your view.

It seems to me, from listening to you, that we still have not grappled, as Mr Katwala said, with the idea of whether we want more people to become citizens in the United Kingdom. Are we agnostic on that? What is our real position? Because we have not worked that out, we are messy about what we are seeking to do in this whole project.

I want to go through the possibility that there are other purposes that could be in this that are rather important. It will not surprise people that I am going to speak to you about gender. Many of the people coming to this nation to be welcomed are from nations and cultures in which women do not enjoy equality. I personally do not think we enjoy equality yet either. On that journey, they are still very accepting of ideas that women have a secondary role and that men have primacy.

Should there be more about the importance of what we mean by equality when it comes to issues to do with gender? I do not think that we deal with that adequately. We speak about equality, and people can tick the boxes because they know what is required of them, but attitudes to women in work, what women's place is and making judgments about women on how they dress and so on—all those sorts of things—are quite challenging, but should be challenged in some ways. What do you do about that? What other purposes could a life in the UK handbook or test provide for us if we were to reinvent it?

Professor Dina Kiwan: Yes, I think that is absolutely right. In conjunction with Compass at the University of Oxford, I did a large evaluation study in 2010. It was a large sample of just under 4,000 people who had gone through the route to citizenship, either the course route or the test route. Some had been successful and

some not successful. There was a survey of those 4,000 and we interviewed 75. We tried to get it as varied as we could across gender and other dimensions.

We found that most of those who did the course route had come on a family visa, and literally everyone who did the test had come through a work visa. That is necessarily gendered. This is why the initial thinking, when we were on life in the UK advisory group, was that the course route played an important function in the domain of gender equality. It provided an opportunity for women to get out there and be learning. As I said, they would do one course and it would whet their appetite for further learning and further qualification. That is good in terms of general capital anyway for the country.

Clearly, that is one purpose. There is obviously a purpose around language—

Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws: Language is also very important in terms of gender. Often, women who are at home more do not have opportunities to acquire language. They have difficulties, for example, with their husband always attending at medical appointments. You can miss domestic violence. They do not feel able to participate in the education of their children or to have a view on those sorts of things. It is all of that.

Professor Dina Kiwan: Yes, it is generally to increase autonomy and to be able to be involved in their children's lives at school and so on. There is also the whole idea of promoting social cohesion and inclusion. It was found from our study that people who attend the courses are more likely, even than the British population, to have more cross-ethnic friendships.

There was data that showed that, generally, people were quite integrated into the labour market, and civic volunteering in the community. There were perceptions, though, from citizens themselves that the test performed a gatekeeping function, and there was anxiety around that for some people.

One interesting and paradoxical finding that has come out is that it actually reduces interest in politics statistically when you compare it. There has been a large study across Europe that shows that educational level is correlated with success in naturalisation. I think that would be further exacerbated by a test option rather than a course option.

Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws: I see you nodding, Mr Katwala. One of the other elements of learning and promoting shared values is the business of race, and being more accepting of people of other ethnicities, and the importance of that. Often, one comes with one's previous class and attitudes towards persons deemed of lesser status because of their race in the societies from which people come. There has to be an addressing of all of that in some way if you are to create shared values. What about that one?

Mr Sunder Katwala: Yes, I think that is important. The broader aim, the overall aim, is to answer the very important but quite fuzzy question, "How do people become

us?" A pro-citizenship society is one in which you actually believe that people can become us.

Baroness Shackleton of Belgravia: What is us?

Mr Sunder Katwala: That is very important. If you do not know what "us" is, people cannot become us. My parents came from India and Ireland around the time that Enoch Powell was making speeches about how, if I was born, it would be the death of Britain and the funeral of everybody else. In the end, people believed that people like me could be us rather than them, and that you could be born in Britain of a different ethnic background but be part of us. I had a birthright claim on the country, and I went to school alongside other people. Maybe I knew some of the same cultural stuff. Lenny Henry ended up laughing at Enoch Powell and saying in the local accent, "He wants to give us £1,000 to go home, but it's only £1.50 on the bus to Dudley". He is clearly us. People can become us, and that is part of the symbolism of how it works.

Gender equality, gay rights and race equality are part of that. In my lifetime, we advanced on those issues. We entrenched and we increased them. It is not perfect on any of those fronts, but the idealised version of our country that this book will tell us about is a bit truer in 2020 than it would have been if we had made exactly the same statements in 1980 or 1990. Expectations have risen again. We are giving a slightly idealised version of what we want. Migrants and new citizens are quite up for that. There is a well-known phenomenon of migrant optimism and new citizen optimism of belief in the society you choose to join, and belief in wanting to participate in it and maybe comparing it to other societies. There will be an integration effect with your children and grandchildren. They will integrate into the more sceptical norm of the rest of the people and wonder if it is all a bit idealised. You get that generational effect.

What is important on the gender and race point you raise is that if you do it through contact and show, not tell, and you are a woman in this class and you are being talked about, with the importance of having your voice and the right to vote, and you vote yourself so that other people do not vote for you, and you can volunteer socially and you hear other women talking about how they have done that, that is better than the test and the tick-box saying that the genders are equal in this country and therefore you must believe in that now. You experience, for example, inter-ethnic contact of a greater kind than you might have experienced.

The social contact model is very important. It is very analogous to what Ofsted is trying to do with its fundamental British values in schools. Do you just tell people the right answers and get them to parrot them back at you, or do you get them to undertake exercises in doing things where the genders have equal status and where people of different ethnicities are doing something together? For example, if you engage in the practice of the traditions of remembrance in this country in a way that recognises and reflects the fact that people who served and died for Britain 100 years ago were of all ethnicities and faiths, that is news to some people, and it is

important for some people to recognise. That is a clearer way to do it and experience the value you are trying to have in an active way than being told what the right answer is.

Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws: Thank you very much.

The Chair: In answering this, Madeleine, can you tell us whether the group that reviews and revises the guide has published its thinking with each revision? You may know, Dina.

Professor Dina Kiwan: Not that I am aware of, no.

Ms Madeleine Sumption: Not that I am aware of either. A final thing on the other purposes of the test is that a large part of the function seems to be symbolic. Some people will see that as perfectly right and proper because we are talking about citizenship, which, as you know, has symbolic content. Some people will see that as therefore something that is a waste of time or that is not really doing what its announced purpose is.

If there is a symbolic purpose to the test, it also has some implications in that it needs to make people feel the right way as part of that symbolic process. The key thing—I have used the word “defensible” a few times—is that it needs to be defensible, both in the eyes of the test takers and in the eyes of anyone else who might take a look at what is in it. From that perspective, I think you would want to avoid things that people laugh at because they are pub quiz trivia or are not seen as necessary. If you are keeping a multiple choice format, a lot of the questions are unintentionally humorous, just because you have multiple choice: “Should I respect people or have noisy house parties”? You see where they are coming from. If the value of the thing is symbolic, it is quite important to try to eliminate some of those things. That might just mean having less content, so that you boil it down to the things that everyone agrees genuinely capture something about our society.

Mr Sunder Katwala: There has very simply been an imbalance between stakeholder and expert involvement, which is very important, about what should be in it, and then public citizen engagement in actually how to ask the questions so that they are not silly, and have legitimacy and so on. To some extent, you can see that the questions have been written more by civil servants than the man and woman on the bus and the Tube.

Baroness Chakrabarti: These poor civil servants, Mr Katwala!

Mr Sunder Katwala: “How many days by law does a school need to be open?” People laugh at you for asking that. It is a good question to ask in the communities department entry exam, but it is not a correct question to ask of a new citizen of your country. “Which year did this legislation get passed?” is not important.

If you sense-checked from a panel of people who had done it and a panel of their fellow citizens, you would go a long way very quickly to making it more defensible

and more legitimate because you would not have asked, “How many quangos are there in our country?” I am sure that some of you know, but most of us do not.

Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws: I like the—

The Chair: Baroness Kennedy, we really must move on because there are quite a lot of other Members still to come in.

Baroness Shackleton of Belgravia: Carrying on with that before I ask my question, I query a country that allows people who are not citizens and do not pay tax to own a newspaper and influence how many people vote. How is it so necessary to have this very difficult, steep curve for people who only have one vote? Anyway, that is a very different philosophical question.

Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws: We like it though.

Q6 Baroness Shackleton of Belgravia: Jumping over that particular hoop for some poor person who is going to have to do this test, as opposed to somebody who is very savvy and can influence a lot of people, seems slightly ironic.

Do you consider that there are unintended and unwelcome consequences? I think we have heard from you, Ms Sumption, about people not doing the test because they are scared of either failing, or they find it too oppressive to commit the information to memory. Are there unwelcome consequences that you think are detrimental? Learning sufficient knowledge about life in the United Kingdom from the booklet is, quite frankly, something that somebody who is very good at memory and exams is going to do much better at than somebody who probably could be a very good citizen because their heart is in the right place and they are the sort of person you would like to be left on a two-man boat with because they would behave properly.

What do you consider the consequences would be? I understand from you, Mr Katwala, that your direct preference is social, where these people get together with like-minded people or learn from people who are about to embark on the process, so it is more than just people who are good at doing exams. What, other than stopping people who could be citizens even trying to be citizens, are the negatives of the process?

Ms Madeleine Sumption: I think the key question is about who is excluded and who is unable to do it. The test, as it is currently designed, is cognitively pretty demanding. It will be much easier for some people to pass than others.

The other key thing, particularly with some of the different models that we might be looking at, is that, depending on how you design it, the cost could be quite a negative point. Currently, the main cost that people are paying is the cost of their time because it takes so long to learn the content. The cost of actually taking the test pales in comparison to the cost of becoming a citizen.

If you are going to move towards a model involving courses, there is a very big question about how much the course costs and who pays for it. In this country’s

immigration system, nothing is free. By the time someone gets to citizenship, if they are a non-EU citizen, they may have paid many, many thousands in fees already. If there is to be a course, are the Government willing to pay for that, or does it add another potential £1,000 on top of what is already a very expensive process? That would need to be considered alongside whichever option you are looking at.

Mr Sunder Katwala: There are very important barriers in the citizenship process that should be lessened. Although this could be a bit daunting for some people, and it requires a certain level of language, partly because of the nature of the multiple choice questions—although if you learn to do it, it is not as difficult to do—the other barriers are much higher. We might be interested in reducing the barriers to citizenship for groups that might like it, but we do not promote citizenship to people.

We are just embarking on a point where we have the largest ever group of permanent residents who are not citizens—the EU settled status group. We have not sent them all a letter to say, “This is the process”. We could have created a new channel for that group. We have actually said, “When you get permanent residence, you will become eligible a year later”. What is that provisional licence year with a settled status and permanent residence before you can decide you would like to vote? What is that for? Why is it useful?

The cost of £1,300 is completely out of line with other countries. You can acquire an American, a Canadian, a French or a German citizenship—I could extend the list—and still have lots of change from your £1,300. We are charging four times the cost. That is the barrier that people experience. In doing the test or course option and finding a way to test it, you need to make special provision for some groups that might struggle.

It is more valued by the new citizens because they want to know what it is they should know. Other people in this country might be a bit sceptical about why we are making people jump through the hoops, but the barrier is the cost and the process. You should be able to apply for citizenship in this country without needing a lawyer. If you simplified the system, people could do that, but it would need a lot of simplification.

The Chair: I am not denying this for a moment, and some of us would like to spend time investigating it—I do not know that we feel we would need to investigate it—but writing about the cost of all this, we have quite tunnel vision on the tests.

Baroness Shackleton of Belgravia: Can we hear from Professor Kiwan?

Professor Dina Kiwan: To emphasise the unwelcome consequence of exacerbated inequality, in our large evaluation of the sample of 4,000 it was found that the most common age to apply to go through naturalisation was between 35 and 44. Older people were being put off. There was not really a gender issue, but there was a significant age issue. There are also quite significant differences in success rates

across the different national groups, with Iraqi, Afghani and Turkish being the most challenged and least successful in the tests.

Baroness Shackleton of Belgravia: Could I ask a follow-up question that comes from Mr Katwala's answer? Baroness Kennedy and I sat on the committee for people applying for settled status. At one of the evidence sessions, I took the Home Secretary to task for not saying, "Thank you so much for applying. We very much hope that you will pass this", and making people feel welcome. That does not cost anybody anything. It is just a matter of manners. It is how you should treat people who want to belong to our club or be one of us.

Has anybody tackled the Government as to how that could be altered? If we are not going to have a ceremony or something at the end, there should at least be some acknowledgement that we are grateful to them for even trying.

Professor Dina Kiwan: Yes, that is really important. I think you are right. I do not know if it has been signalled. On encouragement, our research showed that those stepping forward to apply are those who are most recently arrived. People who have been here for a long time are not applying. That is correlated with age as well.

Baroness Shackleton of Belgravia: Thank you.

Q7 Lord Dholakia: Just before I came to this meeting, I was talking to my colleague Lord Hunt. Both of us were asking the same question. We have repeated the question again and again in the answers that you gave about values.

How do you put values to the questions that you are putting forward about the Life in the UK Test? Over 2 million people have taken this test. I would be interested to know what we know about their experiences. Do different groups experience different approaches to life here?

Ms Madeleine Sumption: The question of values is a really difficult one. We may partly just have to accept that a test is not a very good way of getting at someone's values.

In general, I would say that with the citizenship process overall, and particularly with this test, we in the policy community want to put a lot of our hopes and aspirations about what future citizens should be like into the process, but the process itself, when you think about what the actual policy tools are, is quite crude. It is just an unfortunate thing that any multiple choice test is not going to do a very good job of assessing people's values. That might be one that I would put in the desirable but not necessarily feasible category.

Mr Sunder Katwala: Another thing that makes it more challenging is that we are using this tool because it is the tool we happen to use, but we are using it with a particular segment of the cohort. We are talking about life in the UK and values to a segment of people who, having lived here for five or six years, want to become British citizens and have the financial means and the processes to do so. Although it is quite useful, what it is good at is communicating what the fundamental values

are, in case you did not know, but you will already practically know them if you are in that group. It is a good way of finding out about that.

What we are missing, thinking about what is happening at the moment with the women and children who are coming from Ukraine and the Hong Kongers who arrived in large numbers, as well as the people we have evacuated from Afghanistan, is that they want life in the UK guidance now, this year. They want contact that is practical and useful. In four or five years' time, they will be taking the citizenship test and we can make them tick the boxes and know the answers.

We have an enormous surge of public willingness and enthusiasm at quite a high bar—I would like to have somebody in my own home—but a lot of people without a spare room could do a great many things, with contact clubs, getting in touch with people or helping people with conversation. What people are saying is that it would be quite nice if people turned up and helped us out, but we are doing this process with the group of people who, six years later, have decided to apply for citizenship. Almost as a selection effect, we are doing it with the group where the value questions would probably be answered, but we are getting them to tick the boxes.

Lord Dholakia: When I first came to this country in 1956, I was told, “If you want to learn anything about Britain, just stop a policeman in the street and ask him a question”. There was no such thing as a test. Since then, I have found how life has changed over this period of time.

There are three categories of people that I regularly come across, having taken part in citizenship ceremonies, et cetera. The first bunch are the ones who could not care less about the test itself. They do not have any ambition to move forward, other than getting their citizenship certificate. A large number of people who entered the country in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly Bangladeshi women and others, have no further interest in this particular matter.

The second group are young people who were born in this country. They very much follow the question of wanting to drive a car, for which they are required to know about the Highway Code and how you learn about the Highway Code and become a good driver. Within that particular category, there are people who can drive a car, but who are not necessarily taking advantage of what the Highway Code tells you about how to be a good citizen or not.

The third category are people like me, who can apply for Overseas Citizenship of India just by filling out a piece of paper. The only reason I fill it out is that I get the advantage of not having to pay any visa fees to enter India. There are a large number of people who follow this particular line and yet, when they go to India, they are good citizens. They follow the laws, et cetera, and they need no further help at all.

Professor Dina Kiwan: To pick up on that, from our evaluation study most people expressed broad satisfaction for both the test and the course route. As you say, some people have instrumental reasons for becoming British citizens. Others also

value it symbolically, and there are some for whom it helps with mobility. It is also security and stability.

As I mentioned before, depending on nationality, some are more likely to be successful in passing than others. For example, more than half of people from Bangladesh do the course route. The least successful at passing on the test route, as I mentioned, were Turkish, Afghani, Iraqi and Bangladeshi. There is quite a mixture of experiences depending on which group you are in. There are quite differential experiences.

Mr Sunder Katwala: It was interesting that when we ran the inquiry we had Alberto Costa to chair the very broad, cross-party civic group. He is a British-born Conservative MP for one of the Leicestershire seats and is of Scots-Italian heritage. He had quite a personal stake in the Government sorting out their settled status policy because his parents had lived in this country for half a century, and they had never become British citizens. He met our current Prime Minister, who said, “What’s going on? Why haven’t they become British citizens?” One of his points was that it had never been the position of any British Government in particular whether they should or should not, or whether they should be encouraged or be asked. You might or might not fall into any of those categories.

My mother is Irish and has not become a British citizen; the Irish were one of the least likely groups to take up British citizenship. There is a history and an identity there, but she votes in all our general elections, so there is literally nothing in it for her to do that. European nationals did not become British citizens during the period when we were in the European Union because they had come as European citizens. They are now thinking about a different set of questions, whereas other people did become citizens.

Although there are lots of different trajectories, motives and reasons, such as security and safety of the status, and mistrust of the Government if you do not secure the status, as has happened with other statuses, or a commitment to wanting to vote in elections or to be a citizen of the country your children are now growing up in—there are lots of different reasons—it has simply never been the position of a British Government to say, “We actively encourage and welcome this, if you would like to, although we do not insist on it”. We are quite open to dual citizenship in this country; it is only a problem with countries that find it a very complicated and difficult clash.

We have all the elements basically of civic political and public consensus of a pro-citizenship policy that is not insisting on it or enforcing it on you if you are an Irish person who does not see it as what you want to do but is broadly welcoming of it. If we took that view, we would certainly reduce the costs and the barriers, but we would then know what kind of thing the test was for. The test would be a thing we were glad you were doing, and it would end up in a ceremony that you saw as a rite of passage and that we thought was a happy occasion that people were invited to.

As Madeleine said, if you get it wrong in getting people to jump through the right hoops, and if your whole experience of the process, thanks to how the Home Office behaves, is that it was draining and exhausting, the risk is that the rite of passage element is slightly spoiled for people who are the new citizens of our country.

Q8 Lord Hunt of Wirral: I declare an interest as a practising solicitor whose clients have taken this test. I have two questions.

Professor Kiwan, you mentioned the cost. Can we just run through the direct and indirect costs incurred by the test for those taking it, not only the actual cost but the time off, et cetera? Can we put a figure on it?

Professor Dina Kiwan: A financial number?

Lord Hunt of Wirral: Yes.

Professor Dina Kiwan: You are probably better placed to do that than me. Obviously, there is the actual cost. There is the time commitment. There is an estimated number of hours that takes. Is it 400 hours? You then multiply that by whatever, say, the minimum wage would be. There is the burden of all the bureaucracy and the cost if you feel you need a lawyer to help you with the process. It is not insignificant. There are some figures in the literature that try to estimate it. I am afraid I cannot give an exact number, but we do not compare favourably with other countries, where it is cheaper.

The Chair: Are you talking about fees for application or the test?

Professor Dina Kiwan: I was talking about the whole process—the test and then applying for citizenship.

Mr Sunder Katwala: There are two bits. As you say, there is the financial cost—we know what that is—and the time costs, where I do not think we have good estimates. To do the 45-minute, 24 multiple choice question thing is £50. It is an online test. There is an English language test at B1 level, which is like a good GCSE. You do that at a secure examination centre. That costs you another £150. If you have a degree in English or certain other national qualifications, we exempt you from that.

There are those two bits of process, but that is a relatively marginal cost of the citizenship inquiry. There is a lot of blood, sweat and tears involved in learning all of it in order to get 70% on those 24 multiple choice questions. It is not that hard to get the 75%. The pass rate is about 80%, but that is because of the amount of time people have spent doing all of it. As Madeleine says, the American version feels less like it might be designed to trip you up and catch you out. It just says, “These are the things you need to know and here are the answers. Make sure you know them, please”.

Lord Hunt of Wirral: The second part of my question is this. I have actually asked those who have taken the test. One in particular, who got maximum marks, explained to me afterwards that it was only because she had completely read and

memorised the book, so it was easy as far as she was concerned. She asked me, and may I please ask you, this question? There was no real examination of values or beliefs. This is what Lord Dholakia was saying a few moments ago. There was no real examination of values or beliefs to expose those that might be inconsistent with those we wish to promote and protect in our modern, liberal, tolerant society. Is that right? How on earth do we ask those questions?

Mr Sunder Katwala: You are using 24 multiple choice questions in 45 minutes, so it is very like the driving theory test. Some of that stuff you will remember for the rest of your life, and hopefully get it right if it comes up, and lots of it you have forgotten three days later, although you knew all those particular things. That is what we are doing.

In testing for values anywhere, unless you go for the local town mayor deciding whether they like you or not, which has other things about it, and I do not know that we are going to do that, if you want the values element you will need to have some dialogue and discourse between the applicant and other people about what the values mean. On the value of active citizenship, what are the opportunities to volunteer? Should you have to vote in elections or is it okay to choose not to vote in elections? If you do those kinds of school discussion-type issues, you are inculcating the kinds of values of a liberal democracy that is quite individualistic and does not ask you to do too much, but has some rights and obligations for citizens. You can do that in dialogue. You simply cannot do it in a multiple choice tick-box quiz.

Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws: One of the most interesting conversations that I had with the Afghan women judges was after they tried to cross the road at Trafalgar Square, where the lighting system has symbols. Instead of having a green man, you might have a gay couple or symbols of all sorts of things. It gave rise to a very interesting discussion, which would be a values one that was difficult to put on paper.

Lord Hunt of Wirral: Madeleine Sumption, what do you think? We have just benefited from President Zelensky of Ukraine addressing the whole Parliament and using words that he felt described our liberal, modern, democratic society. When I look down this test and look through the 168 pages from the last Select Committee that looked into it, we all seem to be avoiding asking the questions, but he was certainly aware of what those values were. How would you do it?

Ms Madeleine Sumption: First, there is a distinction between the handbook or whatever course you might have — effectively, the educational materials of some kind — and then an actual assessment. It is difficult in many cases to have a nuanced discussion of values, but you can do it in the handbook in a way that does not seem silly.

There are two issues with the test. First, these things are so fundamental that, when you turn them into multiple-choice questions, they seem a bit ridiculous. Secondly, there is the fact that, if you have a test, you cannot test someone's actual beliefs. There is a big debate in the academic literature about whether it is even an

acceptable thing to do. A term I quite like is “repressive liberalism”, requiring people to hold your liberal values.

You cannot test what people actually believe in their own heart. You can test whether they know what the correct answer is considered to be, and that is what the test currently does. It is relatively easy for people to know. I do not get the impression that many people struggle with those particular questions. I do not know that they necessarily come out of the test espousing all those values. It is difficult to tell.

Lord Hunt of Wirral: Repressive liberalism—

Mr Sunder Katwala: I would say “non-repressive liberalism”.

Lord Hunt of Wirral: Or is it courageous integrity? How do we get to the bottom of what is our tolerant, liberal society? How do we engage with people to express that?

Mr Sunder Katwala: I think the way to do that would be to work out how you could pilot and introduce reasonable, contact-based things. As well as the handbook, we should have a Freeview channel that is partly about learning English, which would be useful alongside formal classes and other informal things, and partly about becoming a British citizen. I am very willing to apply to be the controller of that channel. We could have some Simon Schama programmes, some classic comedy and some great sporting moments, as well as whatever I would put on it.

You should then have people doing, “My journey. Here is my story of becoming a British citizen”, or groups having those debates. That would be how you would get across the ways in which the role of women has shifted and expanded in our society over generations. That has been felt particularly strongly in ethnic-minority communities in this country in the expectations of British-born women from those backgrounds. The reality is that, whatever barriers remain, they have experiences and opportunities that their mothers and grandmothers might not have had.

Baroness Shackleton of Belgravia: It is the after-effect. Having become a British citizen, this is the bonus you get from going on that journey.

Mr Sunder Katwala: You also deal with some of the anxiety about whether we are being too flag-waving and in your face about it. The best advocates for how British identity now works are the many new Britons who have come to this country and chosen to become citizens of it. It is inclusive. It does not make you give up a lot of the things you brought with you.

If you talk to refugees who have become British, they have a powerful sense of the safety and the sanctuary, as well as what that means in values-based terms. You have to put a name, a face, a voice and a dialogue around the values question. It is not simply preaching about values and saying, “Here are the fundamental values. Do you agree with the fundamental values?” You can do that and write them down, but it does not come to life.

Professor Dina Kiwan: To emphasise that, it is worth looking to the school curriculum, the citizenship education curriculum. There is so much debate that young people in classrooms have, with very practical participative work. We can borrow from that. That again emphasises the educative aspect.

Lord Hunt of Wirral: Thank you.

The Chair: The group to which I spoke, who showed far more interest in how Parliament worked than any other group I have spoken to, was a group of quite newly arrived women, who really wanted to know. They asked, “Are we actually allowed to come in?” Of course, I arranged it. They had much more interest than anyone else.

I want to come back to the boring issue of money. Do we know whether the direct costs that are charged cover the cost of administering the test? In other areas of Home Office work, we are told, “We’ve got to cover administrative costs, plus, plus, plus”. Do you know about that?

Mr Sunder Katwala: Because it is wrapped up in this broader process— the £50 and the £150—it probably does, but three-quarters of the £1,300 is profit. It is not whether or not this bit is covering the exact fifty quid. It is when you decide, “Is it a profit centre or does it encourage that?”

Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws: There is plenty of profit.

Q9 **The Chair:** I am not making a value judgment. I just wondered whether we knew.

We were going to end by asking what your priorities would be for chapters in the handbook, if you were editing a new version. I will turn that into whether there is anything that you have not covered but could be of more priority for the handbook. Is there anything you would like to add? It has been a fascinating session.

Professor Dina Kiwan: In the survey that we did, one of the questions was, “Which parts of the handbook were most important and which did you find least useful?” The three highest-rated chapters were how the UK is governed, knowing the law and the UK today. The one that came just below that was on a changing society and the history of migration. The history chapter ranked sixth out of nine. During the time I was seconded at the Home Office, we had to write a new chapter on building better communities, which was all about values. That was rated the lowest. They did not like that chapter.

Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws: That is interesting.

Ms Madeleine Sumption: The history and culture sections are the bits that get the most criticism for the fact that, although they contain a lot of useful information, they also contain a lot of quite obscure stuff. When the studies look at test takers’ views, they often focus on the seemingly trivial facts that they have to know. I think that would be an easy place to start the editing.

Mr Sunder Katwala: I would organise it a bit differently. Being clear about which bits you are being tested on is good. We need a clearer welcome at the front, then the rights and responsibilities bit, which is actually what you are committing to, and then the broader social, historical and cultural things.

People who become citizens are keener on having the overview than British citizens, who are a bit snarkier about it, as long as you are told that you are not going to be quizzed on King Kenneth MacAlpin of whatever century, because nobody knows that. It is interesting and useful to have it there, but it would be having the broader and more diffuse bit separate from, "Here are the rights and responsibilities and here is what the deal is".

On the whole, the handbook could be clearer and better, but it is a good handbook. The tests we use for the handbook do not meet the common-sense test of, "Those are good questions".

The Chair: It is the aspect of the contract between the citizen and the state. Do Members want to pick up anything else? No. It really has been interesting. That concludes the evidence session. Thank you.