Short history of the Project for the Registration of Children as British Citizens (PRCBC)

14 YEARS PRCBC 2012-2026

Since PRCBC was founded in 2012 it has gone from strength to strength, establishing a national reputation for expertise in the field of young people's rights to British citizenship. It continues to be the sole organisation exclusively focused on young people's citizenship rights. PRCBC has directly advised and assisted hundreds of young people to confirm and register their British citizenship rights. In its last completed financial year (2025-2026), PRCBC represented 62 clients; provided one-off advice to a further 168 individuals (or their parents/carers); and provided advice to 113 lawyers and other professionals.

PRCBC has also worked to remove the barriers to young people to confirm and register their rights through engaging in strategic litigation. This has led to changes in the law, rectifying historic injustices, as well as changes in Home Office policy and practice. These changes, such as the possibility of citizenship fee waivers and the recognition of children's long residence, impact on many thousands of young people. PRCBC has spread information about young people's citizenship rights by training lawyers and social workers, publishing information leaflets for parents, children and teachers, and writing articles and blogs.

We are proud of all the work PRCBC has done in its first 14 years and its many achievements in that time. There is more work to do to promote and defend young people's citizenship rights, and those of older people born and living in the UK without citizenship. We look forward to PRCBC's future, building on what has already been achieved.

Carol Bohmer
Chair of PRCBC Board of Trustees

PRCBC
Project for the Registration of Children as British Citizens

How it all started...

In late November 2012, I sat down to address an injustice that kept repeating in my casework as a practising solicitor – young people, grown up in the UK having been born or brought here at an early age, facing being sent to places they did not know and which did not know them. This was despite the fact that had anyone acted sooner, each of these young people would have been a British citizen and so safe against the Home Office and its need to satisfy apparently random targets for numbers of people expelled from the country.

James was the last straw – or rather his deportation. He had been brought to the UK as a baby and had never left the country. Yet as a young man, he was deported to Kenya. James, whose family in the UK had all become British citizens, could and should have been registered as a citizen years earlier – but since nobody had done anything about it, in the eyes of the Home Office he was now a 'foreigner' and one with a criminal record. I had many sleepless nights over James and shed many tears, because ultimately all



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my efforts on his deportation case proved fruitless. I felt like I needed to put an end to this. Nobody else was going to.

So I sat down on the sofa and mapped out all the things I needed to do to ensure children no longer grew up in the UK without their citizenship rights being exercised – including raising public and professional awareness, training lawyers and social workers, and of course casework and litigation to change policy and practice. I had little idea then just how much lay ahead...

Solange Valdez-Symonds
(PRCBC CEO and Solicitor)

Timeline of PRCBC's first 14 years

2012	November	PRCBC was created when Solange Valdez-Symonds and Carol Bohmer met in a coffee shop to discuss Solange's announcement to professional legal groups that she had set up a Monday pro bono project on children's rights to British citizenship. That same month, without an office, PRCBC received its first referral from its Monday project hosted by Sutovic & Hartigan solicitors.
2013	March	A child assisted by PRCBC was registered as a British citizen by discretion under section 3(1) of the British Nationality Act 1981 (BNA) for the first time.
	April	The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO) generally removed legal aid for nationality law.
	May	PRCBC delivered its first training session to social workers and others working with children.
	June	PRCBC received its first referral from a local authority for a child's registration.
	July	PRCBC became hosted by Ealing Law Centre. PRCBC issued its first judicial review claim of a refusal to register a child as a British citizen by discretion under section 3(1) BNA (the claim did not proceed to hearing as the Home Office conceded).
	August	PRCBC began its monthly Saturday casework sessions delivered by Solange and a team of volunteer lawyers and caseworkers (trained by PRCBC).
2014	May	PRCBC's first article on children's citizenship rights was published by Legal Action Group (LAG).
	September	PRCBC issued a judicial review claim for a then 37-year-old man, with a long history of offences, who would have been born a British citizen (by descent) but for British nationality law excluding citizenship rights being derived from British mothers for children born abroad. His right to register as a British citizen under section 4C BNA, intended to correct this injustice, was then subject to a good character requirement.

2014	**September** (continued)	PRCBC also secured his release from an immigration removal centre after the High Court granted bail pending court proceedings.
	November	PRCBC's research on *Systemic Obstacles to Children's Registration as British Citizens* was published.
2015	**April**	Commencement of legislation (sections 4E-4J) to provide a right of registration to children who would have been born British citizens but for being born out of wedlock. PRCBC was influential in this amendment being made.
	August	PRCBC registered as a limited company with charitable objectives. The first meeting of its Board of Trustees took place.
	October	PRCBC became hosted by Islington Law Centre.
2016	**January**	PRCBC issued a judicial review claim for a then 21-year-old man born in the UK with a very serious offence from his childhood, who would have been born a British citizen but for his being born out of wedlock. His right to register as a British citizen under legislation intended to correct this injustice was then subject to a good character requirement.
	February	PRCBC first proposed an amendment to legislation. This was to end registration fees in excess of the administrative costs of dealing with the citizenship registration process, to exempt children 'looked after' by a local authority from registration fees and provide a waiver for children who could not afford these fees. PRCBC became hosted by Asylum Aid and, for a short time, its monthly Saturday casework sessions by Pierce Glynn solicitors.
	September	PRCBC published its first comprehensive briefing on registration fees.
2017	**February**	PRCBC issued its first judicial review claim challenging the legal requirement to pay a registration fee.
	July	PRCBC held its first Let's Talk Citizenship seminar delivered by and for young people.

2017		Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) published his first report on children's citizenship rights. This was on 'good character' and, as with subsequent reports, PRCBC met with and/or submitted evidence to assist the inspection. Solange was awarded the Children's Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year for PRCBC's work.
	November	PRCBC published its first advice leaflet on children's rights to British citizenship for parents, carers, and children.
2018	**June**	PRCBC supported a Regret Motion in the House of Lords against the new regulations on registration fees.
	July	PRCBC and Amnesty UK produced a short film on the impact of the registration fee.
	December	PRCBC's work was highlighted by the Victoria Derbyshire show on national TV in relation to the good character requirement.
2019	**February**	PRCBC first published research on the good character requirement.
	March	PRCBC's youth ambassadors produced their short film on the importance of citizenship.
	July	A Remedial Order was made to remove the good character requirement for registration where that is necessary to correct discrimination in law that had excluded a person from citizenship at birth. Thereafter the two men for whom PRCBC issued judicial review claims in September 2014 and January 2016 were registered as British citizens. The Joint Committee on Human Rights, making reference to a joint submission from PRCBC and Amnesty UK, recommended that: 'the Government should review the application of the good character test to children with a right to British citizenship who have grown up in the UK.'
	November	Channel 4 featured PRCBC's judicial review challenge to children's registration fees before the High Court.

2019	**December**	High Court found the registration fee unlawful for failure to consider children's best interests (one of two main grounds of PRCBC's judicial review challenge). The court found on the basis of a mass of evidence that children prevented from registering as British citizens (in that case by a fee) were made to feel: '…alienated, excluded, isolated, "second-best", insecure, and not fully assimilated into the culture and social fabric of the UK.'
2020	**January**	PRCBC registered as a charity with the Charity Commission.
	March	PRCBC secured its independence, having previously relied upon host organizations, and moved into its own offices at Work.Life, Hammersmith, London.
	April	PRCBC issued its first judicial review claim on behalf of a young disabled man challenging the registration fee on grounds of disability discrimination.
	May	PRCBC began its online advice sessions (a response to the Covid pandemic) and began an unfunded ad hoc service providing advice to young people and other professionals.
	December	Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Law Journal (IANL) published PRCBC and Amnesty UK article on *Reasserting Rights to British Citizenship through Registration*.
2021	**February**	A young former looked after child born in the UK, assisted by PRCBC, who had been excluded by the good character requirement, was registered as a British citizen. The Court of Appeal gave judgment in PRCBC's fee challenge upholding the decision of the High Court. It also found that: 'in cases such as that of O, one of three children of a single parent on state benefits, it is difficult to see how the fee could be afforded at all.'
	April	Home Office settled five judicial review claims of children assisted by PRCBC for their registration by discretion under section 3(1) BNA on the basis of their having arrived in the UK at a young age and become connected to the UK by growing up here. The Home Office registered all five children and agreed to review its section 3(1) guidance.

2021		Home Office introduced a waiver of the registration fee for children who would have been born British citizens had their mother not been married to someone other than their biological father. A child born in the UK out of wedlock to a man not married to the mother, where the mother was married to another man, assisted by PRCBC was registered as a British citizen without payment of the fee for the first time.
	June	A man assisted by PRCBC, who was a former looked after child and had a serious mental health condition was registered as a British citizen. He was born in the UK in 1983 (the year the BNA took effect) and lived here his entire life. His entitlement to register was initially refused due to criminal offences.
	July	PRCBC issued a judicial review claim challenging the change by the Home Office in October 2000 ceasing to treat all children born to EU nationals exercising free movement rights in the UK as British citizens at birth. Home Office confirmed to PRCBC that it would establish from its own records relevant information necessary to a child's citizenship rights where the child could not do so themselves. This change of practice came about after PRCBC sought to secure a British passport for a child, where the child's father refused to assist by providing evidence of his British citizenship status.
2022	**February**	Supreme Court dismissed PRCBC's appeal on the second of its two main grounds challenging the registration fee of children seeking to register their citizenship rights (the rulings of the High Court and Court of Appeal on the unlawfulness of the fee for failure to consider children's best interests remained undisturbed). The Supreme Court nonetheless took note that: 'It is not disputed that the right to become a British citizen is an important right as citizenship, once obtained, confers significant rights.'
	April	Nationality and Borders Act 2022 was passed, incorporating several provisions to correct injustice that had excluded people from their citizenship rights. PRCBC and Amnesty UK had jointly briefed parliamentarians on most of these provisions.

2022	June	Home Office introduced an exemption for all 'looked after' children from registration fees and a waiver for children who cannot afford those fees.
	July	Home Office revised its registration of children by discretion (section 3(1) BNA) guidance to make clear that children brought to the UK who live here for at least 10 years during their childhood should normally be registered as British citizens. (PRCBC has over the years secured registration of hundreds of children in these circumstances but at considerable expense of time due to the need to secure evidence to establish the strength of the child's connection. It is now generally sufficient simply to show the child has lived in the UK for 10 years).
	August	PRCBC registered as a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) with the Charity Commission.
	November	PRCBC launched a hardcopy of its booklet 'Children and their rights to British Citizenship' information for parents, carers, and young people. This replaced its leaflets first published in 2017 and updated in 2019. PRCBC marked its tenth anniversary.
	December	Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Law Journal (IANL) published PRCBC and Amnesty UK article on *Judicial Review of the Registration Fee*.
2023	April	PRCBC formalised and first publicised its advice service for lawyers and other professionals (the service remains unfunded).
	June	British Nationality (Regularisation of Past Practice) Act 2023 fast-tracked through Parliament to secure the British citizenship of people born in the UK before 1 October 2000 to an EU citizen parent. This was prompted by PRCBC litigation. Home Office consulted with PRCBC on the legislation in draft and Ministers thanked PRCBC as it passed through Parliament. (The litigation that led to this concerned the claim to British citizenship of someone born after 1 October 2000. PRCBC represented this young adult. His judicial review claim was rejected by the High Court and Court of Appeal

2023		in January 2023 and March 2024 respectively. The Supreme Court refused permission to appeal.)
	July	PRCBC launched its current website.
	September	Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Law Journal (IANL) published PRCBC and Amnesty UK article on the *section 3(1) discretion to register children*. PRCBC was awarded its first Legal Aid contract.
2024	**February**	PRCBC was awarded Specialist Quality Mark (SQM).
	July	Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Law Journal (IANL) published PRCBC and Amnesty UK article on *the requirement of good character*.
	September	PRCBC was awarded a 3-year Legal Aid contract (subsequently extended to June 2028).
	October	PRCBC met with Legal Aid Agency and the Ministry of Justice on the need to bring citizenship back into legal aid scope. PRCBC moved to a different new office in Hammersmith.
	November	Home Office settled the judicial review claim of a young man assisted by PRCBC for a grant of ILR outside the rules. He had lived in the UK without permission since shortly after his first birthday. ILR was granted.
2025	**April**	PRCBC issued updated booklet 'Children and their rights to British citizenship: information for parents, carers, and young people.'
	June	PRCBC and Amnesty UK sent joint briefing to Legal Aid Agency and Ministry of Justice on the need to bring citizenship back into legal aid scope.
	August	PRCBC reduced its monthly Saturday casework sessions to be delivered by Solange (with occasional support from a consultant and volunteer lawyer).
	December	A Home Office stakeholder group was established on fee waivers, with PRCBC one of the original members.

2026

January

PRCBC responded to an inquiry from US-based lawyers preparing an *amicus curiae* brief in litigation before the US Supreme Court concerning the legality of a presidential executive order seeking to narrow birthright citizenship.

February

PRCBC gave oral evidence to the Home Affairs Committee on the impact of government proposals on the route to settlement upon children's citizenship rights. The Committee recommended that the government mitigate this impact in light of PRCBC's evidence.

PRCBC secured an exemption from the requirement for biometric registration for the Home Office to process applications of three children to be registered as British citizens under section 3(2) BNA, there being exceptional reasons why the children outside the UK could not attend any biometric registration office.

April

A 15-year-old in care, assisted by PRCBC, who had been brought to the UK a few years previously by his father who had then died suddenly, was registered as a British citizen under section 3(1) BNA on the basis that his future clearly lay in the UK. The local authority had received legal advice to apply for limited leave to remain for the child but had nonetheless referred the matter to PRCBC. We made contemporaneous applications for citizenship and settlement.

July

Two adults assisted by PRCBC were registered as British citizens under section 4L BNA on the basis that, in each of their cases, their carers and/or social services should have secured their registration under section 3(1) BNA in their childhood after they were brought to the UK at age 2 months and 2 years respectively.

PRCBC was granted permission to apply for judicial review of the refusal to register a young teenager under section 3(1) BNA. The client and her mother had been settled in the UK for several years under the EU Settlement Scheme. The grounds include a challenge to the Home Office refusal to consider new material at review, which we submitted after the client's application, made by her mother, had been refused; and a challenge to treating scenarios in policy guidance as if these were rigid rules.

2026

August A young man assisted by PRCBC was registered 23 years after his settled mother returned to the UK with him after his premature birth overseas. In judicial review proceedings, the Home Office revealed that she had applied for his registration on her own naturalisation application made shortly after his first birthday. The Home Office repaid several passport, citizenship and leave applications that had been made (and refused) years later.

September The High Court dismissed a claim for judicial review brought by PRCBC on behalf of a 43-year-old refused registration under section 1(4) on character grounds and refused under section 4L. (A decision on an application for permission to appeal remains pending with the Court of Appeal.)

October A 16-year-old refugee, assisted by PRCBC with an internal review of a refusal to register her as a British citizen under section 3(1) BNA, was registered on the basis that her future clearly lay in the UK.

November Referrals and advice requests received by PRCBC continue to rise and the complications raised by several of these to increase. This reflects the increased awareness of PRCBC and citizenship rights as a result of our work. We now regularly encounter people in their 30s and 40s, who have been born in the UK and lived here their entire lives, who are without any status in the UK; and many children and adults deprived of their citizenship rights by the requirement of good character long after adults, whether parents or other carers, first failed to act on their need for their citizenship to be registered. Among the complications that arise, on which we are now undertaking legal research, is the exclusion of people, born and always lived in the UK, from such things as employment, housing, social assistance and healthcare because they are without status in the UK.

PRCBC welcomes donations towards its work.
For more information, please visit our website:
www.prcbc.org

Our Board of Trustees are Carol Bohmer (chair), Pauline Gooderson (vice-chair), Sue Shutter (treasurer), Toni-Ann Murphy (Equality, diversity and inclusion), Olu Sowemimo (youth), Derek McConnell (law and practice) and Charlotte Mann (fundraising). They and Solange Valdez-Symonds (CEO and solicitor) are indebted to the following for their support:

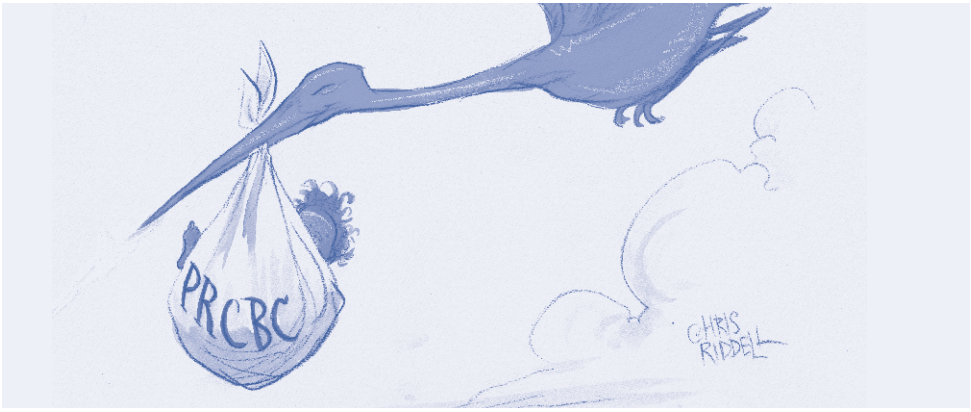
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