

A guide to good practice on Citizenship Ceremonies



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Introduction

Lord Goldsmith was commissioned by the Prime Minister in the autumn of 2007 to conduct an independent review of citizenship. The review was launched at a citizenship ceremony held at Wembley Stadium on 5 October after Lord Goldsmith had requested me to write a pamphlet for the review on the 'Future of Citizenship Ceremonies' which was also launched at the ceremony. My pamphlet posed a challenge for local government to make ceremonies even more meaningful and make them a peg on which to hang citizenship education and other community cohesion initiatives.

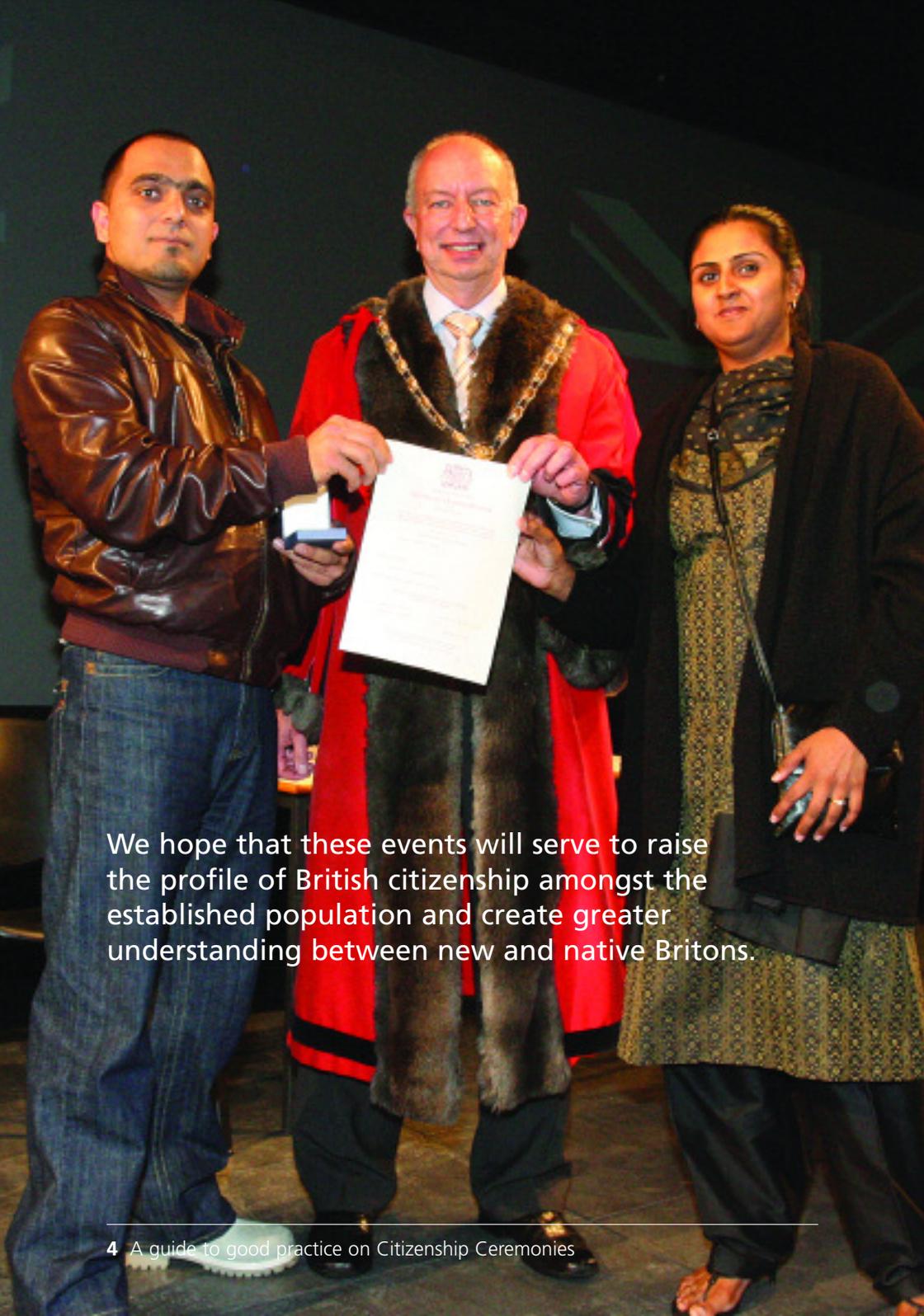
In particular it urged the involvement of schools in ceremonies in order to link them to the citizenship curriculum. It sought the active involvement of employers in the process and suggested that local councils should conduct ceremonies out in the community and in iconic buildings in order to raise the profile with the general public.

Following this launch Lord Goldsmith requested me to chair some working groups to take these proposals forward and this brochure is a collation of the good practice examples already in place in a number of local councils round the country. I hope they provide some inspiration and will serve to stimulate some ideas in those councils that have yet to take up the challenge.



Mark Rimmer

Service Director Brent Council and LACORS Advisor



We hope that these events will serve to raise the profile of British citizenship amongst the established population and create greater understanding between new and native Britons.

Adding drama to the Citizenship Ceremony

A case study from Brent and Barnet

As a joint venture with neighbouring authority Barnet, citizenship officials at the London Borough of Brent are planning a variety of events – including a special citizenship ceremony – to coincide with performances of a new play at a local theatre.

The play, called *Testing the Echo*, revolves around a group of new migrants on their journey to citizenship including a fictional citizenship ceremony and promises to bring many of the issues facing new and prospective citizens to a wider audience. Through partnership with the play's production company and the host theatre, we are planning to hold a real citizenship ceremony following the matinee performance of the play. The audience for this event will primarily consist of schools from the local area and they will be encouraged to focus on the issues surrounding citizenship and becoming British before they attend. It is hoped that some may then participate in the actual ceremony and articulate their thoughts to the audience.

In addition to this special ceremony there will be information displays from both Barnet and Brent Registration Services, and a special post-show discussion, with a panel of guests including the director and members of the cast, as well as leading citizenship officials and genuine new citizens.

Given the government's current emphasis on citizenship and integration, interest from local and perhaps even national media seems highly likely. This public exposure could be hugely beneficial for the often unsung work of the Registration Service, as well as providing publicity for the play itself and the issues which it raises. We hope that these events will serve to raise the profile of British citizenship amongst the established population and create greater understanding between new and native Britons, whilst also providing a meaningful and memorable ceremony experience for those new citizens involved with these special ceremonies.



Citizenship Ceremony at the Tower of London

A case study from Tower Hamlets

In partnership with The Tower of London, Tower Hamlets Registration Service was delighted to have hosted the first Citizenship Ceremony within The Tower on Monday 25 February 2008.

This was a unique ceremony in one of the most iconic buildings in the UK, raising the profile and adding significance to people acquiring British Citizenship. Forty new Citizens were presented with their Naturalisation Certificates by The Constable of The Tower in front of their personal guests and invited dignitaries to mark this very special occasion.



Our Registration Service has worked closely with the Historic Royal Palaces, in particular The Tower and this event was used to publicise our pride in welcoming new Citizens to Tower Hamlets and the UK. It

was hoped that Citizenship Ceremonies at The Tower will help new Citizens build a sense of awareness of our heritage, culture and traditions, encouraging strong and positive integration and participation in their community.

Along with our new Citizens and their families we invited many dignitaries from all walks of life, Elected Members, Members of Parliament, Business Groups, Faith Leaders, Directors of Education etc., in the hope that they too will appreciate the importance of such occasions. We wish to bring to their attention the relevance of working together to bring about a sense of belonging to our new Citizens.

In conjunction with our Education Team we have started a programme of School involvement in our Ceremonies. As part of the Citizenship Education Curriculum in Schools, we feel we have a very important role to play in supporting both pupils and teachers. We have found that the pupils who have taken part are now more aware of the many different reasons why people choose to become British. It has highlighted to them how good it is to live in a free and tolerant society and to appreciate the things that we so often take for granted.

The Tower is very aware of their importance within the community and by hosting this and future ceremonies and by allowing schools to be involved in various events within The Tower, they feel that our common vision will have a positive effect on life for all within Tower Hamlets.



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Treasured mementoes

A case study from Sunderland

In Sunderland, our monthly citizenship ceremonies are conducted in our Civic Suite at varying times to suit those that need to attend, with up to 30 new citizens and an unlimited number of guests.

A community choir or school choir attends each ceremony with their own instruments. They sing two songs during the ceremony, one being the National Anthem, and also perform as everyone arrives and leaves the ceremony.

There's a buffet for everyone to enjoy, which is served before or after the ceremony. High tea with the Mayor before a 6 o'clock ceremony is always well received!

We have three different Order of Service booklets, one for guests, which include the affirmation, oath and citizenship pledge for everyone to follow. The other two booklets are printed with the name of the new citizen, the date of their ceremony and their choice of oath or affirmation. They're often treasured as mementoes of the day.

The Superintendent Registrar leads the ceremony and our Registrars lead the new citizens through the oath, affirmation and citizenship pledge as our photographer captures the occasion. The Mayor presents the certificates to a backdrop of orchestral melodies.

All booklets have the same image of Her Majesty the Queen that is projected onto a five-metre screen during our ceremonies and contain background information about the National Anthem.

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Our gift to the new British citizens is a glass disc, presented by the Mayor, in a black velvet drawstring pouch. The glass industry is synonymous with Sunderland and part of our heritage. The disc is made at the National Glass Centre in Sunderland, and bears the inscription “In commemoration of your British citizenship in the city of Sunderland”, as well as the council’s Coat of Arms. A blue wave runs through the disc representing our famous coastline.

In addition to the Mayor’s Welcome Address, our guest speaker makes a further welcoming speech towards the end of the ceremony.



Involving all staff

A case study from Westminster

Our first ceremony, (out of the Register office), was at City Hall in the Lord Mayor's official 'fancy office' on 11 February. She gave the citizens a special tour and showed them the plate room. One of the citizens delivered a speech about what it meant for her to become a British Citizen.

We have started to sort out live music for all our ceremonies, but the quotes are horrendous, and it came to me that we never see what internal staff can provide across the council, so we placed an ad on our intranet known in Westminster as the WIRE – so far we have had 3 replies and we had a gospel choir sing the National Anthem at the ceremony. We recorded the ceremony, not just for posterity, but also to show our call centre colleagues in Dingwall, Scotland. The call centre staff deal with lots of citizenship enquiries and it's a long way to come to see how we operate (not to mention the travel and accommodation expenses), so I thought a video showing all our services would be good. It goes without saying that if districts have their Citizenship enquiries dealt with by a call centre then their colleagues taking the calls should feel part of the team and be fully informed and enthused.

We all bang on about going to high profile places to conduct ceremonies – and rightly so, but there are lots of community groups who would probably love to host a Citizenship ceremony. I used to area manage for Westminster libraries and sat on the Regeneration committee for a local ward, and I feel that Regeneration areas should be explored as well. My local Regeneration area at that time was Queens Park – not the most pleasant area in Westminster – but a place which still has a plethora of local community groups who, I'm sure, would be up for hosting such ceremonies. So we intend to pursue this avenue. We are lucky in Westminster as the borough is vast and so there will be lots of community groups to contact. I would urge other districts to think about really getting out into the heart of the community and not just to focus on historic buildings or high profile glamour and glitz.

Libraries are also a good point of contact for getting out into the community as they have been doing community outreach for years and have lists of groups in Regeneration areas. We are also hoping to utilise our library

service and hold ceremonies in some of our thirteen libraries in Westminster. Our next ceremony will be in our Archives centre and the chief archivist will be saying a few words about Westminster 'then and now'.

Finally, our Lord Mayor is very enthusiastic and will ask everyone if they have any questions and so we let people know when they book a ceremony that the Lord Mayor asks for questions and to be thinking about things they might want to ask. We all do our best to enthuse the 'citizens to be' at the initial contact when they ring to book an appointment – as we feel this helps to stem any apathy, but more importantly, it is vital that the citizen hears that we are enthused as well.



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Totally inclusive

A case study from Shropshire

The picture below is of a group of adults from Bridgnorth College and features our member for that area Mr John Hurst Knight.

In Shropshire for the last 3 years we have undertaken ceremonies aimed at specific groups: Adults with learning disabilities, age range 18 to mid 60's with various physical and learning impairments. Disadvantaged young people who had not finished school in the usual way. The common denominator in these groups was that they were all on Citizenship courses at various educational institutions around the county.



One of the chief motivators for us doing things like this and for wanting to expand the service so that it can be sampled by wider society is to start to break down the barriers between young people and authority. Each time we have done something like this the groups have approached us and we have arranged opportunities for these ceremonies to take place within the Shire hall and have set programmes that have been bespoke to the group. At the ceremonies for the more able groups we have talked about births/deaths and marriages too, so that we include an element of life skills.

These ceremonies have been extremely rewarding for the staff and in most cases for the participants. The groups of adults with learning disabilities were incredibly proud to be able to visit the Shire Hall, and participate and these in particular were most heart-warming affairs, with participants being, in some cases, moved to tears and in others moved to stand up and tell the entire group and staff how much it had meant to them. We discovered from our dealings with these groups that this category of person feels that they lack value and worth and that this is accentuated by their perceived lack of inclusion in certain areas. The disadvantaged young people managed to concentrate throughout and participated in the discussions very well. The teaching staff that accompanied them were extremely proud of the way that they all sang the national anthem and participated in the graduation style delivery of certificates by dignitaries at the end of the ceremony.

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In December 2007 we also had the opportunity to take a citizenship ceremony out to a local primary school. One of the teachers had been granted citizenship and we agreed to deliver the ceremony in school providing citizenship was studied on the run up to the ceremony itself, and that the teacher concerned agreed to deliver a talk to the children during the ceremony about what it meant to her to receive her citizenship.

We had a fabulous time. The school was decked out in union flags and red white and blue balloons in the gym where the ceremony was held. The teacher delivered a wonderful powerpoint presentation on all the things that she loved about Shropshire. We had the school musicians playing the national anthem and the children had learnt it especially for the occasion. To top things off we asked one of our DL's who is a member of the magic circle to deliver 10 minutes of magic at the end of the ceremony before he delivered his own welcome to our new citizen. A wonderful morning was had by all.

It is our intention to keep up the momentum, the problems that are foreseen relate to funding and resources, as the registration service is one which does not have a lot of money or spare staff to play with.

Approximately 3 years ago I asked our Education department if they would consider allowing ceremonies to become offered as part of the curriculum and they were extremely interested. Due to workload this has never really been developed which is a personal disappointment and something, which will be addressed shortly.

Mock ceremonies for year 5

A case study from East Riding

East Riding of Yorkshire's Registration and Celebratory Services (ERRCS) were aware of the importance of citizenship within the school curriculum and felt that linking with local schools would positively contribute to the council's learning and equality aims and also help those schools to achieve their curriculum objectives.

After consultation with the local education authority it was decided to develop a presentation outlining citizenship in general including an interactive mock ceremony for year 5 pupils. It became clear from the outset that other important messages could be delivered such as the role of local dignitaries, local democracy, equalities, migrant populations, crime reduction, anti bullying, family values and so forth.

The presentation raises awareness on how people from diverse backgrounds and cultures earn the right to become British Citizens. They also focus on how we should be proud of our community and our nationality and how we can all contribute to society, now and in the future.



Local dignitaries attend the formal ceremonies and that support has extended to the school presentations, where they discuss their roles in the community. Pupils are pre selected to play the part of dignitaries in the mock ceremonies and ERRCS provide costumes and props.

The presentations last about one hour concluding with the interactive ceremony when the 'mini dignitaries' step forward to deliver their prepared welcome speeches to the rest of the children who play the part of the new citizens.

The ceremony has been adapted to suit the learning skills of 9 year olds however everything else mirrors the formal occasion from the playing of the national anthem to displaying the portrait of the queen and the union flag. The children stand and repeat the Oath of Allegiance and Pledge their Loyalty to the United Kingdom.

The visiting dignitaries complete the presentation by giving each child a 'Citizenship is Cool' sticker in the hope that this will prompt further discussions outside of school. The children also receive cards displaying words of the National Anthem. The school is then presented with a certificate confirming that they have taken part in a 'Citizenship Information Ceremony'.

The success, so far has been far beyond expectations. Schools have been extremely pleased that they have fulfilled their curriculum objectives around citizenship, community and social health learning and that this has been achieved in an imaginative, original and fun way.

ERRCS are currently building up a portfolio of presentations to assist in their quest for permanent funding, as they strongly believe that this project should become part of a permanent rolling programme.

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Partnership working used in CPA assessment

A case study from Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire Registration Service has been looking at ways of involving the local community in their citizenship ceremonies and has been working with schools to achieve this.

Both secondary and primary schools have been providing choirs to sing at ceremonies which are held on a weekly basis in the Council Chamber in Oxford. At the same time letters were sent to MPs to ask them to attend a ceremony and all five MPs have either attended a ceremony or are due to attend one in the near future. The combination of schools and MPs is a successful one. MPs make regular visits to schools in their area and the school is keen to impress their MP.



To engage more schools in citizenship ceremonies I decided to commission a DVD which I could send out to them to give them an idea of what the citizenship ceremony entails. The DVD is quite short – about 7 minutes – but it has proved very useful in raising the profile of citizenship ceremonies within the County Council and the county as a whole DVD and it has proved extremely.

I work closely with the Lord Lieutenant and his office on citizenship ceremonies and we hold regular meetings to discuss future plans. The Lord Lieutenant is very keen for citizens to sing the National Anthem in Oxfordshire. Although we have a recording of the National Anthem on a CD, it does help enormously if we have a choir to lead us. However, it also adds to the solemnity of the occasion as the choirs sing when citizens enter and exit the Council Chamber. Afterwards, the pupils and teachers commented on how much they enjoyed being involved and how moving the citizenship ceremonies were.

Some schools offer a GCSE short course in citizenship to pupils as part of the curriculum. Therefore, I was delighted to hear from teachers at Wallingford school who decided to offer this GCSE but were looking for material for their coursework. Following preliminary discussions we decided that the school would not only host the ceremony but would plan and organise it as well.

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In 2006, thirteen year 9 students sat this GCSE and obtained excellent results. The ceremony was held at Wallingford School on 24 April 2006. In the morning Anthony Pilgrim and Jane Whitehead from the Home Office visited the school to discuss citizenship with the pupils. This was a lively session with many pupils entering into debates over whether British people should lose their citizenship if they commit a serious crime for example. The pupils were also shown a presentation about the history of citizenship.

The citizenship ceremony was held in the afternoon. The Lord Lieutenant attended and was greeted by a jazz band playing funky music. The citizens began to arrive at 3pm and the atmosphere was both vibrant and exciting. Local TV reporters were present and interviewed pupils and teachers about their part in the ceremony. The pupils were responsible for: car parking; catering and refreshments; provision of flags; music; writing and delivering welcome speeches and a short history of Wallingford; registering citizens on arrival; handing out welcome packs.

The day was a great success and the pupils enjoyed appearing on the TV and they also featured in their local newspapers.

This ceremony was also captured on DVD and has been one of the most requested DVDs. The County Council feel it is a wonderful example of partnership working and was used in the council's CPA assessment. For the Registration Service it has been beneficial for Chartermark. The school also has a copy. The few hundred pounds needed to pay for the DVD has been worth every penny.

Copies of the DVD can be obtained from alicja.gilroy@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Some other examples from around the country

Oxfordshire

Liaison with the Fire Service – they plan to come to ceremonies once a month to talk to citizens about community safety but also to try to attract people from ethnic minorities into thinking about joining the fire service.

Monmouthshire

Provide books to all minors from age 9-14 attaining citizenship entitled “Peoples of the World.” Also give a mug or a small welsh dragon to every child who attends a ceremony whether they are naturalised or not.

Sutton

All ceremonies are held in the evening, or on a Sunday morning for the convenience of citizens. The gift to new citizens is a paperweight with the Borough Coat of Arms etched into it.

Merton

Merton is taking information about citizenship to their customers. Within the borough they have the largest Mosque in Western Europe and have arranged to attend after prayers. Staff will be available to provide information about how to apply for citizenship and the other services offered in the Register office.

Harrow

Harrow includes in their Citizenship packs a welcome from the Mayor dressed in her robes and hand signed (scanned). An A5 leaflet with the Harrow Crest and explanation of the meaning of the crest and a street map of the Harrow area.

Barnsley

Barnsley has a professional photographer present at all citizenship ceremonies. A photograph is taken as each new citizen is presented with their certificate by the Mayor. This photograph is then sent later to the recipient in a presentation folder as a gift from the Borough.

As participants arrive for the ceremony, they are given the white rose of Yorkshire to wear if they wish during the ceremony.

All of the children who attend receive a small union jack flag and are encouraged to wave this at every opportunity!

Redbridge

Once the new citizens have said the vow and pledge, they ask the guests who have attended with them to stand also and make a promise “we promise to help and support these new citizens in the endeavour of being a good citizen”. This helps to make the guests feel a part of the proceedings rather than just spectators and find the guests very willing to participate. They are warned that this is going to happen before the ceremony begins so they are expecting it when they are asked to stand.

Essex

Essex makes available for sale ‘Citizenship’ souvenirs.

Essex also have an official photographer in attendance at ceremonies and families/individuals are able to have their photograph taken with the Lord Lieutenant for the County of Essex and the Chairman of the County Council. Photographs can be ordered on the day of the ceremony or they can be ordered online. Relatives abroad can see the photos online and order if they wish. Essex get 10 per cent royalty in respect of the photographer’s sales. To view photos from a recent ceremony go to www.townandcountryphoto.co.uk. Click on the online albums icon and scroll down the list until you see the Essex County Council Citizenship Ceremony logo.

Everyone becoming a British Citizen is given a survey form and a pre-paid envelope for return of the completed. Response rates are high and customer satisfaction levels are consistently rating as excellent.

Coventry

West Midlands Fire Service send representatives to all group citizenship ceremonies in Coventry and they offer appointments to have a free Fire Home safety check and install free smoke alarms. They have been attending for the last year and take up has been extremely good. The number of home checks is higher than from any other campaign and is targeting one of the most at risk groups.

South Tyneside

At each ceremony new citizens are entertained by one of the local school choirs. The choir chooses 2 songs and also joins in with the national anthem.

Each child receives a small gift of 'citizenship' merchandise, a pen, pencil etc and a signed certificate from the Mayor for their record of achievement. They also have a group photograph taken with the Mayor, which is given to the school as a memento. The feedback from the schools that have taken part is excellent and we usually have a waiting list of schools wanting to take part.

Each citizen is given the option of having their photograph taken with the Mayor and this is sent to them following the ceremony.

During the ceremony they are presented with an engraved citizenship medal, in a presentation box. The medal is personalised with their name and the date of the ceremony. Their citizenship pack is given to them in a good quality gift bag, into which they can then put their medal and helps keep everything together.

They are given the opportunity to sign the citizenship register, which will eventually be a local historical record.

The Elections Team supplies a registration form to allow the new citizens to register to vote and if this form is not returned, they do chase this up to try and make sure that all new citizens benefit from one of the fundamental rights of this country, the right to vote in free and fair elections.

Devon

Devon provides a 'Devon' buffet after the ceremony with as much locally produced food and drink as possible.

The National Anthem was specially recorded locally for Devon by the Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines, Commando Training Centre, Lymington.

Devon has various civic dignitaries attend particularly as those in office regularly change, for example, High Sheriff, Chairman of the County Council, and Chairmen of our local District Councils, Lord Mayor of Exeter as well as Deputy Lieutenants.

The incidental music provided is by British composers, notably Elgar.

Liverpool

Liverpool hold citizenship ceremonies 2 to 3 times monthly on a Sunday. This enables citizens to park more easily in the city centre as Sundays are not as congested with traffic and also allows children to attend as it is not a school day.

Swansea

Ward members bring a selection of children from their schools to ceremonies. Primary schools sing at ceremonies. In Libraries there is a DVD running with a bit about ceremonies in it. Swansea hold ceremonies on special days – eg St Davids Day and Armistice Day.

Dorset

Prints of the County are handed out to new citizens.

Somerset

A DVD about the County of Somerset is given to the new citizens.

Bedfordshire

A presentation is played on the wall of unknown parts of Bedfordshire. "We love Bedfordshire" book is handed out to new citizens.

Westminster

Contract being drawn up between Register Office and Mayor on what each will deliver at the ceremony.

Proposing that those taking citizenship GCSE receive their certificate at a ceremony.

Westminster has some impressive approved premises and will be writing to them in the New Year with a view to holding citizenship ceremonies in them.

Would like to hold one ceremony per week in a large iconic hotel as they all employ a large number of migrant workers.

Producing a brochure/leaflet for new citizens so that they understand about the importance of attending a group ceremony and encouraging them to take part.

Peterborough

Proposing – 3 new colleges being built – will be contacting them with a view to holding a ceremony in the school for 18 year olds.

Leicester

Holding ceremonies on an annual basis in the new performing arts centre. Use of community choir.

Citizens day – young people involved by asking them what they wanted; RAP music and a written drama

Ask a new citizen to talk about what it is like, why they left their country and what they enjoy about being British.

Have moved ceremonies to the morning because they found that parents were rushing off to collect children from school if they were held in the afternoon.

Start with refreshments then ceremony as this helps the event to naturally close and not left with people hanging about.

Wandsworth

Conducted a questionnaire and now hold one ceremony during the week and one in the evening.

Cambridge

Proposing – to hold ceremonies in University buildings.

There is a view that everything revolves around Cambridge, looking at moving ceremonies out into the county.

Working with agricultural employers with high number of migrant workers.

Worcester

Council Chamber currently being refurbished so will be looking at alternative venues in different towns and then look to see how well they are received.

Cheshire

Deliberately chosen not to use Chester as it is viewed that ceremonies should be held within the community. Use of stately homes within the county – these are seen as being very British.

Brent

Proposing – hold ceremonies at outdoor events in the summer eg Respect Festival. Wembley Arena square, Brent Cross Shopping Centre.

Caerphilly

Held a ceremony in a school when three brothers, all students received citizenship. Proposing – working with neighbouring LAs to host large ceremonies. Cllrs invited to attend from ward where the new citizens are living. Mayor always attends along with alternate Heads of Service

Swindon

Members of over various clubs are invited, especially those for the over 60, who have spare time. Encourage membership of clubs – community involvement.

Surrey

In Surrey we give passport holders, with the Surrey County Council logo on, to all new citizens.

Richmond

At Richmond we offer every citizen who attends a group ceremony the opportunity to speak about their experience of citizenship at the ceremony. This may be about their journey to citizenship, what citizenship means to them, their connections with the borough or any experience connected with citizenship. This initiative only started at the beginning of this month so unfortunately it is too soon to know whether there will be any take up of this offer, but it was introduced because of positive comments made by citizens last year and their enthusiasm to share their experiences.



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