

The cost of applying for citizenship in the UK is too high, unfair, and risks undoing the work of integration, General Synod was told today.

This morning's debate highlighted the issues faced by those with indefinite leave to remain in the UK who face a prohibitive cost - currently £1,282 for each adult - to apply for citizenship. Those who do not apply for citizenship but have indefinite leave to remain cannot vote in elections, have more limited travel options and cannot take up their full civic responsibilities, despite paying tax.

A motion, passed unanimously by Synod, asks the Archbishops' Council to make recommendations to the Government on the issue, and encourages bishops in the House of Lords to address the issue in debates.

Ben Franks, the member of the House of Laity who initiated the debate, said "Many of those who are eligible to apply for citizenship are working in the low-pay sectors of our economy due to their uncertain status making well paid employment more difficult. Many people save over years to pay for their applications, there are also those whose difficult situation leads them to go into long-term, high-interest debt from unscrupulous lenders to do so."

Notes to editors

310 votes were recorded in favour of the motion, with 0 against and 0 abstentions. The motion was as follows:

That this Synod:

- 1. request the Archbishops' Council's Mission and Public Affairs Council to investigate the issues around the cost of applying for citizenship and to make recommendations to HM Government;*
- 2. encourage the Lords Spiritual actively to seek opportunities to address the level of citizenship fees in debate;*
- 3. urge parishes to raise the issue with their MP; and*
- 4. encourage parishes to continue to support those known to them who are struggling with the cost of citizenship fees without incurring debt and to signpost responsible lenders or local credit unions for advice.*

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