Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement

Uncorrected oral evidence: Ministers

Wednesday 13 December 2017

10.35 am

Watch the meeting

Members present: Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbots (The Chairman); Baroness Barker; Lord Blunkett; Baroness Eaton; Lord Harries of Pentregarth; Baroness Lister of Burtersett; Baroness Morris of Yardley; Baroness Newlove; Baroness Pitkeathley; Baroness Redfern; Lord Rowe-Beddoes; Lord Verjee.

Evidence Session No. 21 Heard in Public Questions 178 - 192

Witnesses

I: Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government; Tracey Crouch MP, Minister for Sport and Civil Society, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport; Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP, Minister of State for School Standards and Minister for Equalities; Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP, Minister of State for Immigration, Home Office.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

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

2. Any public use of, or reference to, the contents should make clear that neither Members nor witnesses have had the opportunity to correct the record. If in doubt as to the propriety of using the transcript, please contact the Clerk of the Committee.

3. Members and witnesses are asked to send corrections to the Clerk of the Committee within 7 days of receipt.
Examination of witnesses

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth, Tracey Crouch MP, Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP and Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP.

Q178 **The Chairman:** Thank you all very much for coming along today to our last evidence session on citizenship and civic engagement. I have to read out the formal words that apply in all these cases: that a list of interests of members relevant to the inquiry has been sent to you and is available. The session is open to the public and is being televised for BBC Parliament. A verbatim transcript will be taken of the evidence and will be put on the Committee’s website. A few days after this session, you will be sent a copy of the transcript to check it for accuracy; it will be helpful if you can advise us of any corrections as quickly as possible. If, after this evidence session, you wish to clarify or amplify any points made during your evidence or have any additional points to make, you are most welcome to submit supplementary evidence to us.

I will ask you, for the record, to introduce yourselves briefly, and then we will proceed with the questions. We are having some problems with the audio equipment here. The Committee told me the Chairman was inaudible. We have now it turned up as high as we can, but the acoustics in this room are not very good, so if I could ask you to all speak up it would be very helpful.

**Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth:** I am Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government.

**Tracey Crouch:** I am Tracey Crouch, the Minister for Sport and Civil Society at DCMS.

**Nick Gibb:** I am Nick Gibb, Minister of State for School Standards.

**Brandon Lewis:** I am Brandon Lewis, Minister of State for Immigration at the Home Office.

Q179 **The Chairman:** Thank you very much indeed. If I could begin with the first question, one of the issues that we come across a lot is the stop-start nature of government initiatives. We now see there are going to be three strategies: a democratic engagement strategy, an integration strategy and a civil society strategy. How are these going to be co-ordinated? Who is going to be responsible for them? How are we going to make sure we do not plough the same field over and over again? How do we make sure they feed one into the other?

**Tracey Crouch:** I am really proud that we have now said that we are going to have a civil society strategy. It is something that many people in the sector have been calling for, to provide a bit of a focus for the sector but also for Whitehall. It is quite clear that almost every single department engages with civil society and they should be very proud of how they use the sector to deliver some of their own outcomes. We are working very closely with DCLLG and other departments to pull together a
civil society strategy, which will be formally launched in January. There will be a discussion programme before we then deliver a fundamental document, we hope, before the Summer Recess, which will set out recommendations for how we take that forward. Certainly when I was appointed as the Minister for Civil Society back in June and I was having early conversations with stakeholders, it was clear that they would welcome a form of strategic direction and that is what inspired me to do this, having already done it for the sport sector by delivering a sport strategy. We have worked together very closely with other government departments already and this is a way of pulling it all together.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: It is important that, on these three programmes you have mentioned, government departments do work together. There is always the danger of silo thinking and silo action, so we are very conscious of that and, clearly, Ministers discuss these things and so do officials very much.

In relation to civil society and the volunteering side of that, it has a great impact on what we are seeking to do as a department in terms of improving cohesion. It has a definitive role in relation to integration and the Casey Review, which we are taking forward, so very much the volunteering comes into faith aspects of the Department for Communities and Local Government’s work. As I go around, I become increasingly aware of how important the faith element is, with the volunteering element that comes forward from that, and community groups. There is a very close linkage there and we are aware of that, so they do need to dovetail in.

The integration strategy we are taking forward and the government response to Casey we can expect early in the new year; that is what we are looking at, and that is very much pulling together some of the elements of the volunteering strategy. Obviously, the democratic engagement plan from the Cabinet Office is also relevant, though perhaps not quite as central to what my department is seeking to do.

Nick Gibb: I would add that things like volunteering were included in the citizenship national curriculum, which we consulted on back in 2013, so it is not really a stop-start; it is part of an overall theme and approach to civic life that runs through this Government’s policy right across departments. Between us, we are all speaking for the Cabinet Office Minister as well, because it is already quite a squeeze here with four of us. We are going to be publishing a democratic engagement plan on 19 December, setting out the Government’s approach to creating an inclusive democracy, building on the record registrations that we saw leading up to the 2017 general election.

The Chairman: A democratic engagement plan in December, did you say?

Nick Gibb: On 19 December, we are going to be publishing a democratic engagement plan, one of the three things you mentioned.
Brandon Lewis: It is probably worth picking up on Lord Bourne’s point. Going to the core of your question around how we ensure that these things interlink in a positive way rather than duplicating and allowing gaps between them, Lord Bourne’s point is absolutely right: we do work across departments in some areas. In terms of the integration strategy, quite recently Lord Bourne and I met other Ministers in our department, such as Baroness Williams, who leads on counterextremism, Prevent and things like that, that liaise with other departments.

Ultimately, there is also that role that we have across government that the Cabinet Office and the First Secretary of State will lead. With all of these things, the Cabinet Office will always ensure they are linking together properly and some of the inter-ministerial groups and the Cabinet sub-committee will look at these things in the round to make sure that they do complement each other, work together and deliver a whole between them. Each of them obviously has its own particular focus. It is right that they are produced and presented separately, but they are part of an overarching vision that the Cabinet Office will oversee.

The Chairman: Is there a formal co-ordinating body, or is this what I call coffee point co-ordination?

Brandon Lewis: I would say it is somewhere between the two, in the sense that the First Secretary of State and the Social Reform Committee, when it goes around across government, will have an eye on making sure that all of these things are complementary and work together. That is something the First Secretary of State will do, but there is also—taking the second part of your question—the fact that we, as departments, do work together on these things to make sure that they interlink properly.

Baroness Morris of Yardley: I am just not clear on the timing of this. Could you say a bit more about that? It is the inquiry into the civil society strategy that is confusing me, because it looks as though it should underpin the other strategies, but the timing of it is that it is not even going to start on its discussion paper until after all of the other strategies have been published. From the sector’s point of view, they think they have something before Christmas that they have waited a long time for and then they are immediately launched into another strategy, so would you say a bit more about how you see it fitting together? Also, you only mentioned volunteering; is that the only area you are covering with civil society?

Lord Blunkett: Just to follow that up, the idea of launching a democratic engagement strategy within six days of Christmas might raise eyebrows. I would like the thinking on that.

Tracey Crouch: I can answer on the civil society strategy. We were able to say at the last DCMS Oral Questions that we were going to do it. It had not been formally announced before then that we were doing it; we were just having some private conversations with the sector. Its formal launch will happen in January.
Following on from what Nick was saying, the fact is that we see civil society as a golden thread that runs through all of Whitehall and all departments, and what we are trying to do is bring that all together and provide a co-ordinated focus. The sector is so wide and varied, and there are lots of little things happening within the sector, so we want to be able to pull it all together. It certainly, definitely does not only focus on volunteering.

**Baroness Morris of Yardley:** Does it have any connection to the other reports or not?

**Tracey Crouch:** DCMS is leading on that particular report with DCLG, but we have been working with DCLG on the integration strategy, so this is very different. This is going to be a much wider look at civil society and the strategic direction for the future, focusing on a variety of issues, not just integration.

**Baroness Morris of Yardley:** Give us some examples.

**Tracey Crouch:** For example, there is a lot going on at the moment within youth and we want to make sure that youth are a key part of the civil society and we will build on the insights gained from earlier engagement programmes. Volunteering is a key part of it, as is the inclusive economy, so how we look at the alternative ways of financing charities and how we support small charities in the future, whether grant-based funding is the best way or whether we look at alternative funding mechanisms, and how we use lottery funding, knowing, as we do, that lottery receipts are declining.

There are lots of challenges out there for civil society and we want to make sure that we provide a focus through proper, strategic direction, which has not happened for well over a decade. I am really proud: this is now my baby and I want to make sure that what I am doing is something that is really fundamental for the sector. I feel enormously privileged to be representing a sector that I have had a lot to do with, personally, in the past and so we need to make sure it has the right strategic direction.

**Baroness Morris of Yardley:** I do not disagree with that. What I was trying to get at is whether it has any relationship to the other reports. Let me just take youth; that is the only thing I heard you say, other than charities and voluntary work, really. I suspect that the democratic engagement strategy has something about engaging young people, so you publish that and then you launch a consultation that is about youth. It is that disconnection between them. If you were to say that your inquiry into civil society has nothing to do with other reports, I can see why it is, and you have said it is the golden thread, but it is picking up the bits after they have—

**Tracey Crouch:** I am not saying that at all. We have been involved with the democratic engagement plan and, within my portfolio, I have responsibility for Make Your Mark, the Youth Parliament and youth policy in some parts of that. The engagement aspect is very important, so of
course we have been involved in that, in the same way that we are involved in the integration strategy. However, the integration strategy and the democratic engagement strategy have some very specific remits and what I am setting out in the civil society strategy is a much wider strategic direction for the sector, which is incredibly diverse and varied.

**Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth:** It is important to know that the civil society dimension is very much taken account of in the integration strategy, partly through volunteering, community enterprise and so on. They are very relevant and obviously we have been discussing this very much with Tracey and with officials, so it is not as if it is ignored. I appreciate what you are saying about the sequence, but if we were to alter the sequence so it was in any order, I have no doubt you would say, “Why have you done it that way rather than another way?” The sequence is close together and they have all informed each other in the development, so it is not as if they have been done in isolation.

**Lord Blunkett:** When I was in Government, when you did not want to discuss something publicly, you published things within the week leading up to Christmas, when you knew that minds would be elsewhere. What about democratic engagement? How many minds are going to be turned to political engagement in the days leading up to Christmas, do you think?

**Nick Gibb:** Lord Blunkett, you will also know that when you are a busy government with a lot of announcements, measures and activity happening, both domestically and internationally, you find the slot that you can get. That is not the high-profile part of the process. The high-profile aspect of this is around International Democracy Day and the Minister for the Constitution has already announced that there will be a National Democracy Week that will take place between 2 July and 8 July—nice and warm then, and also not leading up to Christmas. That is the high-profile part of this strategy.

**Q181 Lord Harries of Pentregarth:** The Committee would very much value your reflections on fundamental British values. As you know, they were introduced into the school curriculum very closely connected, at least in time, with the counterextremism policy, and this has aroused a fair amount of disquiet. Do you think, in light of that, it was counterproductive to do that? There is then the content of fundamental British values. Some of them are, indeed, fundamental values of British citizenship, like democracy, law, freedom under the law and equality before the law, but the values that we have, including things like tolerance and respect for faith, are fundamental values but they are not so closely connected with the idea of British citizenship. Also, they are rather limited; what about the need for lack of discrimination on the grounds of sexuality, gender and the other characteristics? Thirdly, and very briefly, are the Government thinking of doing more on these fundamental shared values in, say, sports centres and leisure centres rather than just concentrating on schools?
Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: It has been a useful debate. As you will recall, there was a debate in the House of Lords almost a year ago, initiated by the Archbishop of Canterbury, on British values, as he called it. We established that some of the British values are international values, some of those you have mentioned, but that does not stop them being British, of course. All of the things that you have outlined could be taken to be British values, and that was another thing that that excellent debate threw up. There was massive participation in that debate and I think we all found it useful. There is the analogy of the Habsburg face; that you can recognise it but not everybody would mention the same feature, the nose or the forehead or whatever, but it is important.

Speak to people from the ethnic minority communities about the citizenship ceremony. I was initially very wary about it; I was not against it but I was not convinced it was a good thing, but now I have seen people who have experienced the citizenship ceremony and, for them, it was an enormous rite of passage. They were really appreciative of that and so I have changed my mind on that and have seen how good that can be. The same is probably true of signing up to British values. A lot of people who we may feel are against this are, in fact, very much for this, because they see it as an inclusive action to make them part of British society in the way that they are.

We could debate about what goes in and what is left out and, as you rightly say, it is very difficult to talk in terms of British values in any legislative sense or in any statement of values to articulate the tolerance and sense of humour, fair play and so on as part of it—and I am sure they are part of it—but the things that do underline our approach to values should certainly include respect for the rule of law, to ensure that there is equality in relation to matters of race, religion, sexuality and so on. We have not been precious about saying what is not there. We have been having a debate, since the Casey Review came out, about what really does belong in British values, and any contribution on that is still very much welcome and is still part of a wider debate. When we issue the integration strategy, it will not be definitive and say, “This is what people are signing up to”. We do need a wider debate about what it is, but nevertheless I am convinced that it is important.

Nick Gibb: Lord Harries, you raised a number of issues. The definition of “fundamental British values” is “democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance and understanding of different faiths and beliefs”. That came out of the Prevent strategy, which said that vocal and active opposition to fundamental British values is a definition of extremism and that was then inverted to become a positive value.

You mentioned other values beyond those we have listed and, of course, you are right, but the fundamental British values are not intended to be a list of all the values that the Government believe are important. Schools, for example, have a public sector equality duty to protect equality and the characteristics that are protected in the Equality Act. For independent schools, we changed the regulations, the independent school standards,
to require schools to encourage respect for other people and to pay particular regard to the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010.

The term “fundamental British values” does not imply that these values are unique to Britain. Indeed, they are commonplace amongst not all nations but a whole raft of nations, but they are values that are valued in Britain and that is why the term provides a very useful shorthand for that, and they underpin our political and social order.

You also asked about the link with extremism. Fundamental British values are widely held and they are widely shared values that are held by people of all races and faiths, which only a tiny minority do not share. I do not believe actively promoting these values will alienate any specific groups or be in conflict with anybody’s beliefs.

Finally, you asked about sports centres and the role of sport and it is important. Life skills, such as resilience, confidence, team-working and leadership skills are strongly associated with success in school, the labour market and life generally, and we want to encourage participation in sport and other extracurricular activities, which can play a part in promoting those life skills, which are important in developing resilience to the kind of extremist pressures that some young people are subject to.

**Tracey Crouch:** We recognise that the role of sport in promoting active citizenship and community development is extremely important. I really, genuinely, believe that sport has a unique power to bind people together in the UK. We quite often use sport as a means of encouraging community cohesion. In addition, we actively seek to improve participation in sport through recognition of people’s different faiths, because we know, for example, that there are certain faiths where there is lower participation in sport than others. There are challenges there that we have to overcome and the sport strategy, which sets the strategic direction for Sport England and its funding mechanisms, has certainly put that front and centre within that. There are a number of sports, such as football, rugby and cricket, to name but three, that really do work with key partners in order to encourage sport as a means of binding citizens together.

If I may, there is one other aspect of DCMS work that helps with the issue around fundamental British values and that is that we support the promotion of democracy to young people through our funding of the British Youth Council. I am sure Peers are aware that we run its Youth Voice programme, which is part of the process of the Make Your Mark ballot. Last year, almost 1 million young people across the country cast their votes about the topics they wished to discuss when they came here and had the annual House of Commons sitting back in November. The Youth Parliament chose issues such as “A curriculum to prepare us for life” and “Votes at 16” as the two campaign issues they wanted to focus on. This is a process that encourages young people to engage in campaign issues and it teaches them about democracy, and that is something that happens beyond the education system.
Brandon Lewis: I will pick up on a couple of points colleagues have made, starting with Lord Bourne’s point, which is absolutely right. We should not underestimate the importance and the value that people put on their desire and aspiration to understand British values, particularly if they are looking to move towards British citizenship. Lord Bourne is absolutely right that that sense of achievement and people’s desire to feel part of something, to understand what goes behind that is quite intangible and invaluable to them. In fact, when you talk to people who are aspiring to that, let alone people who have achieved that, it is quite humbling to talk to them about why that matters to them. It is almost that intangible sense of not just belonging but understanding something that they want to drive towards.

It links in to the point that both Nick and Tracey were just making and one of the things I see, particularly when I go to centres for asylum seekers. When they first come to the country, there is nothing that brings people together better and quicker than sport. It transcends language, origin and faith, and it just brings people together in a way that, it seems to me, when I have been out and about visiting these centres, nothing else does. It is a huge credit to the Government, and DCMS, in particular, is driving this forward with support from DfE to make sure that we continue that. If we are looking to continue to build societies and communities and see integration as we go forward, there is very little that can match sport for its ability to bind people together in a positive way.

Baroness Redfern: I want to ask about Brandon’s comments regarding bringing people together in sport. Do you think that it really helps and interests young people in wanting to volunteer as well, leading to better aspirations, because I think sport plays a really important part in bringing those communities together?

Brandon Lewis: If you do not mind, I will let Tracey pick up on this, but this is my experience from what I have seen when visiting centres, as I was last week; I was in Wales and went to a centre that supports and works with refugees, and it summed up what I was just saying. When I went into that centre—as I have done with other places but, as I say, the most recent was on Thursday—I met this fabulous team who are working with people in an entirely voluntary way. When you go into the main room, although they have language lessons and people queuing up who want to progress and develop their language—and the key to integration is getting access to the English language—what was bringing people together in the main part of that centre was people playing basketball. The room had a basketball court and foosball and pool tables, and it was various sports that were bringing people together from a huge variety of backgrounds, some of whom had been in the country for months and had a good grasp of English, some who had been in the country for just a few weeks and had no English at all, but were able to interact with each other and the team through the sport they were playing. It absolutely drove home to me that ability to bring people together. I am struggling to think of a way that people can do that that surpasses what sport can do.
**Tracey Crouch:** It is really interesting. When I was first given the role of civil society as well as still being the Minister for Sport, eyebrows were raised as to whether or not a Minister could do both things, but there is such a crossover. If you take away the elite level of sport, the vast majority of grassroots sport is delivered by volunteers. I know that because I was one. I spent 10 years coaching a girls’ football team entirely as a volunteer and if you took away the volunteers from sport, you would have no grassroots sport. When you put the two together, you have examples like Brandon has just demonstrated, which is that you have volunteers within charities who recognise that sport is a means of helping them deliver the outcomes they are trying to achieve in terms of bringing people together and supporting people. There is a positive crossover between volunteering and participation, but also the health and well-being of the nation.

**Q182 Lord Rowe-Beddoe:** During our Committee hearings, we have heard some suggestions that there are negative effects in linking the question of fundamental British values with counterextremism. Do you think it is counterproductive? It was a view that was expressed quite often.

**Brandon Lewis:** No, I do not agree with some of that evidence. We have to remember that, as a country, over a very long period of time, we have managed to develop something that is multiracial and multifaith, with people from a wide variety of backgrounds; that is going back for many generations, particularly as a Member of Parliament representing East Anglia, which has obviously been visited by everybody from the Romans to the Normans, Saxons and Vikings.

We also need to understand that it is what makes our community stronger and the success we have seen in developing, over generations, the ability to deliver a stronger community is underpinned by what we class as that slightly intangible thing, as one of my colleagues said earlier, but it is about British values. That includes, as has been said, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, tolerance of other faiths and beliefs—picking up on the earlier question.

We should make no apology at all or accept that there is anything offensive about being very proud of the values that unite us. Yes, we refer to them, as Lord Bourne said, in the shorthand of “British values”, but promoting those core values is absolutely essential in the work we are doing to defeat extremism, and we should be quite unapologetic about that. If we are not focused on defeating the evil ideology of extremism in all its forms, we will miss out on dealing with one of the biggest challenges of our time. It is not easy, it is complicated, but we have to stay focused on it and not allow ourselves to be taken off piste by people having a problem talking about British values. We need to be very clear about that and we have to make sure that our narrative about that tolerance and belief in the rule of law is something that we drive through, as I say, very unapologetically and be quite forward-stepping about it.

**Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth:** I agree with what Brandon has said. What we have to do, at the same time, is ensure that we get across very
clearly the message that this is not only about tackling Islamic radicals. A significant part of the work is also about tackling racist groups, Britain First and so on—these people who are proscribed. That perhaps is something that is a message that all of us need to get across. However, there certainly is a strong linkage between countering extremism and those people who do not support British democratic values, and the work that we do on the counter-extremism programme. We have just launched pilot schemes through leadership in Leeds and Luton. Baroness Williams and I were at the launch of this and it shows that we are working across the aisle, as it were, because both authorities are very powerfully led by Labour, but we are very much singing from the same hymn sheet, as we do nationally. There is nothing precious about this being just a Conservative agenda. This is an agenda for Britain and, as I say, we have to work across all communities to tackle extremism wherever it is.

**Brandon Lewis:** Just to reinforce that point, I have done a few meetings now where people have raised the issue you have just raised around linking these two things together and whether that is right. They tend to come from the point of view that this is focused on a particular area and we need to remember that, in the context of something like 7,500 referrals last year, from the last set of figures, 25% of those were from far-right groups, and we will be publishing some new figures soon and that has gone up. In terms of extremism in any format that starts to look towards eroding things, whether it is women’s rights or general intolerance and bigotry, we should be absolutely fearless in challenging and making it very clear that that kind of behaviour, whatever angle it comes from, will be contested and we will meet it face on.

**Baroness Eaton:** I find that very interesting, and no one could object to what you say, but there is an elephant in the room that everybody walks around and does not raise. You talked about refugees and asylum seekers and how well they work together and I can fully understand that, but you seem to forget we have communities that are deeply entrenched in views that do not sit with British values. You touched on women’s rights and women’s equality; it is fine talking about it, but what is there that can be done to change minds, attitudes and lifestyles, which do discriminate hugely against women, in particular, and people who might be deemed different? How is what the Government are doing going to address those issues?

**Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth:** I will lead off on that, because you and I were both together, a bit over a year ago, doing visits in Bradford in relation to Communities First activity. I am not sure whether you were there when I went to the English language provision or we met later perhaps, but anyway, for the benefit of everybody, I went to an English language course and most of the people there were young Muslim women and they were finding it transformational. We do have a problem there, which we are seeking to address by increasing the provision of English language courses in key communities. We lead on that, in DCLG, through Near Neighbours and other work, and that will certainly form a part of the integration strategy. I am sure that we are not going to alter the nature
overnight of some of the communities you refer to, but one of the ways we can do that is to do with, as Brandon mentioned, the all-important nature of the English language. It is difficult for us to think of this, because you go anywhere in the world pretty much and they speak English, but for people who do not speak English living in a community where English is the dominant language, they will not come out of the house. It is not just that they will not get a job; they do not feel they can get on a bus; they feel they are going to be challenged as strangers. This is a key to success in driving forward our integration strategy; Margaret is absolutely right about that. It is not going to alter overnight certainly, but it is central to what we are trying to do.

Baroness Eaton: As an aside to that, one of the big issues is transcontinental marriage in the situation you describe, where every generation is a first generation. That is not going to change attitudes quickly and it will not anyway. You say it is a slow process, but this surely exacerbates what is a continuing problem.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: We are broadening this. The Ministry of Justice leads on this, as you know, and it is looking at the marriage issue. That is perhaps something that is being looked at over a longer, slow-burn period. That said, some of that is taken care of by English language courses; some of that is taken care of by visa controls. However, you cannot contest that what we are seeking to do on English language is going to be vital to ensuring that we have better integration in our communities. That is very much what is driving our Casey response.

Baroness Lister of Burtersett: I am really glad that you emphasise the importance of English language courses. We had two sessions last week where our witnesses, including Dame Louise Casey, emphasised their importance, but did not have such a rosy picture of what is happening as you have just given us. The picture they gave us is that there have been serious cutbacks in English language courses, with the exception of resettled Syrians; it has been very welcome that there has been extra help there. However, this is a real concern among a number of agencies, in terms of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: I contest that, because the numbers being taught have gone up, which is the relevant criterion here, I would say. Nevertheless, I am not contesting that there is not a challenge there in ensuring that we get more people on to English language programmes. I have seen some excellent ones in Whitechapel, in Bradford and elsewhere in London, and it has convinced me, and I think the Government are convinced, that this is very much central to the integration strategy that we will be publishing. I do not contest the fact that there is a big challenge there.

Brandon Lewis: Can I just come back to the core point? I agree with the points that have been made around the English language. Something that is very clear when you talk to people who have come to settle in this country, whether as refugees or accepted asylum seekers, is about that
ability to have a good understanding of the English language, not just through the formal test process that ESOL does, which is absolutely required, but that informal ability to be able to communicate and, therefore, properly be part of a community and communicate with that community, which can help get into work and things like that when the time comes. That is hugely important and there is a real piece of work to do there for local government.

One of the things that has been interesting going around the country and seeing these areas is there is some phenomenal good practice out there. Baroness Eaton, you will know this as you have more experience than I have, but one of the things we all have to try to be better at is how we get local government to share best practice. There is this classic challenge, which we see across areas, where some local areas do fantastic work and either are shy about sharing their great work or other areas are shy about listening to what can be done. There is a really important piece of work for the Local Government Association to do about how we spread that even better.

Coming back to the initial point you made around, in a practical sense, what can central Government do, there are a couple of things. One is working with local government, as DCLG and the Home Office do, in generally trying to share that best practice and talking about what we see when we see best practice. We should not underestimate the benefit and importance of that, but there are also the very hard facts of what we are doing. If you think about the Prevent programme, as I said earlier, referrals from that were 25%, and increasing, of far-right groups, but within that some 850,000 frontline staff across schools, the public sector more generally and health, have had training to be able to recognise and deal with these issues. There are some 42,000 individuals in 142 different projects around the country who have been funded in the last period and that is still growing. There is a huge amount of very practical work being done and supported by central government as well.

**Lord Blunkett:** I do not want to prolong this unnecessarily. I have a non-registerable interest in this area. Nobody could fault Lord Bourne's connectivity. Everywhere I go, I find that Lord Bourne has been there, so it is unanswerable that there is a connectivity. The difficulty I see is that there are programmes that are extremely good, but the generality of funding for adult learning and the corollary with further education then reduces, so that with one hand the Lord is giving and with the other, if Richard will forgive me, the Lord is taking away. Could we get this joined up a little?

**Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth:** Thank you very much for the compliment, David. It is undeniably the case that there is an issue about ensuring that, post the English language course, there is connectivity with further education and we are discussing within the department how we deal with that within the integration strategy. As I say, there is a challenge there. As Brandon has said, there is massive good practice out there already, sometimes led by a local authority, as in the case of
Manchester, sometimes led by a particular provider of first-class English language education, as I have seen in London. It is making sure we join all that up in future programmes to do with the English language, but certainly we can say—we are probably all agreed on this—that central to any effective integration strategy has to be teaching in England, with respect to David, the English language. In Wales, it may be English and Welsh, but certainly the English language is the key to unlocking and countering isolation of lots and lots of people.

Q184 Baroness Lister of Burtersett: Moving on to citizenship education now, we have had a lot of evidence about it. We have had a number of witness sessions and it is fair to say that they have painted a dismal picture. One witness, for example, said it is “withering on the vine” and that summed up what a lot of them were saying. I will just point to two areas, but there were others. One is the absolute lack of specialist teachers and the numbers being trained appear to be a fraction of what is needed. The other is that it seems to have lost sight of the original focus or emphasis placed on developing young people as active, democratic, political citizens. How has this happened? Why has it happened? How do you see the role of citizenship education, particularly in view of your democratic engagement plan, which is now anticipated very shortly? Surely citizenship education should be at the centre of any democratic engagement plan and, at present, it simply is not, from all the evidence we have received.

Nick Gibb: I disagree with some of those opinions. Citizenship is a very important part of the national curriculum. When we reviewed the national curriculum in 2011, we took a very active decision to keep citizenship as part of the national curriculum. It is one of only six subjects that are compulsory at key stage 4. The six are PE, science, maths, English, computing and, of course, citizenship. That was a very deliberate decision, because we understand the importance of citizenship. We reformed the curriculum so that it is more knowledge based, because our understanding was that young people did not understand the structure of our political system. If you look at the national curriculum for citizenship at key stage 3 and 4, it covers things like: how laws are made; how the political system works; how local government works; the distinction between metropolitan and county local authorities and district and borough local authorities, parish councils and so on; how our legal system works; the difference between county courts, High Courts, Crown Courts and the Supreme Court. All these issues are now incorporated into the knowledge-based curriculum of citizenship, which we think is very important.

In terms of how it is taught, there is no cap on initial teacher training in terms of numbers that education faculties want to recruit or, indeed, school-centred initial teacher training want to recruit of citizenship teachers. Also, citizenship is taught well by people who are applying to be teachers of politics, for example; it is one of the most common academic backgrounds for teachers of citizenship. Therefore, I would not despair by
looking at the citizenship figures; I would also look at the numbers coming through who are equipped to teach politics.

We take citizenship very seriously, and the promotion of fundamental British values has turbocharged the importance of citizenship in the curriculum, because that is a very effective way of teaching some of those elements of fundamental British values. Do not also forget things like spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, which is a requirement of all schools to teach, and it is also inspected very actively by Ofsted. It is a statutory requirement of Ofsted inspectors to inspect and monitor the effectiveness of that element of the curriculum.

**Baroness Lister of Burtersett:** The evidence we have received is very consistent and from a number of different sources that spiritual, cultural and personal values, whatever they are, plus so-called—I always say so-called—fundamental British values, seem to have displaced political citizenship education. I take the point that it is important that children and young people have the knowledge, although even that has been questioned, but also a lot of emphasis is put on the doing of it, of schools as democratic communities, and that just seems to be lost in a lot of cases. I am not saying there are not still excellent teachers trying to do this, but it seems like they are trying to work against the tide.

**Nick Gibb:** We promote pupil engagement in terms of school councils and pupils being involved in the running of their schools and having a voice to express about how their school is run. In our advice to schools about the citizenship curriculum, we encourage them to have visits to law courts, to the public galleries of chambers, whether locally or, indeed, this building. It is important that young people have the knowledge to be able to navigate through our political system, and that was the deficit that we felt needed to be filled more importantly than anything else. The way to become active in politics is, first, to know your way around the structures of our political system and many young people did not know that; second, some of the fundamental changes we are making to our education system to ensure that young people leave our education system well educated, knowledgeable, equipped for life in modern Britain, is a thing we have been working on since 2010. We want young people to understand our history. If I was to give advice to any young person who wanted to go into politics about the best preparation for life in either this Building up here or the House of Commons, it would to make sure that you are well versed in British, European and world history. Things like the English Baccalaureate are very important in encouraging an increase in uptake in subjects like history, which was in decline until we introduced the EBacc.

**Lord Blunkett:** Chairman, we know all the evidence points to the fact that this is the only curriculum subject that does not equate to bursaries for teacher training. We know that the numbers have dropped to minuscule proportions. We know that there is no clarity yet as to how many schools are teaching citizenship or how many people in those schools are equipped to teach it. We do not disagree at all with the issue
about a body of knowledge, but if people do not know, themselves, as
teachers, about the structures and the body of knowledge that we seek to
impart, how on earth are we going to manage to do it with pupils?

**Nick Gibb:** David, it is compulsory at both key stage 3 and key stage 4.
There is a slimmed down curriculum. We slimmed down the curriculum
right across the subjects at key stage 3 and key stage 4 because the
direction of travel for the Government is a school-led system. We are
trying to raise the status of the teaching profession, but it is very clear
the knowledge that does need to be taught at key stage 3 and 4, and I
have every confidence in our teaching profession that they are able to
teach a knowledge-based curriculum. As I said earlier, it is not only
citizenship-qualified teachers who can teach this curriculum; those
qualified to teach politics are well-equipped to be able to pass on the
knowledge of how our political systems work.

**Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth:** Just to give a quick example backing
that up—and I agree with Ruth that the doing is important—we had some
schools here last week in relation to countering genocide day. They
produced a booklet on countering genocide, which I am speaking to Nick
about as to how we could perhaps disseminate this information to other
schools, because it was a brilliant booklet they produced. The schools
also brought here genocide survivors from not just the Holocaust, but
also Darfur, Cambodia and so on. It was a really useful session, so there
is some really good stuff happening out there.

**Baroness Morris of Yardley:** Nick, I think there is a problem here,
because whatever you say—and I am not doubting; I know it is slimmed
down, I know it is in the national curriculum, and I know it is one of a
small number of subjects that need to be taught—that is not what people
in schools think is the case. Either there is a misunderstanding between
you and most of the schools that we have met and talked to during this
inquiry, and that I have met and talked to outside of this inquiry, or you
are wrong. What worries me most is you are not giving and saying,
“Look, whatever you think, I do understand that it does not seem that
way to schools; therefore something needs to be done”.

I know how passionate you are about maths teaching and phonics. I
know that because of everything you do. I know because you spend
money on it, because you launch initiatives, because you train teachers,
because you send teachers abroad, because you say it is important for
children. I do not know that that is how you care about citizenship
education, because you do not do those things as far as citizenship
education is concerned. I use “you” to talk about your ministerial team. If
you think what has also happened, where the outside world has seen
your ministerial team putting their efforts, it is on character education.
Whether or not you intended it to be the case, the reality is that many
teachers think you are favouring character education over citizenship
education and, as you know, there is a real difference between the two.
Whatever ticks the boxes, whatever the file says, whatever the
documents say, that is not what is being thought in schools and you need
to hear what they are saying and try to give some indication that you are
going to do something about it.

**Nick Gibb:** The last report by Ofsted was in 2013 and they did say that citizenship—

**Baroness Morris of Yardley:** That is a long time ago, before character education, before—

**Nick Gibb:** It is, I accept that, but they did say it was stronger in 2013 than it was in 2010. My view is that the best way to equip young people to participate and to become active citizens and to contribute to society, which is our objective in all our education reforms, is, first, to make sure they know how the system works, and that is why we changed the content of the curriculum so that it is more knowledge based, because previously it was not; you could have gone through the citizenship curriculum and not understood how our political systems work, and knowing how they work is absolutely key to inspiring confidence—

**Baroness Morris of Yardley:** I do not disagree with you on that. I am not arguing about that.

**Nick Gibb:** —that you are able to access the political system. Second, young people need to be well educated. We need to ensure that young people have the confidence to participate in our democratic system in a confident way, not in a superficial way. The way to be confident of engaging in political life is to be well educated, and that is why it is important to focus on children's ability to read, and it is important that young people are versed in science, so that they are able to knowledgeably challenge assertions made about science in the political discourse that we have. It is important that people understand the geography of the world, so they can understand some of the international aspects of political debate. It is important that they know about the history of this country, of Europe and of the major world countries that have influenced this country, so that they can engage in discourse and debate on an equal par with those other people who are engaged in debate who are well educated. That has been one of the fundamental building blocks of the education reform that we have been doing.

**Baroness Morris of Yardley:** I just think there is a huge link between giving them those facts and enabling them to be active citizens in terms of citizenship and civil education and you are not letting that happen.

**The Chairman:** Baroness Morris, we have to move on.

Q186 **Baroness Barker:** In our very first session, the officials from all of your departments relied almost exclusively on evidence from Ofsted when they talked to us about citizenship. We understand from other witnesses that that report, in 2013, is the last of its kind and we are not clear how we are going to get any evidence from Ofsted about citizenship in future.

**Nick Gibb:** Ofsted is no longer doing those themed reports, not just for citizenship but right across the board. They are having to focus their resources on raising academic standards in our schools. Nonetheless, in
the 2015 Ofsted framework, they are required to look at how well fundamental British values are delivered in our schools and, of course, that is best delivered, in many ways, through the citizenship curriculum. Second, they are required by law, under the Education Act 2011, to inspect spiritual, moral, social and cultural education in our schools and aspects of that are covered in citizenship. We will get continued feedback through Ofsted reports about the quality of this kind of education in our schools, notwithstanding that they have stopped doing those themed reports right across the curriculum.

Q187 Baroness Pitkeathley: My questions are about civil society, so initially for you, Tracey. Several members of this Committee were also on the committee that I chaired on charities, which reported in March this year and in which we very much called for a strategic approach with the charitable and civil society organisations. Sadly, we still have not had your official response, but I am very glad to know that you are committed to developing those strategies. I want to ask you specifically about areas with a very low level of social capital. What are you doing to encourage those? We have heard, for example, evidence that areas with large numbers of white, working class people have very low levels of civic engagement. Are you particularly targeting such communities? If we think also about volunteering, what are you doing to encourage people who perhaps have a low level of volunteering—older or disabled people or people who are newly retired and so on? Are you targeting those specifically and do you plan to do that with your new strategy?

Tracey Crouch: The first thing to say is I am so sorry that you have not yet had our response to the report, which is an excellent report. We have obviously had an initial conversation about it. I can tell you I have done my bit, but we do hope to get it to you before we rise for Christmas next week, so I only apologise on that.

With regard to the other issues, about low levels of social capital, as you know, the Community Life Survey tracks trends and is held annually to do this. We know from the recent survey that levels of community cohesion have remained consistent. However, we recognise that there are still challenges to that and particularly the relatively low levels of volunteering. Twenty-two percent said that they had taken part in formal volunteering at least once a month, although when you look at it on an annual basis, nearly 63% have done it at least once a year. We are looking, through the Community Organisers programme, at how we can work to kick-start a grassroots movement to see how we can get volunteering firmly embedded in some of our most deprived communities and neighbourhoods across the country. There are 20 Social Action Hubs that are responsible for delivering the programme and they are working within the defined Index of Multiple Deprivation areas, so they are really looking at the areas of most need.

With regard to other initiatives around social capital, you will be aware of the Life Chances Fund, which is an £80 million fund that provides support for locally developed social impact bonds. The Government have already committed over £16 million to 10 new social impact bonds through the
Life Chances Fund. These are funds that look specifically at very particular issues, such as, for example, drug and alcohol dependency and support for children in care, so they are getting right at the heart in terms of some very early intervention.

With reference to the question around older people and disabled people, I have a particular passion for this; I have worked on older people initiatives and issues for many years. We all understand the value of volunteering to the community, but of course it also brings a real sense of value to the individual as well. Getting older people and people with disabilities to do volunteering has some personal benefit to them—it reduces isolation—but also brings a whole wealth of experience that you do not get from other members of the community. We are putting some money into initiatives such as the 50-plus volunteering. I am told by everybody involved in volunteering that anyone over 50 who offers their services is the “golden ticket”, and so we are definitely trying to make sure that we create a network of older volunteers who can help in a variety of initiatives, including things like careers advice and other opportunities. There is so much skill and experience with older people that you want to really maximise the capital from that, so we are putting some money into that through a variety of funds. The 50-plus initiative is one of those, but we also have the Second Half Fund, the Give More Get More Fund, the Connected Communities Innovation Fund. There is a lot of work going on into that. Finally, I should not forget, because I will be told off otherwise, that we are working with the Centre for Ageing Better on a review to get the evidence about how to better understand how we can help those aged 50 and above to share their skills.

Baroness Pitkeathley: Is that looking at the barriers that stop them?

Tracey Crouch: It is very much doing that. It is looking at issues around how we can establish whether schemes work and at other issues, as you say, such as barriers. Time is clearly one of those issues. Accessibility, I should imagine, will come up, but also knowledge and awareness. Whenever I am in my own constituency, I hold a pensioners’ fair and whenever I talk to pensioners about the opportunities for volunteering, they are up for it but just did not know it existed, so that is something we want to work on.

Baroness Lister of Burtersett: This is perhaps an example of where there is overlap between the civil society and democratic engagement strategies, because we heard also about barriers to active citizenship and civic engagement that are created by socioeconomic deprivation. It is partly time, so people are doing lots of different jobs to get by, but simply people are having to put so much effort into getting by, because of poverty, it is very difficult for them to engage either in volunteering or civic engagement. What are the Government doing specifically to address these very material barriers?

Tracey Crouch: Affordability is key to many issues. Making sure that people are aware of initiatives that are happening right on their doorstep and with which they can engage is important. People do not necessarily
understand what volunteering is, sometimes. I am sorry to harp back to the sports side of my brief, but at no point as a football coach did I think of myself as a volunteer. It is about getting people engaged, whether it is reading books through initiatives like Bookstart to young children in their local schools, right on their doorstep, which does not provide any expense to them; it is matching them. In many respects, we need almost like an internet-dating service for volunteers, so that they can match their skills with the opportunities that are local to them.

We see very acute problems within areas of multiple deprivation, and that is not specific to any particular age or gender. We have to be able to ensure that there is almost a mentoring programme as well. People from an older generation can certainly help support those from a younger generation to cope with many of the challenges that they have collectively faced. We are working on a lot of that. There is money behind this initiative as well, just to reassure the Committee.

Baroness Lister of Burtersett: Mr Gibb, will the democratic engagement strategy be addressing these kinds of very severe material barriers that some people face?

Nick Gibb: Yes, it is precisely designed to deal with that, trying to break down those barriers to participation. The plan will make the case for fostering a democratic society, facilitated by government in collaboration with different partner organisations and electors themselves. That is really what the whole strategy is about: breaking down those barriers.

Lord Verjee: These questions are about minority communities. Could the panel talk a little bit about the Government’s strategy for minority communities, and, in particular, programmes to reach the hardest-to-reach communities? That seems to me a huge opportunity for civic engagement from parts of the population who just would not normally participate. Within that question, what are the Government doing to ensure that all the attention does not go to the extreme voices and the loudest voices, and that attention should go to the majority minority community? What sorts of programmes are the Government doing to achieve that, in particular, women’s groups, and we have talked about sports? In some of the programmes the loudest voices seem to be divisive rather than promote civic engagement.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: First of all, I take very much the point that we do need to engage beyond the usual suspects. I suppose we are all usual suspects. Some usual suspects are very useful but we do need to go beyond that and we do need to be very careful about ensuring that we are listening to mainstream opinion, as it were. I am very conscious of that. In the role that I have, going round and speaking to groups in different communities, one can see the dangers, and I generally try to take advice before going there. A lot of government activity through DCLG is funded through Near Neighbours, which Baroness Eaton knows very much about as a very effective chair of that organisation. The money to local groups is generally channelled through that in relation to projects that we have in helping to tackle minority deprivation and so on.
Beyond that, however, I accept it is important that we do speak to people beyond the usual suspects and, from day one, I very much tried to do that. In my first week, I made a point of—within London, admittedly, so it was London-centric, as it had to be, because I was here in the House—ensuring that, on one day, I went round and visited religious institutions of every variety, not just mosques and temples but also a Jain temple and the Baha’i community and so on. Sometimes, we also have to realise that there are some minority communities that get overlooked, and I also visited Zoroastrians. It is important. You establish links through that, some with the usual suspects, which are absolutely essential to ensuring, because they are the community leaders, that we do get our messages across through the mosque and through the temple and so on. That is important too.

The Near Neighbours funding has really been highly successful, I would say, in reaching beyond the religious leaders into the communities. For example, I went to Leicester recently and had a meal with a Muslim family and also members of the Armed Forces, which is part of what they were trying to do in Inter Faith Week. I have been to churches, not necessarily the ones recommended by people. I have picked some churches, more or less at random, to find out what they are doing on interfaith work. It is important that we do speak beyond the religious leaders.

I agree that women’s groups are very much important. I remember, very early on, going to a gurdwara, where the lead person was female. She took the discussion very much forward, and that has also been surprising, if I could say that. Certainly a surprise to me is that, in some mosques, counter to what I thought—and this shows that perhaps sometimes we are out-of-date in our thinking—the women are very instrumental in what is happening in the mosque, even to the extent that there are female imams, apparently. This is important too.

This is not to say that we are getting it right all the while—we are not—and there is a problem with some religions, as we know. It is not just the Muslim one—a challenge perhaps, more than a problem, that the women are kept a little, historically, to some extent, in the background. That would be true of other religions as well, and maybe even the Christian religion, to be honest, so we do have to make a particular effort to make sure that we are hearing opinions not just from the usual suspects—people like us, perhaps—and that we do go beyond that. That is very much central to what I have been trying to do, and we will see that playing out in the integration strategy when we publish it in the new year.

**Tracey Crouch:** I was going to say we talked about sports in general and how they can help encourage better community cohesion. There are some very specific projects that we are doing in sport that are targeted at BME communities, but also women as well. The This Girl Can campaign is a very strong campaign, not just about physical and mental wellbeing but also about empowerment, which is another aspect. There are other
initiatives that we, as a department, are engaged with. I am responsible for the Tampon Tax Fund and we have just launched the latest round of the Tampon Tax Fund, of which there are some very specific aspects that have been set out—for example, violence against women and girls but also mental health.

Of course, I know we are going to get into more detail about NCS, but NCS does rather well in reaching key groups that are classified as harder-to-reach, such as those eligible for free school meals, those from BME backgrounds and those registered as having special educational needs and from minority-faith backgrounds. The NCS also supports the Jewish Lads’ and Girls’ Brigade to run an interfaith version of the programme for those of all faiths and none.

There are initiatives that are happening within my portfolio that we are looking at but, of course, the department is wide and I can say from previous portfolios, holding both heritage and being involved in issues around the digital agenda, that we are trying to make sure that it is as inclusive as possible.

**Lord Verjee:** I still do not have the answer to the core issue that I think we have. Minority communities seem to be tarred with the extremist brush. What can the Government do to take off that tar? It seems a core issue we have in our society is that all minority groups or all Muslims are tarred as extremist Muslims. What can we do to prevent that happening or to stop that happening?

**Brandon Lewis:** Lord Bourne might want to come in on this, but it is important that one of the ways we deal with that is what we are saying in a place like this. I would challenge the premise of the question. If you think about some of the comments we were making earlier on this morning, and if we look at what Prevent does, there have been about 7,600 referrals. 25%—and, in fact, in the new figures, it has been closer to 30%—of those are far-right-wing groups. That is why we need to challenge people. Some of the people in the communities that are involved—and it is a community-led programme—are very determined to make it clear that this programme works. It is part of a community. It has to be delivered by and with the community for it to succeed.

There is a frustration with some people involved in this that people, in some quarters, decide to jump on a bandwagon to criticise something that is delivering and to misrepresent it. I know Lord Carlile himself was particularly strong on this. We need to be very clear about these programmes that are working in that way. As I say, when you recognise 25% growing to 30% of those referrals are far-right-wing, it is about making sure that we are able, in society, to deal with some of the challenges that are there. It links back to a point I made earlier on: we have to be fearless in dealing with some of those challenges. If they are from extremism in any quarter, we have to be clear about the fact that we will take that on and not be afraid of facing up to that.
Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: Brandon is right on that. We all have a role here in relation to ensuring the message gets across that the Muslim religion and other religions are very much part of the fabric of British society. It is not my political party but having a Muslim mayor in London has been instrumental in helping in that regard. The response to the dreadful terrorist attacks that we have had this year has shown that underlying the difficulties and the challenges that there may be is an example of the cohesion of British society.

We saw that very clearly in Manchester. I remember going to the mosque at Finsbury Park after the awful terrorist attack there that evening and finding out not just that the Charedi community leaders were there from nearby Stamford Hill but that they were the earliest people there, other than the worshippers, and that also they were very close friends of the people running the mosque. Messages like that going out really have helped demonstrate the cohesion that there can be. The Government are very clear that the extremists are a minority, whether they are from racist right-wing groups like Britain First or whether they are Islamist in fanatical terms. They are very much a small minority, and that is a message that we all need to get across.

I have seen powerful leadership, wherever I have gone, in relation to ensuring that leadership is provided by members of the Muslim community. We talked about women’s empowerment and the Women’s Empowerment Fund, and we have put a lot of money into that to help counter domestic abuse. Very often, you would expect the leadership there to be women, which it is. I am very conscious that, when I was with Margaret in Bradford, we met somebody from the south Asian community leading on domestic abuse, and leading on domestic abuse against men. That is, again, something that may be surprising and, probably, from that community, takes a great deal of courage. It demonstrates what is happening in our country and, clearly, the Government, local authorities and organisations have a role in that, as do all of us, in ensuring that that message gets very clearly across that there is much more that unites us than ever divides us.

Brandon Lewis: Just to add to that, in a very practical sense, we are seeing some benefits in those communities in terms of how some of the campaigns work. Prevent, as I said, works with civil society groups to make sure we are countering those kinds of extremist ideologies. We also recognise that we can play a very direct role in helping them to have the toolkit in their bag to be able to reject some of those narratives. For example, at the Home Office, our research, information and communications unit is working with some of those civil society groups to give them some advice and support, down to the details about how you produce these things and have public relations expertise and social media training, so that they can not only understand how to challenge it but also have the skill set with which to challenge some of those issues around extremism from any quarter.

Baroness Eaton: I totally understand and accept and am very
supportive of the idea that we all have a responsibility. However, when we talk at this level, we forget some of the very “minor” things that make that difficult. I am thinking of things that perhaps local authorities do, with the best of intentions, such as serving halal meat to all children without letting parents know. That can be as offensive to a Hindu or to some people as it is offensive to people not to. It is those small things that do create the tensions that then people feel they have no right to express. What you say is absolutely right but we also have a responsibility in the terms of other policies from local government and the Government that create these kinds of unnecessary tensions. We forget that when we are talking about what you have just said, which is terribly important but not the whole story.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: That is fair. Can I just add one additional point? Sometimes, we think that government programmes can do more than they can do. They are clearly important but I often think that Nadiya Hussain and—and Tracey would have a view on this—Mo Farah have done more for race relations in this country and cohesion than anything that governments do. That is important because Mo Farah is a hero not just to people from his ethnic community but to all British kids.

Tracey Crouch: May I just say something really briefly? We are born without prejudice and it is something that we learn. We all have a responsibility to try to ensure that we raise awareness of prejudice and how unacceptable it is, whatever that prejudice might be, whether it is faith, sexuality or other aspects. We are all collectively working together and we should all collectively work together to try to make sure that parents of the next generation are aware, as much as we are, that there is no role in society for any level of prejudice or bigotry.

Lord Blunkett: I want to make a very quick, practical point. As Ministers now responsible in the Home Office for the introduction of the English and citizenship tests and ceremonies, we had a bad patch a year or two ago, with the very substantial rise of UKIP, where it looked as though the British Government were seeking to discourage people who were putting roots down in Britain from becoming naturalised citizens. First, are we over that patch and are we now keen that such individuals and families should join?

Secondly, given that and the fact that the Government have to cover the costs that are incurred, is the cost now too prohibitive, given the fact that we were given evidence that, if you took the route from the beginning all the way through indefinitely to naturalisation, it could cost as much as £9,500? That means that, very often, the male in the family becomes a citizen and, very often, other members do not, with all the inequality and division that that creates.

Thirdly—and I was responsible originally for this as well—the “Life in the UK” booklet appears to have taken on a life of its own. You are all plain-speaking Ministers. Could we take a review of this? Many of us, including me, could not answer some of the questions in the paper, which is not only confusing but confuses a body of knowledge from a nerds’
guide to the British nation, which is not what we were about.

Finally, would it not be a good idea if British citizens, when they reach adulthood, had a bit of a test of their own?

**Brandon Lewis:** I will try to cover off those points, and I am sure you will remind me if I have managed to avoid any part of it. Dealing with the last part first, that starts to cover part of what Nick was talking about earlier on in terms of the test. I often think that, having spent many years in local government myself, having everybody in local government understand how the tier system works, which, in some areas, can be some tiers long and deep, is a challenge for all of us, not least of all some of us as councillors when we were in it.

In terms of the test itself, I will probably deal with the points in reverse order, as it were, having taken that last point first. In terms of the point, David, around the “Life in the UK” book, there were a couple of points you made within that. First, the last edition was revised in 2013. We are looking at updating it because things do move on. For example, there are no longer tax discs, which are mentioned in there. Andy Murray’s success has increased since the book was last done, which is good for all of us—another British hero.

However, what the book does—and going back to its inception back in your time, David—is it does try to outline. We need to differentiate sometimes between some of the ways it is portrayed, because what we are looking for and what the book is looking to give people and the test is looking to check is a basic understanding of the British way of life: people having an understanding of the things that they are going to encounter as a British citizen and as an integrated part of British society, which is not just about language but about understanding how the culture works. That does involve sport and it does involve some of the history of our literature and cultural world—and yes, I say that genuinely as a Thomas Hardy fan—as well as understanding how local government works, how the rule of law works, that there are four parts to the United Kingdom, and how all of that comes together.

That is quite a sensible thing to do, because taking British citizenship, which comes to the second part of your question, David, is a choice that people make, which can be for a number of reasons. Somebody can get indefinite leave to remain without necessarily going to the next step of taking British citizenship. It touches on a point that Nick Bourne made right at the beginning of this morning’s session, which is that people who decide to go for British citizenship will do it for a range of reasons.

However, at the core of it—and I am sure people have different logical reasons for doing it—is a very strong emotive desire to make a commitment to the community that they now feel they are part of and want to be part of, and see British citizenship as a real aspiration and something to gain. For us, in terms of the way it is priced, there is a process that people go through that has different prices at different stages. Indefinite leave to remain is where people stay.
If they choose to go on and take British citizenship, we do charge for that and we have always been very clear, from the Immigration Act 2014 most recently, that it is in line with those powers, and the charges we put forward are charges that cover the costs of running the system itself, which includes border security as well as the administration of our British citizenship test. People choose to do that and their emotive reason for doing that is one that should be admired. As I say, what the book tries to do is give them a feel for what British culture, as well as, as we touched on earlier, the values, are about.

I cannot remember if I have covered, within doing all that, the first part of your question, David.

**Lord Blunkett:** So you do now want to encourage people where it is appropriate.

**Brandon Lewis:** That is the one part I would certainly challenge you on, because I do not recognise that. As I say, working in the Home Office over the last couple of years, and certainly in this role since the summer, I do not recognise what you have outlined in terms of the way the Home Office works.

**Lord Blunkett:** To be fair, it was before his time.

**Brandon Lewis:** Yes, but even looking back, I do not recognise that as a situation. There are ebbs and flows. When you look at the tracking of the number of people who look for British citizenship, there is a definite ebb and flow. It literally goes up and down. There is not a clear trajectory. For many years, it is up one year and down the next. It does ebb and flow. That will be about the number of applications. From the Home Office point of view, I do not think there has been any particular view about seeing less, but what we are very clear about is that, if somebody is coming into this country, I make no apology for the fact that we are doing what we can to make sure that people who come into this country are coming for all of the right reasons and are able to integrate and be part of that community whilst keeping our communities safe. Having your previous roles, David, you will know about that from the point of view of national security and immigration more widely, and the border security part of that is part of my brief.

**Lord Blunkett:** Chair, just to be mischievous, I thought Minister Gibb was just warming to the idea of my last point about British citizens knowing a lot at the age of 18.

**The Chairman:** Did I hear you answer the question about cost and the fact that it tended to be only the leader of the household, and whether the Government make a profit out of this?

**Brandon Lewis:** The fees for visa and naturalisation do exceed the administrative costs of those services. We have been very clear about that but we have set the fees to make sure that they are able to contribute towards the resources for the wider border security,
immigration and nationality system, as outlined in the 2014 Immigration Act.

**Lord Blunkett:** We may want to come back to this with recommendations. You may want to consider a family fee rather than just an individual one, but that is another matter.

Q190 **Lord Rowe-Beddoe:** Democratic engagement is the next section. Ease and accuracy of registration: in recent years, after each general election, concerns have been expressed concerning voter registration and the difficulties that parts of our community encounter in trying to register. Has the Government considered allowing members of the public to register to vote without a national insurance number on the basis of other recognised government ID? Secondly, what work has the Government done to improve the efficiency of voter registration by harnessing existing datasets? The last part of that is: has automatic voter registration been considered for people coming through the age of 16?

**Brandon Lewis:** I can certainly deal with the first part of your question. Both from a department point of view and more widely as well, the Cabinet Office have been doing a piece of work on this. Chris Skidmore is the lead around voter registration. I do think it is right that the Government do take this seriously and with some caution, and I say this as a Member of Parliament who represents an area where I have seen opponents being found guilty of electoral fraud. I have seen first-hand what people will do and what people can do in terms of that. It is right that we use national insurance numbers for identification, because it is important that we are able to verify that somebody is exactly who they say they are. In the case that I saw in my own constituency, people were able to put in nominations for somebody to be a councillor without that person signing the form, and ended up in a case about that.

We also sometimes forget that, because that is the standard procedure—and it is right to be certain about identity—we also need to bear in mind that, for people who cannot—and, yes, I do accept this—provide a national insurance number, they can still register. There is another process for exceptional circumstances, where they will go through other processes to prove their identity and they can use other forms of documentary evidence to show that they are who they say they are, the most common and obvious being a passport, which is one of the most secure documents. There are other processes but it is right that we make sure that people really are who they say they are.

**Nick Gibb:** If I can just add one comment to that, we are also concerned that any kind of automatic registration would undermine the principle of individual electoral registration: namely, that the individual responsibility and ownership over registering to vote—the sense of personal responsibility—would be undermined by the concept, as well as all the issues about verification.

**Baroness Morris of Yardley:** I see that point and I agree with you on that, but would you accept that perhaps in that join from young person to
adulthood and getting the right to vote, something could be done in sixth form to encourage people to register to vote, as individuals—not against the law—and for sixth-form teachers to take that responsibility on and some facility in the school to enable them to register themselves individually?

**Nick Gibb:** Again, it would undermine that principle but—

**Baroness Morris of Yardley:** No, they would still register individually.

**Nick Gibb:** No, it undermines the principle that you, yourself, are responsible for registering. What we need to do is to do more. It is incumbent on all of us to promote democratic engagement.

**Baroness Morris of Yardley:** Including schools.

**Nick Gibb:** Yes, to explain the importance of registering but not necessarily to do it for students.

**Baroness Morris of Yardley:** No, not do it for them but to do it there.

**Lord Rowe-Beddoe:** I talked previously about the ease of registration, but there is somebody in the room called fraud. That is the biggest threat that you have. How do you assess fraudulent registration? How do you assess fraudulent votes today? Do you have any idea other than what the popular press tells us?

**Nick Gibb:** On the ease of registration, it is very easy. People can register on the “register to vote” website at any time and it can be done in as little as three minutes, so it has never been easier to register than now.

**Q191 Baroness Barker:** On the National Citizen Service, an ongoing theme throughout all our debate has been the parallel definitions of citizenship. On the one hand, there is individual, personal responsibility, and then, on the other hand, there is collective engagement in the democratic process. We have heard from you in your submission to us and also the statement from the Ministers that the National Citizen Service is not about citizenship per se but about social action. I wonder if you could expand on the reasons why that should be, given the paucity of other citizenship education and schemes.

The second thing is, as you well know from the passage of the Bill during the House, there is a question that arises from the original design of the National Citizen Service, which is its attachment and its overall inclusion in wider citizenship involvement. Can you answer the question that is repeatedly put about the NCS: four weeks’ engagement, then what?

**Tracey Crouch:** The first thing to say is that it was not set up as a citizenship scheme, so absolutely, categorically, that was not its purpose, whereas it was set up with three core purposes, which we highlighted in the evidence to you as well, around social mobility, social cohesion and social engagement. That said, it does encourage active citizenship. It encourages a broader personal development and social mixing, but quite
clearly we want to make sure that the NCS is involved in all the aspects of democratic engagement.

The NCS Trust have worked closely with schools in order to embed NCS into the citizenship and PSHE curriculums. They work with the Association for Citizenship Teaching. They also have various activities while the youngsters are on the programme to engage their youngsters with citizenship and democratic engagement. They work with Bite the Ballot and Rock Enroll. They help tens of thousands of people to register to vote and they connect young people with local politicians and community leaders. We as MPs get invited to our local citizenship schemes and programmes, where we can talk about what we do. Clearly, they do participate in citizenship education; they are just not set up as a citizenship scheme, and it is really important that we recognise that.

In terms of the skills that they learn on the programme, it is around things like social mixing, social engagement and social action. The scheme is designed to fill a gap that was not necessarily happening within communities themselves. What we find from the feedback that we get after each and every programme is that they really value the scheme. Many youngsters absolutely love it and they have certainly gone on a personal journey as part of the citizenship scheme.

You do make an important point, however: what next? It is really important that the skills that they learn as part of the programme are things that they take with them for life. We are certainly looking at ways we can connect graduates from the NCS scheme with other community-hub initiatives, so that they can continue to take their learnings from the programme into life in general. We recognise that we are at early stages of that part of the programme. I certainly recognise some of the criticism that was outlined by the PAC and the NAO on those issues and we are working with the NCS Trust to develop that going forward.

We are trying to connect the graduates from the NCS scheme with other opportunities. NCS is working with the Scouts in order to try to encourage those who have been through the programme to become scout leaders. They are working as part of the #iwill campaign, which is all about volunteering. There are lots of different initiatives that are happening, although we do recognise that we have a little way to go.

**Baroness Barker:** The NCS is only unique in one aspect, and that is that it will have automatic contact with every 16 and 17 year-old. Do you not think that, given that advantage that it has, it ought to be doing more towards promoting citizenship and engagement as well as all the other activities that are done by other groups?

**Tracey Crouch:** It does but it is done in a subtle way. It is done in a way that connects youngsters in citizenship and encourages them to get a better understanding, but without the parameters of being in a classroom. It is not sitting there necessarily teaching them about the difference between a tier-one and a tier-two local authority, but it is
teaching them about the importance of getting out to vote and teaching them about other social issues, such as social inclusion and social mobility. That is enormously important. Citizenship is not just about encouraging people to vote; it is also about getting a better understanding of the society that they live in, and that is one of the advantages of the NCS.

**Lord Harries of Pentregarth:** It is a very expensive programme, and doubts have been expressed about whether it is good value for money. I wonder what comparisons have been done with comparable schemes like the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, for example, in terms of good value for money, effectiveness and reaching all communities.

**Tracey Crouch:** I know that the NAO and the PAC report on the NCS highlighted the importance of improving value for money, and we would recognise and agree with that. We are working very closely with NCS to try to enhance that. Annoyingly, the 2016 evaluation of value for money comes out next week, so we will write to the Committee to update you on that. The 2015 statistics, however, showed that, for every pound spent on the summer programme—and, of course, there are three seasonal programmes—£1.50 of benefits were realised. We recognise that there is definitely improvement in the value for money of that. Next year, when the NCS looks at all its local contracts, we would expect a reduction in some of the unit costs, which is a horrible way of putting it, going forward. We recognise the criticism and we are working on those issues.

**Lord Blunkett:** Chair, I have a number of numerated interests. Could I bowl the Sports Minister a very quick googly? Do you, Tracey, have a timeline yet on when the new chair might be appointed?

**Tracey Crouch:** It is imminent, one hopes. My bit is done.

**The Chairman:** Thank you very much. You have been very good with your time. Perhaps we could finish off with a more general question. You will have gathered the concerns of the Committee. They include the values—whether they are called shared or British—and the red lines associated with them, in terms of the points beyond which people should not go; the position of citizenship education; the challenges of areas of low social capital, of introverted and isolationist communities and of how we encourage democratic engagement. As I said at the beginning, one of the things we have been told is that it is going to require sustained, persistent effort to tackle these and other areas. You have these three strategies coming forward. How are you going to judge whether you have been successful and how far do you think you are going to be able to tackle some of the points that the Committee has raised with you this morning? Lord Bourne, would you like to start?

**Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth:** Not really (smiling, laughing). First of all, I do not think we will be able to tell overnight whether we have been successful. It is something that you would need to look at over a period. You are absolutely right to highlight the danger of silo thinking and warn us about the dangers of that, but these programmes do dovetail citizen
and democratic engagement and integration, and it would be wrong to think of each of these being produced in isolation and saying different things. They are designed to dovetail together. Your summary of the challenges of social capital and isolation are all well stated.

Just listening to the last question and Tracey’s response, I agree with all that but it also does perhaps highlight the fact that we are not just faced with the issue of the increasingly diverse nature of British society in terms of citizen engagement and so on; there is also the issue that we are fighting against there in citizenship and engagement about the computer in the bedroom and so on, and getting people engaged not because they do not want to engage with people of other faiths or religions but simply the isolation that comes from that. That is another interesting challenge that perhaps we need to explore more.

There are many ways of looking at this. We have seen serious challenges. We have seen hate crime go up in the last year at the same time we have seen better reporting. Better reporting is good. Some of the hate-crime statistics represent better reporting. How do we find out which that is? How do we judge whether this is successful? We will all be able to see and recognise it but there are so many different strands to it and so many different sets of statistics that it is going to need a deep dive to make sure that we are being successful.

We have not touched on something else that is very relevant, and that is the Race Disparity Audit, where the Government have been absolutely right, and the Prime Minister in particular has really been leading on this in terms of how we use those statistics to inform policy across a whole range of issues, some of which we have been discussing today. I have no easy answer to how we will know whether we have been successful, Robin, but I suspect that, over four or five years, we will have a rough guide of what the challenges are.

**Tracey Crouch:** The Committee’s work is incredibly welcome on this, but the fact that there could have been five, if not six, Ministers here shows that there is not one single problem. There is not one single department. There is not one single solution to the issues that you raise. We are all working together to try to ensure that we do improve better democratic engagement and citizenship across the board. We all have a responsibility, both as Members of Parliament and Peers, to ensure that we encourage an understanding within our own communities of what it means.

**Nick Gibb:** Education lies at the root of both democratic engagement and social capital; we might call it social mobility. Standards are rising in our primary schools and in our secondary schools, and already the gap between those from disadvantaged backgrounds and their more affluent peers has closed by 9.3% in the primary sector and by 7% in the secondary sector. Last week, the international reading and literacy survey showed England rising from joint 10th to joint eighth place in the 50 OECD jurisdictions. We are seeing an eight-percentage-point increase in attainment in the new, much higher standard of key stage 2 SATS
happening. Right across the board, we are seeing higher standards in our schools. There are 1.9 million more pupils in good and outstanding schools today than in 2010. That is absolutely key. More knowledgeable, better-educated people leaving our school system is the way to enhance voter engagement and democratic engagement.

**Brandon Lewis:** Building on the points that colleagues have made, we face a huge challenge as we move forward in all of these areas, because of the way that our lifestyles are changing, particularly, as Nick Bourne touched on, in terms of this issue around how we integrate and how we link with the internet at all different levels; it is not just integration but the impact that that has generally on society and how people interact with each other. People can interact now without seeing each other, which does make it harder to integrate, whatever your background and wherever you come from. Therefore, we have to be even more ferocious in our desire and our determination to make sure that we do work together as communities, that we do recognise that, as a country, we are a great country because we have had this kind of integration—multifaith, multi-background—for generations. It is what makes this country so special and such a great place, as we see regularly now. People want to come to it and want to be part of it, and we should be proud of that. We should not be afraid, particularly where political correctness can get in the way, of dealing with extremism wherever it comes from.

Ultimately, coming to your point, Lord Chairman, around how we assess that, we have to be very careful that we do not try to set arbitrary targets of what success looks like and feels like, because it will change as the challenges change. We have to make sure that we move with that. The Prime Minister has been very clear about the overarching desire to deal with that, which is absolutely right. Fortunately, there will be an august committee such as your good selves who will no doubt challenge us on that and test us on that in due course.

**The Chairman:** Thank you very much indeed for your time and for the information you have given us. We look forward to discussing the results of our report with you in due course.