

# Student Activity Resource:

## OCR Module 2596: Politics of the UK (sample pages)

# Part 5 Citizenship

## Section A: Summary

### Definition

A full British citizen (there are other categories) is somebody who was born in the UK, has one or both parents who are British citizens or has been granted citizenship. Citizenship confers rights, legal obligations and civic responsibilities.

### Citizens' rights

- ✓ Political rights – eg voting or the right to stand for election
- ✓ Civil rights – eg freedom of speech, movement and assembly now incorporated in the Human Rights Act
- ✓ Social rights – eg the right to free health care and free education.

### Citizens' legal obligations

- ✓ To obey the law
- ✓ To pay taxes
- ✓ To do military or other duties as are required by the government in an emergency.
- ✓ Jury service.

### Citizen's responsibilities

Voluntary involvement within the community – for example:

- Charity work with the elderly or disabled
- Neighbourhood watch
- School involvement through Parent/Teacher Associations
- Joining a pressure group
- Joining a political party
- Standing as a candidate at elections.

### Citizenship and changing attitudes 1945–97

**1945-79** The post-war Labour government defined citizenship as having equal opportunities through healthcare, education and state benefits. Only with a common starting line could everyone enjoy full citizenship. This approach was broadly accepted by subsequent Conservative governments (the 'post-war consensus').

**1979-97** The Conservative governments of Thatcher and Major changed the emphasis from rights to responsibilities and **active citizenship**. The welfare state would be a safety net for those who fail but citizens should be given the opportunities to help themselves. Direct taxation was cut. The right to buy council houses was granted. State industries were sold to those wishing to buy shares. Housing associations were formed to allow tenants to run their own rented homes. Schools could opt out of local government control and run their own budgets. The **Citizen's Charter** told the public the standards they could expect of a particular government service, how far such targets were being met and how a citizen could complain if this failed.

## **Citizenship and changing attitudes 1997–2004**

**1997- 2004:** The Labour Party felt that Conservative changes at been at the expense of civil rights. Rights to belong to a trade union (the sacking of workers at GCHQ) and freedom of movement (during the miners' strike 1984-85) had been compromised and the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1994 were seen by some as a threat to civil liberty. Labour therefore promised a programme to extend civil rights while simultaneously promoting citizen involvement.

### **Key changes 1997–2004 (1) – Political rights**

- Increased voting opportunities - eg devolved Parliaments in Scotland and Wales.
- Increased use of referendums.

### **Key changes 1997–2004 (2) – Civil rights**

- The incorporation of the European Convention of Human Rights into British law ( in force since 2000)
- Freedom of Information Act - to be fully implemented in January 2005.

### **Key changes 1997–2004 (3) – Social rights**

- The right to a minimum wage
- The acceptance of the Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty which gives protection on working hours, part-time work and female employment.
- Anti-poverty programme to help the most disadvantaged members of society.
- The Citizen's Charter replaced by 'Service First'.

### **Key changes 1997–2004 (4) – Citizenship education**

- ◆ In 1997, the Advisory Group on Citizenship and Democracy in Schools under Professor Bernard Crick was set up to draw up a scheme for effective citizenship education
- ◆ Citizenship is now a compulsory part of the secondary school National Curriculum. Students must be taught about social and moral community responsibility; ways of being involved in the community (active citizenship) and they should be politically aware of institutions and issues.
- ◆ Proposals for citizenship courses (January 2003) included knowledge of English, knowledge of basic rights and duties and understanding of the political, legal and social system.
- ◆ In February 2004, 19 people from ten countries took an oath of allegiance in front of Prince Charles at the first formal ceremony to recognise new citizens.

## Section B: Activity 5.1 Views on citizens' rights

### Source 1 The post-war consensus & the New Right

In 1945, the Labour Party won the election on the promise of creating a country fit for heroes. The party's philosophy was to use state intervention to create an equal society. The National Health Service, giving free medical care, began in 1948 and the welfare state system of benefits and subsidised housing was expanded. Only with an equal start line could a citizen enjoy equal rights. Until 1979, the Conservatives accepted this attitude (albeit with modifications). The Thatcher government (1979-90), however, believed that this approach to citizenship had created a 'dependency culture'. Thatcherites who belonged to the New Right argued that citizens expected the 'nanny state' to take on what should be individual responsibilities. The New Right felt that the role of the state was to protect its citizens against lawlessness but otherwise to give opportunities for 'active citizens' to help themselves.

### Source 2 New Labour

In 1997, New Labour promised positive intervention to increase citizens' rights. There would be changes in the law to widen the political and civil rights of individuals giving greater opportunities for participation. Social rights would gain greater legal protection. Simultaneously, state intervention in the form of money and new schemes such as 'Sure Start' would tackle the poverty that undermined people's opportunities.

### Questions

1. Explain what is meant by the phrases 'dependency culture' and 'nanny state' used in Source 1. (5)
2. Describe four ways by which the political rights of citizens in some areas of the UK have been increased since 1997. (20)
3. Evaluate the contribution of the Conservative governments from 1979-97 to 'active citizenship'. (30)
4. Evaluate two changes in the law since 1997 that have increased citizens' civil rights and two changes in the law that have increased citizens' social rights. (40)