

First virtual citizenship ceremony welcomed by Home Office minister

Local authorities will now be able to conduct citizenship ceremonies for individuals and households virtually.

As a result of coronavirus restrictions, group citizenship ceremonies have been suspended. However, citizenship ceremonies will now be allowed to take place via video conferencing. The move will allow applicants to complete their unique citizenship journey and become British citizens.

The first virtual citizenship ceremony has been led by Southwark Council, London, who will begin offering the option from today.

To mark the momentous occasion Home Office Minister, Kevin Foster, attended the UK's first virtual citizenship ceremony. He said:

This ceremony is a moment in history as it is the first to be undertaken virtually. It is good to see how the process has been adapted by local Councils to allow ceremonies to still take place during these difficult times.

Citizenship ceremonies are important as they recognise the commitment the new citizen has made to the UK, in establishing their home here, contributing to the economy, and having learned about life in the United Kingdom, its culture, laws and history.

Those aged 18 or over who have successfully applied to become a British citizen must attend a citizenship ceremony. During the ceremony, individuals make an oath or pledge; the event is administered in the local authority by a registrar.

Leader of Southwark Council, Councillor Peter John OBE, said:

Southwark Council's registration service helps about 3,000 people become British citizens every year. Our cultural diversity is one of the many great things about Southwark, and citizenship ceremonies help us to encourage new citizens to play an active part in the community.

The current epidemic means that in Southwark, like across the country, we're working hard to find new and innovative ways to deliver services I'm delighted that we can now offer virtual citizenship ceremonies too.

These measures are expected to be temporary. It is anticipated that local

authorities will resume providing group ceremonies in official premises once it is safe to do so and subject to national or local social distancing guidance.

Departments have worked together closely to deliver an efficient solution to the current restrictions. Due to coronavirus, the period over time to book a citizenship ceremony after receiving an invitation from the Home Office has been extended from 3 months to 6 months, to allow for greater flexibility.

[More information on the citizenship process can be found on GOV.UK.](#)