



Authenticating Emblem of the People of United Ulster

A DISCUSSION PAPER

Citizenship by Descent, Birth in the Territory, and the Public Interest

From the People of United Ulster

Date: 14 August 2026

This document is issued under the authenticating emblem of the People of United Ulster.

Population of United Ulster (confirmed figures):

- Northern Ireland (6 counties): ~1.93 million
- Republic of Ireland Ulster counties (3 counties): ~333,000
- Full nine-county United Ulster: ~2.26 million

This document sets out our collective analysis of automatic or weakly conditional citizenship by place of birth, the related problem of children of non-citizens entering the political community without genuine connection, the consequences for local services, intergenerational continuity and the integrity of public institutions in the nine counties of United Ulster, and the principles and concrete framework we put forward. It draws on the predominant international model of citizenship by descent (*jus sanguinis*), the post-1983 United Kingdom rules, the post-2004/2005 Irish rules that ended unrestricted birthright citizenship, and the practice of the large majority of the world's states, adapted to the constitutional realities of British and Irish law and the Common Travel Area.

1. Who We Are and Why We Speak

We are the people of United Ulster — the historic nine counties that form one continuous territory: the six counties of Northern Ireland and the three Ulster counties of the Republic of Ireland.

The population of this territory stands as follows: Northern Ireland (6 counties) ~1.93 million; Republic of Ireland Ulster counties (3 counties) ~333,000; Full nine-county United Ulster ~2.26 million.

We live with the realities of the Common Travel Area, an open land border, dual legal systems, and the daily consequences of decisions made in London, Dublin and Belfast. We have watched debates on who belongs to the political community become polarised between those who treat any concern for genuine connection as illegitimate and those who offer only resentment. Neither approach serves us.

A serious society must examine incentives, costs and consequences. This paper sets out what we have observed, what the experience of other jurisdictions shows, and the principles we believe should guide policy. We do not claim to speak for every person in United Ulster. We do claim the right, as citizens and residents of this place, to insist on clarity and honesty about who becomes a member of the political community by birth, who holds the passport of this place, and who may later claim the full rights of citizenship — including access to government roles, public services and intergenerational continuity — in a territory of approximately 2.26 million people.

2. Two Different Models of Citizenship Acquisition

There are, in essence, two ways a territory of this scale can structure the acquisition of citizenship at birth.

Model One (descent-primary and conditional)

Citizenship is transmitted first by parentage (*jus sanguinis*). A child of a citizen parent is a citizen regardless of place of birth; the parent registers the birth at the relevant embassy or consulate and obtains the national passport and nationality documents. Birth inside the territory does not by itself create citizenship for the child of non-citizens. A local birth certificate may record the fact of birth, but the child's nationality and passport remain those of the parents. Non-citizen parents remain fully subject to immigration and visa rules, must support the child without placing an undue burden on public funds, and may later seek naturalisation for the child only after a substantial period of lawful residence and demonstrated integration. This is the predominant model worldwide and the approach adopted by the United Kingdom since 1983 and by Ireland since the 2004 referendum (effective 2005).

Model Two (unrestricted or weakly conditional birthright)

Birth inside the territory automatically or near-automatically confers citizenship and a passport, irrespective of the parents' nationality or length of lawful connection. The child becomes a full member of the political community from the moment of birth. Parents may then leverage that status for settlement, access to services, and long-term rights. Over time the citizen body expands through place of birth alone, without corresponding requirements of descent, residence or commitment.

These are not abstract theories. Model One is practised across the large majority of the world's states and was deliberately chosen by both the United Kingdom (British Nationality Act 1981) and Ireland (Twenty-seventh Amendment and Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 2004) after public debate about birth tourism, pressure on maternity services, and the integrity of citizenship. Model Two remains the default in a minority of jurisdictions, principally in the Americas.

3. What the Current Approach Produces in United Ulster

Under present United Kingdom and Irish rules, unrestricted *jus soli* has already been ended. A child born in the United Kingdom is British only if at least one parent is a British citizen or settled. A child born on the island of Ireland after 1 January 2005 acquires Irish citizenship only if at least one parent is an Irish or British citizen or has been lawfully resident for three of the previous four years (with important exclusions for certain temporary statuses).

Even so, residual pathways, registration routes after later parental settlement, the ten-year continuous-residence rule in the United Kingdom, and the practical effects of the Good Friday Agreement birthright language continue to generate complexity and friction. Children of non-settled parents still require regularisation of status. Maternity, education, housing and social-care systems experience concentrated demand. The perception persists that membership of the political community can be acquired with insufficient prior connection, and that this membership later opens doors to public roles and entitlements without the shared understanding that comes from descent or long residence.

In a territory of approximately 2.26 million people the cumulative effect matters. Each automatic or near-automatic addition to the citizen body expands the pool of those who may later claim full political membership, including eligibility for government, police and related roles. When those individuals (or their families) lack deep local roots, the same friction already observed in other domains — land, business control, everyday retail — reappears in the domain of citizenship itself.

4. The Cost to the Local Community and to Intergenerational Continuity

Citizenship is not a mere administrative status. It is membership of the political community that owns the land, staffs the institutions, and carries the intergenerational responsibilities of the place. When citizenship is conferred primarily by place of birth rather than by parentage or proven long-term belonging, the next generation of Ulster people finds the political community expanded by individuals whose parents had no prior durable connection.

The parallel with the earlier papers is exact. Just as unrestricted external acquisition of land and businesses transfers control away from the resident population of 2.26 million, and just as open family reunification multiplies pressure on schools and services while reducing remittances, so weakly conditional birthright citizenship multiplies membership of the polity without corresponding investment in local continuity. The result is reduced legitimacy of public institutions, friction when people without lived understanding of Ulster's particular difficulties enter positions of authority, and a sense that the citizen body itself is being reshaped by rules that do not prioritise the people already rooted here.

5. The Cost to United Ulster under Dual Jurisdiction

United Ulster experiences these pressures under two legal systems and an open border. Decisions taken in London affect the six counties; decisions taken in Dublin affect the three counties. The Good Friday Agreement's birthright language adds a further layer of complexity for those born in Northern Ireland. Capital, labour and family units can move freely across the land border. Unilateral looseness or residual pathways on one side become a pressure on both.

Housing, schools and public services are already under strain. When children of non-citizens acquire or later claim citizenship with limited prior parental connection, the costs and the political consequences fall on the full 2.26 million population. The people who live with those consequences are entitled to examine whether the present balance between descent, residence and place of birth is sustainable.

6. Principles for a Better Framework

We do not call for the end of migration or of pathways to citizenship. We call for rules that are coherent, enforceable and honest about trade-offs. Drawing on the predominant international model of *jus sanguinis*, the deliberate choices made by the United Kingdom in 1983 and by Ireland in 2004, and the practice of the large majority of states, we set out the following principles:

First, citizenship of United Ulster is transmitted primarily by descent. A child of a citizen parent is a citizen at birth, wherever born. The parent registers the birth with the competent authority or the nearest embassy or consulate and obtains the United Ulster nationality documents and passport.

Second, birth inside the territory does not by itself confer citizenship on the child of non-citizens. A local birth certificate may be issued for civil-registration purposes; it does not create nationality or a passport. The child's nationality and passport remain those of the parents.

Third, non-citizen parents remain fully subject to immigration and visa rules. They must demonstrate the ability to support the child without undue burden on public funds. The birth of a child creates no automatic new right to remain or to public benefits beyond those already permitted by status.

Fourth, a clear, demanding path to naturalisation remains open after a substantial period of continuous lawful residence (a baseline of ten years is proposed), subject to integration requirements, good character, and knowledge of the language, history and civic life of Ulster. Minor children may be included when parents naturalise or may apply in their own right once the residence threshold is met.

Fifth, British and Irish citizens continue to enjoy the full rights of the Common Travel Area. The tighter rules on acquisition by birth apply to third-country situations.

Sixth, the United Kingdom and Ireland should strengthen practical coordination on nationality registration, birth documentation, and the immigration status of children born to non-settled parents so that the open land border does not become a route for regulatory arbitrage.

These principles do not ban belonging. They raise the threshold so that membership of the political community of a territory of 2.26 million people is grounded first in descent and second in proven, long-term commitment.

7. What We Ask

We ask politicians in London, Dublin and Belfast to stop treating the discussion of genuine connection as a precondition of citizenship as morally forbidden. The people of United Ulster — across Northern Ireland (~1.93 million) and the three Republic of Ireland counties (~333,000) — live with the results. We are entitled to examine incentives and outcomes.

We ask for a nationality framework that is robust, transparent and fair in both directions — fair to the communities that host newcomers, and fair to the long-term continuity of the territory itself. Fairness is not served by residual pathways that expand the citizen body through place of birth alone while diminishing the priority of descent and durable belonging.

We ask for honesty about the cumulative effect of citizenship rules on the political community, on public services, and on the legitimacy of institutions, and for the courage to design rules that protect local continuity without denying legitimate pathways to membership.

We are the people of United Ulster. We share this place. We share the consequences of policy. We will continue to insist that questions of who becomes a citizen by birth, who holds the passport of this place, and who may later claim full political membership in a territory of 2.26 million people be treated as matters of practical governance and mutual responsibility, not as tests of ideological purity.

The choice is not between openness and isolation. It is between policies that acknowledge the structural vulnerability of a territory of this size and policies that pretend the vulnerability does not exist. We choose the former.

Issued under the authenticating emblem of the People of United Ulster



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POLICY FRAMEWORK

Citizenship by Descent, Birth Registration, and Related Residence Rules

Presented by the People of United Ulster

Applicable across the nine counties of United Ulster
(Northern Ireland — United Kingdom; and the Ulster counties of the Republic of Ireland)

High-Level Strategic Policy Advice — For Senior Government, Ministers and Cross-Border Bodies

Date: 14 August 2026

This framework is put forward by the People of United Ulster as a concrete expression of the principles set out in the preceding Discussion Paper. It is designed to operate within the existing constitutional settlement while delivering coherent, enforceable rules on the acquisition of citizenship, the registration of births, and the immigration status of children born to non-citizens. It draws on the core architecture of *jus sanguinis* practised by the large majority of states, the United Kingdom's post-1983 rules, and Ireland's post-2004/2005 rules, adapted to British and Irish law and the Common Travel Area. It is issued under the same authenticating emblem.

Population context: Northern Ireland (6 counties) ~1.93 million; Republic of Ireland Ulster counties (3 counties) ~333,000; Full nine-county United Ulster ~2.26 million.

1. Strategic Context and Governing Reality

United Ulster is not a single sovereign jurisdiction. It comprises six counties forming Northern Ireland (part of the United Kingdom) and three counties forming part of the Republic of Ireland. Any coherent policy must therefore operate within the existing constitutional settlement, the Common Travel Area, the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, and post-Brexit arrangements. Unilateral creation of a single nationality regime is neither legally feasible nor politically viable. The correct approach is structured coordination between the two sovereign governments, with devolved input from the Northern Ireland Executive where competence exists.

The objective is to design systems that:

- Maintain the integrity of the Common Travel Area for British and Irish citizens.
- Ensure that citizenship is transmitted primarily by descent.
- Ensure that birth inside the territory does not by itself create citizenship for the children of non-citizens.
- Require non-citizen parents to support their children without undue public burden and to regularise the children's immigration status.
- Provide a clear, demanding path to naturalisation after substantial lawful residence.
- Protect the long-term integrity of the citizen body of a territory of approximately 2.26 million people.
- Avoid creating incentives for forum-shopping or regulatory arbitrage across the open land border.
- Provide clear, enforceable rules that parents, embassies, civil registrars and public authorities can apply with certainty.

2. Core Design Principles

1. Sovereignty with Coordination — Each state retains exclusive competence over its nationality law. Coordination occurs through formal intergovernmental mechanisms.

- 2. Descent as the Primary Mode of Acquisition — A child of a citizen parent is a citizen at birth, wherever born.**
- 3. No Automatic Citizenship by Place of Birth Alone — Birth inside the territory does not confer citizenship on the child of non-citizens.**
- 4. Civil Birth Certificate Distinct from Nationality — A local birth certificate records the fact of birth; nationality and passport follow parental status.**
- 5. Parental Support and Immigration Compliance — Non-citizen parents remain subject to visa and immigration rules and must demonstrate capacity to support the child.**
- 6. Demanding Naturalisation Pathway — Naturalisation after a substantial period of continuous lawful residence (baseline ten years), subject to integration and character requirements.**
- 7. CTA Protection — British and Irish citizens continue to enjoy full rights. The tighter rules apply to third-country situations.**
- 8. Transparency and Registration — Clear procedures for embassy/consular registration of births to citizen parents abroad and for regularisation of status of children born to non-settled parents.**
- 9. Digital Interoperability — Where legally permissible, data-sharing between UK and Irish authorities on nationality status, birth registration and immigration compliance of children should be strengthened.**

3. Citizenship Acquisition Architecture

3.1 Citizenship by Descent

A person is a citizen of United Ulster at birth if at least one parent is a citizen at the time of the birth, regardless of place of birth. The parent shall register the birth with the competent authority (or the nearest embassy or consulate if abroad). Upon registration the child is entitled to United Ulster nationality documents and a passport.

3.2 Birth Inside the Territory

A child born in the territory to parents who are not citizens does not acquire citizenship by virtue of birth alone. A civil birth certificate may be issued. The child's nationality and passport remain those of the parents. The parents are expected to obtain the child's documents from their own embassy or consulate.

3.3 Naturalisation

After continuous lawful residence of not less than ten years (or such longer period as may be prescribed), and subject to good character, language and knowledge requirements, and demonstrated integration, a person may apply for naturalisation. Minor children may be included in a parental application or may apply independently once the residence threshold is met. Naturalisation remains discretionary.

3.4 Statelessness Safeguard

Where a child would otherwise be stateless, limited residual routes consistent with international obligations may apply, subject to strict conditions.

4. Obligations of Non-Citizen Parents

Non-citizen parents who give birth while present in United Ulster remain fully subject to the immigration and visa rules under which they entered or remain. They must demonstrate the ability to support the child without placing an undue burden on public funds. The birth creates no automatic expansion of residence rights or entitlement to public benefits beyond those already permitted by status. Failure to maintain lawful status or to provide for the child may result in removal of the family unit in accordance with immigration law.

5. Operational Sequence (Recommended)

1. Citizen parent of a child born abroad registers the birth at the nearest embassy or consulate and obtains nationality documents and passport.
2. Non-citizen parents of a child born in the territory obtain a civil birth certificate and secure the child's nationality documents from their own embassy or consulate.
3. The child's immigration status is regularised in line with the parents' status (or independently if required).
4. After the prescribed period of continuous lawful residence, an application for naturalisation may be submitted and assessed against the published criteria.

5. Ongoing compliance is monitored; breach of immigration conditions triggers the ordinary consequences under immigration law.
6. Cross-border movement of family units is subject to coordinated notification where the open land border is involved.

6. Cross-Border Coordination Mechanisms

Given the open land border and the Common Travel Area, the following high-level arrangements are recommended:

- Formal information-sharing protocols between the UK authorities (including the Northern Ireland Executive where relevant) and the Irish authorities on nationality status, birth registration, and the immigration status of children born to non-settled parents.
- Joint or parallel guidance for parents, embassies, civil registrars and legal practitioners operating on both sides of the border.
- Coordinated approaches to residual pathways and naturalisation criteria so that a grant on one side does not create an unintended loophole on the other.
- Regular intergovernmental review of thresholds, registration procedures and enforcement data to prevent regulatory arbitrage.

These mechanisms must respect data-protection law, the Belfast Agreement, and the distinct constitutional positions of each state.

7. Expected Strategic Outcomes

- Citizenship is transmitted primarily by descent.
- Birth inside the territory does not by itself create membership of the political community for the children of non-citizens.
- Non-citizen parents remain responsible for support and immigration compliance.
- A clear, demanding path to naturalisation after substantial residence remains open.
- The Common Travel Area continues to function fully for British and Irish citizens.
- Public confidence in the integrity of the citizen body and the legitimacy of public institutions is strengthened.
- Policy remains predictable for legitimate family life while remaining enforceable.

Recommendation

This framework should be developed further through formal intergovernmental channels — the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and relevant North-South bodies — with technical input from the relevant UK and Irish departments responsible for nationality, civil registration, immigration and the Northern Ireland Executive. Detailed legislative and operational drafting would follow once political agreement on the high-level principles is secured.

The document is put forward by the People of United Ulster and issued under our authenticating emblem. It respects the constitutional realities of the two jurisdictions while proposing a coherent, enforceable approach that aligns United Ulster with the predominant international model of citizenship by descent and with the deliberate choices already made by the United Kingdom and Ireland, adapted to the specific circumstances of the nine counties whose combined population is approximately 2.26 million.

End of Document — Discussion Paper and Policy Framework

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