

For queen and country

Would you take part in an event that welcomed you to adulthood?

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In October, Britain's 18 year olds will be invited to take part in a pilot "Transition to adulthood" event - a Home Office initiative to encourage them to have a sense of their rights and responsibilities in their communities and in Britain.

Cristina Cooney, 15, from Islington, welcomes the idea: "I would like to swear that I would be a good citizen because I would be helping the country.

"The Government want young people to feel that they are in a society together and are not shutting us out because we are young."

Matthew Nash, 17, from St Albans, adds: "I would be able to realise what my powers were of being an adult rather than just thinking: 'oh great, I'm eighteen, I can go out and get drunk.' I would think: 'now I can vote, now I can take part in this country.'"

But Charles Hendry, Conservative Shadow Youth Minister said: "This is a one-off event which has a warm glow one day but doesn't actually carry forward."

The event may be based on the citizenship ceremonies undertaken by immigrants applying for British citizenship, in which people must either make an oath to God or make a "civic affirmation" to the Queen.

But how significant is the Queen in young people's idea of citizenship?

Korku Anomah, 18, from Hackney says: "She doesn't have any real role in my eyes."

welcome to adulthood

Cristina agrees: "I don't think we should have to swear an oath of allegiance to anyone. If we don't believe in the royal family why should we?"

Home Office Minister Fiona McTaggart says: "We don't have anything to say welcome into the community of adults.

"Here is some signal that you have some power and opportunities you didn't used to have and encouraging people to use it."

But Mathew Green, Liberal Democrat Shadow Youth Minister, disagrees: "Having a citizenship ceremony at the age of 18 is not going to make a jot of difference as to whether people are perceived to be engaging in society.

"Before the Government think about a ceremony, they ought to be trying to rationalise the different ages at which they make people do different things."

About the team

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