

Jane Hutt AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y
Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Our ref: JH-/01066/25

Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair of the Equality & Social Justice Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay,
Cardiff, CF99 1SN

SeneddEquality@senedd.wales

5 January 2026

Dear Jenny

Thank you for your letter of 1 December regarding the Welcome Ticket for asylum seekers in Wales. I welcome the Equality & Social Justice Committee's continued interest in our Nation of Sanctuary commitments, and I am grateful for the opportunity to provide further clarity on the challenges we encountered in developing the Welcome Ticket element of the Welcome Connectivity Project.

Clearsprings Ready Homes (CRH) were supportive of the project but, under Home Office contract terms, could not share or verify service-user information with third parties, including Welsh Government or Transport for Wales. These restrictions stem from Home Office requirements and GDPR, not reluctance on CRH's part.

After confirmation in June 2025 that CRH could not verify eligibility, we explored whether local authorities could take on this additional responsibility. While supportive, authorities faced capacity pressures and the need for agreement across 22 councils, which was not feasible within the timeframe. We have also needed to give consideration to the Strategic Partnership Agreement with local government which we agreed earlier this year, which includes commitments to fair funding in relation to new responsibilities. The 2022 Asylum Seeker Transport Pilot relied on intensive manual verification by third-sector partners. Though effective for evidence gathering, it was resource-heavy, short-term, and not scalable.

Updated modelling estimated annual costs of £1.8m–£3.8m, far exceeding the £700k allocated for 2025/26. Previous funding streams ended in March 2024, and transport

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Gohebiaeth.Jane.Hutt@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Jane.Hutt@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

budgets remain under significant pressure. Any alternative verification model would have increased costs further.

Stakeholders also raised concerns about the risks of harassment associated with visible asylum specific smartcards, increasing community tensions and anti migrant sentiment, the potential wellbeing impacts if support were to end after six months, and perceptions of unfairness when compared with other low income groups.

There were also concerns that any long-term scheme could affect Section 95 support payments.

With regards the use of MyTravel Pass. This system uses datasets Welsh Government can lawfully access. No equivalent route exists for asylum seeker data, and the Home Office has not permitted third-party verification.

Although the Welcome Ticket cannot proceed as planned, we remain committed to reducing transport barriers for asylum seekers. Work is underway to promote existing concessionary schemes and explore locally led models. I hope this clarifies the legal, financial, and operational factors behind our decision.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Hutt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line above the first letter 'J'.

Jane Hutt AS/MS

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