

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

Mike Hedges MS  
Chair of the Legislation, Justice  
and Constitution Committee  
[SeneddLJC@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddLJC@senedd.wales)

17 July 2025

Dear Mike,

I am writing to you in accordance with the Inter-Institutional Relations Agreement, to inform you that the third meeting, and the first under the current UK Government, of the Inter-Ministerial Group on Justice took place on 3 July.

I attended this hybrid meeting virtually, representing the Welsh Government on behalf of the Counsel General and Minister for Delivery.

The meeting was chaired in London by Lord Ponsonby, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and Lord in Waiting (Government Whip), with in-person representation from Angela Constance MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs for the Scottish Government. Naomi Long, Minister of Justice, attended online on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive.

A communiqué summarising the business of the meeting will be published on the [.gov.uk website](https://www.gov.uk) in due course. The agenda facilitated discussions on a range of issues, including prison capacity, court caseloads and legal aid.

During the discussion on prison capacity, I expressed support for the publication of David Gauke's Sentencing Review, particularly its emphasis on reducing reoffending and addressing the root causes of crime. I reaffirmed the Welsh Government's views on minimising the use of short-term custodial sentences, noting concerns regarding their limited efficacy and wide-ranging impact on offenders.

Additionally, I reiterated the Welsh Government's support of any efforts aimed at reducing the women's prison population and noted our desire to establish a Residential Women's Centre in Wales. I advocated for collaborative engagement with the UK Government to assess the potential implications for devolved services before any legislative changes are implemented. I also emphasised the necessity of sufficient investment in probation services and relevant third sector organisations to ensure effective implementation of these reforms.

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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.

The conversation on court caseloads primarily focussed on Sir Brian Leveson's Independent Review of the Criminal Courts Part 1, which has now been published. I highlighted that present circumstances and proposed reforms could further diminish public confidence in the justice system. It is anticipated that magistrates may assume significantly greater responsibilities; therefore, it is crucial to evaluate the long-term sustainability and efficiency of a criminal justice system reliant on unpaid volunteers, as well as to ensure diversity within the magistracy.

I also stressed that the diversity of perspectives inherent in the jury system is an asset not to be overlooked, as losing it could increase the risk of miscarriages of justice. Furthermore, I suggested it would be beneficial to understand the potential impact of the Review's recommendations on courts adopting less adversarial, and more problem-solving approaches. Such cases often involve frequent court attendance and multiple hearings, increasing the burden on courts and support services, albeit within a more rehabilitative context.

Regarding legal aid, I welcomed the increase in fees for immigration cases, recognising the critical shortage of available advice for asylum seekers and refugees. I emphasised the importance of ensuring that hybrid models for providing legal aid preserve access to in-person advice, which remains essential for many individuals, particularly those who are vulnerable or uncomfortable using digital platforms.


I also referenced a recent online initiative led by the Solicitors Regulation Authority in partnership with The Law Society and the Access to Justice Foundation, noting its potential applicability to other areas of civil law. Additionally, I highlighted the Welsh Government's support of any pilot projects taking place in Wales.

Finally, I proposed the inclusion of an agenda item addressing miscarriages of justice, especially in view of the expanded use of technology and insights gained from the Post Office experience. I also welcomed an idea that had been put forward to have a future agenda item on tackling violence against women and girls.

The Welsh Government is due to chair the next Inter-Ministerial Group on Justice, which is currently expected to take place in Wales in November 2025.

I am copying this letter to the Counsel General and Minister for Delivery.

Yours sincerely,

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

**Jane Hutt AS/MS**

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Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip