

Jane Hutt AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol
Minister for Social Justice



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

SeneddEquality@senedd.wales

26 November 2021

Dear Jenny,

Thank you for your letter of 9 November on behalf of the Equality and Social Justice Committee. As the Minister for Social Justice, I am a passionate advocate for the protection of all citizens' rights and by supporting citizens to obtain residency status, where they wish to do so, we are ensuring we continue to safeguard those rights going forward. I welcome the Committee's commitment to monitor the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) in Wales and will do all I can to support that work.

I note the areas on which you have requested an update, based on the objectives of the EUSS Co-ordination Group, and have provided information against each point below.

To share reports on the work of the supporting organisations, including on best practice and issues in relation to the EUSS

The EUSS Co-ordination Group, chaired by the Welsh Government, consists of a number of external partners that support citizens in their applications to the EUSS. Members include Newfields Law, the Wales Civil Society Forum, Citizens Advice Cymru, Migrant Help, Newport Mind, the Wales Council for Voluntary Action, TGP Cymru, the Welsh Local Government Association, Settled, Wales TUC Cymru, the Royal Association for Deaf People and the Public Law Project.

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

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.

The Group meets every two months and at each meeting stakeholders provide updates on the work they have undertaken to date and the work they have planned for the future. The next meeting is scheduled for 22 January 2022 and I am planning on attending that meeting so I will raise your request for reports to be shared and let you know the outcome. My proposal would be to share the minutes of future meetings with the Committee, as this will outline all updates given.

To promote public awareness of, and participation in, the EUSS in Wales and to maximise citizen access to the EUSS in Wales through focused publicity;

The UK Government, the Welsh Government and partners continue to communicate messaging around the EUSS. Recently, the Welsh Government targeted healthcare settings, such as vaccination centres and local general practices, to publicise messaging, in a number of European languages, around EUSS and to continue to encourage applications even though the deadline has passed. Only last week, I also wrote to Cabinet colleagues to ask for their continued support in this area.

More recently I have agreed funding to undertake another digital awareness campaign, which will run over the coming months, and focus on communicating messaging around late applications, applications for children and other cared for family members, applications for joining family members and to encourage EU citizens to update their online digital status.

The Welsh Government will also continue to update its 'Preparing Wales' platform with key messaging and information on the EUSS , on an ongoing basis.

To ensure there are consistent EUSS advice services available in Wales, with the right level of support targeted at the right people

The Welsh Government has recently announced the extension of the EU Citizens Immigration Advice Services until March 2022. This extension will ensure that both citizens who missed the EUSS deadline and those who need to make an application for settled status having previously obtained pre-settled status continue to have access to the support they may need. In addition to this, the UK Government has also announced that it will continue its grant funding to organisations supporting the EUSS until March 2022.

Specialist immigration law firm, Newfields law, is one of the organisations funded by the Welsh Government to provide the following:

- Information and support, including immigration advice, to help EU/EEA/Swiss nationals and their family members to understand how they are affected by changes in the immigration rules as a result of the UK leaving the EU;
- Awareness raising and better understanding of rights, entitlements and requirements which are affected by an individual's immigration status;
- Giving particular focus to supporting vulnerable people, those with complex needs and those who are at higher risk of failing to secure settled or pre-settled status.
- Provide an advice service up until 31 March 2022 and enable people to access advice at a time, place and means that best fits their needs.
- Support individuals with a right to appeal an outcome given by the Home Office

To identify any gaps in the current supported provisions and assist the Welsh Government/Home Office in finding solutions to overcome any issues

The Welsh Government continues to engage regularly with both external stakeholders and other Governments to monitor any ongoing concerns or issues in regards to the EUSS. The EUSS Co-ordination Group meetings provide a platform for all stakeholders to voice concerns and discuss mitigations in a collaborative manner.

Welsh Government policy officials also continue to meet with the UK Government on a fortnightly basis to discuss EUSS developments, ongoing communications efforts and to raise any concerns and queries.

As I mentioned earlier the next meeting of the EUSS Co-ordination Group is scheduled for 22 January and at that meeting I will seek members' views on the manner in which updates are provided to the committee going forward.

I shall write to the Committee following that meeting.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane', with a horizontal line above it.

Jane Hutt AS/MS

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Minister for Social Justice