

Jane Hutt AS/MS
Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol a'r Prif Chwip
Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref **PO/JH/128/2023**

Stephen Crabb MP
Chair of Welsh Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1 0AA

17 May 2023

Dear Stephen,

I am writing to you as Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee regarding your report on 'The Benefits System in Wales', which was published in March last year.

I was pleased to provide evidence for the inquiry and welcomed all the recommendations which I believe would increase the take-up of social security benefits, both devolved and non-devolved, by people in Wales. I note with interest the recently published report from Policy in Practice which estimates that the total amount of unclaimed income-related benefits and social tariffs is now £18.7 billion a year. This serves as timely reminder that there is more action required by the UK Government to ensure that household incomes are maximised by encouraging individuals to claim their entitlements.

I was disappointed at the response issued by the UK Government to the report which lacked any detail apart from their rejection of the Committee's recommendations. This reflects my own experience of the lack of interaction that I have had with the DWP at a Ministerial level despite my efforts to communicate regularly.

Whilst the good working relationships between my officials and officials from DWP continue to facilitate joint working, like your Committee, I consider that establishing a UK and Welsh Government Inter-Ministerial Advisory Board on Social Security would provide an effective forum through which I could work more collaboratively with the DWP Secretary of State and their Ministerial team.

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.

Given the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, which has unfolded since your report was published, I think it would be timely to have a renewed focus on this area and for the UK Government to reconsider its response to your recommendations. I would urge you to raise this as a committee.

I would also welcome the opportunity to meet with you as Chair of the Committee to explain how we are simplifying access to devolved benefits, including the development of a Charter for the delivery of benefits provided by the Welsh Government which we hope to publish by the end of this year, and consider how we could maximise our efforts with more co-operation from the UK Government.

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 letter of "Jane".

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