



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Draft Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2023**

DATE **07 November 2023**

BY **Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change**

The situation in Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, and Lebanon, continues to be dangerous and uncertain, and we need to prepare for the very real scenario that people may need to escape or evacuate these affected territories.

The UK Government has already made changes to the way it applies the habitual residence test for those evacuated to the UK. The habitual residence test, which prevents someone who has a right to enter the UK from claiming benefits immediately after their arrival, and can take up to three months to complete, will be disapplied for those who have escaped the conflict in the affected territories. Disapplying the habitual residence test will give those arriving in the UK immediate access to benefits, including housing and homelessness assistance.

We need to align housing law in Wales with the UK Government's change of approach, so that people who come to Wales from those affected territories can be made eligible to apply for social housing and homelessness assistance. I therefore intend to lay the draft Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2023 ("the draft Regulations"). This will enable British Nationals, others not subject to immigration control (or treated as such), and anyone with immigration leave and recourse to public funds evacuated from the conflict to be eligible for social housing and housing assistance where they need it.

Whilst we do not expect there to be significant numbers of people arriving in Wales and in need of such support, we must be prepared for those that do. As such, we need to make these changes to legislation as soon as possible. Consequently, the draft Regulations have been laid today for consideration by the Senedd on 14th November.

Due to the urgency of the situation and to ensure both the preparation of our stakeholders, along with certainty to those arriving from the affected territories, I have taken the decision to accelerate this process. I wrote to the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee to seek their assistance for urgent consideration of the Regulations on 30th October, in order that Members of the Senedd have sight of the Committee's report before the debate on 14 November 2023.

This is a desperate and worrying situation, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee and Members of the Senedd for their support on this urgent issue.