

# P-06-1563 Abandon the plan to make Wales a "nation of sanctuary"

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 26 Ionawr 2026  
Petitions Committee | 26 January 2026

**Reference:** RS25/12887/1

## Introduction

**Petition Number:** P-06-1563

**Petition title:** Abandon the plan to make Wales a "nation of sanctuary"

**Text of petition:** The current climate regarding immigration is that it is completely out of control and in dire need of attention. The people of Wales deserve a parliament that speaks and acts for them and their best interests. More focus should be put on improving the nation for the people of Wales and put Welsh nationals first. Wales is one of the leading nations in the UK when it comes to poverty and homelessness, these issues should be addressed before we invite the world to our shores.

The text provided above is submitted by the petitioner. The petitions team make every effort to ensure it preserves their authentic voice. This text has not been verified for accuracy, or errors, and may contain unverified opinions or assertions.

Mae'r testun uchod yn cael ei gyflwyno gan y deisebydd. Mae'r tîm deisebau yn gwneud pob ymdrech i sicrhau ei fod yn cadw ei lais dilys. Nid yw'r testun hwn wedi'i wirio am gywirdeb, neu wallau, a gall gynnwys barn neu honiadau heb eu gwirio.



# 1. Background

## 1.1. International responsibilities

The UK has international legal responsibilities to protect refugees. Alongside 148 other countries, the UK is a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, a global treaty overseen by the United Nations. The core principle of the Refugee Convention is 'non-refoulement', which means that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom.

The UK is also party to other treaties which protect refugees, such as the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR).

The Welsh Government is required by the devolution settlement to comply with these obligations. In 2019, the Welsh Government declared that Wales would become the world's first 'nation of sanctuary'. The plan explains how it will ensure Wales fulfils its international obligations and has been endorsed by the United Nations.

## 1.2. UK Government support for refugees and asylum seekers

### **According to the Refugee Convention 1951, a refugee is:**

*a person who is outside their country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.*

### **An asylum seeker is:**

*a person who has crossed an international border in search of protection, but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been decided. An asylum seeker is therefore someone who has arrived in a country and asked for asylum. Until they receive a decision as to whether or not they are a refugee, they are known as an asylum seeker.*

In the UK, asylum seekers do not have the same rights as a refugee or a British citizen. For example, people seeking asylum aren't allowed to work or claim benefits. The UK Government provides asylum seekers with housing, financial support and access to services if they meet the eligibility requirements (that they are homeless or do not have money to buy food). Where an application for asylum

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has been refused a person may be eligible for short-term support under section 4(2) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

Asylum accommodation is provided on a 'no choice' basis so asylum seekers cannot choose where in the UK they live. Asylum seekers in receipt of support will be placed in temporary accommodation which is managed by providers on behalf of the Home Office.

## 2. Welsh Government action

Immigration is a reserved matter and as such the Welsh Government has had little involvement in the development of policies and action taken at a UK level. In the correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice to the Petitions Committee, she states the Welsh Government "does not have the power to implement or stop UK-wide policies on this issue" and does not "decide on who is placed in Wales".

The Welsh Government is however responsible for the broad range of policies that support the integration of migrants including health and social care, housing, education, employment and is a key player in managing the impacts of migration and ensuring communities are cohesive. The Cabinet Secretary states that the Welsh Government has committed to welcoming a proportionate share of people share of people seeking sanctuary in the UK, the equivalent of up to 5% of all arrivals and will support them to help them settle, access services and integrate into their communities ensuring Wales "remains a safe, welcoming and cohesive nation".

In 2019, the Welsh Government announced it would become the world's first nation of sanctuary. This was in response to a 2016 inquiry by the Fifth Senedd's Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee into refugees and asylum seekers in Wales.

The Welsh Government's impact assessment summarises how the policy: seeks to remove barriers to asylum seekers accessing services, improve employability support for refugees, improve integration and knowledge of rights for refugees and asylum seekers and mitigate destitution, mental ill health and homelessness.

The Plan has been updated as part of the [Anti-racist Wales Action Plan](#) (2024) and [sets out 10 principles](#) rather than specific actions. Outlining the Welsh Government key priorities in 2024 to 2025, it states:

*The focus will be on preventing the most harmful impacts experienced by sanctuary seekers, such as homelessness, destitution, exploitation, unemployment, and mental ill-health.*

### 3. Welsh Parliament action

In March 2022 the [Petitions Committee considered](#) a petition to hold a referendum on Wales becoming a nation of sanctuary. In its response [the Welsh Government said](#) the Nation of Sanctuary Plan was developed through “[a three month open consultation](#)” and [the summary of responses](#) “[...] demonstrate substantial support for the draft Nation of Sanctuary proposals.”

Concluding its consideration the Committee “noted that a consultation has already taken place on the Nation of Sanctuary plan which was widely supported. Therefore it agreed to thank the petitioner and close the petition” and:

*[...] reiterated the heartfelt offers of support from the people of Wales standing in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and the strong support expressed by Members of the Senedd, reinforcing how Wales wishes to welcome asylum seekers and refugees.*

Over recent months both the [Welsh Conservatives](#) and [Reform UK](#) have called on the Welsh Government to scrap the Nation of Sanctuary plan on the basis that funding public services, which meets the needs of Welsh citizens, should be prioritised over non-devolved areas.

In January 2025 Welsh Conservative MS, Andrew RT Davies submitted a [written question](#) regarding the total cost to date of the Nation of Sanctuary plan. In response on 20 January 2025 the [Welsh Government stated that](#) the total net spend (expenditure minus income from external sources) since 2019 was £62,83. It explains that approximately £51m of this net spend is related to the Ukraine humanitarian response work.

Welsh Conservative Senedd Members have since submitted a number of written questions requesting further information on the total cost of the Nation of Sanctuary Plan and details on how spending has been allocated. [Providing an](#)

update on 6 November 2025, the Welsh Government stated that, up to the end of the financial year to March 2025, the total figure is £63.87m. It explained that:

*Of this updated figure the total Welsh Government expenditure on the Ukraine response (since 2022) is £58.22m which represents 91% of the total Welsh Government expenditure on Nation of Sanctuary. The total non-Ukraine spend was £5.65m over the six years which represents 9% of the total. The total amount of £63.87m continues to represent 0.05% of the Welsh Government's budget from 2019 to 2025.*

In the correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice to the Committee she states that the Welsh Government ensures the needs of Welsh citizens are addressed and continues to tackle poverty, reduce homelessness, and improve public services for all residents. She adds that the Welsh Government is committed to "promoting inclusive communities where everyone can contribute meaningfully to society" and explains that:

*This approach allows us to balance providing support to those who need sanctuary with ensuring that local communities are strengthened and that residents' needs are prioritised within our devolved responsibilities.*

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.