



Mike Hedges MS  
Chair, Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

13 March 2026

Dear Mike

I write to you in relation to the escalating conflict in the Middle East since 28 February 2026. The Committee will be aware that the UK Government has advised British Nationals in several countries in the Middle East to register their presence, with further travel advice expected to change at pace.<sup>1</sup>

Currently, the Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) Regulations 2014 do not give certain persons returning to the United Kingdom from the region any exemption from the habitual residence test, should they need to access housing accommodation or assistance on arrival. Those persons are British nationals or persons subject to immigration control who have been given leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom with access to public funds. We therefore need to act swiftly to ensure that if evacuation advice is issued by the Foreign Office, they can make a claim in Wales for assistance without delay.

It is our intention to lay amendments to the Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) Regulations 2014 as soon as is practicably possible both to respond to the current conflict in the Middle East and to ensure that Wales can respond should the UK Government issue 'leave now' advice. In previous crises, the Welsh Government has made region specific amendments to the regulations; this method provided clarity because the evacuation related to a single, defined location and a clearly identified cohort. This is not the case with the current situation. The present conflict is dispersed across several countries, and the scope may widen or change quickly.

As a result, it is not possible to identify with confidence which countries should be cited in regulations, or whether those choices would remain accurate even in the short term. It is therefore our intention to create a "General Crisis" waiver from the habitual residency test that will be activated if and when the Foreign Office issues "leave now" advice to British Nationals and those with leave to remain in the UK with access to public funds, anywhere in the world. The waiver from the habitual residence test would only apply where an

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<sup>1</sup> [Foreign Office travel advice updates - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-office-travel-advice-updates)

application for housing accommodation or housing assistance is made within six months of the date of the “leave now” advice or from the first day of an evacuation from the region, whichever is later.

This approach will enable Wales to respond to the current conflict as well as providing flexibility, clarity and certainty to deal with potential future crises, making it more straight forward for local authorities to plan and prepare for such events.

I want to provide you with notice of the intention to amend regulations and that I recognise the Committee will not have the usual length of time to scrutinise the amended regulations. I am therefore seeking your assistance to expediate the scrutiny of these regulations.

I appreciate that this is a change in approach and the Senedd is being asked to make a decision at pace. To mitigate this, it is our intention to include a ‘sunset clause’ of one year after the amendments come into force. This will limit their duration and overall impact. It is my hope that this will provide assurance to the Committee that, although the provisions are not geographically specific, they would be strictly time-limited. A sunset clause will also allow the general approach to operate only for a defined period, after which a future Senedd would be able to undertake full scrutiny of any wider, permanent Regulations, which would be developed in consultation with the sector, before they take effect.

I would like to thank the Committee in advance for their assistance in providing support to these arrangements, which will allow people fleeing crises an opportunity to seek housing or homelessness assistance in Wales without undue delay.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jayne Bryant". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Jayne Bryant AS/MS**  
**Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Lywodraeth Leol a Thai**  
**Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government**