

23 March 2026

Jane Hutt MS, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

Dear Jane,

I am writing in my capacity as Chair of the Expert Group on Cohesion to share with you the Group's **recommended actions for the next Welsh Government**.

The group was brought together quickly to respond to recommendations from the Senedd's Equality & Social Justice Committee report 'Co-operation over Conflict: Wales must Act', and its membership was drawn from organisations and individuals who work in and with issues of equality and social justice.

Below you will find the Group's collective assessment of opportunities for strengthening cohesion in Wales. The Group has compiled actions for forthcoming Welsh Ministers to consider, comprising a set of practical recommendations and suggested areas of priority focus.

The Expert Group believes these recommendations offer timely and constructive contributions to addressing critical challenges facing our communities. As the Senedd's Equality and Social Justice Committee Inquiry report made clear, there is a clear and pressing need to focus on cohesion in volatile political times. The group is very aware that the recommendations are not all that should be done and are aware of the ongoing good work currently in place in Wales, that perhaps needs more time to achieve their positive outcomes. The recommendations should be read in conjunction with the Inquiry report and the report produced for our Group by the Wales Centre for Public Policy, which is expected to be published in the summer.

I have included our recommended actions as Annex A at the foot of this letter. The Expert Group acknowledges that these recommendations have been drawn together after a swift period of focused work. They should not be interpreted as offering comprehensive solutions to address challenges and foster long-term cohesion – instead, they offer urgent pinpointing for the early focus of the next Government.

Although these recommendations will be for subsequent Welsh Ministers for consider, the members of the Group – and I as Chair - wish to put on record our thanks to you as Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, for convening this Group and responding quickly and meaningfully to the Senedd Equality and Social Justice Committee's Social Cohesion Inquiry recommendations.

Yours sincerely,

Gaynor

Gaynor Legall CBE

Chair, Expert Group on Cohesion

Annex A

Recommended actions for the next Welsh Government

The Expert Group on Cohesion believes these recommendations offer timely and constructive contributions to addressing critical challenges facing our communities. The Group has compiled actions for forthcoming Welsh Ministers to consider, comprising a set of practical recommendations and suggested areas of priority focus.

Expert Group recommended actions:

Relating to Welsh Government and Local Government processes:

- Better support schools and other services for children and young people to strengthen cohesion.
- Identify areas of higher risk and invest in community anchor organisations in these locations to enable them to bring people together over time.
- Commit to multi-year funding for cohesion activities to allow local government and Voluntary and Community sector to develop long-term strategies with communities, and to forward plan.
- Prioritise embedding the [Cohesion Principles](#) across all relevant policy areas and with partner organisations across Wales, using existing partnership infrastructure such as the Public Services Board, Regional Partnership Boards and Corporate Joint Committees.

Working with Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations and communities:

- Ensure civil society is given parity of esteem as a partner working to foster cohesion.
- Invest in community spaces with the involvement of communities, including progressing a 'community right to buy'. Integrate thinking on community buildings, religious spaces, and hubs.
- Commit to longer-term, community-led, and co-produced approaches to cohesion (beyond short-term pilots).
- Recognise cohesion-building activities as critical preventative measures which build local resilience. Support increased investment in preventative, place-based approaches to building cohesion at neighbourhood level.
- Recognise the interface between volunteering infrastructure and social cohesion and resource accordingly. Review where less regulation of volunteering would be beneficial, creating more space for informal and ad-hoc participation.

Improving awareness and data:

- Establish a national approach to capturing lived experiences of hate and exclusion, considerate of intersecting experiences and inclusive of gender, beyond the existing police data.
- Develop broader measures of cohesion, specifically relating to relational and institutional trust.

In addition to these specific recommended interventions, the Expert Group recommends that Cohesion should be treated as an enabler of a prosperous, equal and safe Wales, rather than as a discrete or reactive activity. This aligns directly with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, particularly the goal of a Wales of cohesive communities and the requirement to take a long-term, preventative and integrated approach to decision-making. The Group highlights the importance of recognising intersectionality - noting that inequality, disadvantage, and protected characteristics overlap in real lives. Further work should also include understanding and responding to the interface of extremism, cohesion, and misogyny. Policies aiming to actively foster good relations, reduce harm and strengthen belonging must reflect this. Delivery should be grounded in meaningful involvement of communities, with lived and living experience recognised as a legitimate and valuable form of evidence, alongside academic research, and administrative data.

The Group calls for a more open, practical, and confident approach to how government works with communities, particularly during periods of tension. This includes improving how government prevents information gaps and builds trust. The Group feels Welsh Government could make better use of existing data collections, local intelligence and monitoring already held across public services and local governments, rather than repeatedly consulting the same communities. Using what is already known more intelligently can support earlier action, reduce duplication, and help avoid consultation fatigue. The Group places strong emphasis on understanding the links between online harms and offline tensions, including the need to tackle online polarisation and mis-, dis- and malinformation as part of cohesion work. Finally, the Group highlights the importance of being willing to test new approaches and be prepared to fail, learn from what does not work, and adapt to improve long-term outcomes for current and future generations.