Nation of Sanctuary – Strategic Oversight Board

15 January 2026, 11:15-12:45

Virtual MS Teams

Attendees

- **Cllr. Mary Ann Brocklesby**, Leader, Monmouthshire Council (Co-chair)
- **Jane Hutt MS**, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip (Co-chair)
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)**, Home Office
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)**, WLGA
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2) [Wales Trade Union]**
- **Amelia John** (in place of Emma Williams), Director, Communities and Social Justice, Welsh Government
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)**, Welsh Government
- **Andy Dunbobbin**, Police and Crime Commissioner for North Wales
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)**, Newport City Council
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)**, WLGA
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2),** Welsh Government
- **Cllr. Emlyn Schiavone** (in place of REDACTED – SEC 40(2)), Cabinet Member for Housing
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)**, Welsh Government
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)**, Home Office
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)**, Welsh Government
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)**, Welsh Government
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)**, REDACTED – SEC 38(1)
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2),** REDACTED – SEC 38(1)
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)**, REDACTED – SEC 38(1)
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)**, REDACTED – SEC 38(1)
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2),** Home Office
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2) [Welsh Government]**
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)**, Welsh Government
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2),** REDACTED – SEC 38(1)
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)**, Welsh Government
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)**, Public Health Wales
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)**, Welsh Government
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2),** Welsh Government
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2),** Home Office
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)**, REDACTED – SEC 38(1)
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)**, Welsh Government
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2),** WLGA
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2),** REDACTED – SEC 38(1)
- **Nikki Lawrence** (in place of Erica Cassin), Chief Executive Officer, Careers Wales
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2),** Welsh Government
- **Paul John Rowlinson** (in place of Nia Wyn Jeffreys), Gwynedd Council

- **Peter Jones,** Deputy Director Health Protection Policy & Priority Programmes Division, Welsh Government
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2),** REDACTED – SEC 38(1)
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2),** Home Office
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2),** REDACTED – SEC 38(1)
- **Sarah Rhodes,** Deputy Director, Housing Policy Housing and Regeneration, Welsh Government
- **Shavanah Taj,** General Secretary, Wales Trades Union Congress (TUC Cymru)
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2),** Home Office
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)** (in place of Cllr. Huw Charles), Cardiff Council
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2)** (in place of Cllr. Huw Charles), Cardiff Council
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2),** REDACTED – SEC 38(1)

Apologies

- **Alex Norris MP,** Minister for Border Security and Asylum, Home Office
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2),** Carmarthenshire Council
- **Cllr Huw Thomas,** Leader, Cardiff Council
- **Cllr Nia Wyn Jeffreys,** Deputy Leader Plaid Cymru, Gwynedd Council
- **Emma Williams,** Director General ECWL, Welsh Government
- **Erica Cassin,** Careers Wales
- **REDACTED – SEC 40(2),** Welsh Government
- **Mike Tapp MP,** Minister for Migration and Citizenship, Home Office
- **Sioned Rees,** Temporary Public Health Protection Director, Welsh Government

Agenda Item 1: Welcome, introductions and apologies

Jane Hutt MS, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Chief Whip (CSSJCW), welcomed attendees.

Apologies and deputies noted.

Agenda Item 2: Actions from last meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting agreed by attendees.

All actions from the previous meeting noted as complete or ongoing.

It was noted that a Welsh version of the UK Government's Fairer Pathway to Settlement Consultation Paper is now available.

Agenda Item 3: Nation of Sanctuary Partnership Board

Councillor Brocklesby provided an overview of the Nation of Sanctuary Partnership Board meeting, held on 10 November 2025. Cllr Brocklesby noted the significant contribution and leadership of REDACTED – SEC 40(2) noting that this was the first Strategic Oversight Board meeting following her retirement.

Cllr Brocklesby handed over to REDACTED – SEC 40(2) (WSMP) to provide a detailed update of the meeting as follows;

Discussion of the continued rise in mis/dis/malinformation and its impact on community tensions across Wales.

- The Home Office's Countering Emerging Threats team meets fortnightly and liaises with police and local authority stakeholders, providing advice and guidance and working with stakeholders to help to respond to these issues.
- Protests and hostility linked to misinformation remain a concern, mirroring UK-wide trends.
- Local authority mis/dis/malinformation training and information sessions have been delivered and well-received. Further sessions planned in February and in March 2026.

Asylum accommodation was also discussed, including the importance of engagement with local authorities.

- Enthusiasm from some local authorities to progress the rural model with and gain further clarity of what it would look like, and disappointment that this may not be currently planned.
- The Home Office is progressing pilot schemes, dependent on due diligence. Funding and engagement with local authorities across the UK continues.
- Home Office continues to work closely with local partners and stakeholders regarding accommodation sites to ensure that all sites are suitable and compliant.
- Presentation on the National Transfer Scheme, which mandates transferral of unaccompanied child asylum seekers to local authorities across the UK to reduce the burden on areas that receive a disproportionate number.

Agenda Item 4: Update: Interministerial Group on Safety, Security and Migration (IMG)

The Cabinet Secretary updated the Board regarding the most recent Interministerial Group on Safety, Security and Migration which took place on 12 November 2025, chaired by Home Office Minister of State, Lord Hanson. The Cabinet Secretary highlighted the importance of the IMG bringing the four nations of the UK together to collaborate on complex safety, security and migration issues.

The Cabinet Secretary outlined key topics discussed at the IMG. These were public safety priorities, with a focus on safety, safer streets, the Safer Streets Mission, the Police Reform My Paper and tackling violence against women and girls. Continuation of Welsh Government support for Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) important in supporting the efforts of the group.

- The Welsh Government is engaged with the Safer Streets Mission and highlighted the importance of capturing and considering the Welsh context,

emphasising the need for further details to be shared with the Welsh Government.

- Raised ongoing concerns about rising online hate and misinformation, noting the adverse impact of misinformation on the Welsh Government's Nation of Sanctuary approach. Calls for social media/tech companies to better protect users, particularly women and girls.
- Emphasised that violence against women and girls is a priority for the Welsh Government, noting Senedd legislation on this ten years ago. Welcomed the UKG cross-government strategy on this, and its ambition to halve violence in a decade. The Welsh Government will be working closely with UK officials, understanding the Welsh context and methods of delivery.
- Upcoming Senedd elections and local elections a potential flashpoint– it is essential that everyone, including vulnerable groups, can participate freely.
- Affirmed the importance of working on community reassurance in partnership with community leaders, particularly in the context of international events adding to feelings of uncertainty and hostility.

Additional points of discussion:

- Acknowledgment of the cumulative fear experienced in communities following violence in summer 2024, and that there is work to do to fully understand the impact and respond accordingly. Important to reassure communities and take strong measures to support those facing hate crime and discrimination.
- Importance of demonstrating visible Welsh Government support. Guidance needs implementation: there is a need to collectively uphold the commitment to community cohesion, the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan and Wales' ambition to become a Nation of Sanctuary.
- Rising discrimination in housing was discussed. Training for landlords is being provided, with a call for further action and discussion of what that could be.
- The role of misinformation was discussed, and the need to ensure visibility of the correct information to combat it. A Welsh Government fact-checking blog (For The Record | Factual information on Welsh Government policies) includes information on Welsh policies. Local authority training on misinformation (see, Agenda Item 3, above) aims to equip partners with the tools and support to develop something similar.

Following the Cabinet Secretary's update, attendees raised several issues:

- Growing concerns about public safety, misinformation and community cohesion across Wales. Participants reported rising fear and insecurity among minority communities, driven by increased hate incidents, online hostility, and misinformation circulating locally and nationally. Concerns were also raised about inflammatory social media content, including posts from UK Government channels, which attendees felt risk undermining cohesion efforts.

- Need for timely and direct communication with faith communities following safety-related incidents, citing recent examples where delays caused significant anxiety. Attendees also noted increasing discrimination in housing and employment, alongside a decline in visible diversity and inclusion activity.

- Shared call for stronger safeguarding guidance, practical training for frontline services, and more accurate public information to counter false narratives. Attendees emphasised the importance of coordinated multi-agency action to support communities and uphold Wales' commitment to being a Nation of Sanctuary.

Agenda Item 5: Discussion: Fairer Pathways to Settlement

Cllr Brocklesby outlined the UK Government's consultation "A Fairer Pathway to Settlement", emphasising the importance of ensuring that migrants in Wales are treated with respect and dignity, consistent with the Nation of Sanctuary vision. Cllr Brocklesby welcomed the recent publication of the Welsh language version and urged organisations and individuals to respond to the consultation ahead of the closing date of 12 February 2026.

Cllr Brocklesby handed over to Home Office representative, REDACTED – SEC 40(2), to present the proposed model and take questions.

REDACTED – SEC 40(2) presented the proposals for a new Earned Settlement Model, which would replace automatic settlement after five years with a points-style system based on the four pillars of character, integration, contribution and residence. The baseline qualifying period would increase to 10 years, with potential adjustments depending on income, English proficiency, use of public funds, or immigration compliance. Some groups—such as those on family routes and under the BNO scheme—would retain existing pathways.

The consultation seeks views on how contribution should be measured, with stakeholders encouraged to respond before 12 February to ensure Welsh perspectives are fully reflected.

Stakeholders raised concerns about the model's implications for integration, workforce stability, equalities, and the delayed availability of the Welsh language consultation.

Concern was expressed regarding unintended consequences for vulnerable groups. REDACTED – SEC 40(2) assured the meeting that an Equality Impact Assessment has already been drafted and would be modified further following consultation, and that part of the purpose of the consultation is to consider the position of vulnerable groups and decide on strategy with this in mind. The Home Office reaffirmed that community cohesion, integration and the human impact are important points and will be considered in the consultation.

REDACTED – SEC 40(2) (REDACTED – SEC 38(1)) shared a powerful reflection on the real-life impact of current settlement rules and proposed changes, including the high recurring costs of visas, the lack of access to public funds, and the wider toll this insecurity places on individuals and families. Attendees agreed that this powerful illustration of the importance of dignity, security, and humane treatment within the immigration system underscores the importance of policy decisions fully considering the lived experiences of those directly affected.

The Cabinet Secretary and Cllr Brocklesby thanked REDACTED – SEC 40(2) for sharing her lived experience.

Agenda Item 6: AOB / matters arising

The Cabinet Secretary informed attendees that this will be the last meeting of the Nation of Sanctuary Strategic Oversight Board before the Senedd elections in May 2026. A future meeting will be planned and attendees informed in due course.

Both Shavanah Taj (TUC Cymru) and Cllr Brocklesby extended heartfelt gratitude and thanks to the Cabinet Secretary for her contributions to the Board and wished the Cabinet Secretary well as she retires from Welsh Government.

No other business or matters arising.

Actions

Action	Responsibility
Welsh Government to raise asylum accommodation pilot issues with Minister Jayne Bryant.	Welsh Government (Cabinet Secretary) Lead official: REDACTED – SEC 40(2)
Share comments on the Earned Settlement consultation with Home Office colleagues and provide feedback at the next meeting where possible	REDACTED – SEC 40(2), Home Office