



Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-789
Ein cyf/Our ref EM/00205/18

David John Rowlands AM
Chair - Petitions committee.
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

April 2018

Thank you for your letter of 23 March requesting an update on my commitment to consider extending the eligibility criteria for the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) to include asylum seekers.

As is noted in Gulnar Sohail's petition, asylum seekers are provided with very limited financial assistance from the UK Government whilst they await the outcome of their asylum claim. Asylum seekers are also denied the right to work during this period, which means that many become isolated without the opportunity to fulfil their potential and harness their skills to support their new community in Wales. The Welsh Government is committed to the principle of becoming a 'Nation of Sanctuary' and we are currently consulting on proposals to try to make this a reality: <https://beta.gov.wales/nation-sanctuary-refugee-and-asylum-seeker-plan>

Those draft proposals include a commitment to "*explore possible changes to the Education Maintenance Allowance and Financial Contingency Fund to enable asylum seekers to be eligible from the September 2019 term.*" It is too early to confirm whether this change is possible but we are continuing to explore this during the consultation period.

You will appreciate that any policy change needs to be evidence based and the equality impacts fully assessed. I have asked my officials to fully explore the impacts of introducing a new residency category to the EMA Scheme and Financial Contingency Fund rules.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Gohebiaeth.Eluned.Morgan@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Eluned.Morgan@gov.wales

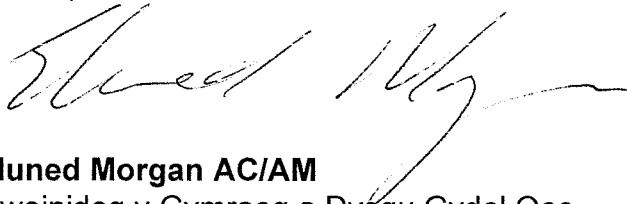
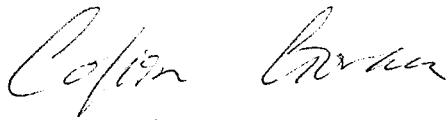
Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The earliest this could be implemented would be for academic year (AY) 2019/20. Part of the policy review will look at whether this should be applied only to new students or include continuing students.

You will be pleased to note that I have also asked my officials to review the eligibility criteria for the Welsh Government Learning Grant (Further Education).

I can assure you that I recognise the assets which asylum seekers already possess and want to ensure they are able to integrate into our communities as quickly and effectively as possible. It is in nobody's interest to prevent individuals learning English or Welsh, seeking to better themselves and adding to the diversity of our communities.



Eluned Morgan AC/AM

Gweinidog y Gymraeg a Dysgu Gydol Oes
Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning