# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Celebrating the Windrush Generation** |
| **DATE**  | **22 June 2018** |
| **BY** | **Julie James, Leader of the House and Chief Whip** |

Today marks the 70th anniversary of the arrival in the UK of the Empire Windrush and her 492 Caribbean passengers. This important cultural landmark in our history is celebrated this afternoon in the Senedd at an event organised by Race Council Cymru and the Black History Month Elders. We want to embrace this celebration wholeheartedly and recognise its wide historic and present-day significance.

The Windrush landing followed the passing of the British Nationality Act 1948, at a time when Britain was struggling to recover from the devastation of the Second World War. It was recognised then that Britain needed the assets and strengths of Commonwealth citizens to help rebuild our society. The British Nationality Act made a clear invitation for individuals to come to Britain to make a new home.

The invitation to Commonwealth citizens in 1948 embodies the Welsh Government’s approach towards migration today. Those on the Windrush were not the first wave of migrants who helped to weave the multi-cultural fabric of modern Wales, nor the last. Butetown in Cardiff, in particular, is one of the UK’s oldest multi-cultural areas. Migrants were a major part of Wales developing as an economic powerhouse prior to the First World War. Commonwealth citizens were a crucial part of the Allied war effort during both wars. Migrants have continued to be an integral part of how our nation has developed since the Windrush landed. In 2018, Wales relies heavily on our migrant communities in sectors such as the food and drink industry, manufacturing, tourism, higher education, veterinary health and the NHS. 2018 is also the 70th anniversary of the NHS and it is particularly difficult to imagine the continued success of our health system without the vital support of migrant communities and their descendants.

We want the Windrush Generation to know that we value their contributions to Wales over the last 70 years. Not only have they contributed to Wales' economic growth, they have enhanced our cultural and artistic diversity – some of which I hope to see at the celebration event today. The combination of new forms of art and lifestyles, as well as opportunities to mix and mingle with people from other cultures, has had a profound and positive effect on tolerance and community cohesion in Wales. The recent outpouring of support for the Windrush Generation reflects the respect Welsh people hold for those who answered the call all those years ago to make Britain their home. Racism and discrimination still occur within Wales, so we must continue to promote and safeguard our principles of tolerance, inclusivity and equality.

It is impossible to discuss the Windrush without reflecting on the impact of the UK Government’s ‘Hostile Environment’ policies on migrants and BAME communities across Wales. It is outrageous that some of the Windrush generation subsequently lost their jobs or homes, were forced to delay or forego necessary medical treatment or were deported due to the draconian and unjust Hostile Environment. Our discussions with stakeholders have so far only identified a small number of cases but we recognise that others may be fearful of coming forward at this stage. We would encourage those individuals to seek support from regulated advice providers to enable them to seek redress.

Although the UK Government has agreed to help those affected, we will continue to press for a speedy and satisfactory resolution. We have asked stakeholders to update us if the system is not working as intended but we have not yet received any comments to that effect. Equally, we will also support other people unfairly affected by these policies, which includes other migrants, refused asylum seekers and British nationals who cannot readily produce a passport.

Today we pay tribute to the contributions made to Wales by the Windrush generation and their descendants, as well as the other migrant communities who came before and after. We thank them for their efforts and sacrifices over the generations. We will continue to welcome and embrace those from other places who seek to improve our communities and we will challenge discrimination faced by these communities wherever we find it.