**HOLYROOD ELECTION 2021**

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**Template letter to candidates**

*This template is a useful starting point in writing to your local candidates. You can use as much of the content as you like— the minimum you need to change is highlighted below in yellow.*

*You can find your constituency details and local candidates here:* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-56653199>

*You can find an estimate of the number of people living with RA in your constituency in the PDF table* [*here*](https://nras.org.uk/resource/our-current-campaigns/holyrood21)*.*

Dear *[Candidate],*

**Rheumatology services in *[Your constituency]***

I am a local resident living with rheumatoid arthritis (RA). The National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS) estimates *\*\*\** people in this constituency are living with RA.

Rheumatoid arthritis and juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA can affect children as young as six months) are incurable, autoimmune, systemic, lifelong conditions. The inflammatory nature of these conditions causes not only painful, swollen joints but also can impact other organs including the heart, lungs and eyes. Common comorbidities are depression, chronic fatigue and cardio-vascular disease. Inflammatory arthritis has an impact on every aspect of a person’s life, including their families, friends and workplace experience.

As a candidate to be MSP for *Your constituency* I have three questions for you.

Throughout the pandemic many rheumatology healthcare professionals supported the frontline fight against Covid, leaving many departments with backlogs and exhausted staff.

**Will you campaign for rheumatology services to get their fair share of funding to help them recover from COVID?**

Scottish rheumatology waiting times have risen in recent years. It is important to diagnose RA and start treatment within 12 weeks of symptoms appearing. One way to achieve this is for more GPs to be trained in rheumatology, which would lead to faster diagnosis.

**What will you do to support greater urgency in first rheumatology appointments & commencement of treatment?**

The pandemic has also helped boost innovation in digital health care services and telemedicine. Rural service users in particular benefit from digital resources to help manage their condition and, when appropriate, speak to their healthcare practitioners without the need for long journeys.

**Where access to broadband is poor, will you campaign for improvements, so that all Scottish citizens have equity of access to online health care and wellbeing services?**

I hope you will be able to make these commitments and support rheumatology healthcare to recover from the COVID pandemic.

Yours sincerely

*Your name*