**SENEDD ELECTION 2021**

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**Template letter to candidates**

*This template is designed to be a useful starting point in writing to your local candidates.*

*You can find your constituency details and local candidates names here:* [*https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/56129210*](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/56129210)*.*

*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/senedd21)*.*

Dear *[Candidate’s name]*,

**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 Senedd candidate to become MS for *Your constituency* I have three questions for you.

Before the pandemic, waiting times for diagnosis of RA and for treatment already varied dramatically across Wales. To prevent long-term damage and achieve the best outcomes, it is important to get a diagnosis and start treatment within 12 weeks of symptoms appearing.

**What will you do to support bringing waiting times down across the board, especially for new diagnosis?**

Wales has opened its first paediatric rheumatology unit, in Cardiff, following years of campaigning by the National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society and others.

**Will you support continued funding for resources for this vital new service? This will support an expansion of paediatric rheumatology services, so children with JIA across Wales can access quality care close to home.**

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

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

I hope you will be able to make these commitments and support our local rheumatology healthcare teams as they recover from COVID.

Yours sincerely

*Your name*