# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Access to Elected Office Fund**  |
| **DATE**  | **22 October 2021** |
| **BY** | **Rebecca Evans MS, Minister for Finance and Local Government.** |

On 15th February 2021 the pilot Access to Elected Office Fund for Wales opened for candidates standing in the Senedd Cymru Elections in May 2021. This was the first stage of the pilot fund.

The second stage opens today with the launch of the arrangements to support disabled candidates seeking election in next year’s local government elections.

The fund which is delivered by Disability Wales and is financed by the Welsh Government pays for practical support to allow disabled people to fully participate in the political process. This covers reasonable adjustments which level the playing field between disabled and non-disabled candidates, but not general campaign costs.

Individuals can apply for assistance with the additional costs of support to overcome barriers which will enable participation in the election. This could include:

* Assistive aids, equipment and software, adaptations to equipment.
* Training in the use of specialist equipment and software.
* Travel around the constituency if you cannot use public transport.
* Personal assistance, communication support workers such as BSL Interpreters, Palantypists and Lip speakers

There are more than 1,200 councillors elected to 22 principal councils in Wales. In addition to providing support for candidates seeking election to principal councils the fund will also be available to support candidates seeking election to community and town councils in the local government elections. With more than 8,000 councillors elected to 735 community and town councils in Wales, this fund will provide a greater number of opportunities for disabled people to be supported in their aim to participate in local democracy to support their communities. This is key to increasing diversity in democracy.

The arrangements launched today include an advice and support service provided through Disability Wales which will provide individuals with an opportunity to discuss the level of support they require and assistance, where required with the application process. A number of Access to Politics events will be hosted by Disability Wales to provide awareness about the support available and the timescales for applications.

Individuals interested in learning more about the fund and how to apply should contact Disability Wales. Their contact details are:

Website: <https://www.disabilitywales.org/projects/access-to-elected-office-fund-wales/>

Email: accesstopolitics@disabilitywales.org

I would ask members to share this link widely and to encourage people interested in standing for elected office to find out more about how the fund could support them in the 2022 elections.