



STUDENTS  
FOR

GLOBAL  
HEALTH

General Elections 2024

Toolkit

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## Context

2024 is a pivotal year of elections in 64 countries. This means that about half of the world's population is called to vote. In the UK, the General Election was called last month and **will be held on 4th July**. This toolkit offers practical campaign tips to Students for Global Health (SfGH) members and any member of the public who wishes to be involved.

Students for Global Health has 30 years of experience in engaging and challenging policymakers, to advocate for our vision of **a fair and just world in which equity in health is a reality for all**. As a UK-wide network of students, we harness the power of the youth by providing training and opportunities for young people to be heard. This General Election, we can bring global issues locally by engaging candidates and future MPs directly in their constituency. **We can get our voices heard, and raise the voices of those most affected, at hustings, in local media, and in letters to candidates before and after the elections.**

## Why should I be involved?

Whatever the results may be, this General Election is critical on the pathway leading to the Sustainable Development Goals deadline in 2030. The UK has played a leading role and must continue to do so. **Issues that affect the universal right to health, such as climate change, conflict, global inequities, cannot be ignored.**

On World Health Day (7th April), we published our [manifesto](#) in which we shared our vision to achieve Universal Health Coverage by 2030 ([UHC2030](#)). This manifesto was created by students, for students and decision makers to use.

We called on the future government to focus on 3 key strategies:

- The government should contribute to build **equitable and resilient health systems**, facilitating access to medicine and effectively supporting health systems strengthening and pandemic preparedness.
- Recognising the impact of **climate change on health**, the government should mitigate its effects by stopping new fossil fuels extraction,

championing a fair transition by supporting the most affected health systems, and safeguarding fair leadership and discussion.

- The government should ensure **equitable access to digital health technologies**, investing research into existing barriers (including gender-based discrimination), and encouraging and supporting technology transfer in low resource settings.

You can find a [summary of our key asks](#) at the end.

This General Election offers a unique chance and the means to get these issues on the top of the agenda of future decision-makers. As young people, we have the power to push for a fairer future where everyone has access to healthcare. We can engage candidates and newly elected MPs and work with them to influence UK policy.

## What can I do?

There are many ways you can get involved.

[Contact your  
local MP /  
candidates](#)

[Meet your  
local MP /  
candidates](#)

[Attend  
hustings](#)

[Organise  
an event](#)

[Write to  
the local  
media](#)

## General election rules

Students for Global Health and branches must remain independent from party politics, both in **practice and perception**. In short, if you campaign as a branch, don't influence people's vote.

How:

- Don't promote a party's policy specifically, even if their policies align with SfGH. Speak within SfGH remit, which is global health equity
- Avoid explicit comparisons between parties and politicians. Share all parties' positions without bias
- Engage candidates across parties and extend similar invitations to various candidates if possible
- Use a double sign-off system for all social media posts and events. In short, ask someone else on your committee: "do we appear to be favouring one party or candidate?"

## Contact your local candidates and MP

All politicians have beliefs they stand for and care about their constituents. Advocacy is a lot about **building and sustaining a relationship with your representatives**. Although candidates will be very busy, it might help to establish a contact before the election.

### Know your candidates and MP

When writing to your candidates or MP, it helps to **know a little what they stand for**. If you will write to candidates before the election, the first step is to know who is standing in the elections in your constituency. You can find this information [here](#). Once elected, you can find your MP and look up keywords (e.g. “health equity”) in their interventions at parliament [here](#). Sometimes, a simple google search can also help.

In simple terms, the key answers you are looking for are:

- **What do they care about?**
- **Why would they care about health equity?**
- **Can we find a middle ground?**

### Write to your candidates and MP

With the information you have collected, you can now write to them. There are a few rules of thumbs:

- **Make it personal** - MPs represent their constituents. They care about *why* it matters to you, what *you* do about it. Remember, they receive many letters.
- **Summarise the problem** - Your MP may not be an expert in global health equity. Summarise the issue in brief, avoid jargon and too many intangible statistics, make it relevant to them.
- **Highlight why they should care** - The *why* is as important as the *what*. Show that you researched them and what they care about.
- **Clear action** - Perhaps the most important: make it clear what you want from them. Highlight it in **bold**, *italic*, **red**, so that they know what to do in one glance. You may ask them to:
  - Meet with you
  - Ask a question to a minister on your behalf

- Ask a question at parliament
- Attend an event you or someone else is organising
- **Make it doable** - No one can change the world alone. Whatever the solution, make sure they feel that they can do something impactful. For example, they can intervene in an important parliamentary debate rather than building hospitals on their own.

You can find key asks and a sample letter at the end.

## Follow up

MPs and candidates are very busy and may not respond to your letter immediately. You can follow up by calling their office or send a follow up email.

To give momentum, you can include:

- **An update on the campaign**
- **A smaller action as a stepping stone to build momentum**
- **A post or article that shows public support to the campaign**

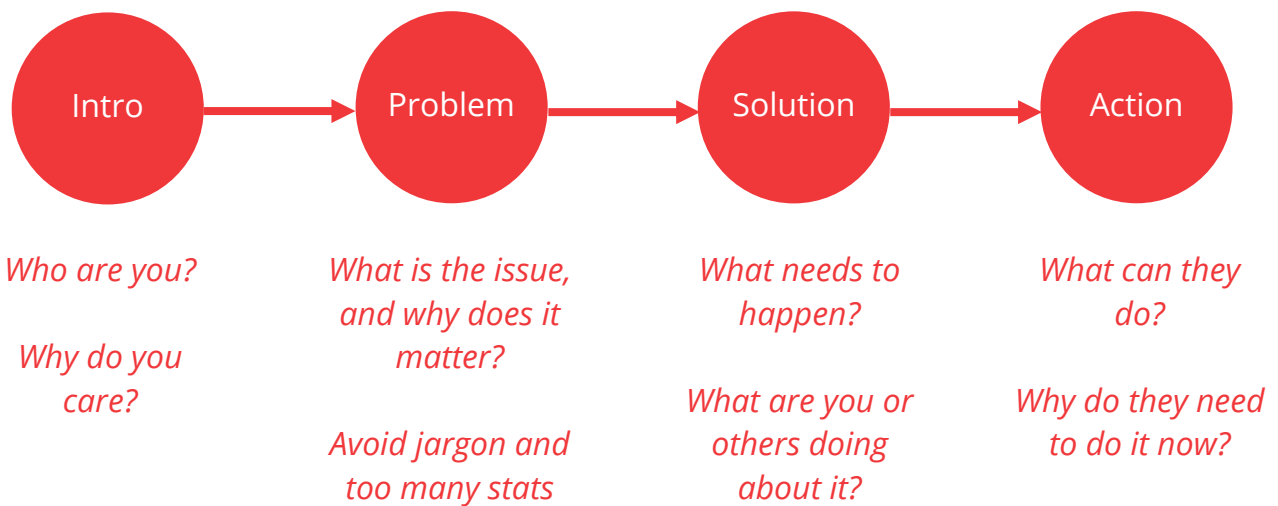
## Meet your local MP/candidates

Your MP or a candidate has agreed to meet you. What next?

## Prepare your pitch

You can prepare yourself. Like with writing a letter, it helps to do a little research on your MP or candidate. Then, you can write a small pitch. If you are unsure how to, you can follow this structure:





Few more tips:

- Make sure you **Keep It Short and Simple, Nice and Direct** (KISS & KIND rules).
- **Practise your pitch**, to your housemate, to your cat, facing a mirror etc.
- **Be clear with what you want** from this meeting.

You can gauge your pitch by passing the TEA test (Ellis, 2017): after listening to this pitch, would they feel **Touched** about this issue (i.e. is it personal enough)? Do they feel **Enthused** (i.e. is it doable)? And is it clear how they can **Act**?

## On the day

It may be daunting, but remember, they work for you. Their job is to listen to you and represent you. **Introduce yourself, summarise what you stand for and what you expect from this meeting.** Use your pitch if you are stuck, but also go with the flow of the conversation.

## Follow up

After the meeting, make sure you **thank them** for their time. You may wish to post on social media, but make sure you follow rules of neutrality. A few weeks later, **you can follow up on the actions discussed at the meeting.** You can also send them:

- **An update on the campaign**
- **Another action**
- **A post or article that shows public support to the campaign**

## Hustings

Before the general election, you can engage candidates at hustings. These are panels where candidates from different parties are asked questions about what they will do, if elected. If you get the opportunity, you can ask them a question, but they sometimes need to be submitted in advance.

Here are few tips:

- **Prepare your question.** You can find inspiration [in the key asks](#), but it helps to keep it broad. If elected, one candidate might remember and raise your question at future meetings.
- **You are attending as a voter.** Whoever is chairing the meeting might not want to engage with any lobbying groups, so it might help not to wear your SfGH t-shirt.
- If you are attending as a group, you may have more chances to get picked for a question if you **don't sit together**.
- **Show a calm and positive attitude**, and some interest in all questions. You will stand out to the chair, who might be more likely to pick your question.
- Try to **meet with a few candidates** after the husting. You can [prepare a short pitch](#) and ask for a photo with a sign, but make sure you follow the [general election rules](#).

If you get picked, **take note of the answer and [share it with us](#)**.

## Events

There are various events that you can organise as a branch, to inform the public. If you are an individual, feel free to [contact us](#) and we will do our best to support you.



## Challenges...

May require previous subject knowledge and external facilitators  
Can require more organisational planning

## Good for...

Facilitating discussion between participants  
Keeping the session interactive  
Sharing many different opinions  
Developing skills such as communication, planning and strategising

## Workshops

Here's an example of a workshop structure about climate change:

1. Icebreaker: Ask attendees to write down on a green sticky note what they expect from this session, and on a yellow sticky note an impact of climate on health (if online, you can use tools like [miro](#)). Ask if anyone wants to share what they wrote with the group - 5 mins
2. Introduction: what is climate change and why does it matter? - 5 mins
3. Brief discussion of the links between climate change and health - 5 mins
4. Small group discussions: - 10 mins
  - E.g. Each group is given a city around the world and considers the different ways climate change may affect the health of their citizens.
  - Encourage outside the box thinking such as impacts on mental health, community, and safety.
5. Debrief small group discussions. - 10 mins
6. Introduction of a second concept e.g. unequal impact - 5 mins
  - Discuss who are the groups most affected by climate change- 10 mins

OR

6. Small group activity - 15 mins

- E.g. Write a postcard to your MP (Have the postcard ready), prepare a pitch, or role play (e.g. climate-induced risk mitigation)
- Think of an activity where participants have an action to take away (e.g. send their postcard to their MP).
- You can use the tips in this toolkit (e.g. how to write to your MP, how to pitch)

7. Action: signposting next points of action. - 5 mins

8. Debrief and questions - 5 mins

Consider providing certificates at the end. Write to us before the event if you'd like to give an SfGH certificate.

We can also support you with organising a workshop on any topic in this toolkit, including how to campaign and how to engage your MP.

## Challenges...

Important to include an interactive element

Subject may be very niche which can make it more difficult to attract large numbers of participants

## Good for...

Exploring difficult concepts in depth

Allows experts in the field to talk

Audience engagement

Creating a platform for multiple perspectives on a topic

## Panels and conferences

Here's an example of a panel structure:

1. Introduction: start with some housekeeping (e.g. raise your hand to ask a question). Then, if you organise it as a branch, summarise what SfGH and your branch do. Introduce the topic, and each panellist. If you want, you can let them introduce themselves. - 5 mins
2. Each panellist gives a short presentation on the topic - 15 mins
3. Ask a couple of questions to the panellists, including any questions submitted in advance - 10 mins
4. Open the floor to questions from the audience - 20 mins
5. Closing comments and next steps - 10 mins

Here are few additional tips:

- To make it more attractive, you can mix your topic with other subjects, such as a broader conversation on capitalism, sexism, or healthcare systems. This creates a wider audience and shows how multifaceted the subject is.
- Having a timekeeper with a sign showing "30 seconds" can help sticking to schedule. Warn the panellists beforehand though.

## Write to the local media

Writing to a newspaper may be daunting. There are a few rules of thumbs to follow to increase your chances of being featured in a newspaper:

- Everyone loves a **good and original story**, especially if they can feel an **emotional connection**. The more **local**, the better, as it makes it more relevant to the audience.
- Quote **experts** in your article, and include an **action** if possible, such as signing a petition or simply looking up Students for Global Health
- Try to find the **personal contact of the editor** (e.g. on LinkedIn). Just like with MPs, it's about building a relationship. Prepare a small pitch to convince them to publish your story. Be **very clear what you want, why them**, and that you did your research.
- **Tailor your pitch** to a specific newspaper and their audience. Think what topics they are interested into. Include all the necessary information in the pitch (e.g. name, interviewees, dates, students for global health etc.). Include images if you can.
- Only follow up **once** if you don't get an answer. You don't want to annoy an editor.



# Resources

## Sample letter

*Your name and address*

Dear *Full name, MP if relevant*,

Re: *The main topic of your letter*

I hope that you are doing well. *Introduce yourself*. My name is *your name* and I live in your constituency. I am a member of Students for Global Health, and I am writing to you *introduce your topic and what you want, for example*: as I am concerned whether the UK will continue to play a leading role in strengthening health systems globally. I would like to find out your views and what you would do if elected (*or, if you write after the election*: I would like to congratulate you on being elected) and see how we can work together to champion global health equity.

*MPs and candidates like when their efforts are appreciated. It's a good place to highlight why they should care and find a common ground. For example*: I very much appreciate your advocacy for *access to medicine / climate change / reducing the digital divide*, as shown by your interventions at parliament regarding *an example of a speech or debate. Can be found here*, and your efforts in *some relevant local action here, for example*: keeping the local park open and reducing traffic in the town centre.

*Now, outline some information on the topic. Remember, they might know it all. If possible, link it to a local issue. For example*:

- During COVID-19, we were privileged to gain fast access to the vaccines. In 2021, nearly 80% were vaccinated in high-income countries, as compared to 33% only in low-income countries (UNDP). This is partly due to the pharmaceutical companies' unwillingness to share Intellectual Property, despite research being largely funded by our taxes. For example, the government paid twice for AstraZeneca: for the research, and for the vaccine, which cost disproportionately more than the research (STOPAIDS).

*Now, show that it doesn't have to be that way.* Yet, the government can attach condition in R&D contracts, which is why I am writing to you today.

- There is growing evidence that climate change has a dramatic impact on our health, whether due to heatwaves, infectious diseases, respiratory diseases etc. *Add a statistic or a fact relevant to where you live, if possible:* Even here in *the constituency*, the council recently recorded temperature exceeding the norm / members of your constituencies died due to the abnormal heatwave (*reference*). Despite this evidence, new fossil fuel extraction projects are starting, such as Rosebank and Cambo. The government has the power to stop such projects.
- The UK is spearheading the development of digital technologies that are revolutionising healthcare. Yet, deep global disparities might hinder access for already marginalised groups around the world due to limited funds, digital illiteracy, or even lack of a stable internet connection. *When writing the solution, you can adapt to your MP. For example, if they took part in debates on Official Development Assistance (ODA):* The UK government can sustain its critical role in bridging this gap by redirecting Official Development Assistance (ODA) to encourage technology transfer.

*And probably the most important part: the ask. Make it clear, **bold**, and simple, as they may only read this.*

- **I would really appreciate it if you could ask the following question to relevant minister / at the next debate on date, if you know it: question (from the key asks). For example: In the first year in post / if elected, what will you do to ensure that pharmaceutical companies commit to tech transfer to low-resource settings.**
- **We would be honoured if you could join and speak at our panel on give some details (where, when, what, who etc.)**
- **I would love to meet you to discuss this topic further, at a time of convenience to you in-person meetings are the best way to build a relationship**

*And don't forget to thank them!* Thank you very much for your time reading my letter, and I look forward to hearing from you.

*Your name*

*Your contact details*

## SfGH Manifesto summary

You can find our manifesto [here](#).

### Strategy 1: Equitable and resilient health systems

#### Health systems strengthening

- **The UK government should ensure that Official Development Assistance (ODA) is spent supporting governments to build resilient health systems** that mitigate health inequities, and should **reinstate the 0.7% commitment to ODA as soon as possible**, addressing the impact of funding cuts.
- **A part of ODA should be redirected to community-based organisations in LMICs**, fostering meaningful consultation and participation of LMIC stakeholders.
- **The UK Government should work to define and alleviate the unsustainable debts that LMICs face**

#### Equitable access to medicine

- **The UK government and donors should attach conditions in R&D contracts that safeguard public interest and enforce transparency in publicly funded R&D**, making licensing agreements and the true costs of R&D available to the public.
- **Researchers and companies should actively engage in in-depth technology transfer** to support regional manufacturing of health technologies worldwide.
- **The cost of medicine should be de-linked from the cost of R&D**, through upfront grants for example.

#### Funding for international institutions

- **The UK government should continue to be a leading donor to key international institutions**, such as Unitaaid, Gavi, the Global Fund, the Pandemic Fund, and the World Health Organization (WHO).
- **The UK Government should maintain seats on the boards of relevant global health institutions and strengthen their work**

#### Swift and equitable implementation of the Pandemic Accords

- **The Implementation of the Pandemic Accords should be backed by commitments to robust funding** to support LMICs in their implementation.
- **The Pandemic Accords and their implementation should follow a rights-based framework and discourse.**
- **The impact of conflicts should be acknowledged** in countries' ability to implement the Pandemic Accords



## Strategy 2: Climate change and health

### No new fossil fuels extraction

- The UK Government should commit to halting new fossil fuels extraction projects such as Rosebanks and invest public funding into renewable energies instead.
- Universities and health institutes should divest from fossil fuel investments and prioritise sustainable alternatives instead.

### A just transition

- The UK government should advocate for equitable systems while meaningfully recognising the experience of LMICs with greater exposure
- The UK government should identify, mitigate, and support local authorities in addressing both the inequities in accessing healthcare in the UK, and the climate-induced factors that can exacerbate them (e.g. heat- and flood-resilient healthcare infrastructures).

### Fair leadership and safeguarded discussion

- The UK Government should ensure that the voices of those most affected or excluded are central to decision-making in climate-related decisions that affect them.
- The right to protest should be safeguarded, and no one should face intimidation or violence for voicing concerns for planetary health.

### Equitable mitigation and adaptation

- The UK Government should allocate part of ODA to support LMICs disproportionately exposed to climate hazards in implementing their National Adaptation Plans and strengthening their health systems.



## Strategy 3: Equitable digital health

### Further research

- Further research should be done into the granularities of disparities in access to women's health technologies in the UK

### Technology transfer

- The UK Government should use the UK's foreign policy leverage to encourage technology transfer to low resource settings, as part of the Official Development Assistance strategy

## Contact us

Feel free to contact us at any point if you need support with any of your activities. We would love to hear how campaigning is going, so drop us a line anytime.



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