

Campaigning during elections

Guidance on the election process and election law

This month, we are asking you to campaign for Gavi replenishment, calling for the UK to continue its strong financial support to global vaccination.

As a General Election has been called for 12 December, some campaigners might also want to raise the importance of vaccination and other global health issues with prospective parliamentary candidates (PPCs). During elections, strict rules govern what candidates and campaigners can and cannot do or say, and as a charity, RESULTS must be strictly non-party political. Here are some guidelines on how this affects you.

What happens in the run-up to an election? Can I just contact my MP as usual?

Once an election is announced, strict rules come into effect governing how campaigners for particular parties, and 'third party campaigners' such as charities advocating for particular causes can and cannot behave, to ensure the fairness of the democratic process. In the few weeks prior to the election, Parliament is dissolved, and MPs who are standing for re-election will focus on campaigning in their constituency. Selection processes within the parties will enable other candidates to be selected to stand against the sitting MP.

Once Parliament has been dissolved, all the candidates including the existing MP must be treated equally. You cannot just contact one or some of the candidates, but must make all reasonable efforts to contact them all.

Advice on communicating with candidates including via social media

When campaigning on behalf of RESULTS, because of our charitable status, you may not endorse any particular party or candidate or seek to persuade members of the public to vote for or against a candidate or party. At election time, we must treat all candidates equally, and campaigning is governed by the Lobbying Act. This means that, if representing RESULTS, you must do all you can to ensure you contact all the political candidates, even those who you think or who might actually be unsupportive of international development.

It is important not to give the impression of supporting one party, even if our views on a particular issue, such as international aid, are shared by some parties and not others. For example, while global health is widely supported by politicians from all the political parties, UK aid and the 0.7% spending commitment are controversial, therefore it is particularly important not to make public statements which could be seen as supporting some parties' positions and not others.

It isn't necessary to win an argument with candidates who don't agree with you; but we do want them to know that there is support for aid and development in your constituency. You may need to simply agree to disagree.

Don't do any public communications or media work with only one candidate. Make sure all candidates are invited to meetings and events.

Don't compare the statements of candidates on particular topics, which could imply support for some rather than others.

Do not react to the position of a particular party or candidate, but keep your communications broad and general. Avoid including a specific call to action for voters. Do not call on voters to vote for or against a party, candidate, or category of candidates that support or do not support a policy such as the 0.7% target.

Your own political activity

This guidance affects your campaigning with RESULTS, not your rights as an individual constituent to attend any meetings, contact candidates individually and share your concerns. But please ensure this is kept separate from your role as an identifiable RESULTS campaigner. In particular, when using your social media channels, make sure it is clear to people who see them that you are commenting as an individual and not as a RESULTS campaigner. There are various ways to do this, such as ensuring you don't mention RESULTS on your private channels, or having separate accounts. RESULTS Groups accounts must not be used to support or disparage particular candidates or parties.

For further advice on charity law and election law, including details of how election law and the Lobbying Act affects our work, please visit [the Electoral Commission website](#).

How do I find out who my parliamentary candidates are?

Political parties will usually announce who their candidates are shortly before an election; this will be public information, which you can find out for example by visiting the party's website. Because of the very short notice at which the 2019 election was called, this information will only become available in some constituencies at relatively short notice.

If you have any concerns or questions about campaigning with RESULTS over the election period, contact naveed.chaudhri@results.org.uk 0207 793 3970

Timeline

- Tuesday 5 November – last day of the current Parliament
- Wednesday 6 November – Dissolution of Parliament comes into effect at midnight
- Thursday 14 November – deadline for parliamentary candidates to put their names forward. Parties' selection process will have come to an end by this time and all candidates' details are publicly available.
- Week beginning Monday 18 November – likely date for party manifesto launches
- Tuesday 26 November – deadline for registering to vote
- Thursday 12 December – polling day.