Talking points

This month, we are asking you to write a Letter to the Editor of your local paper or online media outlet – which you can amplify through your social media channels if you get published, or you can re-use it as a blog post if you don’t!

The aim is to show how protecting people at home and investing in global health are both needed in the fight against COVID-19. Readers should learn how weak health systems around the world are a huge risk factor for the spread of global pandemics, as well as being a cause of poverty, illness and preventable deaths.

As the huge economic cost of the pandemic becomes increasingly clear, understanding the value of continuing to invest in global health will be essential to retain public support for UK investments in global health and international development.

- Infectious diseases don’t respect national borders, so the threat to humanity from COVID-19 needs a coordinated global response.
- As well as keeping ourselves safe here in the UK, we must help minimise the pandemic’s impact in countries with weak health systems.
- Strong health systems are vital to fighting global health threats, including pandemics like COVID-19 and other deadly diseases such as TB.
- People with TB, malnourished people and those who haven’t had routine vaccinations are among those at most risk from COVID-19.
- The poorest and most vulnerable people in the world are most affected by lack of health care and are at greatest risk of illness and death.
- The UK should continue to work together with other countries to protect health and strengthen our ability to fight pandemics, including the search for new COVID vaccines and treatments.
- The UK should continue funding for immunisation, nutrition and TB services during the current pandemic to prevent further loss of life.
- Education is also at risk from the COVID-19 pandemic. When it is safe for schools to reopen, it is vital that children have safe spaces to learn.

See also our tips on talking about COVID in last month’s Background Sheet 2.
How to write a good Letter to the Editor

Most news outlets have a ‘letters’ section that gives readers the opportunity to express their opinions. This is often the most frequently read section of a publication, providing a good opportunity to reach a wide audience.

- In addition to local news outlets, lots of publications have comments sections – lifestyle magazines, blogging platforms, national papers, student papers, and parish websites.

- Get to know your target publication before you start writing. Respond promptly to any articles or discussions that are relevant to the points you want to make. With COVID so much in the news, your thoughts will be highly relevant and may be a new ‘angle’ on the issue.

- Think creatively about things the readers have in common with people elsewhere in the world – children, health, education. If you’re pitching to a local publication, responding to a local “hook” will make it stronger.

- Keep it short – no more than 300 words. Avoid development jargon and keep the language simple. Don’t be afraid to be contentious; let your feelings be heard! Share personal stories where you can.

- Consider drafting a letter collaboratively with other members of your group. Follow up to see if your letter has been published, and if it has, please share it with the RESULTS office!

- Check for guidelines on how to submit a letter as these vary from publication to publication.

Read our full guide to writing a letter to the editor.

Amplifying your message

- Whatever social media platform you use, think about increasing the reach of letters you get published. Connect with relevant local or global hashtags including local print or broadcast media outlets, your MP and @resultsuk.

- Follow your local media outlets on Twitter and when appropriate mention them (by tagging their @ handle) with information about your story. If the content you tweet is interesting, they may follow you back and ask for more information about your story.

See our social media guidelines for more information.