

Using blogs for advocacy impact



Creating and running a blog site in your local RESULTS group is easy, and we want everyone to be confident with the type of content they are posting in RESULTS' name. To help you, we've put together these tips on using blogs as an advocacy tool. We've also included some basics on setting up and running a blog site, suggestions for content, and some guidelines on what to post from your group's account when associated with RESULTS UK.

Why have a blog as a RESULTS group?

There are many reasons why running a blog site can be beneficial both to your advocacy and to your group. We've picked out a few:

- **Exploring issues in more depth**

Blogs allow you to write about a topic in far more detail than on social media or in your letters. Writing a blog is a nice reason to do some research into a topic and gain a deeper understanding of something you're interested in. Blogs also enable you to share this research and understanding with your audience, and help them explore the topic too.

- **Reaching new audiences**

By sharing your blogs, you might gain the interest of people who hadn't heard of RESULTS before. For example, if you share your blogs on social media, you never know who will be interested in the topic you wrote about, read the blog and then reach out to join RESULTS!

- **Showing public support for an issue**

You can use blogs as a way to show public support for issues you care about. Once you've written a blog, you could share it with your MP and other decision-makers. You could also adapt the blog to use in other media, for example, by writing a short article for a local newspaper.

- **Amplify your activities**

A blog site is a good place to write about activities that you or your group have been doing. For example, if you attend an advocacy day in Parliament, you could write a blog about the day, what you learnt, why you went and what actions should be taken next, and something which prospective members may find appealing to get involved with.

- **Group cohesion and skills**

Having the regular activity of writing blogs can be fun for the whole group and/or individuals who have an interest in developing skills in blog writing. It's a great transferable skill to have and something which prospective members may find appealing to get involved with. You can also collaborate with other RESULTS groups and members on a blog, which is an opportunity to get to know and work with fellow campaigners.

Before you set up a blog site or write a blog, think about who your target audience is. Always have them in mind when posting!

Setting up a blog site

There are many free blog sites which are quite easy to use. Wordpress is a good place to start as it is simple to use, free and allows you to easily post blogs. When getting started, you can either choose template sites and pre-made designs, or build your site from scratch.

- Before you set up an account, consider making an email address for your group. This will make it easier to share access to the account so members can take it in turns to manage it.
- Keep the password safe and only share with members, making sure to change the password regularly.
- It is important to distinguish your account from RESULTS UK's and make it clear that the content is made by you and reflects your views as a group. To do this:
 - Make sure you include the name of your group eg. 'RESULTS Norwich' in the blog's name.
 - In the bio/'about' section of your blog, add a sentence such as "This account reflects the views of campaigners in RESULTS (city)". This should also be repeated at the top of blogs that are not directly related to RESULTS' issues.
 - If you don't already have one, make a group logo which distinguishes your group from RESULTS UK. You can base your logo on the RESULTS one, and add the name of your city or an outline of the skyline of your city below.
 - Consider adding a photo of the group on the blog site.

What could you include in a blog?

There is lots of content you could post about from a RESULTS associated blog site. Here are some themes and ideas that we broadly recommend sticking to:

- Amplify advocacy and activities you have done, such as attending an advocacy day in Parliament, meeting your MP or holding a recruitment stall.
- Each month, [RESULTS sends out a well-researched campaign action](#) which is a mainstay of the grassroots network's activities. You could explore the issue of the campaign in more detail in a blog, and end with a call to action.
- Blogs about international development, people using their voice for change, and our advocacy issue areas: education, TB, polio and child health, nutrition and pandemic preparedness.
- Look out for key global dates, anniversaries and political moments, e.g World TB Day (23 March) or International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17 October). For example, RESULTS Manchester wrote a blog about water for [World Water Day](#) (22 March).

Top tip: Some organisations share social media toolkits for these global dates which include graphics - you could use these in your blog or to help promote it on social media.

- Share stories from people with lived experience of the issues we advocate for.

However, be careful not to use or share languages or images that stigmatise and stereotype people affected by the issues and living in poverty. Always make sure the people featured in a blog give their full consent, or extracts are appropriately credited if taken from other sites. Always include people's contexts and stories, and try and try and portray people in a positive and hopeful way which shows their agency. Read more about this [here](#).



Free stock images: You can use free photos from a number of websites such as Flickr or Creative Commons. If you use stock images or any image from the internet, always make sure it is copyright free.

It is relatively easy to make graphics, and it can be fun to produce them. Sites such as [canva](#) and [adobe spark](#) are free and easy to use.

Always make sure you credit and caption photos appropriately!

How to write an effective blog

Before writing a blog, consider if it is the right format to get your message across. Would it be better suited as a newspaper article, report or twitter thread? It's important to get the key messages really clear. Here are some questions you may want to think about when planning your blog:

What is the objective/purpose of the blog?

For example, what do you want the reader to know/feel/do by the end of the blog?

What is the main message of the blog?

If you were to sum up the blog in one snappy sentence, what would it be? This will help inform the choice of title and promotion of the blog too.

Who is the target audience?

Always keep in mind that language in blogs should be accessible to the general public.

What questions might the audience have about the content and message?

For example, what terms or specialist words might you use that need explaining?

What is the key content and context for the blog?

What content is vital for the blog and what sources will you use for this? What context is needed to make the content and message of the blog make sense?

Whilst it's good to write in your own voice, consider developing a 'tone' for your blog site so there is some consistency between posts.

Guidelines when posting as a RESULTS group

Central to RESULTS UK is the belief that people's voices are powerful and we encourage RESULTS advocates to speak out on issues they care about. However, some issues or tones of voice are not really suitable for a RESULTS associated page. In such situations, it would be better to use a personal blog site, or an account not associated with RESULTS to share your blog.

There are 3 main things to keep in mind when writing a blog on a site associated with RESULTS:

Party-political content, or content of a very overtly political nature.

As a charity, and particularly an advocacy organisation which works with parliamentarians across parties and political positions, we are legally required to remain strictly non-party political. Good relationships with decision makers of all parties are key to effective advocacy and achieving change. Content which could reasonably be interpreted as supporting or criticising a particular party would be deemed party-political. This is not acceptable on pages associated with RESULTS and we'd encourage you to share your personal political views via another account instead. We aren't expecting RESULTS campaigners not to be politically active! But it's important that this is done in your own name and that it doesn't risk RESULTS' political neutrality.

Examples:

A blog which looks at recent funding decisions by the UK Government in international development is acceptable - for example [this blog RESULTS published in 2021](#). However, it wouldn't be appropriate to contrast decisions by a Government with an opposition party's policies, as that could imply political bias. You must also be careful how you word any opinions of Government decisions, and focus on the decision - rather than any political party or approach behind it.

A blog about an issue which is highly party political, such as nationalising energy, is probably better on another site rather than one associated with RESULTS. It would be difficult to talk about such an issue without implying support for particular party political opinions. It is also not a topic we work on, and it could suggest that we do.

Content about issues or policy areas that RESULTS doesn't work on

RESULTS cannot have a policy position on everything, and it is important that we have coherent policy and advocacy positions on our key issue areas. When writing blogs on an account associated with RESULTS, groups and individuals need to primarily stick to issues that link with RESULTS. This leaves scope to post about a range of things, but be careful not to imply that RESULTS takes certain policy positions on things that we don't. Depending on what you write, and how you write, there is a risk that your audience will think RESULTS has provided policy information for it which can have negative consequences for us as an organisation and also, may hide the fact that you have done all the hard work for the post!

Examples:

A blog about climate change and how it links to global health with an overall message that health is affected by climate change would be an acceptable blog.

A blog commenting on strikes in the UK such as the train strike would not be acceptable on a RESULTS-associated blog, as it is highly contentious as a matter of party politics and RESULTS does not work on domestic issues.

Content about issues or news happening in another country

RESULTS UK is part of the ACTION Global Health Advocacy Partnership and we work with advocacy organisations around the world that are experts in a range of issues and on what works in their national political context. In some countries, campaigning and advocating can be dangerous and carry risks of being targeted by political actors. We need to be very careful about compromising our partners' advocacy or safety. We also need to be respectful of campaigners in the country who know what is and isn't constructive to say in their context. We can still show support and stand in solidarity with anti-poverty campaigners in other countries, but we need to be careful how we do this. Where possible, amplify content from campaigners in the country in question rather than write your own content. As with UK politics, we must not support particular political parties or positions in other countries when speaking in RESULTS' name.

Examples:

A blog about TB in another country would be acceptable on a RESULTS-associated blog. For example, you could share stories of health workers in a particular context or find examples of projects funded by the Global Fund. Just remember not to pass comment or judgement on politicians, parties or ideologies in that country.

A blog about human rights abuses in another country would not be acceptable to post under RESULTS' name as it could be interpreted that RESULTS is supporting/not supporting certain political figures, parties or actions involved in that, probably complex, situation. Also, RESULTS is not a human rights organisation and writing blogs on this issue may give your audience the wrong impression of what our advocacy is about.

If you are unsure about content to share, refer to the [RESULTS blog site](#) as a reminder of the type of content we post. There can sometimes be a fine line between what is acceptable to post affiliated to RESULTS UK and what is not. If this line is crossed, we reserve the right to ask you to remove the content from the RESULTS affiliated site. If you're ever unsure, email our Head of Campaigns, Naveed Chaudhri on naveed.chaudhri@results.org.uk or your group's main contact in the Campaigns Team.

We'll leave you with some top tips!

1. Share your blog!

If you've put time and effort into writing a blog, make sure you share it so it gets the attention it deserves. Think about how and where best to share your blog, eg. on social media channels such as twitter. Tweets could include: an extract from the blog, an overall summary of the blog, a few key bullet points about the content, 'new blog: [title]' and a generic 'read to find out about...'. Always include the link to the blog and any relevant hashtags and tags.

2. Monitor engagement

Most blog sites have a section with statistics so you can see how many people read your blog, where your audience is from, and how long they spent on your site. This can give you an idea of which topics are popular and whether your promotion has worked.

3. Length

Blogs can range in length but as a starting point, aim for around 500-800 words. Whatever the length of the blog, the important thing is to make your points clearly!

4. Language

Think about using clear and accessible language, and avoid jargon and acronyms where possible. If the piece focuses on quite a policy-focussed campaign from RESULTS eg. 'Health system strengthening', explain what that means before going on to refer to it throughout the text. Use dignifying language to describe people and where possible, be specific about their context.

5. Structure and process of writing (more resources [here](#))

Consider the flow of the blog and how the main messages are conveyed. Think through what you want to say in each paragraph, how long you want each paragraph to be, and how you will convey your overall messages.

6. Hashtags: *If you want to join a broader conversation or amplify a specific campaign, check if there is a widely-used appropriate hashtag. Don't use too many hashtags in one post though, as that can be distracting.*

7. Does the blog need any external links or links to other parts of the RESULTS UK website?

Include a link if you think something needs a source, such as a statistic or organisation name, or if you want to direct your audience to further information. It's also good to signpost other RUK content when relevant, such as our 'get involved' page.

8. What image/s would be appropriate?

Think about what images support or illustrate the written content. It's good to break up the text with a couple of images, especially when images can be used to support the written content. Try to avoid only using images with tables/text-heavy content in. Ideally all images will have a clear caption and source.

9. Enjoy it! *Social media as an advocacy tool should be fun and a way to gain and develop your skills and experience.*