

# NEXTGEN PA

## Public Affairs Board

### PRCA Public Affairs Board NextGen PA Elections 2020 Candidate statements

#### **Anderona Cole, Jisc**

My name is Anderona Cole and I am a political consultant working in house at Jisc, an educational technology organisation.

Over the past six years, I worked for industry bodies, trade associations and on behalf of clients in an agency.

I have a real passion for the future industry and ensuring that it better reflects society as a whole.

In 2019, the PRCA Public Affairs Census revealed that 79% of public affairs practitioners identify as White British, and 87% identify as British nationals. According to the results of the census, 10% of public affairs professionals are from a black or another minority ethnic background.

Perhaps now, more than ever, as we are seeing just how impactful our profession can be we should be increasing our efforts to encourage individuals from a plethora of backgrounds to pursue and continue careers in our public affairs.

If selected to play a role in the committee, **I would dedicate my time and energy to ensuring that it embarks upon meaningful initiatives to help evolve the careers of talented individuals as well as attract the brightest and best, regardless of their ethnic background, to this brilliant industry.**

## **Riccardo Robertson, Connect**

My name is Riccardo Robertson and I am an Account Manager at Connect with nearly three years of experience in public affairs. Originally hailing from Scotland, I moved to London to throw myself into the world of public affairs.

Public affairs is a fast-paced, energetic and intense industry. The NextGen PA Committee is a great industry initiative that succeeds in providing support, a network and a voice for new practitioners. I am standing for the Committee in order to build on the last few years and take the group forward especially in enhancing **social mobility in public affairs**.

I want to see NextGen being the champion of inclusivity, diversity and social mobility in the industry by offering CV and application workshops for new entrants and young professionals already in the industry.

I also want to see NextGen become more of an industry leader in providing young practitioners with mentors, with events like mentoring speed-dating as well as creating online documents which provide tips on the best way to secure a mentor.

Complimentary to these important events, I want to ensure the Committee's strong tradition in hosting networking nights and social events with special advisers and parliamentarians continues.

**Louise Alestam, Atticus Communications**

In the current circumstances of Brexit, both the public affairs industry and UK-EU liaisons are more important than ever. With my knowledge of Europe and my language skills, I can be that bridge on the NextGen committee. I founded and chaired the board of the international policy incubator European Horizons' Cambridge branch, overseeing more than 120 local members, 5 research projects and 1 international conference with a €60k budget. A native Swede, I also speak 5 European languages. I can thus act as an ambassador for Europe on the board, helping the many Europeans that will likely find it difficult to enter into the UK public affairs industry post Brexit. I would especially want to contribute to your committee activities – especially your learning events – by giving attendees a better understanding of EU politics. The NextGen committee would thereby uphold the crucial link between UK and EU politics that will be centre stage in post-Brexit politics for many years to come.

## Hamish Shah

- The group represents practitioners with fewer than 10 years of experience in the industry. This provides support, a network and a voice for new and ambitious practitioners to showcase their ideas, creativity and experience.
- NextGen PA welcomes inhouse professionals and political consultants. Currently Committee Members lean towards consultancy backgrounds. I come from a consultancy [former Freshwater and Teneo] and Inhouse [current NHBC and former Patients Association] background. My blend of experience and skills will diversify the experience within the Committee.
- Public Affairs and politics should represent society. As well as diversity in experience, I also bring a BAME background to the Committee. This is a topic I profoundly believe in and campaigned effectively during my time at Teneo.
- The Committee engages in a range of activities such as panel discussions, networking opportunities, quizzes and drinks. This is positive at a professional and personal level and it enables an opportunity for all to be involved.
- The NextGen PA Committee Chair sits on the Public Affairs Board Executive Committee, speaking on behalf of the Group. This is positive as it encourages Committee Members to further articulate their ideas.
- The group continually showcases member profiles on newsletters and social media.

**Sarina Kiayani, FleishmanHillard Fishburn**

Back when Rebecca MacIntyre was at FHF, she insisted I skipped a team drinks for a NextGen event with Ben Nunn and Sam Richards. I loved the talks and I enjoyed meeting the committee, and would love to get to know everyone more as part of the committee.

On the Committee, I would focus on bolstering NextGen's profile during COVID to raise our profile in the industry. As part of this, I have several ideas of events we can do to boost engagement.

Like WiPA, it would be great to organise some virtual networking opportunities in smaller groups. One idea I had for this was "sector-specific" virtual networking events. I've found it difficult to meet other young PA professionals who work on similar clients, so these could provide a great opportunity to share learnings and knowledge.

As a Taylor Bennett Foundation alumnus, I also have a strong interest in improving diversity in PA, particularly amongst early careers, that I'd love to bring to NextGen planning. I was the only ethnic minority on the FHF PA team when I joined and still don't know many others in PA, so would love for NextGen to play a role in changing this.

## **Emily Carter, DevoConnect**

By way of introduction, I have worked for DevoConnect for over 2 years, a boutique, one of a kind devolution-focused public affairs agency in Manchester, recently being promoted to Head of Political Campaigns. Before that, I worked in public policy research and spent over 2 years working in Parliament for a variety of MPs. Shocker!

Having worked closely alongside industry leading comms experts for a number of years, I will bring a deep understanding of the industry and bring a fresh outlook on how to help new PA professionals develop their career, as so many wonderful people have done for me. In my current role I manage a small team of graduates and love the enthusiasm and energy they bring to the company, confidence is key! This will all be backed up by a passion for spreading the word about the positive impact of lobbying and a genuine commitment to promote the Committee's aims of helping early stage professionals develop their skillsets, networks and confidence.

With talk of Government departments moving to areas outside of SW1, there is a real opportunity to promote public affairs to young people outside of the Westminster bubble and get them excited about the prospect of a career in such a fast-paced industry. It is more important than ever for industries like PA to provide opportunities for people from all backgrounds all across the country. I want to be one of those voices banging the drum and advocating for PA as an exciting career path for those already interested, as well as reaching those who may not even know PA exists at all. I certainly didn't when I left university but was lucky enough to establish myself through networking and building professional relationships.

In a time where there is prevailing uncertainty and volatility facing young professionals due to the Covid-19 pandemic and as we adapt to working from home, I believe there's a real opportunity for the NextGen Committee to strengthen its digital platform and engage virtually to support new practitioners to grow their confidence and build their networks.

As someone who was born, studied and works in the North, I am passionate about increasing regional diversity in politics and making sure the levelling-up agenda becomes a reality.