

**PRCA NextGen Public Affairs Elections 2021/22**  
**Candidate Statements**

**Name: Anderona Cole**

**Title: Public affairs and external relations officer**

**Organisation: Jisc**

I am a public affairs professional who is currently 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 am putting myself forward to add something unique to the committee as someone working in-house and that has technology policy background.

Back 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.

Moving forward to the future, the policy adoption that will occur during and after the recent global health crisis will be of paramount importance when it comes to the lives and futures of many who are reliant on good governance to deal with rapidly evolving situations. I believe that we should be increasing our efforts to encourage individuals from a plethora of backgrounds to pursue and continue careers in the public affairs arena so that they can come up with innovative and well-tailored policy solutions that can make a real impact.

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.

**Abigail Simons**  
**Senior Account Executive**  
**Cavendish**

I would like to be a NextGen Committee member because I believe the Committee plays an important role in supporting those who are relatively new to public affairs, like myself, by providing opportunities to meet, network and learn from others and I am keen to get involved.

I'm excited about the opportunity to work with other committee members to think of innovative ways to engage and organise insightful and fun events both online and hopefully in person. I believe it's incredibly important to be inclusive and engage with public affairs professionals about what they would like to see from the Committee as much as possible. It is also important to ensure new starters are aware of NextGen as early as possible and I would work to ensure this happens.

I believe I would be a good committee member because I have experience working in both an inhouse role as well as a consultancy and appreciate the respective challenges and experiences of both. Overall, I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to become a committee member and if elected will work hard to ensure NextGen continues to be a success!

**Harry Foskin**  
**Executive**  
**Hanbury Strategy**

A professional starting a career in public affairs today does so at a challenging time for the industry. However, as the various inquiries into the Greensill scandal reach their conclusions and the industry faces further scrutiny, early career professionals have a unique opportunity, and indeed responsibility, to bring fresh ideas to shape the sector in the right way.

To do so, early career professionals must do more to promote good practice, highlighting innovative examples of legitimate, regulation or legislation-changing campaigns. NextGen is the perfect forum to do just this.

In doing so, we will make younger generations aware that you can do good and meaningful work in this industry and provide support for public affairs practitioners at the beginning of their careers.

Finally, many young professionals, myself included, have either started their careers or begun a new role immediately before or during the pandemic and found networking difficult. Employers, the PRCA, NextGen and others have gone to great lengths to arrange virtual networking but, as we look to lifting of COVID-19 restrictions and the resumption of in-person events, I fear that there has been a lack of training in how best to network.

Having spoken to early career professionals at my company and other consultancies, I know this concern is widely shared. To equip people for the return to normal, I would like to explore training events with industry leaders, similar to those the NextGen ran with Lindsay Paterson earlier this year, as guidance on how best to network.

**Angat Ahluwalia**  
**Four Communications**

I am currently working for Four Communications within the Health Public Affairs Team, and I have recently transitioned into a career from digital marketing to public affairs. Firstly, I believe that this demonstrates that a transition into public affairs is possible without any prior political experience and this is something I am passionate in illustrating to people who believe they may not be able to enter the sector without prior political experience. I am a passionate advocate for greater diversity within public affairs, and I believe I can take a lead in developing a number of new and innovative ideas/initiatives in order to reach more diverse audiences to encourage people from underrepresented communities to consider a career in public affairs. I believe this can be done by targeting a number of community organisations through digital means in order to raise awareness of public affairs as a career path. In addition, I believe that in-house public affairs teams and agencies need to do more in order to provide work experience for those wanting a career in public affairs. This is something I would be very keen to lead on, by working with other organisations such as Step in promoting work experience opportunities.

**Emily Carter**  
**Devo Connect**

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

DevoConnect is the first public affairs agency in the UK created to deliver regional and devolved campaigns. Working at DevoConnect, I would bring a unique perspective to the NextGen Committee. Based in Manchester we are redefining public affairs by influencing and shaping policy through a devolved lens. That means we build consensus to influence and inform Westminster and Whitehall processes and decision making.

These are challenging times for all of us. Given the prevailing uncertainty and a volatile job market due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the next generation of public affairs professionals need greater investment in the development of their professional and personal skills. As we continue to work remotely, 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.

I know I have a lot to bring to the NextGen Committee table - specifically a new perspective and a strong regional voice.

With so much talk of Government departments and businesses moving outside SW1, it is timely to promote public affairs to young people outside of the Westminster bubble and get them excited about a career in a fast-paced industry. It is more important than ever to provide opportunities to people from all backgrounds and all regions. It should not be the case that you have to move to London to have a career in public affairs.

I want to be one of the voices banging the drum and advocating for PA as an exciting career path for those already interested, as well as reaching out to those who may not even know PA exists as a professional career. I certainly didn't when I left university!

Having worked closely with some truly amazing industry leaders including my current boss and former APPC Chair, Gill Morris, who have championed transparency and openness in public affairs, I am thoroughly grounded in why we need to promote and raise professional standards in our industry

I will bring both a deep understanding of the industry and a fresh outlook on what is needed to champion the PA industry. We should all be committed to encouraging diversity and opportunity so young PA professionals can progress their career. I have been so lucky to have some great mentors to guide me but believe we need to proactively promote public affairs and provide mentoring to others starting out.

I want to join the NextGen committee so I can help others make the right choices and encourage more diversity. I was recently promoted to Head of Political Campaigns at DevoConnect and before that, I worked in public policy research and in Parliament and in my current role I manage a small team of graduates. All this has happened in the first 3 years of my PA career! I love the enthusiasm and energy they bring to the company and I am passionate about the positive impact of lobbying and have a genuine commitment to promoting the NextGen.

**Hannah Fuchs**  
**Inline Policy**

My name is Hannah Fuchs and I would like to be one of your new members on the PRCA NextGen Committee. I joined the public affairs agency Inline Policy in March 2021 after gaining two years of experience in Communications and PR, including at the PR agency Lansons and working in-house at a national charity.

Last year, I started eagerly looking for opportunities to gain relevant experience that would help me start a job in public affairs. Originally, I moved to the UK to complete a master's degree with only a small network of family and friends who could help me with my plan to move into public affairs; as a result, my search was often frustrating.

I have been incredibly grateful then to have had the opportunity to work closely with Rebecca Deegan and her social enterprise "I have a voice", as well as PRCA NextGen committee members. I received incredibly valuable experience and feedback that allowed me to start a career in public affairs and now work across both PA and PR. Partnerships allow us to reach more diverse and greater amounts of people, which I think is incredibly important. Connecting people is certainly something I value highly, especially given how much it has helped me land my dream job.

I have personally experienced how valuable the NextGen Committee's work is. I would like to join such an important group, share my experience, and encourage and help others to start a career in public affairs and/or public relations. Having worked in both fields, I can serve as a crucial link between them. As part of the committee, I would also like to support social mobility and provide support to those who have not had the benefit of a social environment that allows them to form connections that help someone properly climb the career ladder. As a committee member, I would like to provide opportunities and support for those who have a passion for public affair or public relations, but have lacked the right advice on how to progress in their careers.

After Brexit, it has become increasingly difficult for non-British citizens to work and live in the UK. As an EU citizen, I would like to represent and support non-UK citizens in the industry, encourage cultural diversity, and highlight the importance of language and cultural diversity. As I work in a boutique PA agency, I would also be able to represent boutique firms on the NextGen Committee to help reflect our broad and diverse industry and share skills, knowledge, and experience with those interested in working at smaller firms.

Thank you so much for your support. I hope to serve you soon as a member of the PRCA NextGen Committee!

## **Alessandra Sciarra**

My name is Alessandra Sciarra and I would like to express my interest in joining the NextGen Public Affairs Committee.

I'm a passionate and highly motivated policy and public affairs professional with just under seven years of experience in the non-profit sector in the UK, India and Italy. I currently work as Social Policy Manager for an international poverty relief charity, leading on our public affairs and lobbying work in England and Wales. I have a strong track record in developing robust, evidence-based policy positions and have successfully launched impactful advocacy campaigns including the Lewisham Borough of Sanctuary campaign and collaborated on the Windrush campaign. I have been a member of the PRCA since December 2020, and am eager to become more active with the NextGen Public Affairs group to promote equality and diversity in the public affairs sector.

I have campaigned, advocated and lobbied on social justice issues and I am particularly passionate about democratic and political participation by under-represented groups. This includes women, people from migrant backgrounds and people from LGBT+ backgrounds. I am eager to join the NextGen Public Affairs Committee as I believe this group can be a catalyst for change in promoting a more diverse and inclusive sector.

Having worked in policy and public affairs for international and grassroots charities, I have experienced and witnessed discrimination and learnt how opportunities in the sector can be stacked against those from a non-traditional and under-represented background. I began my career working on the frontline, in project and operations management and service delivery for frontline and grassroots charities. This experience gave me a unique perspective and knowledge I bring to my public affairs and policy work, and I believe this experience allows me to be an effective change maker and lobbyist.

I have seven years of experience working in the non-profit sector in the UK and internationally and have worked for several grassroots and frontline migrants' rights charities. In addition to my public affairs work, I have built extensive experience in programme and operation management, field research, strategic communications and political campaigning.

I believe the solutions to some of today's biggest societal issues, from health and social care, to housing, youth crime and unemployment can be designed by those who are affected by these issues. I am hoping that by being elected as committee member I will bring a unique perspective and experience and help engage with new groups.