

PubAffairs Profile

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| Name | Lucy Bell |
| Job Title | Parliamentary Assistant, Office of Brian Cotter MP |
| What academic /professional qualifications do you have? | BSc Politics, University of Southampton |
| How did you get into Public Affairs? | I have only very recently been recruited with a public affairs consultancy, before that I worked for a year in the House of Commons. Getting my job in Parliament involved deciding which party I wanted to work for and trying to find out as much as I could from contacts there before sending my CV to a few key people. I wanted to work in Parliament to give me the valuable experience necessary to get a good job in public affairs, rather than doing a public affairs internship which would have been fairly difficult to get, as well as being unpaid. |
| What others careers did you consider? | I considered PR as an option, as well as a career in media communications or journalism. |
| How did you get your current job? | After hearing through a friend that it might be possible for someone like me with a politics degree to do an internship in Parliament, I sent my CV to a contact in one of the Lib Dem MP s offices, and also to the Lib Dem Whips Office. I heard from Brian Cotter s office within a week and was called to an interview at Parliament. After a second phone interview I was offered a (poorly) paid position as Brian s Parliamentary Assistant. My pay went up during my time there and I stayed for 15 months. (After planning to stay for only 3!) |
| What characteristics do you need to work in Public Affairs? | In Public Affairs: You must be motivated, proactive, a good communicator, able to translate complex/lengthy information quickly and succinctly, a lateral thinker, articulate, good under pressure, level headed. In Parliament: Calm under pressure, able to maintain good working relationships with your MP s staff and other party staff, able to translate complex/lengthy information quickly and succinctly, a good communicator, not afraid to come up with new ideas, able to handle a variety of projects at once. You must also be patient and not mind doing very menial jobs once in a while. |
| What skills are most important in your job? | In Parliament: Efficiency, being clear in producing what the MP has asked for, often within a very short period of time, good at coming up with campaign and media communications ideas — and carrying them out, ability to prioritise, making sure that the MP trusts you to do the job properly, being good at talking to constituents. Knowing how Parliament works is also important. In Public Affairs: Written and oral communications skills — you need to be able to translate complex information quickly and succinctly in a way your clients will appreciate. |
| What does your current role entail on a day to day basis? | Parliament: Managing the MP s diary and occasionally organising events for them; writing and sending out local media stories; dealing with phone calls from local and national journalists; opening and dealing with the post, organising and conducting tours for constituents; attending meetings with the MP to take notes; attending receptions or meetings on behalf of the MP. |

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| <p>Which campaign that you have worked on are you most proud of?</p> | <p>An event in Parliament to commemorate the Ten Year Anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda. It was organised in conjunction with a Rwandan charity and involved a media campaign as well as a drive within Parliament to get all of the MPs and Peers supporting the commemoration event and HIV anti-retrovirals campaign that we were launching. I also ensured the smooth running of the event, which involved looking after the Secretary of State for DfID and the First Lady of Rwanda and co-ordinating all of the speeches.</p> |
| <p>How do you go about making contacts?</p> | <p>The researchers in Parliament all tend to be friendly with each other and socialise outside of work (although the parties do not mix very much) so I have made a lot of contacts that are researchers, advisers and press officers for the Lib Dems. I have also kept a couple of MPs as contacts since leaving a few weeks ago. Apart from that I make contacts through things like Pub Affairs and the Government Affairs Group — although I prefer to do this informally rather than just formal card swapping at events. Party Conference is also a good way to make contacts if you are pro-active enough.</p> |
| <p>How has networking at PubAffairs helped you?</p> | <p>It has helped me a great deal. It did not get me my current job, but I would not have expected it to. It has ensured that I am always meeting people in the Public Affairs industry in a relaxed environment who are very happy to give advice and tips on how to get a job and what employers are looking for. It is also an excellent way of hearing about jobs that might be coming up.</p> |
| <p>What advice would you give to anyone looking to break into Public Affairs?</p> | <p>If you are a fairly recent graduate, try to work in Parliament first, even if you can only do it for a short period of time unpaid. Apart from it being an amazing privilege to work there and good fun, you will make useful contacts. You will also hear about good jobs coming up in things like public affairs as well as internships or policy work for NGOs and Think Tanks. Time in Parliament makes you more valuable to employers because they are often looking for someone who knows how Westminster works and is not intimidated by working within the political process.</p> |