

PubAffairs Profile

Name	Sereena Hirst
Job Title	Parliamentary Adviser (until August 2004 then External Affairs Manager)
What academic /professional qualifications do you have?	BA Politics MA International Relations
How did you get into Public Affairs?	Somewhat by accident. While doing political degree decided I was hooked by current affairs and wanted to work in that field. I started off as a Policy Researcher and then Policy Manager for the Motor Industry Trade Association where I did a lot of work with civil servants and worked closely with our Government Affairs Managers on various campaigns and All Party Groups. I moved from there into Parliament working as an Education Adviser for the Liberal Democrats which was a fascinating role — teaching me lots about working with the media. My central role in the HQ during the 2001 General Election was a totally unique experience. I then moved from there to the NSPCC as their Parliamentary Adviser and ran some major political events, worked on some high profile campaigns and worked extensively on a number of Bills. It was while at the NSPCC that I realised the importance ensuring that in large and diverse organisations you must help people to understand what public affairs is and how it can work from them. In August 2004 I will be moving to the RAC to return to the motor industry and work as their External Affairs Manager.
What others careers did you consider?	Journalism
How did you get your current job?	I got my role at the NSPCC through an advert in the Guardian and my role at the RAC through Electus Select.
What characteristics do you need to work in Public Affairs?	Confidence, confidence and confidence! Plus an ability to work quickly, stay calm under pressure, multi-task and empathise and relate to whoever you are lobbying (or explaining what public affairs is too!).
What skills are most important in your job?	Understanding of parliamentary procedures and policy making processes. General awareness of politics and political parties and news agendas. Being able to network and build relationships.
What does your current role entail on a day to day basis?	Anything from drafting amendments to legislation, writing speeches for debates, drafting briefings, meeting MPs and Peers, organising events in Parliament, taking MPs to visit NSPCC projects, and running internal training sessions about public affairs.
Which campaign that you have worked on are you most proud of?	I've worked on so many over the years to varying degrees I couldn't pick one.
How do you go about making contacts?	In terms of political contacts — research their background and then meet them for formal meeting, coffee, lunch etc depending on person armed with as much info as you can about them.

	In terms of public affairs contacts — talk to everyone you meet at any event and make an effort to attend social functions such as PubAffairs!
How has networking at PubAffairs helped you?	As I am currently working in-house in the charity sector it has increased my in-house contacts in private companies and my contacts in agencies.
What advice would you give to anyone looking to break into Public Affairs?	Ask yourself if walking into a room of people you don't know and having to start a conversation feels you with terror or excitement. If it's the former this may not be the job for you. If it's the latter you'll love the constant number of new people you have to meet when working in Public Affairs.