Rebecca Hales

rebecca@rebeccahales.co.uk | [LinkedIn](#) | rebeccahales.co.uk

Organised, motivated, and curious communications expert with a background in:

- developing, implementing and evaluating agile engagement strategies that put users first
- writing, commissioning, and editing quality content for print and online channels
- uncovering interesting stories from inside high profile organisations and sharing them at the right time through the right channels
- helping teams articulate complex concepts in plain English
- crisis communications and reputation management
- managing individual and organisational relationships with the press

Employment

Head of Content and Digital Engagement, UK Parliament, Dec '16 - present

Promoted from Content Lead in August 2018, I'm using my expertise to help make democracy open, transparent, and engaging. Leading a team of 17 content producers, I make sure Parliament is delivering high-quality, user focused, accessible content.
Duties include:
- Setting the overall strategic direction of content for Parliament's digital services and channels, aligning the content team's work - whether that's [content design](#), [social media activity](#) or [filmmaking](#) - to organisational priorities
- Developing content strategies that respond to the needs of users and shine a light on the work of subject matter experts working within Parliament
- Implementing structures, processes and tools for content design
- Producing style guidelines, setting standards, and putting them into effect
- Resolving conflict at senior levels
- Team growth and professional development
- Crisis management and contingency planning for digital communications channels

Skills gained:
- CIPR Specialist Diploma in Crisis Communications
- Managing team resourcing and leading roadmapping for content projects that reach audiences of millions
- Board-level negotiation and influencing
- Managing a £1m annual budget
- Significant people management skills, including formal training in mastering performance management, coaching and leadership, conducting difficult conversations and diversity, inclusion and disability in the workplace

Head of Digital Communications, Government Digital Service, Feb '14 - Dec '16

At GDS I worked on two high-profile work streams: initially as Digital Engagement Lead on the [Digital Transformation Programme](#) and then Head of Digital Communications for the [GOV.UK Verify Identity Assurance Programme](#).

Duties included:

- Leading on the accurate and timely reporting of progress across the GOV.UK Verify Programme by: managing the editorial calendar for [the Identity Assurance blog](#); ghostwriting, commissioning and editing posts; and briefing the design team on sharable [audiovisual material](#) for use on social media around programme milestones
- Developing and implementing a strategy for digital engagement for GOV.UK Verify for 2015/16 by producing - and getting senior level buy-in on - a comms plan for GOV.UK Verify through public beta development to live covering: scope; resources; milestones; core messages and overall narrative; channel management; collateral; and crisis scenario planning
- Managing multiple relationships with heads of comms and media across government and in the private sector share digital engagement best practice and ensuring collaborative multimedia storytelling across a range of channels
- Sitting on the Senior Management Team for GOV.UK Verify, advising on comms best practice
- Shaping a narrative for GOV.UK Verify by identifying programme priorities, developing a set of lines to take to create a coherent story of digital transformation in government, and feeding pitches for good news stories to Cabinet Office Press Office
- Improving output on the various digital comms channels available to GOV.UK Verify, increasing engagement and reach. Including, for example, running the [@GOVukverify](#) Twitter feed and increasing the channel's following by 78% in 6 months
- Ensuring briefings for Ministers, speeches, media, reporting requests, FOIs and PQs are dealt with by: delegating or escalating the handling of requests and responses to colleagues when appropriate; keeping track of what was said (and why); and fact checking and clearing material
- Line managing 3 team members - digital engagement leads and a digital engagement assistant - supporting them in taking responsibility for their own development and acting as a role model for workplace-based learning

Skills gained:

- Formal training courses completed: CIPR crisis communications; CIPR writing for online audiences; and LCC short course in advanced copywriting
- The ability to set a campaign direction whilst seeing the big picture and identifying the implications of business priorities on digital engagement plans
- Strategic decision making by drawing reasonable conclusions from a range of incomplete and complex evidence – making difficult decisions pragmatically, even when details are not clear
- Knowing when to escalate decision making to the right level within teams, not allowing bureaucracy to suppress innovation and delivery

Senior Complaints Investigator, Press Complaints Commission, Sep '08 - Jan '14

Duties included:

- Liaising with newspaper and magazine editors across the industry and negotiating with complainants and solicitors to resolve complaints
- Managing the PCC's response to some of the most high-profile and contentious news stories of the day
- Working with individuals and families personally affected by press attention in addition to PR and communications staff, press offices around the UK and worldwide; and news desks and senior editorial staff on all major UK newspapers, broadsheets and tabloids
- [Drafting technically precise and well reasoned decisions](link) and press guidance
- Producing clear, concise press releases for dissemination across the industry
- Writing corrections, clarifications and apologies for publication in print and online
- Training, developing and line managing a team of 6 complaints officers
- Managing educational outreach work with colleges and universities (UK and US-based) and members of the industry (national and regional) and presenting on press regulation and ethics at more than 50 seminars and open days

Skills gained:
- Improved project management and problem solving skills obtained through complaints investigation. Shaping investigations (of which had around 50 ongoing at any one time) and using independent research and expert analysis of corroborative evidence
- Negotiation skills and the ability to handle difficult people and those in a state of grief or shock
- Versioning and the ability to respond with speed and positivity to critique of my writing
- The ability to anticipate the path of a news story and judge who might be impacted whilst planning the external and internal communications required to deal with a crisis

Assistant Editor, HarperCollins Publishers, Jun '07 - Sep '08

Duties included:
- Editorial support. Proofreading, copy editing, project/delivery management, picture research and monitoring artwork, market research to assist the commissioning of projects and writing blurbs and rejection letters
- Backlist management. Organising reprints, re-launches and rebranding of titles
- Sales and marketing responsibilities. Providing sample material for publicity, writing marketing copy, drafting rights sheets, creating book fair presentations/sample layouts

Education

London School of Economics and Political Science, Jul - Aug '10

I attended the LSE Summer School whilst working full time at the PCC. [I wrote about media freedom](link) and got A grades in the following courses:
- International Journalism and Society – the role of the media in the modern world
- Athens to Al Qaeda – political theory and international politics

Queen Mary, University of London, Sep '04 - Jun '07

BA (Hons) English Literature, 2:1

Technical stuff...

I'm great with Google docs and apps, the Office 365 suite, and CMS systems such as Wordpress, Episerver, and KenticoCloud. I've got demonstrable experience of monitoring tools including Google Analytics, Brandwatch, Sysomos, and native analytics tools for the big social platforms. I'm OK with InDesign and basic HTML.