

MJ Starfish Top Talent: Communications and Marketing

esidents' expectations as to how public services communicate with them have never been higher. As ever, local government is rising to the challenge, striving to find better and more interesting ways to communicate with their communities. High quality social media, new digital channels, interactive and proactive comms and brand marketing are all high on the agenda for comms teams up and down the country.

In this feature, we celebrate these communications and marketing professionals who have been recognised as rising stars by their organisations for their creativity, innovation and desire to connect with their communities.

Digital Communications Manager. London Borough of Barking and

Wajid leads on digital communications that instantly engages residents. He manages Barking and Dagenham's in-house video team which create award-winning videos, and is now generating income from its video production skills. Wajid has developed a new social media strategy, full of creative content ideas with a focus on collaborating with residents to jointly share stories. Wajid also led on internal comms when the council changed the way it worked during and after the pandemic and made a

key contribution to its Investors in People gold accreditation.

Jessica Allen-Rohinson Transformation and Communication

Stoke-on-Trent City Council Jess believes that the success of any organisation lies with its people, so having

joined Stoke-on-Trent City Council just over 12 months ago, she set about developing and shaping an internal communications policy which would inform, engage and inspire the council's 5,000 staff to fulfil strategic aims and to take pride in delivering important services to communities. This work is providing the means for staff from all levels and services to be connected, informed and engaged. This stretches from the development of a new intranet through to fun, quirky, wellbeing challenges. Her motto is: 'Shout loud, be proud and celebrate success!

Rrian Rorland Community Participation Project Officer. South Lanarkshire Council

Brian is a community planner with a passion for bringing people and projects together. With more than a decade of

experience in community engagement, events and marketing, he has honed his skills in creating dynamic and engaging events that foster a sense of community and belonging. A notable project has seen Brian lead the development and promotion of a network that delivers free period products across South Lanarkshire, making them available at 200 different community locations, 140 schools and through direct online ordering, making a real difference to women and girls across South Lanarkshire

Gemma Cattell Communications Officer **North Northamptonshire Council**

The communications challenges for a brand new unitary authority like North Northamptonshire Council are many but

even more so within the context of a council formed in 2021 during the pandemic. Gemma has been recognised for her ability to digest and communicate complex issues, supporting the delivery of new services to residents. She has also led outstanding communications for high-profile projects including the Corby Towns Fund and Chester House Estate – a flagship project for the area.

Senior Communications Officer. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Emma's passion for communications and marketing support across children's services. adults and health has prompted her nomination

by a senior leader within Stockton-on-Tees. Her work with key partners and stakeholders on joint campaigns has been acknowledged and highly acclaimed. Emma has also been instrumental in delivering a regional marketing campaign across the North East of England to support the care sector's efforts to recruit more staff, particularly to work in care homes and care at home services.

Louise Gibson Social Media Team Manager, Sheffield City Council

Louise leads a new team, developing digital channels focused on delivering residents' need-based communications. This has

included an extensive automated email change programme built around subscribers, resulting in one of the most effective email platforms nationwide. She works closely with communities via digital channels, collaborating to build strong relationships and enhance the city and organisation internally and externally Removing barriers to understanding and engagement, Louise is driving a communication accessibility improvement programme which has already seen improved engagement and efficacy.

Nathan Greenwood Communications Officer, Gedling Borough Council

Nathan's career trajectory into communications has given him a perspective that is highly valued by colleagues. Having gained experience in customer services and then revenues, he discovered a passion for

communications and his ideas and enthusiasm led to a permanent role in the team. Nathan has been involved in numerous key campaigns including the Pride of Gedling Awards, the council's annual event honouring heroes from the borough, and the "food for life" community celebration which brought together Ukrainian and Syrian refugees. Nathan also led on communications for a scheme which saw elderly and vulnerable residents have their homes adapted with accessible wet rooms, helping them live in their own homes independently for longer.

Digital Communications Officer, **London Borough of Wandsworth**

Yvonne is passionate about telling compelling stories using digital channels and is described as an influencer who constantly applies out-

of-the-box ideas to deliver fresh new communications and marketing strategies. With just six months' experience in local government, she has helped transform the council's social media platforms. implementing creative ideas that capture and engage target audiences resulting in over 3,000 new followers, and making the council's Instagram account the fourth largest of the London boroughs.

Kara MacFadven **Head of Communications and** Marketing, Derby City Council Kara leads an ambitious and multi-talented communications and marketing team at





Derby City Council. Joining Derby in 2017, Kara's talent has seen her guickly progress to head of service in 2020 at the height of the pandemic. She has transformed the team over the past two years, focusing on commercialisation and income generation, as well as modernising corporate comms and marketing campaigns, design and media management. Her passion and determination to showcase the city has helped put Derby on the map, most notably with the recent announcement of a combined authority in the East Midlands, as well as successfully rallying national support for Derby to become the new home of Great British Railways.

Head of Communications and Digital, Leicestershire County Council As well as leading the council's

communications and digital teams, Jo heads up its customer and automation programmes. Both are focused on fundamentally changing how

the county council digitally engages with residents, as well as supporting the modernisation of services. Building on the lessons learned during the pandemic, Jo has been instrumental in driving significant increases in digital adoption while reducing complexity and embracing automation across the front and back office. Her multi-disciplinary approach is achieving significant cultural change, reduced costs and a higher quality

Safika Munshi **Deputy Head of Strategic Communications Manchester City Council**

Saf joined Manchester in 2020 to help shape and lead its high performing strategic communications function as a centre of excellence, building trust through close collaboration with engagement teams and community networks. She champions best practice, leading channel development and turning behaviour change theory into practice. Starting in her role at the height of the pandemic, she led a transformational communications and engagement approach to vaccinations in the city. Saf is described as passionate about leading with purpose and delivered a workshop on the importance of these values at the

Louisa Shaw Place Brand Manager, Staffordshire County Council

council's senior leadership summit.

Louisa leads the We Are Staffordshire place marketing programme, launched in late 2020 to raise the profile of the county nationally.

This work directly supports Staffordshire County Council's mission to attract inward investment, increase tourism, and attract and retain talent. Louisa works with place leaders across the region including councils. universities and businesses, running campaigns and events including

roundtables, a growing ambassador network and regular speaking slots at national conferences. Under Louisa's inspiring leadership, and less than two years from launch, We Are Staffordshire was shortlisted for City Nation Place international place brand of the year in 2022.

Gemma Simons Marketing Campaigns and Strategy Manager, Cardiff Council

Gemma leads the tourism and events marketing team within Cardiff's economic development service. She is known for leading on innovative

leisure and tourism projects as part of the council's long-term strategic vision for the city through Visit Cardiff. Gemma is credited with transforming the city's approach to marketing and has delivered key campaigns, working alongside some of the world's biggest event organisers. She was instrumental in helping deliver World Wrestling Entertainment's first major UK event in 30 years — Clash at the Castle - and her work with global partners like the Volvo Ocean Race has produced impressive results.

Stars in Surrey Lead, Communications & Engagement, Surrey County Council Elliot leads on the council's Stars in Surrey Awards, a programme established in 2022 to recognise outstanding performance and



actions across the county by staff, residents and partners. A key member of the internal communications team. Elliot embodies the council's 'No-One Left Behind' ethos and has been instrumental in improving connectivity across the workforce. Surrey colleagues have been impressed with his design of the online one-stop Coronavirus information hub at the onset of Covid-19, as well as his role in the design and launch of a new staff intranet and the flair and creativity he has brought to staff engagement events.

Helen Stalker Head of Communications, Knowslev Council

Helen has brought her private sector background to Knowsley to fantastic effect. Upon joining the council, she set to work

reshaping communications and establishing its importance with the senior leadership team. In addition to her demanding day job, she has provided support to the Shakespeare North Playhouse – securing national TV exposure through the development of a young person's playwriting competition with the BBC's *The One Show.* Last year was a big year for Helen and the communications team, supporting Knowsley's year in the spotlight as the Liverpool City Region's Borough of Culture. Their promotion of more than 60 events attracted over half-a-million people, more than three times the population of Knowsley itself.

Max Wieland Communications Team. Business Partner for People, Stockport Council Max is responsible for communications across public health, adult social care and

children's services, digital channels on social media, e-newsletters and improving the organisation's response to media enquiries. In the past few months, he has completed the LGcomms Future Leaders programme, become a Local Government Association peer reviewer, and joined the LGcomms executive committee, providing support to communicators working across the public sector and local government. Max's commitment and passion are recognised as making a big difference, helping to put Stockport on the map with the council's regeneration programme

Anna Wright Senior Communications Manager **London Borough of Camden**

and cost of living response.

Anna manages a team delivering engaging, evidence-based campaigns to support and inform Camden residents. Alongside

supporting the team with a full portfolio of campaigns on council priorities including the climate emergency. Anna has a strong focus on communicating Camden's work tackling inequality and promoting diversity and inclusion, including community campaigns such as Pride and Black History Season: local and organisational race equality work; and leading a London-wide food poverty campaign that raised more than £350,000. Anna is co-chair of London Councils' Tackling Racial Inequality communications and engagement sub-group, which promotes and amplifies race equality work happening across

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