



GENERAL ELECTION CLASS OF 2019

**18 MONTHS ON FROM AN ELECTION RESULT THAT TURNED POLITICS ON ITS HEAD,
EDELMAN LOOKS AT WHO FROM THE 2019 INTAKE HAS MADE THEIR MARK IN WESTMINSTER**

When the 140 new MPs elected 18 months ago took their oaths and entered the House of Commons, none could have anticipated the disruption and difficulties that would soon affect the daily lives of their constituents. With the British public returning a solid Conservative-majority Government, it looked like a period of some political stability was due. Instead, the new intake has spent considerably less time in Westminster. MPs have been unable to travel for long periods at a time. The numbers physically taking part in debates have been restricted. Many MPs have been so overwhelmed with constituency issues relating to the pandemic that they have struggled to engage with parliamentary business, their party leadership, and the private sector, to the extent that they normally would have expected.

Despite these challenging circumstances, many of the new MPs have still found ways to make their mark. The 2019 intake is a varied and unusual mix. On the Tory side, a number running in what looked like no-hoper races in the North and Midlands suddenly found themselves with a seat in Parliament. Often far from the typical Conservative mould, their concerns (and those of their 'Red Wall' constituents) can be very different to – and sometimes actually in conflict with – those of their colleagues in the Shires. The pandemic has made the usual tea-room engagement with the party leadership more difficult, and the lives of Government whips correspondingly harder.

On the Labour side, meanwhile, a group of MPs originally selected during the height of Corbynism suddenly found their leader out of a job (and later suspended from the party), and a new leadership embarking on a softer left path which many of them strongly object to. Some have already resigned from junior shadow roles in protest at some of Sir Keir Starmer's decisions. Those who thought Labour's internal management problems would ease with Corbyn's departure have been proved over-optimistic.

18 months on from the General Election, Edelman has identified 14 of the 140 who we believe have demonstrated they are 'ones to watch'. They are the next generation of ministers and shadow ministers (some high-flyers are already there), party spokespeople, select committee chairs, and Westminster movers and shakers. And with a Government reshuffle expected in the coming weeks, some may not have long to wait.



CLAIRE COUTINHO MP
CONSERVATIVE

Age: 35

Role: PPS to the Treasury Ministerial Team

Constituency: East Surrey

Parliamentary contributions: 60

Majority: 24,040

Twitter followers: 7,384

Closely aligned with Chancellor Rishi Sunak – who she worked for as a special advisor before becoming an MP – Claire Coutinho's stock has been on the rise since she secured her ultra-safe seat last year. The long-standing Brexiteer was made a Treasury PPS within weeks of her election, and it is clear that Number 10 hold the former banker and entrepreneur in high regard.

Likely to be one of the first of the 2019 intake to get a ministerial promotion at the next reshuffle, Coutinho recently co-launched a project called 'The Opportunity Gap' with the Social Market Foundation, focusing on improving opportunities for young people. She is also on the Advisory Board of the dynamic, youth vote-focused Tory think-tank Onward. With influence and intellect to match, her role in shaping the Tory direction of travel in the years ahead is clear for all to see.



DEHENNA DAVISON MP
CONSERVATIVE

Age: 27

Role: N/A

Constituency: Bishop Auckland

Parliamentary contributions: 149

Majority: 7,962

Twitter followers: 39,629

The first Tory to take the County Durham seat of Bishop Auckland since it was created in 1885, Dehenna Davison has become one of the most recognisable of the Red Wall MPs. Her maiden speech, in which she gave a robust defence of "blue collar conservatism", was applauded for its authenticity, with Davison paying tribute to her father who was killed after being punched in a pub when she was a teenager.

Not afraid to hold Number 10's feet to the fire on its levelling up commitments – Davison is part of Jake Berry's Northern Research Group - she is high on the list of those likely to be promoted to a junior role in the near future. A Northern Powerhouse in the making.



ANDREW GRIFFITH MP
CONSERVATIVE

Age: 50

Role: Net Zero Business Champion

Constituency: Arundel & South Downs

Parliamentary contributions: 325

Majority: 22,521

Twitter followers: 4,208

A key part of the Prime Minister's leadership campaign team and his business advisor before winning a safe seat in 2019, it was always likely that Andrew Griffith's political ascent would not take very long to get going. Well thought of by Number 10, his pro-business credentials as the founder of the Campaign for Economic Growth and a former COO at Sky have seen him appointed as the UK's Net Zero Business Champion, tasked with mobilising the business community and positioning the UK as a global leader in climate change reduction in the run up to COP26.

Griffith has spent an active six months giving speeches up and down the country – including on a fully electric Carbon Battle Bus – and is understood to have persuaded a significant number of FTSE 100 businesses to back the UN's Race to Zero campaign. His role as the Prime Minister's point-man with business is unlikely to last forever, with a ministerial promotion a serious proposition.



RICHARD HOLDEN MP
CONSERVATIVE

Age: 36 **Role:** N/A
Constituency: North West Durham **Parliamentary contributions:** 473
Majority: 1,144 **Twitter followers:** 8,193

A former CCHQ staffer and special advisor, Holden’s win in 2019 was perhaps the biggest red wall shock of them all. A Lancashire lad, he took the rock-solid Labour seat of Durham North West with a majority of just over 1,000, becoming the first Tory ever to represent the constituency. He is smart (if not always empathetic), and has impressed as a vocal constituency MP, helping to deliver legislative change on Vehicle Excise Duty, motorhomes and scrapping business rates for public toilets.

Holden writes a regular column in *ConservativeHome*, focusing on ‘Red Wall’ issues and offering views on how voters in the North East perceive the goings-on in Westminster. He is popular amongst his peers and is often talked up for early promotion, although it’s unclear whether Number 10 share that vision.



ALICIA KEARNS MP
CONSERVATIVE

Age: 33 **Role:** PPS to the DCMS Ministerial Team
Constituency: Rutland & Melton **Parliamentary contributions:** 181
Majority: 26,924 **Twitter followers:** 14,455

Alicia Kearns has become a prominent foreign policy hawk on the Tory backbenches since her election, calling for the Government to fundamentally reassess its position on China. Gaining attention initially as a vehement critic of Huawei, she has since taken aim at Beijing’s stance on Hong Kong and its persecution of Uyghur Muslims, with a starring role in Foreign Affairs Committee sessions on these issues.

Her no-nonsense approach and civil service background mean a role at the Foreign Office is possibly on the cards at some point in the future. Closer to home, Kearns has led a high-profile and successful campaign to prevent pregnant women from having to give birth alone during the pandemic, receiving endorsements from across the political spectrum and from the Prime Minister himself.



DANNY KRUGER MP
CONSERVATIVE

Age: 46 **Role:** N/A
Constituency: Devizes **Parliamentary contributions:** 117
Majority: 23,993 **Twitter followers:** 10,516

A veteran figure on the political scene, Danny Kruger has been at the side of various Tory leaders over the past twenty years. The author of David Cameron’s infamous ‘Hug a Hoodie speech’, Kruger was also Boris Johnson’s Political Secretary before winning the safe Wiltshire seat of Devizes.

He has used his time in Parliament to focus on the need to build back better from the pandemic, publishing a report which calls for a ‘new social covenant’, setting out a vision for a future in which people are empowered to take an active role in their communities. Not as vocal as some other rising talents, Kruger, the son of Bake Off star Prue Leith, recently had to pay a fine after being filmed trying to restrain his dog Pebble who was chasing deer in Richmond Park.



LAURA TROTT MP
CONSERVATIVE

Age: 36
Constituency: Sevenoaks
Majority: 20,818

Role: PPS to the Secretary of State for Transport
Parliamentary contributions: 130
Twitter followers: N/A

Trott previously worked as an advisor on education and family policy for David Cameron and was the former PM’s chief strategic communications advisor during his brief second term. Young, well-liked and in a safe seat, she is highly thought of within Government. Given how well she knows the inside of the Number 10 machine, she could be a logical choice as one of the PM’s two junior aides at the next reshuffle.

Despite her relatively short time in Parliament, Trott has already scored a legislative win after her Private Member’s Bill to restrict access to botulinum toxin and filler cosmetic procedures for under-18s secured widespread support and became law earlier this year – a rare achievement for a PMB. She is also involved in the new China Research Group of MPs pressing the Government to take a more robust stance against China.



FLORENCE ESHALOMI MP
LABOUR

Age: 40
Constituency: Vauxhall
Majority: 19,612

Role: N/A
Parliamentary contributions: 408
Twitter followers: 25,384

Florence Eshalomi convincingly won a fierce selection battle for Kate Hoey’s old seat of Vauxhall, despite attempts by the hard left to scupper her. That popularity speaks to Eshalomi’s deep local connections, having been a Brixtonian since primary school whose first job was just down the road in the Clapham branch of Sainsbury’s. The self-described “girl from the Somerleyton Estate” went on to build her political career in Lambeth, where she was a councillor for 12 years, as well as the London Assembly Member for Lambeth and Southwark.

Eshalomi arrived in Parliament with a well-earned reputation as an effective advocate for young people, and her maiden speech was a paean for investment in youth services and positive opportunities. One of the first of the 2019 intake to be promoted to the Whips’ Office, she later resigned her role after Labour whipped its MPs to back the Government’s trade deal with the EU.



JAMES MURRAY MP
LABOUR

Age: 37
Constituency: Ealing North
Majority: 12,269

Role: Shadow Financial Secretary to the Treasury
Parliamentary contributions: 199
Twitter followers: 8,526

James Murray was always going to have a tough time living up to his predecessor, the ebullient, ex-merchant seaman Stephen Pound. And yet, in different ways, the new MP for Ealing North is already making himself a heavyweight in Westminster. He came to Parliament with serious political experience, having served as Sadiq Khan’s Deputy Mayor for Housing since 2016 and before that as the Cabinet Member for Housing at Islington Council, where he’d driven an extensive affordable homes building programme – a scheme that had ruffled feathers amongst developers who reportedly lobbied against his appointment to City Hall.

Murray spent a brief spell in the Whips’ Office before becoming Shadow Financial Secretary to the Treasury – another member of the new intake to form a part of the Shadow Treasury Team – where he is highly respected. A Labour insider says: “He’s brilliant, he’s just always on it.”

**ABENA OPPONG-ASARE MP****LABOUR**

Age: 38
Constituency: Erith & Thamesmead
Majority: 3,758

Role: Shadow Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury
Parliamentary contributions: 348
Twitter followers: 15,984

Describing herself as a “campaigner, community leader and champion of women’s equality and BAME equality”, Oppong-Asare arrived in Westminster with the reputation of someone who was going to make a difference, not just sit on the green benches. Alongside Bell Ribeiro-Addy, she is the joint first British Ghanaian to be elected to Parliament. Like all our Labour rising stars, Oppong-Asare served her time in local politics, with four years on Bexley Council where she was Deputy Leader and education spokesperson.

Since her election, her campaigning has been in the form of powerful speeches and articles on homelessness, as Chair of the influential Labour Women’s Network, and as one of the few MPs who actually ‘gets’ TikTok. Oppong-Asare is also a highly effective frontbencher, currently as Shadow Exchequer Secretary in Rachel Reeves’ Treasury team.

**SARAH OWEN MP****LABOUR**

Age: 38
Constituency: Luton North
Majority: 9,247

Role: Opposition Whip
Parliamentary contributions: 363
Twitter followers: 18,783

Resigning from the frontbench to rebel against the whip in your first 18 months is not a common choice for new MPs. But then, neither is choosing to promote that rebel back to the frontbench not long after. This unusual start shows both the integrity of Sarah Owen and the high regard that her colleagues have for her. The Luton North MP’s last-minute selection in 2019 raised some eyebrows, but with her record as the GMB’s National Political Officer and a member of Labour’s National Executive Committee, she’s always been one to watch.

Before Parliament, Owen’s career involved a stint in the London Fire Brigade, and as Sir Alan Sugar’s political adviser in the Lords. She is the first female MP of South East Asian descent, and chairs the high-profile East and South East Asians for Labour group. Owen is an effective and passionate MP... just don’t remind her about the time she stood next to the infamous Ed Stone when Ed Miliband launched it in Hastings, where she was the parliamentary candidate in 2015.

**SAM TARRY MP****LABOUR**

Age: 38
Constituency: Ilford South
Majority: 24,101

Role: Shadow Transport Minister
Parliamentary contributions: 237
Twitter followers: 21,247

Tarry is that rare thing in the Parliamentary Labour Party: a committed supporter of the Corbyn project who remains on the frontbench. As Shadow Transport Minister, he has impressed with his policy knowledge and his ability to cut through – although this is no surprise given his role before Parliament as National Political Officer for the Transport and Salaried Staff Association (TSSA) trade union.

Before his election, he had been a committed advocate for the left in the Labour Party as well as an effective campaigner – including running Corbyn’s second leadership contest triggered by the challenge from Owen Smith and other MPs in the wake of the EU referendum result. Tarry also managed to find time to be a local councillor alongside these commitments, which shows just what an effective political organiser he is – a skill that will be highly valued by his colleagues as Labour establishes what course it will follow under Sir Keir Starmer’s leadership.



DAISY COOPER MP
LIBERAL DEMOCRAT

Age: 39
Constituency: St Albans
Majority: 6,293
Role: Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats
Parliamentary contributions: 657
Twitter followers: 19,998

Cooper was one of just three English MPs to unseat a Conservative incumbent at the 2019 election. The experienced campaigner, who directed Jo Swinson’s campaign for the Lib Dem leadership last year, has since been elected Deputy Leader. Earlier in her career she was heavily involved in Hacked Off – the campaign to support victims of press abuse – and More United, a movement encouraging cross-party collaboration to create a fairer and more tolerant society.

Influential within the Liberal Democrats even before becoming Deputy, she has driven forward measures to improve the diversity of parliamentary and local councillor candidates. As education spokesperson she has taken the Government to task on free school meals, school safety, the format of exams, and education recovery – partly by tabling a prolific number of written parliamentary questions.



COLUM EASTWOOD MP
SDLP

Age: 38
Constituency: Foyle
Majority: 17,110
Role: Leader of the SDLP
Parliamentary contributions: 169
Twitter followers: 38,106

One of two SDLP MPs to enter Parliament in 2019, Colum Eastwood has led the party to electoral oblivion in Westminster and back again. The SDLP lost all three of its seats in 2017, before regaining two of them in 2019 with a surge in support as backing for the two main Northern Irish parties – the DUP and Sinn Féin – fell away. An articulate and impassioned speaker, the 37-year-old is already a seasoned politician, having become Mayor of Derry at just 27 years of age.

Highly active in Westminster, his most high-profile efforts include a campaign for an independent judicial inquiry into the murder of Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane, and more recently pushing for solutions to the UK-EU stand-off over the Northern Ireland Protocol.

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