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Ross Kempself

Ross Kempself was the Political Director of the Conservative Party and Director of the Conservative Research Department under Prime Ministers Boris Johnson and Liz Truss and three successive Conservative Party Chairmen.

As Political Director, he was the most senior policy and political official in the Conservative Party, having overall responsibility for developing the party's policy

platform, political campaigning, media position and managing a team of ten in the party's policy and research secretariat. He provided political advice directly to the Prime Minister, all Cabinet ministers and many MPs, prepared the Prime Minister for parliamentary appearances and developed the party's platform for multiple party conferences. He led work on major parliamentary by-elections including the Conservatives' victory in the 2021 Hartlepool by-election, as well as several sets of local elections.

Prior to his appointment as Conservative Party Political Director, he worked in Boris Johnson's government as a Senior Special Adviser to the Prime Minister in the No10 Policy Unit. During this time, he worked on a range of policy issues including public sector reform, where he personally led work from No10 to establish a new unit in Cabinet Office-HMT, the Evaluation Taskforce (ETF). The team works to improve the way government programmes are evaluated. A recent parliamentary question in the House of Commons established that since the founding of the ETF 18 months ago, 169 programmes worth £81.7bn have been examined by the unit. In addition, through the £15m Evaluation Accelerator Fund, the ETF has awarded 16 programmes funding in areas such as homelessness, domestic violence and drug use in prisons, to make better evidence-based interventions.

He also worked on fraud and error with the Cabinet Office, helping establish the Complex Grants Advice Panel to establish greater scrutiny of general grants spending. He continues to have a strong interest in the use of evidence and evaluation in policymaking, and in public sector fraud and error. During the pandemic he was seconded to the Cabinet Office as a Special Adviser where he worked on several key projects including the Ventilator Challenge.

During the 2019 General Election he worked in the core team that designed the 2019 Conservative Party manifesto, managing the political process. He also helped author the manifesto including writing sections on public sector reform, securing the commitment: 'We will improve the use of data, data science and evidence in the process of government.'

He has been a Senior Fellow at the Policy Exchange think tank where he oversaw work on a landmark project studying Whitehall reform.

Prior to entering politics, he worked as a print and broadcast journalist, reporting for titles including The Times and the Daily Mail. As the Special Correspondent for Times Radio, he helped launch the political coverage for a new national radio station. He continues to have a strong interest in broadcast media.

He studied at the University of Cambridge and graduated with a double first.

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Charlotte Owen

Charlotte is a former Special Adviser to two Conservative Prime Ministers. She has worked for the Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP for over five years. Charlotte has previously worked for and advised two other Ministers including the Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP and the Rt Hon Sir Jake Berry MP.

The Prime Minister entrusted Charlotte with engaging the parliamentary party on his behalf and she was essential to maintaining his relationship with them. Charlotte ran the MP engagement strategy and quickly built strong relationships across the whole of the Parliamentary Conservative Party. This work meant Charlotte was later tasked with helping the new Chief Whip, the Rt Hon Chris Heaton-Harris MP in his role and used her unique knowledge to become a bridge between the Prime Minister and the Chief Whip to rebuild the relationship between the Government Whips Office and No10.

Charlotte led on many sensitive and key projects including advising the Prime Minister and the Chief Whip on suitability for Ministerial appointments during the reshuffle. When Mr Johnson left No 10, Charlotte was asked to stay on to assist the new Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP.

She is the first generation in her family to attend university and is passionate about mentoring young people in politics; tackling gender inequality with a focus on advocating for young women who have fallen victim to image based sexual abuse, as well as work around preventing sexual violence in conflict.

The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

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The Rt Hon Chris Heaton Harris MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

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