

Dstl careers: Louise, scientist

The science for defence and security starts at Dstl with hundreds of projects underway in a myriad of areas, including important innovations for the British armed forces on land, sea and air. Dstl's world-leading experts also work in areas to support UK security, policing and counter-terrorism.

Louise Bonati is a scientist who works in a small specialised project team. Their work seeks to strengthen existing position, navigation, and timing methods, through the evaluation of related equipment by conducting practical trials and data analysis. For example, their work includes adding to the resilience of GPS availability and seeking out alternative navigation methods to complement GPS.

Our team researches alternative position, navigation, and timing methods, similarly evaluating their effectiveness, but also to explore alternatives for satellite navigation.

This information is fed forward, to allow a continual understanding to be achieved across MOD and Dstl about the requirements and how the information shapes the future focus of the work.

Louise completed a BSc degree in Psychology in 2018 and graduated in the September, heavily pregnant with her daughter. She spent the next 2 years (and another child later, a son this time) researching the careers where she could apply her newly acquired skills.

I have always had an interest in the Defence and Science area, as my Father worked in in Defence also. When I saw Dstl's graduate roles advertised, I knew my degree could be transferred to any role, I just needed to approach Dstl to check if this was possible.

The response was really encouraging, so I applied for every graduate role advertised and I was hugely fortunate to be considered for an interview for my current role. I had the most comfortable and encouraging interview and was thrilled to be offered a Graduate Scientist position.

Many employees at Dstl say they value how supportive and encouraging the organisation is, its work life balance and the priority it gives to supporting equality and diversity.

Dstl has made me feel valued, encouraging me to carve out a career that is focused around what I enjoy and want to engage in, whilst allowing me to work flexibly, which still gives me time to nurture my family as well as work fulltime.

I love the people I have encountered, the support, the diversity of knowledge and skills, the better understanding I am gaining of the military, the variety of work, the comprehensive training, and the fact that my role allows me to learn every single day. I feel enormous gratitude to be able to work for an organisation that facilitates such job satisfaction.

More recently Louise took to the air with the RAF, on board a Hercules transport aircraft, to gather vital data linked to GPS. Flying to the Hebrides off the west coast of Scotland the task was to investigate the impact on GPS jamming signals and how science could mitigate this.

This was a hugely exciting day and I felt very grateful for the opportunity to experience a live experiment, but also gain an understanding of a typical flying day with the RAF.

I was able to ask questions directly to the crew to gain further knowledge about the RAF, the life and training of a pilot, and how the work of Dstl directly affects and impacts their work.

The RAF were hugely welcoming and accommodating. We experienced flying with the tail-ramp of the plane down as we flew at low level over the sea, safely harnessed to the plane. We sat at the very end of the ramp and took in the view.

It was an incredible event and one I shall never forget for the whole of my life.

Dstl is a workplace that facilitates building a career and allows for individuals to change direction and to other areas of science.

However small your contribution, you are still an integral part of the team and Dstl.

There are many more reasons that I would recommend Dstl, such as its fantastic ongoing training and development opportunities, and the fact that your work can be very varied.

The diversity of skills means there are always new ideas from a different perspective and the opportunity to learn from others, and the opportunity to form cohesive working relationships across Dstl and other organisations to achieve a shared goal.