

Honorary fellowship for Dstl menopause awareness advocate

Nicola, who is a senior principal systems consultant in Exploration Division, has been awarded an Honorary Fellowship at the University of Winchester for her actions as a passionate advocate for menopause awareness at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl).

Inspired by her own personal experience, Nicola has become a champion for menopause awareness amongst staff at Dstl. It was for this, and her broader commitment to diversity and inclusion, that she received the accolade.

The Honorary Fellowship is awarded to someone that embodies the University's qualities and values and is a role model for their students.

Nicola said:

Having gone through a painful early menopause I couldn't quite believe that there wasn't more information out there about it.

It seemed so strange that there wasn't an open conversation about something that is likely to impact so many of us, some in a profound way.

It made me determined to make sure we have an environment at Dstl where people feel able to talk openly about the menopause and are supported.

Working with other colleagues, Nicola formed groups where anyone affected by the menopause could come for support and to connect with others. She started Menopause Café events to encourage people to share lived experiences and for supporters to come together and she continues to raise awareness of the menopause, for example with blogs and events. The groups now have over 150 members and around 140 people joined a recent online event with an external menopause expert.

Ed Rothead, who works for Dstl and is a Governor at the University of Winchester, nominated Nicola for the the prestigious award.

Nicola added:

I'm really proud of the progress we've made. We're seeing more and more people coming forward to learn about the menopause, to share their experiences and to normalise the conversation. And to receive an Honorary Fellowship, well I feel really honoured and humbled – for once, I am speechless!

Linda Knutsen, Dstl's Exploration Division Head, joined Nicola at the graduation ceremony. She said:

My heartfelt congratulations go out to Nicola on this fantastic achievement. I'm so pleased that her passion and dedication to improving the experience of colleagues has been recognised in this way.

I'm fully supportive of her efforts – it's so important that we continue to raise awareness of the menopause and break down the stigma that can surround it.

Find out more about [working at Dstl](#).