

Meet Dstl's outstanding apprentice

Annabel Nash, 21, is working for Cyber and Information Systems (CIS) at the organisation where her dad Stuart, a senior principal adviser, and her mum, Kerri, a commercial manager, first met.

She credits her parents' passion for their jobs and their positive stories about the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) for piquing her interest in the organisation and encouraging her to apply for the role she started 18 months ago.

Her other links with defence include a sister who works for BAE plus a boyfriend and a grandfather in the armed forces.

Annabel, from Drayton, Portsmouth, said:

I came from doing my A-Levels and I didn't really know what I wanted to do.

I read the advert for the apprenticeship and looking at the qualities and job description it fitted me quite well. I feel like I had the correct attributes for the job.

Obviously as an apprenticeship it was good as I would learn all those skills and also learn on the job, and earn money as well so that was really attractive.

I think apprenticeships nowadays should be pushed out more for schools and colleges because I think they are amazing.

What I've been able to achieve through the apprenticeship has been really good and launched my career at an incredible place.

The People Inside: Annabel Nash

Annabel works for the world-class science facility through the apprenticeship scheme run by Solent University.

She won the Outstanding Apprentice of the Year gong from the university after setting up a network to support the mental wellbeing of fellow students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This was an online group, with regular catch-ups, enabling everyone from the course to share experiences and support each other with the challenges of studying and of learning during a pandemic.

Judges also praised her determined and proactive approach to her work and her desire to continuously improve.

She said:

I feel really proud to be part of an organisation like Dstl because I think the work we do here is amazing. Even in the short amount of time I have been here some of the work I have seen produced is beyond my imagination.

Everyone here is so nice and friendly. I get on well with everyone on the team and they are all really supportive and understanding. I am proud that I have been able to quickly adapt to a professional environment.

Winning Solent's Outstanding Apprentice of Year was amazing. I was shocked, I was obviously so happy. It really solidified to myself that what I was doing is good. I am extremely proud to have already started progressing in my career.

She went on to say she loves her current role and aspires to be a project manager with the organisation and has already been promoted.

As my parents both work in the organisation they understand what I do. It does create conversation and we can talk about it at the dinner table.

Some of my friends don't really understand what I do. You go to work then you come back and they ask 'what do you do?'

You do feel quite funny when you have to explain to your friends you can't tell them what you are working on. They accept it and go along with that and know that some of the work at Dstl is secret.

Working at Dstl is not Annabel's first experience of performing at a world-class level as in her free time she has been a national and world dance champion.