

In conversation with our digital apprentices, Donna and Tom

This week is [National Apprenticeship Week](#) – an annual celebration of apprentices around the country. To mark the occasion, Donna and Tom share their experience of completing a digital degree whilst working at DVLA.



Who are you and how long have you worked at DVLA?

Donna: My name is Donna and I'm a Lead Security Operations Centre (SOC) Specialist at DVLA. I've worked at the agency since I was 17, joining as a Contact Centre Advisor and progressing into cyber security in 2017.

Tom: My name is Tom and I'm a Senior SOC Specialist at DVLA. I've worked at DVLA for 7 years, with 5 of those on my current team within cyber security.

How did you begin your digital degree whilst working at DVLA?

Donna: When I found out that the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) was launching computing degrees in partnership with the Welsh

Government, I was keen to learn more. The Computer Networks and Cyber Security degree perfectly complimented my role at DVLA.

As I had previously completed an apprenticeship, I understood that this would be a big commitment and would take a lot of work on my part.

We were the first cohort so it was a completely new experience. The apprenticeship required us to attend university one day a week, and we had access to training resources such as Udemy which allowed us to complete additional learning.

Tom: During my first year on the Cyber Security team, I became aware of an opportunity to join the Digital Degree Apprenticeship Scheme with UWTSD. I put in an expression of interest to my managers and was successful in gaining a place. I began my digital degree in September 2018, and it took me 4 years to complete.

I found it challenging to study alongside work, however DVLA allowed me one day a week to attend university lectures, which was a big help.

What have you learned throughout your degree?

Donna: The degree was a great opportunity to build on my existing knowledge and learn new disciplines. Whilst I had existing knowledge of cyber security, the course also included a number of computer networks modules which I thoroughly enjoyed.

A lot of work in the final year focused on device configuration. Due to restrictions, we were tasked with using simulated labs rather than real-life hardware. I embraced the change and really enjoyed the challenge of using simulated labs. This experience enabled me to learn even more skills, and the university provided us with additional resources to support us.

Tom: The flexibility of the degree allowed me to explore modules that I had a keen interest in. With the support of my managers, I was able to pursue areas that allowed me to build a strong skillset beneficial to myself and my team, whilst making my experience on the degree enjoyable.

Not only did I expand my knowledge in the field of cyber security, but I also enhanced my soft skills. I remained focused by keeping my eye on the final goal and made sure to plan my days efficiently, whilst still making time for my personal life. This is a technique I now use in my day-to-day life to self-motivate whenever faced with challenges.

How has the degree assisted your career progression?

Donna: The knowledge I've gained throughout the degree has assisted my overall understanding of the agency's network and has improved the advice and guidance I give. I'm able to identify training opportunities for team members to further enhance ways of working and strengthen our team capability.

Tom: Throughout the degree, I've been fortunate to achieve 2 promotions. The ability to discuss topics I've worked on throughout my course has given me an extra skillset that I'm able to bring forward in applications and interviews.

Due to the variety of topics covered, I've been able to explore many related areas of study alongside my main role and bring new ideas into my work.

What have you enjoyed most about your experience?

Donna: I enjoyed meeting new people from other companies with varying levels of experience in the topics we covered. It was great to share ideas and support each other throughout the 4 years.

Tom: I've enjoyed learning new skills that apply directly to my work as it has built my confidence and strengthened my abilities. On a personal level, overcoming competing demands in my life whilst still being able to succeed has given me a great sense of achievement.

What advice would you give to someone thinking of starting a digital degree?

Donna: Unlike traditional learning, a digital degree apprenticeship lets you use your skills in the real world as you're learning. You can develop at a faster pace and it gives you real context to what you've learned. The best advice I could give to anyone starting a digital degree apprenticeship is to make sure you manage your time between work, home life, and university.

Tom: I think a digital degree apprenticeship is a great option for those looking for a less traditional approach to study. By completing the course alongside work, you're able to support yourself whilst working towards your development and growing the abilities of your team with your new skillset.

Take a look at our apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are a great way to develop and nurture new talent. Our Centre of Digital Excellence development programmes are based on this principle and combine learning opportunities alongside 'real world' work experience.

[Explore what DVLA's development programmes have to offer](#) and [sign up to Civil Service Jobs for future opportunities](#).

[Adblock test \(Why?\)](#)

[Latest step of borehole sealing](#)

project a success

Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) has successfully sealed existing boreholes at Rosemanowes Quarry, Cornwall, as part of a vital research project for the safe and permanent disposal of higher activity radioactive waste.

In the search for a suitable site for a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF), drilling and sealing boreholes will be key. The GDF developer, NWS, is conducting a £5M+ project to investigate and demonstrate to regulators its approach for deep borehole sealing.

A GDF will make a major contribution to the environment by safely and finally disposing of waste which otherwise would have to be stored and maintained for thousands of years above ground.

The UK search for a suitable site is a nationwide process based on community consent and includes detailed investigations over a number of years. Community Partnerships, which have formed in Mid Copeland, South Copeland, and Allerdale in Cumbria, and Theddlethorpe in Lincolnshire, are engaging in a dialogue with local people to ensure they have access to information about what hosting a GDF might mean.

During the process of exploring if a site is suitable to host a GDF deep boreholes will be drilled to investigate the geology of the location. NWS will then need to seal these boreholes as part of the site restoration programme to minimise impact on the environment.

The initiative is part of the wide-ranging research and development (R&D) programme that will support construction of a safe and secure GDF deep underground.

Prof Simon Norris, Principal Research Manager at Nuclear Waste Services and project technical lead, said:

“The aim of this research project is to demonstrate the process we plan to use for sealing deep boreholes during future investigations into potential sites for a geological disposal facility.

“We want to show that we have the necessary toolkit of approaches, procedures, and equipment to seal any boreholes we may construct in the GDF siting process, and this research was a step closer to achieving this goal.”

The latest phase of this project was carried out at the Borehole Test Facility at Rosemanowes quarry in Cornwall. The site, formerly a working quarry, now offers access to one of the most comprehensively mapped well systems in the world.

Two pre-existing boreholes in granite, one 2km deep and the other 300m deep, were successfully sealed using an innovative technology called a Downhole Placement System (DPS) tool.

Bentonite clay was used as sealant because of its low permeability and swelling properties, with cement being used for seal support. Commonly found world-wide and used in international waste management programmes, bentonite will also be packed around some GDF waste packages as part of the engineered barrier system that will isolate and contain disposed waste in the UK Geological Disposal Facility.

The DPS tool is being tested in different locations with varying rock types and at varying borehole depths. The first successful test was in Sweden in 2018 in a 200m borehole, followed by a 300m borehole in clay in Harwell, Oxfordshire.

The UK search for a suitable site is a nationwide process based on community consent and includes detailed investigations over a number of years to ensure a GDF can be constructed safely and securely.

[Learn about geological disposal.](#)

Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative conference 2022: Foreign Secretary's speech

Conflict-related sexual violence is morally abhorrent, it is illegal, and yet it is still happening all around the world.

We naturally and rightly feel revulsion at the idea of chemical or biological attacks in war. And With our conventions and treaties – and the power of world opinion – those weapons signal a huge escalation and demand an international response.

Sexual violence in conflict is equally immoral. It is a clear breach of international law, and should be a line that is never crossed.

The very threat of rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war, or as part of its aftermath, should bring immediate international condemnation, and swift action to deter those attacks before they occur.

Today, we stand in solidarity with survivors, determined to bring justice.

And today I want to send an unequivocal message to those who order, allow or perpetrate sexual violence against women and girls: it isn't combat; it isn't strength; it is cowardice. We will not rest in our efforts to protect those potential victims, and prosecute the perpetrators.

I am honoured to be able to hand over to one of our most powerful advocates

and campaigners: Nobel Laureate Nadia Murad.

Thank you so very much. In our panel discussion we will consider whether the current response is effective; how we, as an international community, can do better; and how we turn talk today into action tomorrow.

Despite our collective efforts, the tragic reality is that sexual violence is occurring in at least 18 active conflicts today and it is clear that we need a stronger global response. We need to make a lot more noise.

Now There are some small causes of optimism. We can see that our work does make a difference. We have just heard from Angelina on the progress of the last decade, however it is clear that this is a marathon, not a sprint. And we have so much more yet to do.

Because all the time, more lives are wrecked, communities broken, by sexual violence. So today I am launching the [UK's 3-year strategy to escalate the global response](#).

I'm putting a total of £12.5 million of new funding into ambitious programmes, sharpening our analysis, building capacity for prosecutions, and ensuring that survivors know the routes to justice.

Our ACT for Survivors initiative will use £8.6 million of that over 3 years, to increase the number of successful prosecutions.

As part of this, we will continue our support to the [Global Survivors Fund](#) with £5.15 million for the next 3 years.

In the 10 years of this initiative, we have learned that the key to success is putting survivors at the heart of all of our policies, so we are urging states to review their programmes and embed the [Murad Code](#).

We are using the code to develop new partnerships between the UK and International Criminal Court, deploying cutting-edge technology to help safeguard survivors throughout the justice process.

And today, I am launching the Platform for Action Promoting the Rights and Wellbeing for Children Born of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence. This framework for commitments will confront stigma, and build futures: a crucial step in the longer journey.

I am also announcing separate funding to tackle Gender Based Violence in Ukraine: £3.45 million for the UN Population Fund, on top of our £2.5 million to prosecute atrocities.

As part of the overall fund, I am committing £1.8 million over 3 years for projects in priority countries, including Iraq, South Sudan, Colombia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In recent years, this kind of funding has made a real difference. In Bosnia and Herzegovina we supported changes in the law to recognise children born of wartime rape as civilian victims – providing them with important legal

protections. We're now building a global coalition of countries to protect other children in the same situation.

We have increased judicial support for reparations in Iraq, and funded legal support to men in Colombia who have survived conflict-related sexual violence, paving the way for men and boys to be recognised as survivors too.

In Kenya, Ghana and Zambia, we have run a gender-based violence course for Police Officers. And In Somalia we are training peacekeepers.

In total, we have deployed a UK team of experts over 90 times to build the capacity of governments, the UN and NGOs.

Our Women, Peace and Security programmes work hand-in-glove with our experts in conflict and conflict-threatened areas.

Our ultimate aim is of course to prevent these atrocities from happening in the first place. On the heels of our successful research programme, we are launching a new report today on what works to prevent violence, providing compelling evidence that sexual violence is not inevitable in conflict.

What we need now is greater ambition and stronger resolve from all countries. The work that many of you do is tough, and I'm in awe, genuine awe, of your fortitude, your perseverance. But we need more ambition from governments, to do more, do it better, and do it together.

States have been signing up to a political declaration, to launch here at the Conference, setting out that ambition, and our collective abhorrence of sexual violence in conflict.

We agree to strengthen the data behind what works; address the underlying cause of gender inequality; remove the stigma; strengthen laws to prosecute perpetrators; and ensure sexual survivor-centred support.

The UK is using all the levers at our disposal to prevent Conflict Related Sexual Violence and to ensure that perpetrators are held to account.

Throughout 2022 the UK has actively used sanctions to tackle serious human rights violations and abuses around the world. Most recently, following Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, our sanctioning of over 1,200 individuals including members of the Russian military responsible for atrocities, and in Iran we have used our sanctions to target the officials responsible for heinous human rights violations.

I can announce that in December we will be using sanctions to specifically address the abhorrent crimes of sexual violence.

We have to face this as an international united community, led by the survivors.

Because the scale of suffering is unacceptable. Sexual violence is not inevitable. It will not be tolerated.

Vehicle salvage merger reduces choice and may limit access to salvage vehicles for green parts

Copart and Hills Motors both supply vehicle salvage services. This involves collecting damaged vehicles from customers, including the insurance industry, finance companies and rental car companies, and then managing the onward sale, dismantling or scrapping of the vehicle.

Copart is currently the largest supplier of salvage vehicles in the UK, including those that can be used to recover green parts. Hills Motors has an in-house dismantling service and is an important supplier of green parts.

The Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) Phase 1 investigation has found that Copart and Hills Motors were among a few in the business with national contracts for salvage services and they competed for the same contracts. The CMA therefore found that Copart and Hills Motors are close competitors, and the transaction could lead to a loss of competition in the supply of salvage services and salvage vehicles.

The CMA also considered the effect of the transaction on the supply of green parts. Copart previously had no dismantling capability but was one of the largest suppliers of cars to dismantling businesses. Since acquiring Hills Motors, Copart could decide to restrict the number of salvage vehicles with reusable parts available on its auction platform and instead have Hills Motors dismantle them. This could restrict rival dismantling businesses' access to salvage vehicles.

The CMA is therefore concerned that the loss of rivalry between the companies could lead to higher prices and reduced choice for customers of salvage services and reduce competition in the supply of green parts in the UK.

Sorcha O'Carroll, Senior Director of Mergers at the CMA, said:

It is important that salvage and green parts services remain competitive so that the many businesses in the UK that rely on them benefit from lower prices and higher quality services.

Our investigation showed that Copart's purchase of Hills Motors takes out an important player in the vehicle salvage services industry and that few competitors would be left in the market. The transaction could also make it more difficult for green parts suppliers to purchase the vehicles they need, which would reduce competition in that market.

We will move to an in-depth investigation unless the companies can address our concerns.

Copart has 5 working days to submit proposals to address the CMA's competition concerns. The CMA would then have a further 5 working days to consider whether to accept these in principle instead of referring the case to a Phase 2 investigation.

For more information, visit the [Copart / Hills Motors case page](#).

1. All media enquiries should be directed to the CMA press office by email on press@cma.gov.uk, or by phone on 020 3738 6460.
2. 'Copart' refers to Copart, Inc. and 'Hills Motors' refers to Green Parts Specialist Holdings Ltd.

[New measures to improve access to dental care](#)

- All NHS dentists to receive fairer payments for providing more complex dental care to those who need it most
- Dentists will be required to update NHS website regularly to make it clear which practices are taking on new patients and the services available, improving access
- This will ensure the system better supports all dentists and their teams while also providing better value for money dental care for patients.

A new package of measures to improve patient access to dental care has been introduced by the government.

From today, NHS dentists will receive fairer payments for delivering complex dental care to incentivise practices to take on high needs patients who require treatment the most.

Previously dentists would receive the same payments for all treatments delivered within band two, which includes fillings and tooth extractions, regardless of the amount of time taken to deliver the work. For example, they would receive the same payment for one filling as three fillings.

This meant dentists may not have been able to afford to take on patients who had not seen a dentist for an extended period who require more extensive treatment as a result.

The contract changes, which come into force today, will provide fairer payments to dentists by taking into account the time taken to do the work, incentivising practices to provide the care needed for patients with complex and high needs.

Health Minister Neil O'Brien said:

I am determined to make sure everybody seeking NHS dental care can receive it when they need it.

Our new contract rewards dentists more fairly for taking on high needs patients and delivering treatments to those who need it most.

It will not solve all the problems overnight, but it will help improve access and ensure the system supports dentists and their teams.

The new contract will also require dental practices to regularly update information on the 'Find a Dentist' tool on the NHS website, ensuring it accurately reflects available services. This will help patients to locate practices taking on new patients and access the treatments they need quickly.

This government is also introducing legislation which will provide the General Dental Council (GDC) with greater flexibility to amend its international registration processes for overseas qualified dentists. This will pave the way for additional exams places and enable the GDC to recognise and accept more qualifications for dentists and dental care professionals who want to work in the UK and support a reduction in unnecessary delays.

Louise Ansari, national director of Healthwatch England said:

Thousands of people have spoken up about their struggles accessing an NHS dentist over the last few years, telling us about dental practices in many regions either closing down or not accepting new NHS patients. This announcement shows the power of their voices, with government listening and taking action.

The changes should help people find clear and up to date information on dentists taking on new NHS patients. While people with more complex dental problems will find it easier to access care because of the shift in how the NHS pays dentists. Ultimately, we hope these combined measures will help to reduce long waiting times, the extended periods of pain many people suffer and prevent the extreme cases of DIY dentistry we have seen.

These changes are a good start and when put into practice can help ensure dental care that is accessible and affordable to everyone who needs it.