

I got a degree in Economics from the University of Birmingham. And after graduating I travelled round Africa for a year...

...before returning to the UK and taking a position on a graduate training programme with a management consultancy. I worked in the UK for three years, and then moved to work for the consultancy in Kuala Lumpur.

I loved the international life, but I was tired of working for a large corporation and wanted to move into public service. That's when I applied to SIS. The idea of contributing to the safety and security of the UK appealed to me.

My first role was as a targeter in the counter-terrorism team. I really enjoyed the team-work, the excitement of finding a suitable lead and the scope to be creative in developing new operations. It was a great role but after 3 years I decided I wanted a new challenge...

So I trained to become an agent runner – someone who recruits and runs agents. In this role I worked in counter-proliferation for two years. It was daunting at first, but it gave me the opportunity to travel overseas, meet existing agents and develop new contacts.

After this I got the chance to go to South America for three years. I'd never learned a language before, but the Service gave me time to develop my Spanish to a high level before I went. Living and working overseas was hugely satisfying; it really felt like I was at the sharp end. I was married by this time and after my posting I went on maternity leave for a year.

When I joined, the range of different roles available in the Service was an attraction. It seemed like a career that could work for me in both the short and long term. And it certainly has – now, I'm back in London with my family, working part-time and enjoying the job as much as ever.