

#Mondaymotivation: Sophie Dawes (Class of 2008)



At the age of 15, alumna Sophie Dawes knew she wanted to join the Army. At 16 she had secured her place within the forces. After postings to Afghanistan and Germany amongst others, she now works within the Army's training and education service.

What did you go on to do after leaving Putney?

Before starting my year of training at Sandhurst to become an officer in the Army, I studied Business Management at Newcastle University.

What happened after your year at Sandhurst?

My first 'posting' was to a base in Germany where I provided HR and administrative support to an Army regiment. This posting also involved a deployment to Canada and a six-month tour to Afghanistan. My subsequent roles have been within the Army's training and education service, although they have been mostly UK-based, I have worked in Brunei and Uganda.

What does a working day look like for you?

Naturally, it varies, however, contrary to popular belief I do actually do a reasonable amount of work in an office or classroom within fairly normal working hours. Being an Army officer is quite different to what you might imagine, and my nights of sleeping in a field in a trench are mostly over, fortunately! My role is much more about leadership, management, analysis and decision-making. Physical training is a regular feature as we are all expected to keep fit, regardless of our specific role.

When did you decide you wanted to go into the Army?

I was about 15 when I got the inspiration to join the army. My older sister had a friend who was going to join and he introduced me to the idea of the benefits that an Army career can bring. I managed to do a week's 'Look at life in the Army' course for work experience in the summer of Year 10. Following that, I applied for a bursary and completed interviews along with a series of assessments to gain a place to train at Sandhurst.

What do you find challenging about your role?

In some of my postings, I have been the only girl and at times I have found that quite tough. Saying that, Putney encouraged me to be independent and have courage in my own convictions, which has helped with this. Additionally, the wide range of extra-curricular activities I did at Putney and Newcastle has opened doors, for example I have represented the Army golf team!

What advice would you give to students and alumnae who perhaps haven't considered a career in the Army?

There are a lot of myths around joining the Army, but it has enabled me to see things that I could never have learnt in a book. The Army is a fantastic employer and offers a lot of opportunities in lots of different roles. You can work within your particular vocation - doctor, dentist etc. - or you can complete training within the Army itself. On top of that, the Army offers unique roles, for example you can train to become a dog handler!

As an employer, the Army gives a lot of responsibility early on so your experience and potential career might be a lot different to how you might initially imagine. There are also opportunities for you to enhance your career, and they encourage you to develop.

The jobs are a good springboard for your career. I was drawn to the adventure, sport and activities the Army can provide, not to mention the fantastic travel opportunities!