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Meet the woman SOC-ing it to 'em

Thinking you'll be a CSI but ending up devising, building, leading and growing a world-wide Security Operations Centre (SOC) isn't a career route many expect. But that's just what happened to Head of Security Operations, Jess Hall.

Categories [Cyber Security Strategy](#), [Cyber Resilience](#), [Security Operations](#)

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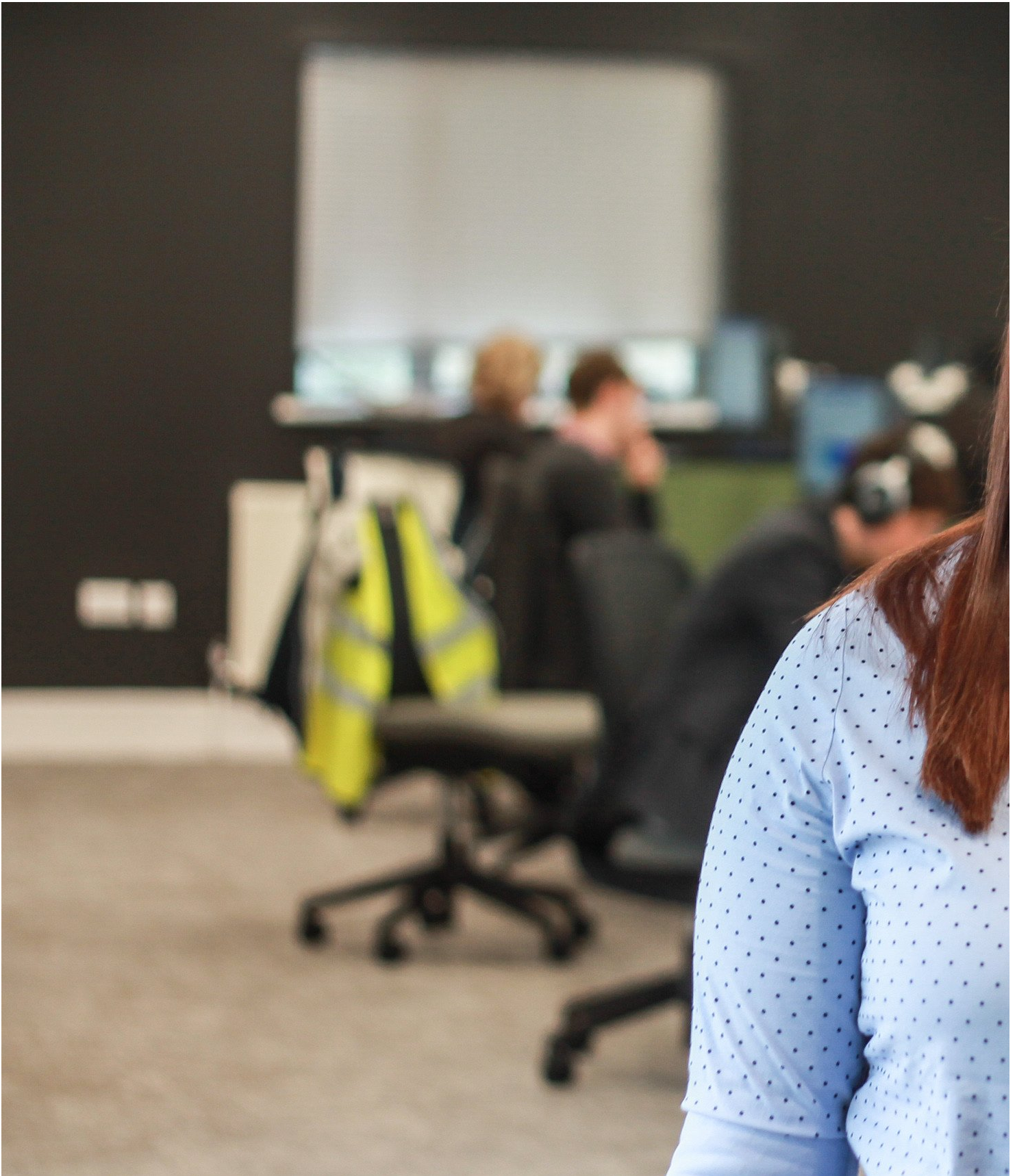


[Jessica Hall](#)

Head of Security Operations

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After discovering that actual forensics involves a lot of blood – and the possibility of happening upon a severed body part – [Jess](#) needed to find something that combined her love of investigating, finding clues and solving riddles, with her love of IT.

She completed a Digital Forensics degree – one of only 10 available in the UK at the time – then joined Waterstones as a graduate in the still-in-development cyber security team.

From joining in 2018 as a 22-year-old, Jess is now Head of [Security Operations](#), managing a team of 16 people globally, and protecting the assets of countless organisations across the world, 24/7.

"I didn't wait long before sharing my idea - within my first week I approached the department lead to express an interest in security monitoring, then three months later a client asked for it. Within six months of joining, I had helped to design and build a security helpdesk for Waterstones, expanding to a fully accredited, 24/7 global operation in 2021."

The worldwide team monitors business systems around the clock to detect and neutralise any active cyber security threats. This could be anything from malware and phishing, to the nefarious use of Internet of Things devices.

"The cyber industry has grown phenomenally fast to keep up with the wider digital world; and that's what makes it so exciting. Threat actors are constantly working on the latest trends and technologies to identify vulnerabilities and how they can be exploited, so we need to work twice as hard to pre-empt them, understand them and stop them. We really are on the front line of cybercrime fighting and there's nowhere I'd rather be."

Of the 17-strong SOC team, Jess is the only female and is passionate about encouraging more young people to learn about careers in cyber security, and how it should start in schools.

"I didn't know fighting cyber crime was a career option, and as the digital and technological world expands, the need for experts will only increase. Yet cyber security still isn't a core part of the National Curriculum, or encouraged as a direct career route. Although it is comforting to see the National Cyber Security Centre working alongside schools to create the CyberFirst programme, aligning education with cyber experts like Waterstons.

"By inspiring young people at an early age, we hope to see the current shortage of cyber security professionals reduce in years to come, as well as nurture the skills needed.

"Organisation, stress management, critical thinking and problem solving are all traits that don't require cyber security knowledge, and can make a huge difference to managing the impact of an attack. Everything else can be taught and inspired with the right leaders.

"People on my journey told me I can, and now I'm telling – and showing – others they can too. But what's more, my team are too."

Want to learn more about cyber security for your business? Interested in a career in cyber security? Have any questions for Jess on what it's like to be a woman in a mainly male industry? Get in touch at jessica.hall@waterstons.com