

## Inspiring a younger generation into STEM and the Aviation Industry

**Our goal:** Inspiring young people to explore careers in STEM and aviation, to support and encourage their future career choices.

**How can you help?** By sharing your story

Name & job role:	Anna Vereker, Human Factors Programme Specialist (and Aviation/ Occupational Psychologist by training)
What did you enjoy doing when you were younger?	Reading (anything and everything). But I also had a wide variety of other interests in the arts and outdoors, although I wasn't very sporty. My Dad was a pilot and my Mum also had a PPL for a while, but I was never attracted to flying myself.
What were your favourite subjects in school? Why?	English; probably because I had some ability and found writing essays much easier than number crunching in mathematics. I did take a broad variety of subjects at Bursary though (the equivalent of A-levels in NZ); English, NZ History, Classics, Biology and Mathematics with Statistics.
What or who inspired you to study these?	My Grandmother was a keen learner and completed two Masters degrees in languages after the youngest of her seven children when to school. She always encouraged me to keep learning. This was balanced with the need to 'keep my options open' because I wasn't sure what I wanted to do after school.
Did you do work experience? Where and did it help in choosing your career path?	After high school I completed a 'GAP' year and worked in a school for disabled children in Dorset. I also travelled abroad by myself which was a huge learning experience at age 18/19. Later I worked in supermarkets, cinemas, a child care centre, a rest-home, an electronics store and for Vodafone in both retail and phone customer services to earn money while I studied. All these jobs taught me different and useful skills. I also worked for free at a Psychology Consulting firm during the later part of my degree, and this experience was enormously useful.
What was your first job?	I worked in a stationary and video-hire store after school and at weekends in my last year of school.
How did you arrive where you are in your career?	In my third year of university I took an 'Organisational Psychology' paper and loved it. To work in that field I



	<p>needed a Masters, so I spent another three years getting that (I had to do an extra undergraduate year to do a 'research methods' paper, but it was a great opportunity to take some other papers just for fun).</p> <p>Once I graduated I looked around for jobs that would allow me to register as a psychologist (which involved more on-the-job training and supervision).</p> <p>I applied for the Royal New Zealand Air Force but wasn't successful, and instead worked in Selection for NZ Police for two years.</p> <p>I applied to the RNZAF again and was successful. I had a period of just over a year completing my Psychology Registration and served all over NZ and abroad as a Psychology Officer. This role had a huge breadth of work across a lot of military tasks and stood me in great stead for the rest of my career.</p> <p>After seven years I wanted a new challenge and was interested in human factors psychology and in living abroad, so won a role with the NATS human factors team in Scotland. This was more 'hands-on' human factors work which was great, but I wanted to move south to England. I won my current role with the CAA and have now been here 2.5 years.</p>
<p>What do you love about your current job?</p>	<p>It is varied and there are lots of opportunities for all sorts of different activities, dealing with a wide range of people, and some travel to interesting places.</p>
<p>What were the biggest challenges/barriers you had to overcome?</p>	<p>My initial military training was tough, and the course has a way to challenge everyone. But I made it through with a lot of hard work and it has been so useful for other challenging things in my career. Sometimes being a woman in a predominantly male industry has been a challenge, and I think my military training helped with being able to put view points across and being confident in my own abilities.</p>
<p>Who have you looked up to and why?</p>	<p>Dr Mica Endsley; she is a talented human factors Engineer who served as the Chief Scientist for the USAF while raising a daughter. She invented the term 'situation awareness' and conducted ground-breaking research in this area. Most people assume she is male because many of the lead researchers in human factors have more commonly been men.</p>
<p>What is your ambition?</p>	<p>To keep doing work that I enjoy, and that contributes positively to the way that people do work. At the moment I work in Aviation so ensuring safe travel for the public is an overarching aim, but this would be similar if I worked in another industry such as rail or maritime human factors.</p>

<p>What is the best advice you were given?</p>	<p>‘Keep going’ from my military training, and ‘Nothing lasts forever’ from my Yoga teacher, (usually when trying to get us to hold a challenging pose). There will always be challenges, and if you keep working at it you’ll get there.</p>
<p>What advice would you give a younger you?</p>	<p>Spend more time looking after your own wellbeing, because no organisation you work for will care as much about it as you should. Make sure you have a balance between work and life, and keep looking for new opportunities to challenge yourself.</p>

Any additional comments:



(This is quite an old picture now – from 2009; but is one of my favourites from a Military trip to Antarctica).

Thank you for sharing your journey.