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# Cyber Specialist Development Programme

GCHQ

**Apply before 11:55 pm on Monday 10th February 2025**



### Reference number

386186

### Salary

£25,856

with promotion opportunities at 18 months, increasing to £34,663 after interview and assessment

A Civil Service Pension with an employer contribution of 28.97%

**Job grade**

Administrative Officer

**Contract type**

Permanent

**Business area**

GCHQ is an intelligence, cyber and security agency with a mission to keep the UK safe. We use cutting-edge technology, ingenuity and partnerships to identify, analyse and disrupt threats. Working with our intelligence partners, MI5 and M

**Type of role**

Other

**Working pattern**

Flexible working, Full-time

**Number of jobs available**

1

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# Location

Lancaster

# About the job

## Job summary

On our new Cyber Specialist Development Programme, you'll receive all the training, support, and experience needed to launch a rewarding career in cyber security. Are you fascinated by technology? Do you have a passion for problem-solving? You don't need any previous tech experience or formal STEM qualifications to join this programme. Whether you're finishing school, leaving university, or looking to change careers, bring your enthusiasm, aptitude for technology, and willingness to learn to GCHQ. This programme will help you develop the skills and knowledge needed to join our Computer Network Exploitation (CNE) team and help keep the UK safe.

You'll undertake a dedicated 18-month development programme, based at a designated place of study in Lancashire and funded by GCHQ. On this course, you'll complete ten mandatory modules, plus one of your choice, delivered in four-week blocks. Your learning will be varied – from lectures, seminars and self-study, to supervised lab sessions, real-world simulations, and group projects. You'll engage in activities reflective of CNE work, giving you practical experience and preparing you for the role. The programme is designed to provide ample opportunities to learn, develop and practise the skills you'll need before you begin your career. Alongside your studies, you'll spend time at our Samlesbury location with the CNE team. Here, you'll immerse yourself in a supportive environment, collaborate with knowledgeable colleagues, explore our specialist tools and systems, and get a real feel for our organisation.

You'll also grow in confidence as you see how your aptitude for technology and learning makes a real impact on our daily work. Plus, you'll receive a salary from the start of your studies. By the end of the course, you'll have earned a Certificate of Higher Education, equivalent to the first year of a full-time undergraduate degree, or a Postgraduate Certificate if you already have a degree.

## **Job description**

So, once you've completed the 18-month programme, what will you be doing? You'll be part of a group at the front line of our mission to protect the UK from harm. Within the team, there are two key roles: operators and developers. Operators use bespoke technologies to disrupt threats to the UK, target and infiltrate adversaries' computers, and find weaknesses in intricate software. Developers design tools that operators need to do their job, working closely with operators and other professionals on the team to understand their requirements. The CNE team develops tools that detect threats and identify vulnerabilities. In short, we're always looking for new and creative ways to solve real-world problems and influence operations. Operating under strict legal safeguards and oversight, we have the scope to do things that simply aren't possible elsewhere.

The work is serious, but the atmosphere is friendly and welcoming, allowing you to bring your whole self to work, and you certainly won't be working alone; the CNE team is built on respect and camaraderie. We're all working towards the same goal, so we value individual insights and perspectives, share ideas, and encourage new ways of thinking to help us stay one step ahead.

## **Training for the Cyber Specialist Development Programme begins in January 2026.**

**Please note**, you'll need to successfully pass your probation period after nine months to become a full-time GCHQ employee. At the end of the 18 months training programme, you'll be required to pass the training assessments and demonstrate key competencies before you can apply for a promotion to become either an Operator or Developer within the CNE team.

**It is also important to note** that we do not provide accommodation or an allowance for accommodation during the 18-month course, so you'll need to ensure you're within a commutable distance of the set Lancashire place of study and our Samlesbury location before applying.

## **Person specification**

### **About You**

You don't need formal STEM qualifications or prior experience in technology to do this role, but you're required to have two GCSEs/O-Levels at grade 4/C or above in Maths and English Language. Alternatively, you'll need an equivalent Level 2 qualification, such as an NVQ or Intermediate Apprenticeship in Maths and English Language subjects.

We're looking for someone serious about turning their interest in technology into a career. While technology surrounds us all, you find it genuinely fascinating. You might spend your free time reading up on cybersecurity, ethical hacking, or coding, and participating in tech communities. Perhaps you're curious about specific technologies and monitor the latest breakthroughs. You might be a gamer who enjoys building and creating online worlds or teaching yourself to code. You may follow YouTube channels or be part of a Reddit group with a keen interest in tech. For you, tech isn't just a tool to make life easier; it's a passion, and you have a strong appetite to learn more about it. As tech evolves, there'll be new skills to develop and problems to solve. You keep up with trends and are always eager to learn more, just like our colleagues at GCHQ.

Bringing a creative approach to problem-solving and taking satisfaction in finishing puzzles is essential. With your abstract reasoning and numerical skills, you can identify patterns and draw conclusions from intricate information. Most importantly, you have a genuine passion for technology, a curiosity that drives you continuously, and the determination to complete your training and thrive within our team. You're eager to adapt, acquire new skills and apply your knowledge to a range of exciting, unique tasks and situations.

Working as part of a friendly and supportive team, focusing on fast-paced, technical projects. You're comfortable communicating with others and enjoy being part of a group that pulls together to get the job done. Sharing results and explaining your findings to non-technical colleagues is also important, so you can translate technical information to all audiences in a clear and concise manner.

Perhaps most importantly, you'll be someone motivated by the idea of making a real, tangible impact in a role with purpose. This programme aims to unlock your potential, helping you to build a rewarding career as a cyber specialist, dedicated to securing our digital borders. Does that sound like you?

# Benefits

Alongside your salary of £25,856, GCHQ contributes £7,490 towards you being a member of the Civil Service Defined Benefit Pension scheme. [Find out what benefits a Civil Service Pension provides.](#)

## Training and Development

This is a programme with learning at its heart. Your training and development will be supported and invested in throughout the course, and it doesn't stop there. We'll encourage you to continuously advance your skills and knowledge throughout your career at GCHQ.

You'll have opportunities to attend courses or conferences of interest to you and pertinent to the role, with the cost of further technical courses covered by us. You can also apply to a bursary scheme to pursue technical or academic qualifications.

While at the Lancashire place of study, you'll have support from your lecturers and a dedicated course administrator throughout your studies. At GCHQ, you'll be assigned a 'buddy' who'll act as a guide when you first join, along with your line manager and friendly, welcoming colleagues. You'll also have a tech mentor and a soft skills mentor whose knowledge you can tap into whenever you need it. You'll be surrounded by people you can ask for help – you'll never be left on your own.

You'll receive a starting salary of £25,856, plus other benefits including:

- 25 days of annual leave automatically rising to 30 days after 5 years service, and an additional 10.5 days public and privilege holidays

- Opportunities to be recognised through our employee performance scheme

- Opportunities to work flexibly after 18 months training period, subject to business needs

- Interest-free season ticket loan

- Excellent pension scheme

- Cycle to work scheme

Paid parental and adoption leave

## **Equal Opportunities**

At GCHQ, diversity and inclusion are critical to our mission. To protect the UK, we need a truly diverse workforce that reflects the society we serve. This includes diversity in every sense of the word: those with different backgrounds, ages, ethnicities, gender identities, sexual orientations, ways of thinking, and those with disabilities or neurodivergent conditions. We therefore welcome and encourage applications from everyone, including those from groups that are under-represented in our workforce, such as women, those from an ethnic minority background, people with disabilities and those from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Find out more about our culture, working environment and diversity on our website: **<https://www.GCHQ-careers.co.uk/life-at-GCHQ/diversity-inclusion.html>**

## **We're Disability Confident**

GCHQ is proud to have achieved Leader status within the DWP's Disability Confident scheme. This is aimed at encouraging employers to think differently about disability and take action to improve how they recruit, retain and develop disabled people. Being Disability Confident, we aim to offer a fair and proportionate number of person-to-person interviews to any candidate who self-identifies as disabled and meets the essential criteria for the role. This is our Offer of Interview (OOI). To secure an interview for this vacancy, the essential criteria (in order of application process) are:

A minimum of 2 GCSEs at Grade 4 (C) or above in Maths and English, or equivalent

Demonstrate an interest in IT and new emerging technologies, either through work experience or self-taught methods – assessed at sift.

There is a wide range of extra support available throughout the recruitment process to enable you to do your best. See our website for information on reasonable adjustments (link) we can offer.

# Things you need to know

## Selection process details

### What to Expect

Our recruitment selection process is fair, transparent, and based on merit. Here is a brief overview of each stage, in order:

**Initial application** You will be asked to provide your basic personal details and complete a number of yes/no questions. If you meet the eligibility criteria, you will then be asked to complete the online tests.

**Online Tests** You will be required to reach the minimum pass mark for the cognitive ability test and an aptitude test before being invited to complete a full application form.

**Application Sift** - Assessing the candidates' responses to the two questions on the application form.

**Virtual interview.**

Please note, you must successfully pass each stage of the process to progress to the next. Your application may take around 6-10 months to process including vetting, so we advise you to continue any current employment until you have received your final job offer.

### Before You Apply

To work at GCHQ, you need to be a British citizen or hold dual British nationality. You can read our full eligibility criteria here <https://www.GCHQ-careers.co.uk/how-to-apply.html>

This role requires the highest security clearance, known as Developed Vetting (DV). It's something everyone in the UK Intelligence Community undertakes. You can find out more about the vetting process here <https://www.GCHQ-careers.co.uk/how-to-apply.html>

Please note we have a strict drugs policy, so once you start your application, you can't take any recreational drugs, and you'll need to declare your previous drug usage at the relevant stage.



Before you apply, we advise you to consider setting up a separate email address for your contact with us, to ensure your personal and application correspondence remain separate. Try to avoid having identifying features in your email address, such as your first and/or surname and date of birth. This is good practice and will help you manage your application with us more discreetly.

The role is based in Lancashire at a set place of study and Samlesbury, so you will need to live within a commutable distance. Please consider any financial implications and practicalities before submitting an application, as we do not offer relocation costs.

**Please note, you should only launch your application from within the UK. If you are based overseas, you should wait until you visit the UK to launch an application. Applying from outside the UK will impact our ability to progress your application. You should not discuss your application, other than with your partner or a close family member.**

### **Right to Withdraw Statement:**

Please be aware that we reserve the right to bring forward the closing date for this role from the original closing date once a certain number of applications have been received. Please be mindful of this and submit your application at your earliest convenience to avoid disappointment.

Feedback will only be provided if you attend an interview or assessment.

### **Security**

Successful candidates must undergo a criminal record check.

Successful candidates must meet the security requirements before they can be appointed. The level of security needed is [developed vetting \(opens in a new window\)](#).

[See our vetting charter \(opens in a new window\)](#).

People working with government assets must complete [baseline personnel security standard \(opens in new window\)](#) checks.

## Nationality requirements

Open to UK nationals only.

## Working for the Civil Service

Please note this Post is NOT regulated by the Civil Service Commission.

The Civil Service embraces diversity and promotes equal opportunities. As such, we run a Disability Confident Scheme (DCS) for candidates with disabilities who meet the minimum selection criteria.

## Diversity and Inclusion

The Civil Service is committed to attract, retain and invest in talent wherever it is found. To learn more please see the [Civil Service People Plan \(opens in a new window\)](#) and the [Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy \(opens in a new window\)](#).

## Apply and further information

Once this job has closed, the job advert will no longer be available. You may want to save a copy for your records.

## Contact point for applicants

Job contact :

Name : careers@recruitment.org.uk

Email : careers@recruitment.org.uk

Recruitment team

Email : careers@recruitment.org.uk

