

## WOMEN IN IT:

### **Bridget Kenyon**

Chief Information Security Officer at SSCL.



---

#### **Can you tell me about your role within SSCL?**

My role stretches across the whole of SSCL, which is quite interesting. I look at information risk from a physical and technical point of view, if someone's printed out a document and left it on the printer, or if they've made a note in their notebook, I still have to care about it.

It's an interesting role because it spans a whole load of different aspects of information of risk. It wasn't really a role up until the year 2000, this is a new area and the design and purpose vary between different organisations.

Organisations have everything to do with information risk, including personal data protection. With SSCL we have a separate role within the Finance team that looks at personal data and I look at all the other aspects.

Cyber is very fast moving, It takes into account everything that happens on the technical front and account behavioural aspects. It's a wide-ranging, fast-moving role that has so many moving parts.

---

## **Can you tell me about your career journey to this point so far?**

In terms of my career, I started off with a Physics degree and then I discovered I didn't want to proceed to a higher degree in Physics and there weren't that many jobs in industry for Physics and Astrophysics people.

I worked in an engineering firm and discovered a role being advertised for a network vulnerabilities expert or even an apprentice, which is what I was at the time. They were happy to take me on with pretty much zero experience of Information Security and I just loved it.

I ended up working for the MOD for a while and then I took on some IT specific jobs in network engineering and systems administration and then IT management. I then went back into cyber or Information Security as it was known at the time.

I've worked in and out of public and private sector, with some consulting and payment card security positions. Supporting the organisations in making good decisions about how to manage and protect its information while being able to use it. It's always a balance of safety and usability, because if something needs to be completely safe, you should delete it.

---

## **Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years?**

I'd like to really establish and grow the Information Security Service within our organisation, SSCL. We've got a fantastic team and we've been doing some really good work since I started in 2022.

We've got wonderful opportunities, especially with all the exciting bids we are currently working on to develop, mature and move our discipline forwards. Because Information Security is a unique discipline in that it is not yet mature.

We can play a part in maturing it, it's something I do in my spare time anyway. I work on standards development; I was the lead editor for the latest revision of ISO 27,001 and I participate in other entities that work on professionalism in the field.

---

### **Who inspires you as a woman working in the IT industry, and why?**

Ada Lovelace because she was the first person to do programming, when I think about people being very groundbreaking, I think of Marie Curie because, she got 2 Nobel prizes.

She pioneered an entire field, and she was amazing, especially given the era that she was working in, where opportunities for women were limited.

---

### **In your experience, what are the benefits of having women in IT?**

I think it's disingenuous to assume that women bring this to a company, if anything, that minimises the value of the individual.

Diversity or inclusivity is learning to recognise the value of the individual. A variety of viewpoints are valuable, and that's not just because I'm a woman and I find it concerning that it feels like you're being boxed and labelled.

You're a woman, therefore you are this height, this weight and this level of strength and we are going to assume you have skills and advantages that are specific to women, but also disadvantages and limitations that are specific to women. I don't want to be in that box, I want to be seen as a person.

---

### **Do you have any work-related lessons that are unique to being a woman?**

It's a difficult question to answer because I haven't ever been anything else or seen as anything else than female. I would say the important thing to bear in mind is that everyone sees everyone else through a lens. The way that someone reacts to you when they first meet you, it's not you they're reacting to, It's their perception of you.

It's their image they've created, people make assumptions about you and come to a conclusion in 7 seconds. Give them the opportunity to get to know you, put that extra effort in. You will discover you can make connections with someone who perhaps has been a little prickly to start with because they're attempted to shortcut the relationship building.

---

### **What advice would you give to the next generation of women working in the IT industry?**

Don't feel like tall poppies. It's easy for people who are working in an industry where their characteristics are rare, to feel as if they are different because everybody keeps noticing them more. It's a double-edged sword, firstly, anything that you do that works is going to be assumed to be everybody like you is going to be good at this.

If you make a mistake, people will assume that everyone like you will make that same mistake. Don't let it get you down, focus on who you are as a person, not who you are as a woman.

