# PLEXAL AND DSIT REVEAL THE SIX EXCEPTIONAL CYBER SECURITY LEADERS JOINING CYBER RUNWAY IGNITE

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**The selected founders come from diverse backgrounds spanning everything from the military to education to performing arts and have a mission to bring more inclusivity to the sector and break down barriers, while simultaneously building solutions to enhance our security.**

Plexal, the innovation company solving society's challenges through collaboration with government, startups and industry, continues its partnership with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) as the private-public pair announce the six high-potential startup founders to participate in their latest Cyber Runway Ignite programme. Plexal was founded in 2017 as the innovation centre at Here East and is owned by clients of specialist real estate investment advisory company Delancey.

Cyber Runway is developed as a growth platform for UK startups, helping them to launch, grow and scale their companies, which Plexal designed to address major challenges facing the UK's cyber sector. These include everything from increasing entrepreneurial representation within the innovation ecosystem to navigating the economic climate to creating greater connectivity between regional, national and international networks – fully realising the potential for all UK cyber startups.

The Ignite stream of Cyber Runway will provide six startup founders with a bespoke, highly tailored package of support over the course of six months. This will include mentorship, in person deep-dive days and virtual workshops, leadership coaching, a founders retreat, as well as the opportunity to form connections with industry leaders and investors. The chosen six leaders will also receive international exposure, with the previous cohort taking to the stage at 4YFN, Mobile World Congress.

The new Cyber Runway Ignite cohort has a particular focus and mission when it comes to making the sector more diverse and inclusive, with the startup founders – 50% of whom are women – coming from different backgrounds spanning everything from the military to education. They are:

**1. Emma Humphrey – CEO of secure cloud specialist Kuro**

Emma is a military veteran who specialised in open-source research and analysis. As the CEO of Kuro, her mission is to put secure cloud capability in the hands of those protecting our national and regional interests. Emma wants to encourage

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veterans, women and girls to consider careers in cyber and cloud technologies as well as encourage employers in the sector to consider how they might make their organisations more inclusive for those groups, as Emma feels Kuro and Blacksmiths Group does for her.

Kuro's team of technologists use complex cloud infrastructure behind an intuitive interface to lower the barriers to accessing powerful cloud capabilities to solve complex defence and national security challenges. Kuro's technology enables users to operate online safely, securely and efficiently.

**2. George Dunlop – Co-founder and Director of Partnerships at Quantum Dice**

George is the Co-founder and Director of Partnerships at Quantum Dice, which provides trusted, unpredictable security keys generated from a quantum random number generator. He leads the company's commercial growth through strategic partnerships with the world's leading public and private sector entities as they proceed towards a quantum-powered future.

Before co-founding Quantum Dice, George completed a master's degree in mathematics at the University of Oxford, before going on to become a Quantum Technology Enterprise Fellow at the University of Bristol, the UK's only quantum technology incubator.

George is passionate about using this expertise to promote the practical application of Quantum Dice's cutting-edge solutions in its mission to bring true, provable randomness to the world's most critical challenges.

**3. Jonathan Wood – CEO and Founder of security and compliance company C2 Cyber**

Jonathan Wood is an engineer and Royal Navy veteran who's primarily worked with the intelligence community.

In 2018, he founded C2 Cyber to deliver risk analytics and assurance to public sector, defence and private sector clients. As CEO, Jonathan has built C2 into a capable startup, delivering multi-year contracts to large enterprises and smaller organisations globally.

He launched C2 Cyber to enable companies to operate and thrive in tomorrow's digital world. With a background of 20 years in operational intelligence deployments, cyber services delivery and corporate security strategy, Jonathan has experienced the rise of the threat landscape at first hand and is passionate about building a team to help customers navigate it.

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**4. Lorna Armitage – Co-founder of cyber security education organisation CAPSLOCK**

Lorna is a co-founder of CAPSLOCK and has a background in consulting, training and education. She has worked in cyber for over 15 years, advising the public and private sector and working at both strategic and operational levels. A proud Northerner, Lorna is passionate and outspoken about removing barriers to entering the cyber sector.

CAPSLOCK is an award-winning, female-led educational organisation that reskills adults into cyber security professionals. The company is all about increasing accessibility to life-changing education, with all welcome and learners not needing degrees to qualify for a place. Their career history or employment status doesn't matter and CAPSLOCK has helped hundreds of adults reskill in cyber security and launch exciting new careers in the industry.

**5. Mayur Upadhyaya – CEO and Co-founder of API security company Contxt**

Mayur Upadhyaya is the CEO of API security company Contxt. The business offers end-to-end visibility across the API landscape, from CDNs to applications, and monitors personal data movement to prevent security regressions. Its robust solution integrates seamlessly with existing workflows and compares APIs across environments and applies a proactive approach to data privacy and security. This ensures sensitive data stays within the customer's infrastructure.

Mayur has spent over two decades in tech, starting as a full-stack developer and dedicating the last decade to customer identity, a domain where he's passionate about the role privacy and trust play in modern digital experiences.

**6. Shelley Langan-Newton – CEO of identity verification platform SQR**

Shelley started her career in performing arts and then secondary school teaching before changing her career entirely with a move to telecoms. Today, Shelley is the CEO of SQR, which is on a mission to create a safer world by enabling trust and eliminating fraud. With its digital identity service, organisations can quickly and effortlessly verify individuals' identities without storing sensitive documents. SQR's compliance dashboard provides controlled access to real-time customer information, while the frictionless app triggers instant KYC and AML checks using comprehensive global data.

Having come from a non-technical background, Shelley's ethos from performing arts is that collaboration is how to move things along quickly, which she's keen to do at SQR – while bringing authenticity to the sector.

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From group workshops to 1:1 coaching with hand-picked experts, the Ignite programme will help the six startup founders take their leadership skills to new heights, with some of the topics they'll cover including:

Growth

- Exit, growth and funding strategies
- What industry wants and product-market fit
- Policy and ecosystem trends

Leadership

- Mission and making an impact
- Confidence and overcoming demons like imposter syndrome
- Authentic personal branding and storytelling

People

- Stress and burnout
- Creating inclusive, supportive and productive cultures
- Building effective teams and delegating

Cyber Runway is part of the government's ongoing work to grow and strengthen the UK's cyber ecosystem. The programme is designed in keeping with the mission to ensure Britain has a sustainable, innovative and internationally competitive cyber security sector.

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