

GEORGE NIPAH

BUSINESS SUPPORT ANALYST/SENIOR MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANT
KING'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



JOURNEY TO DATE

Having been inspired by a neighbour (who worked as an auditor) at age ten and later on by my secondary school accounting tutor, I developed an interest in numbers and bookkeeping at that early age. Since then, I have always had the burning desire to learn, train, and develop professionally in accounting and finance. However, it was difficult getting into this field of work, particularly when I migrated to the UK initially.

My journey of working in the NHS, however, started in 2017 when I had the opportunity to work as a Health Care Assistant (HCA) at one of the busiest neurosurgical wards in King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (King's) at Denmark Hill. I did not have a degree or UK experience in finance by then, so I considered myself lucky to be hired for the HCA role. I did enjoy every bit of my time spent working as an HCA irrespective of how demanding the role was. I must say I learned most of my life's valuable lessons from working on the ward. In as much as I was happy making a difference in other people's lives, I never gave up my childhood dream. So, I decided to go back to school to pursue an accounting and finance qualification.

In 2018 I enrolled in a 4-year full-time study at the University of Surrey (including placement year) to pursue a BSc Accounting and Finance degree. I had to combine working full-time as an HCA with my full-time studies at Surrey. I also started doing my ACCA professional exams alongside. I chose to do a placement knowing very well the important role that it would play in my personal and professional development. When the time came for me to apply for placement opportunities in my second year at Surrey, my first instinct was to look for one within King's, but I did not know who to reach out to in the finance department. I gathered the courage to email the then People's Officer and to cut the long story short, I received a confirmation from finance a few weeks later to do my placement as a Finance Trainee at King's.

This happened before the Covid-19 pandemic started. So, in 2020 I was not sure if I could start my placement. Thankfully, I was one of the lucky ones to start their placement in the middle of the pandemic. This was the beginning of my NHS finance career and I could not be happier for the bright future that awaited me, particularly working in one of the best NHS foundation trusts in the country. Coming from a very busy ward, and always being on my feet for not less than 13 hours on a shift, I thought I was going to get bored in the finance department. I also thought there would be nothing much to do in finance. How wrong I was! It was the typical month-end period, and I did not require the power of a wizard to figure out what I was about to get myself into in NHS finance. My placement experience was second to none as I worked across various teams within the function department. This allowed me to learn and experience different aspects of the finance function and how they all fit together as a unified function. My placement plan also allowed me to experience different finance processes and systems and several other key tasks performed by different finance colleagues.

I continued studying towards my ACCA professional qualification while doing my placement. It was indeed challenging juggling with all that but my eagerness to learn and improve as well as being resilient and tenacious helped me to sail through those difficult moments. Also, due to the excellent support, mentoring, training, and coaching received from all and sundry in the department, I was able to excel in all assigned roles during my placement. This was recognised by the Surrey Business School, and I received a certificate for an outstanding contribution during my professional training year. Likewise, combining my excellent work ethic, being always keen to learn and improve, and my ability to deliver outstanding results enabled me to move up from the Band 2 finance trainee role to a full-time Band 4 Financial Management Transaction Officer role at the end of my placement. Fortunately (or unfortunately) I had to return to Surrey to complete my degree programme combining my final year (being 65% of my degree classification) at Surrey with the full-time Band 4 role.

I had my graduation in July 2022 and started my current Band 6 Business Support Analyst/Senior Management Accountant role in September 2022, working in the R&D Finance Team, which I enjoy very much. I love and am passionate about my work, as I get the opportunity to learn from and work alongside well-esteemed consultants, clinicians, directors, service managers, research principal investigators and delivery teams, and other finance professionals on various innovative ideas and services that help to improve quality care delivery in King's and across the entire NHS.

Most importantly, I take pride in being part of Team King's for King's not only being an institution that provides opportunities for all but also for providing a plethora of opportunities and resources for personal and professional development and growth. I love the fact that all finance colleagues are encouraged and reminded regularly to live out the Trust's shared core values and strategic objectives in our day-to-day work, tasks, interactions, and behaviours.

Because of the solid foundation that King's has given me, I am fully confident in my role and understand what is required of me and my team in terms of delivering the Trust's BOLD strategic objectives. As a learning organisation, the finance function is fully committed to excellent knowledge management and collaborative working, which are considered a requisite for achieving the department's vision of being the stellar finance partner supporting world-class patient care at King's and the wider NHS.

Over the past three years and eight months of working in finance at King's, I have helped streamline and improve the month-end, financial management, and financial reporting processes across all the teams that I have worked with. These have enabled the teams to complete month-end within the required timescale and improved the effectiveness and efficiency of internal and external reporting. For example, the numerous trackers and databases that I have set up and managed have been robust in providing timely financial information for prudent financial management, swift grant returns, efficient budgetary control, and effective decision-making. Besides, they provide useful information that underpins the formulation of costings, forecasting, and budget setting.

I currently manage some of the biggest and most complex grants/research portfolios in R&D, which requires excellent collaboration, multi-tasking, and interpersonal skills to manage the expectations of both internal and external stakeholders. Here, I provide business, financial, and analytical support to various stakeholders on the post-award financial/budgetary management of the various grants and awards. These include regular budgetary and financial performance reviews and effecting changes in contract variations, which are supported by producing timely and accurate financial information. My collaborative approach and strong analytical skills have enabled me to adopt strategies that help the research delivery units that I support manage their research grants and awards efficiently and excellently.

The opportunities for career and professional development at King's and within the finance function are endless; including its flexible working arrangements, excellent training and development supports and packages, just to mention a few.

"The future continues to look brighter, and the sky indeed is the limit especially as I seek to complete the remaining two ACCA papers in 2024 of which I owe everything to King's and the awesome colleagues who have and continue to support me along the way."