

**VIVIAN HE**  
**CARE GROUP ACCOUNTANT – COMMUNITY SERVICES**  
**COUNTY DURHAM AND DARLINGTON NHS FOUNDATION TRUST**



### CAREER JOURNEY

Hello, everyone, my name is Vivian He and is currently working in the Finance Department in County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT).

I must say Finance was not my first career choice after I graduated from Uni. I had been a financial journalist for 5 years in Beijing before I came to UK due to family reasons. It's not easy to find a journalist job in the North East so I decided to change my career path after my post graduate study in Accounting and Finance in Durham University. Later I got a job offer from the Finance Department in CDDFT.

I started in Financial Management as a B2 Assistant Management Accountant in 2003. From the 1st day I started, I can feel the kindness, patience and support from my colleagues. They never hesitated to share their knowledge and skills. I was trusted to answer budget managers' queries and attend budget managers' meetings, even though I was only an Assistant Management Accountant. There were my personal efforts but undoubtedly the supportive environment had a crucial impact on me.

After 3 years as an Assistant Management Accountant, I came across department restructure and more job opportunities became available. Although I had a good understanding of my areas, I wasn't confident enough to apply for the B5 Senior Management Accountant role, which involves supervising junior colleagues and seemed a big jump to me. My line manager at the time had a separate career conversation with me and encouraged me to apply for it. I submitted the application, nailed the interview and got the job at the end, which gave me huge confidence that I can thrive over my career.

Later I was pregnant and had my 2nd child. I didn't feel losing contact with work or the colleagues while I was on maternity leave. My manager at the time still sent me useful information, including job/training opportunities and one of them was to work as a B6 Deputy Financial Business Partner in North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT), which is closer to where I live and beneficial for me to look after the new baby. I was concerned about leaving CDDFT but my manager encouraged me to have wilder NHS experience for my further development. I passed the interview and got the job in the end.

I came back to CDDFT in 2011 as B7 Associate Care Group Accountant, and within a year I was promoted to B8a Care Group Accountant in Community Services leading a team. I had been a bit concerned if they would mind I came back but there is no such a thing at all. I was welcomed like I had never left.

My typical day as a Care Group Accountant involves Care Group meeting, business cases, savings, Senior Finance meeting/reporting, team management etc. It's more like a Finance Business Partner working with the clinical service as well as part of the senior finance team. I like all my jobs in NHS Finance. They're not the traditional accounting job that people think, i.e pure data input. Yes, we deal with numbers but we also deal with people. We provide financial advice to clinical service managers and apply financial governance by costing service proposals, reporting/monitoring financial position and proactively working with clinical colleagues. To some extent, my interview and communication skills in my previous job as a financial journalist are also used in NHS Finance and help a lot in my career development.

After work, I'm a mum with two children. What often occupies me and my husband is being chauffeur for the children between different after school activities and birthday parties. Life is busy but we really cherish the time with them when they're still young.

I'm really grateful to the opportunities that I was given at work, as well as the career advice that my colleagues have provided me. Every time when I'm not sure if I'm good enough to make the next movement, they always encourage me or share their experience to give me further reference. They're like my mentors or friends. I'm so lucky to have them.

This is pretty much my career story so far in NHS Finance. I'm not sure how it would help you in your own career development but if you're an immigrant like me, or a career path changer like me, hope it would give you some inspiration.